

Live the Crucified Life - Display the Glorified One (Part 1)

'BORN AGAIN' & Walking in the Spirit

By Averine Pennington, 7- 01-22

***"If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not,
how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?" (John 3:12)***

We live in exciting times when many of the mysteries of God sealed up from the time of Daniel are being revealed for this end-time generation. There is an awakening occurring in the body of Christ! Those who have come out of their slumber realize that time is short for all this 'hidden knowledge' to come to light. I am somewhat of a Bible sleuth, and as such, when I come across a verse like the one above, I have an 'aha moment'. There is more to know than Jesus revealed about being 'born again!'

The time is **NOW** at hand when those who are called to work in God's harvest will need to have many basic questions settled in advance in their own hearts. As I have matured in my Christian walk, I have come to a better understanding of what it means to be 'born again.' However, when I recently had to tell a young man with a spiritual question, "Let me get back to you," the Holy Spirit pricked my heart. **Am I truly prepared for the harvest?** When God's appointed time comes, will I be able to articulate the knowledge I have been given easily and without complexity as I share with those put in my path? I must be READY at a moment's notice! Keeping it simple will be paramount.

I'm going to be brutally honest with you. I have spent five days already just on Part 1 of this article, accumulating pages upon pages of supporting scriptures which I meticulously typed up for you. The Holy Spirit kept giving me additional things to cover and the scriptures just kept coming. However, late last night after completing the third revision, when I thought I was finished and ready to dispatch this post for publication, Holy Spirit suddenly slammed on the brakes! I confess I was so frustrated I was ready to give up on this post altogether. Was all that effort in vain? Absolutely not! It was purposeful and planned by my TEACHER to bring me to where I needed to be. Once I quieted my spirit, and poured out my heart to my Heavenly Father, I knew what must be done. With the leading of the Holy Spirit, I began to HIT DELETE!

So, this is the final revision as I have been instructed . . . JUST THE BASIC FACTS!

As I have studied diligently, YOU the reader will be required to do likewise. Perhaps this is meant to test how serious we all are about seeking God's truths. I will provide scripture references for your personal study but will not be typing them out for you in most cases. If you are not willing to take the effort to read the references given, this study will bring minimal edification to you as the scriptures themselves provide the insight into the FACTS. After taking the time to read the scriptures on your own, please take your questions or concerns to the Holy Spirit. He is waiting patiently for you in the Secret Place (**Ps. 91**).

Ok, let's start over. (Please note that ALL CAPS or underlines indicate **emphasis mine**.)

Take a moment to read the scripture passage found in John 3:1-12.

BASIC FACT: *“Except a man be BORN AGAIN, he cannot see the kingdom of heaven.”*

This fact is of vital importance to our mission to bring people to Jesus. We want them to ‘see the kingdom of heaven’ and absolutely not end up in the alternate destination, the lake of fire. To that end, we must have an understanding of what it means to be born again. Jesus realized that Nicodemus was just not ready to deal with ‘heavenly things.’ He was having trouble grasping such a concept. He asked Jesus, “How can these things be?” . . . Can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born? Nicodemus was relying upon his own logic from his knowledge of an ‘earthly birth.’ Knowing that Nicodemus was a teacher of the law of Moses, Jesus rightly expected him to be more knowledgeable.

Likewise, we also have the same difficulty when we depend solely upon our own logic instead of seeking ‘spiritual’ understanding. **What would Jesus expect of us today?** What will be our excuse for not having a better understanding of what it means to be born again? We have access to the best teacher of all, the Holy Spirit! We have an entire NEW TESTAMENT filled with information that was not available to Nicodemus! Do we even know what a ‘Testament’ is? For a testament to be in effect, someone has to die (Heb. 9:16). That is what Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, did for us. He shed His precious blood to redeem us, to pay the price for our sins. On the cross of Calvary, He showed us how to overcome . . . how to have VICTORY OVER DEATH. He is our example of how to **LIVE THE CRUCIFIED LIFE and DISPLAY THE GLORIFIED ONE**. In a nutshell, that’s what it means to ‘be born again!

WHAT PROMPTED ME TO WRITE THIS STUDY?

As mentioned previously, a few days ago a young man asked me a question I could not readily answer. He was seeking further explanation of Acts 2:38.

“Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”

As a new believer who has repented of his sins and asked Jesus to become his Lord and Savior, this young man desires to NOW take the next step that Peter talks about. He wants to follow Christ in baptism and receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. What BASIC FACTS can be found in this verse? Let’s take a look at the last part of Acts 2:38 first.

THE GIFT OF THE HOLY GHOST

There is not a one sentence explanation to the question that has been posed. Though the scripture is straightforward, to someone just beginning to understand spiritual things and perhaps unfamiliar with God’s Word, it can be overwhelming. Even Nicodemus had a hard time understanding something new and different. Remember, the Holy Spirit had not yet been given as Jesus Himself was still walking upon the earth. Think about it! Nicodemus was living in a time of transition. Those of his day who were

steeped in the law of Moses and the traditions of men were about to be catapulted into a new era . . . **the BEGINNING of the AGE OF GRACE**. Perhaps we are not so different from Nicodemus as we find ourselves in a similar situation. We are the last generation before the return of Christ. Any day now our present reality can change dramatically. We are living on the cusp . . . **the END of the AGE OF GRACE**. Are we prepared for a major paradigm shift? Are we ready for the 'new and different' that will suddenly be thrust upon us as we enter into the MILLINENIUM, the 1,000 year reign of Christ upon planet earth? Great change is upon us! We might just also be amazed and say . . . "How can these things be?"

As I 'chewed' of [Acts 2:38](#), I realized how confusing it could be to a new believer.

- **Is faith in Jesus Christ and repenting of your sins enough OR is more required for salvation?**
- **What role does the Holy Spirit play in our salvation?**
- **Must someone be baptized to be truly saved?**

Many theologians over the centuries have attempted to answer these questions with differing conclusions. God is not the author of confusion. His Word must be studied precept upon precept. Scripture will interpret scripture. God's truths can be found in His Word ([Luke 11:28](#); [1 Thess. 2:13](#); [2 Tim. 2:15 & 3:16](#), [Heb. 4:12](#)). Those seeking truth must be willing to take the time to read it and ask the Holy Spirit to interpret what they are reading. He is our teacher! Let me also add that God's Word is LIVING! It is not just 'read it once and done.' It speaks to each reader in ways we do not necessarily understand. You can read the same verses over and over and many times you will gain more insight every time you read it!

Here's a little more information from [John 3:5](#) that will hopefully help us unravel the MYSTERY!

BASIC FACT: *"Except a man be **BORN OF WATER** and **OF THE SPIRIT**, He cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."*

As I prayed over how best to answer this new believer's question, I came to the conclusion that what Peter is describing to his listeners in [Acts 2:38](#) has to do with being BORN AGAIN of God's Holy Spirit. Peter is clearly seen being about his Father's business. He is carrying out the great commission that Jesus gave to His disciples after His resurrection and just prior to His ascension back to heaven. There are accounts in [Matt. 28:18-20 & Mark 16:15-20](#); however, for the purpose of a smooth transition to Acts 2, I will use [Luke 24:46-51](#):

THE GREAT COMMISSION:

*"And [Jesus] said unto them, **Thus, it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: 47) And that REPENTANCE and REMISSION OF SINS should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. 48) And ye are witnesses of these things. 49) And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with **POWER FROM ON HIGH**.***

The disciples were obedient to Jesus and tarried in Jerusalem so that they might receive the 'promise' of 'power from on high.' This brings us to the events that occurred on the Day of Pentecost ([Acts 2:1-4](#)).

So, what is this 'power from on high'?

It is the promised Holy Spirit (also referred to in scripture as the Holy Ghost and the Spirit of truth).

Read **John 14:16-29** where Jesus is talking with His disciples. He says He will pray that the Father give them another Comforter that will abide with them forever.

BASIC FACT: *“Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you and **SHALL BE IN YOU.**”*

This speaks of the promise of the **INDWELLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT** that was to come (fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost where about 120 people were gathered in the Upper Room – see **Acts 1 & 2**).

Brothers & sisters, what happened at Pentecost continues today! The Holy Spirit is a gift from God that is available to everyone. Read **Luke 11:13**. For further assurance, read **Acts 2:39**.

Remember when Jesus was trying to talk to Nicodemus about the mystery of ‘being born again’, He was referring to ‘heavenly things’ (*see the opening verse*).

