

Baptized Into Glory

*“We are made
partakers of
Christ, if we hold
the beginning of
our confidence
stedfast unto the
end.”*

—Hebrews 3:14

IN HIS SECOND EPISTLE,

the Apostle Peter assures his brethren—the called and chosen of God during the present Gospel Age—that they have been furnished all things necessary to complete their earthly course unto

death and to attain the promised reward—the Divine nature—which is grand beyond human imagination. Of that wonderful promise, the apostle says, “His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”—II Peter 1:2-4

UNMERITED FAVOR

To strengthen the resolve of those called to the prospect of immortality, the apostles repeatedly

referred to the limitless benevolence of God, a fundamental aspect of which is the spiritual body that the faithful disciples of Christ will receive when changed to the Divine nature. In his first epistle to the Corinthians, the Apostle Paul informs us that the body with which they enter the tomb will not be that with which they will be resurrected. Referring to their identity as spirit-begotten New Creatures in Christ, he says, “It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.” (I Cor. 15:44) This speaks to all of the faithful New Creatures in Christ Jesus, “As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.”—vs. 49

THE DIVINE IMAGE

Paul magnifies the marvelous generosity of the loving Heavenly Father by stating plainly that at their resurrection the faithful followers of Christ will receive not merely a spiritual body, but a spiritual body that is the same as that of their resurrected Lord and Master—the Divine nature. He explained, “Our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.” (Phil. 3:20,21) The Apostle John confirms Paul’s statement that they will be resurrected in the likeness of the Lord by saying, “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”—I John 3:2

The Apostle Paul tells his Colossian brethren that Christ Jesus is now of the same nature and appearance as his Heavenly Father—"Who [Jesus] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature." (Col. 1:15) The statements of the Apostles John and Paul reveal the astonishing truth that Christ's faithful disciples will, at their resurrection, be of the same Divine nature and appearance as their Heavenly Father. Thus the grace of God and his unmerited favor is revealed to be infinite, and profound to a degree beyond the ability of the human mind to fathom. We read, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ."—I Cor. 2:14-16

THE PATH OF SACRIFICE

The Lord Jesus himself declares the Divine nature to be attainable only by those who are called by our loving Heavenly Father to receive it during this present Gospel Age. Jesus declared, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day." (John 6:44) Those who are thus drawn during this period of time must, as the Apostle Peter admonishes us, tread the path of sacrifice that their Master trod. "This is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your

faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.”—I Pet. 2:19-21

The path which Christ walked furnished his disciples with an example which they were to follow. That path began with the presentation of himself to John the Baptist at the Jordan River for water immersion. Those who are called to follow the Lord’s footsteps during this present Gospel Age are to have in mind, even as the Lord did, that water immersion is symbolic of a grander and much more profound immersion into the will of God that has already occurred in the heart.

HEARTS FULLY IMMERSED

Paul provides a rare insight into the Lord’s very thoughts as he presented himself to John the Baptist. The apostle says, “Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.” (Heb. 10:5-7) It is manifest that, as he presented himself to John for immersion, the Lord’s heart was fully consecrated, dedicated, and committed to full cooperation with the will of God. Thus, it is seen that the Lord’s water baptism represented that which had already transpired, the death of his own will, his complete immersion into the Father’s purposes, and his plans for the redemption of mankind.

THE HOLY SPIRIT

Paul's proclamation to the Hebrew brethren (Heb. 10:5-7) made clear that the Lord was aware that his full cooperation with the Divine will would eventually entail the literal death of his flesh, an awareness that was declared by Jesus himself when he said, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."—John 6:51

However, as the Lord's immersion symbolized his death to all things fleshly, so also his rising from the water represented his resurrection to newness of life in the Spirit by the power of God. This was divinely declared at Jordan and witnessed by John the Baptist—"Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he [John] saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him [Jesus]: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."—Matt. 3:16,17

PARTICIPATION IN THE LORD'S BAPTISM

The Apostle Paul, when addressing his brethren in Rome, comments on Christ's baptism. He wrote, "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism 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. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we

shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.” (Rom. 6:3-5) Having been immersed by John the Baptist, Jesus symbolically entered death when he was lowered into the waters of the Jordan River. When he was raised from the water he arose in symbol from the grave. Hence, his water baptism prefigured his literal death at Calvary as well as his subsequent resurrection to glory, honor, and immortality.

Those who would, during this present Gospel Age, follow the footsteps of Jesus must do more than follow him into the water. They must follow him also by the death of their respective wills and ambitions. They must follow the Lord even unto the death of their flesh if they would attain life. Reminding his brethren of the prospect before those who faithfully endure temptation even unto death, the Apostle James says, “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.” (James 1:12) This promise is stated by the revelator who wrote, “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”—Rev. 2:10

DESCENDING DOVE

As the Lord Jesus emerged from the water of the Jordan River, God’s acceptance of his dedication was signified by his Holy Spirit alighting in the figure of a dove seen and declared of John the Baptist: “John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. . . . 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 Spirit.” (John 1:32, 33) Thus, water baptism was declared to be but a shadow of the true—the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Further, the baptism of the Holy Spirit was itself revealed to represent something far more profound than Divine acceptance of a disciple’s devotion. It is even as it was with Jesus when he arose from the waters of Jordan. That was a sign of the attainment of that most precious distinction—sonship with God.

DEAD AND RISEN

The Apostle