Please take a moment and read **1 John 5:1-8**. This is a foundational scripture on which further discussion is based so portions will be included in the text.

Basic Fact: “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is **BORN OF GOD.**”

5) Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God? 6) This is He that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by **WATER AND BLOOD**. And it is **THE SPIRIT THAT BEARETH WITNESS**, because the Spirit is truth. For there are three that bear record in heaven, **the Father, the Word** [Jesus Christ-see John 1}, and **the Holy Ghost**: and these three are one. 8) And there are three that bear witness in earth, **the Spirit**, and **the water**, and **the blood**, and these three agree in one.”

Basic Fact: There are 3 that bear witness in earth: **the Spirit, the water, & the blood.**

Many believe that **THE WATER** mentioned by Jesus in **John 3:5** is perhaps referring to a person’s natural birth in the flesh. I tend to disagree. Jesus is trying to explain the spiritual concept of being born again. Yes, during natural birth, the mother’s water breaks just prior to delivery, so water is involved. But that logic seems to be a little too obvious for such a profound mystery. The fact that water is involved in a natural birth has nothing to do with spiritual things. Some think John 3:6 confirms Jesus is talking of a natural birth. Others believe it confirms He is differentiating between the two . . . flesh and Spirit. In seeking truth, we must look to other scriptures for interpretation. There are many other references that do speak of water in a spiritual sense. Read the very next chapter, John 4 where Jesus is speaking to the Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well about the **LIVING WATER**. Jesus refers to this ‘living water’ as a gift of God, the same is said of the Holy Ghost. See also **John 7:37-39**.

Basic Fact: *“If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.*

(This is speaking again of the indwelling of the Spirit that was to come.)

Other spiritual references to water are found throughout scripture: 1) the story of Jesus’ crucifixion in **John 19:33-34**; 2) Christ’s love for the church, **Ephesians 5:25-27**; 3) washing of the disciples feet after the Last Supper, **John 13:1-16**.

Peter was absolutely mortified that His Lord would humble Himself to wash his feet. Jesus told him, **“What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.”** Peter still flatly refused, so Jesus had to tell him firmly, **“IF I WASH THEE NOT, THOU HAST NO PART WITH ME.”** Only then did Peter more than willingly comply. Like Peter, we do not always understand God’s ways. They are so far above our ways! That’s where our faith comes in. We just have to trust that God knows what He’s doing, whether we know or not. We only know IN PART right now. That’s why we need to be obedient children and follow His commandments and all the examples our Lord has set for us. Do we understand fully the significance or symbolism associated with baptism? OR the role of **THE WATER** as a witness in earth? Perhaps not. The thing is, if we did have all the answers to the mysteries of ‘heavenly things,’ then how often do you think we would seek God? We must know our place in God’s order of things. It is only in Him that we live and move and have our being (**Acts 17:28**). He is the only one who is ALL KNOWING, and He KNOWS THE WAY, we don’t. **HE IS THE WAY!** He shines His light so that we can take our every step. He ‘reveals’ on an ‘as needed basis.’ He knows each of us and where we are along our individual journeys. No two paths may be the same, but the important thing is that we reach our intended destination.

Before leaving this topic, let’s look briefly at the Old Testament with supporting evidence in the New Testament. Read **Exodus 17:6** and **Numbers 20:10-11** (the account of WATER from the rock in the wilderness). Now let’s look at **1 Cor. 1-4**. Here is a small portion: “ . . . *for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and THAT ROCK WAS CHRIST.* Whether we understand or not, **THE WATER** is connected to **THE SPIRIT** and **THE BLOOD** . . . the three that bear witness in the earth . . . the three that agree in one.

REPENT AND BE BAPTIZED

The previous discussion has been primarily focused on THE WATER and THE SPIRIT as it relates to ‘BEING BORN AGAIN’ and the indwelling of the gift of the Holy Spirit in the believer. Now let’s take a closer look at the first half of **Acts. 2:38**. The supporting scriptures will focus more on LIVING THE CRUCIFIED LIFE and DISPLAYING THE GLORIFIED ONE.

The first step in coming to Christ is recognizing that you are a sinner in need of a Savior. The Bible tells us that we are all sinners . . . born under the curse (sin) of Adam. (see **Rom. 3:23** & **Rom. 5:12**). But there is good news! Our Father in heaven provided a way that the curse of sin can be removed. That ‘WAY’ is through His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. Born into this world of a virgin, Christ came in the flesh to walk among men. He lived a sinless life. He suffered and died on a cross to pay the penalty for our sins, was buried, and resurrected to life after three days. There is no other way back to the Father, but through His Son. (See **John 14:6**)

Basic Fact: “Jesus saith unto him, **I Am THE WAY, THE TRUTH, and THE LIFE: no man cometh unto the Father but by Me.**

This is the gospel that the apostles and those of the early church preached. See **Acts 4:10-12**.

Basic Fact: “. . . there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved [the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth].”

The next step is seeking God's forgiveness for your sins. That requires REPENTANCE . . . a turning away from sin, confessing your past sins and asking our Heavenly Father to cover them with the precious blood of the Lamb of God.

Basic Fact: The blood of the Lamb of God, His Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ is the only acceptable sacrifice for sin.

Our Savior, Jesus Christ, died in our place that we might obtain everlasting life. **THE BLOOD** that he shed is 'one of the three' that bear witness in the earth (see discussion above).

There are so many verses regarding this, it is difficult to choose which to include here. It is the THEME throughout the entire New Testament. Here are just a few: **Matt. 26:28; Rom. 3:24-25; 2 Cor. 5:21; Ephesians 1:7; Col. 1:19-22; Rev. 1:5-6.** I will include the text of **Rom. 5:8-11** below:

"But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. 9) Much more then, being now **JUSTIFIED BY HIS BLOOD**, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. 10) For if, when we were enemies, we were **RECONCILED TO GOD BY THE DEATH OF HIS SON**, much more, being reconciled, we shall be **SAVED BY HIS LIFE**. 11) And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, **BY WHOM WE HAVE NOW RECEIVED ATONEMENT.**"

THE PART BAPTISM PLAYS IN OUR SALVATION

I have now covered repentance and the remission of sins through the forgiveness offered through Jesus Christ. Finally, we have at long last reached the crux of the matter regarding the question asked by the young man . . . the question that prompted the writing of this study in the first place. I guess I have saved this for last, as it is probably the hardest for most to wrap their heads around. There are so many differing beliefs regarding baptism and the part it plays in our salvation that I'm sure I am about to raise a few eyebrows. Nevertheless, let's plunge right in.

There is no way anyone discussing baptism would not mention the ministry of John the Baptist. In fact, I think his ministry deserves more than just a mention. God chose John, the son of Zacharias and Elisabeth (cousin to Mary the mother of Jesus), to be the one who would 'prepare the way for the coming of the Lord.' John had a very unique life story. We learn about his prophesied birth before we learn about the angel Gabriel appearing to Mary. John was filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb. You can read that story in **Luke, chapter 1**. Then, in **John, chapter 1**, we see the actual beginning of the ministry of John the Baptist and his interaction with Jesus Christ of Nazareth. As John was baptizing beyond Jordan and saw Jesus coming, he exclaimed, "***Behold, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.***"

The mere fact that Jesus came to John the Baptist and submitted Himself to baptism should be a very good reason for believers to also be baptized. After all, if we are followers of Christ then we should **FOLLOW** the example that He has set for us. This is not something Jesus did on a whim. It was purposeful! I did a little research. The scripture says Jesus came from Galilee to Jordan unto John, who at that time was baptizing in a place called Bethabara (**John 1:28**). Today, that area is known as Bethany Beyond the Jordan. It is on the east side of the Jordan River, across from Jericho (north of Jerusalem). From Nazareth in Galilee to Bethany Beyond the Jordan, would have required that Jesus travel a

distance of over 60 miles most probably on foot with much of the terrain crossing the Judean Hills. Not an easy or short trek! From this fact alone, we can perceive that Jesus made the trip to find John while baptizing beyond Jordan, with the express intention to be baptized.

When John the Baptist felt unworthy, Jesus said, ***“Suffer [permit] it to be so now; for thus it becometh us TO FULFILL ALL RIGHTEOUSNESS.”*** John the Baptist could not refuse such a request. *“And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him; And lo a voice from heaven saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased (see Matt. 3:15-17).”*

I find the account in John 1:33b-34 to be very interesting. John the Baptist makes this remark, “. . . ***He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is He which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.***” **Who do you think sent John?** It was certainly God ordained! Remember, he was filled with the Holy Ghost from the womb. The baptisms which John performed were with WATER unto repentance, but Jesus baptized with the Holy Ghost. You can read similar accounts in the other gospels (Matt. 3; Mark 1:1-12 and Luke 3:1-22.)

(Note: I’d like to interject a personal observation. Jesus did not need to be baptized unto REPENTANCE for He was without sin. He was baptized to fulfill all righteousness, to set an example for us to follow because we ARE SINNERS in need of REPENTANCE. He did it for us because His Father asked Him to!)

Our EXPECTATION (if not yet baptized), OR our EXPERIENCE (if already baptized) is either about being SPRINKLED WITH WATER or total SUBMERSION UNDER WATER. Scriptures from the New Testament (ex. Rom. 6:4 . . . ***‘being BURIED with Christ in baptism’***) seem to indicate that ‘total submersion’ is the pattern to be followed for baptism. If this conclusion is a concern for you, please pray about it and ask the Holy Spirit for His interpretation. He will lead you into all truth.

We will only look briefly at how the baptism performed by Jesus differs from that of John. Both Matt. & Luke give a little more detail on this subject: “. . . ***He [Jesus] shall baptize you WITH THE HOLY GHOST, AND WITH FIRE.*** *Whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into the garner; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire (Matt. 3:11-12).*” Whoa, that’s not usually what comes to mind when we think of baptism, is it? What’s this about **FIRE**? *(This will be the topic for Part 2).*

Folks, what takeaway can we glean from all this? There is a WATER BAPTISM which Jesus Himself went to great lengths to participate in. **The purpose . . . TO FULFILL RIGHTEOUSNESS.** This act of baptism was so very important to our Heavenly Father that years prior, He hand-picked the man, ordained the method, and appointed the moment in time that the **TRUE IDENTITY of Jesus** would publicly be announced to the world He came to save. The life of John the Baptist was prophesied in advance and ordered by the LORD in such a way as to prepare the way for His Son to be revealed. Jesus was only 30 years old at the time of His baptism. Remember, as John saw Jesus approaching, he proclaimed, ***“Behold, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world.”*** Then after Jesus came up out of the water, the Holy Spirit descended upon Him like a dove, and the voice of God could be heard saying, “This is My Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” This was a moment that had been in the making from the foundation of the earth . . . the ultimate fulfillment of Gen. 1:3 when God spoke and said, “Let there be Light!” (See also John 1:1-16). What a day for rejoicing! The promised Messiah had come!

I'm sure not a single person in the crowd at the Jordan River that day had a clue of the true spiritual significance of the event they had witnessed. As is often the case, only in retrospect do the puzzle pieces sometime fall into place. Who on that day could imagine that in a few short years their Messiah, the one they had awaited so long, would be crucified? It is only after the cross, that we get a better understanding of many of the patterns and examples set for us by our Savior. **ONLY AFTER THE CROSS**, can we read the sermons of Peter, the teachings of other early church leaders, and the epistles of the Apostle Paul to gain even an inkling of what baptism is truly about.

For sure, **WATER BAPTISM** is a very special event in the life of every new believer. Like the young man seeking answers about **Acts 2:38**, we all should desire to understand more fully what it means to be born again and truly follow Christ with our whole heart. When you follow the example of Christ in water baptism, you are making **a public declaration of who you are 'in Christ'**. You are not the same person you once were. By accepting Christ as your Savior and Lord, your life has not only changed, but you have been given a **'NEW IDENTITY.'** You are now a son or daughter of God! *"For you are all the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ. For as many of you as have been **BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST** have put on Christ . . . And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and **HEIRS** according to the promise (**Gal. 3:26,27 & 29**)."*

I spoke about the change that occurs in your life when you become born again. One of those changes is that YOU DIE! That is, the 'old man' you use to be in the flesh dies, and Christ makes you into a 'new man' that walks in the Spirit. *"And they that are Christ's have **CRUCIFIED THE FLESH** with the affections and lusts, If we live in the Spirit, let us also **WALK IN THE SPIRIT** (**Gal. 5:24-25**)."* That means we have turned away from the sin that we once walked in when we followed the lusts of the flesh, and we now yield ourselves to the leading of the Holy Spirit which indwells us.

The apostle Paul describes this concept in much more detail in **Rom. 6:2-13**: *". . . How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? 3) Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? 4) Therefore we are **BURIED WITH HIM** into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should **WALK IN NEWNESS OF LIFE**. 5) For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection. 6) Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. 7) For he that is dead is freed from sin. 8) Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him: 9) Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him. 10) For in that he died, He died into sin once: but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God. 11) Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be **DEAD INDEED UNTO SIN, BUT ALIVE UNTO GOD THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD**. 12) Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. 13) Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as **instruments of righteousness unto God**."*

Folks, I have whittled down this study to about half of what it was originally, but it is still overly lengthy. However, I would still like to address the question: **"Must I be baptized in order to be truly saved?"** I cannot definitively answer that question as I am not God. Only He knows the heart of every man. I know there are many who would answer this question with a resounding NO, quickly citing the example of the thief on the cross as their argument. The thief could not come down from his cross and be baptized, yet when he asked Jesus, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom" . . . Jesus

responded to him, "Verily, I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with Me in paradise." I would just remind you that this occurred in a different dispensation. The 'Age of Grace' had not yet begun as Jesus was still alive on earth. We must also consider that Jesus, being God in the flesh, had the power and authority to forgive sin THEN (**Matt. 9:6**), just as He does NOW (**Eph. 1:7**). It is stated in **Rom. 9:15** that God said to Moses: "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy; and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." I am sure that just as it was for the thief on the cross, there may be exceptional circumstance or situations where someone will accept Christ as their Savior and not have an opportunity to be baptized. An example of this might be a death bed confession of faith. But let me just say, when Jesus gave the great commission to his disciples mentioned earlier in this study, it was not a suggestion but a COMMAND. The account previously cited was from Luke, but please see the accounts also found in **Matt. 28:19-20a** and **Mark 16:15-16**. Each is worded a little differently.

We can read in **John 8:28-29** and **John 8:37-38** that Jesus spoke only what he was taught from the Father. Also, in **John 3:34** we read, "For He whom God hath sent **SPEAKETH THE WORDS OF GOD**, for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him." From these scriptures, we can conclude that what Jesus commanded His disciples to do, He heard first from His Father and that His desire was to always please His Father.

How then should we take the COMMANDS about baptism? They should not be looked at as mere guidelines that we choose to follow if we want to and discard if we don't. Yes, there may truly be exceptions when a particular situation requires God's mercy, but I am compelled to offer a word of caution. It is sometimes in the nature of man to think more highly of himself than he should. If you willingly choose to be disobedient regarding baptism by claiming to be an EXCEPTION . . . for whatever reason YOU THINK can be justified . . . you are placing yourself upon the mercies of God rather than simply choosing to be obedient. When the time comes for reckoning, it will not matter what YOU THINK was a sufficient excuse. All that will matter is what is in your heart, and God knows the heart of every man. You will be judged accordingly. This applies not only to baptism, but to every area of your life. We must follow the example of our Lord and Savior and seek always to please our Heavenly Father.

BASIC FACT: Obedience is key. (**Rom. 6:16; 2 Cor. 10:15; 1 Sam. 15:22**)

I hope what I have written helps you better understand being BORN AGAIN & WALKING IN THE SPIRIT. I believe if you take the time to read and re-read **Romans 8:1-28**, you will gain even more insight into what it means to become a child of God. In conclusion, as you read **Romans 8:4**, notice particularly what Paul says about those who walk in the Spirit as opposed to those who walk after the flesh and are still in bondage to the law of sin and death. "That righteousness of the law might be **FULFILLED IN US**, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Jesus Christ our Lord asked John to baptize Him so that righteousness could be fulfilled. It is only through the Spirit of God dwelling in us that we can be used as His **INSTRUMENTS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS**. There is still a great work to do to reach those who need to find freedom in Christ Jesus. He left us with a great commission to be His ambassadors, His hands, His feet, His mouthpieces. The kingdom of God is nigh at hand! We have a lot of work to do. See you in the fields!

Yours for the Harvest,

Averine

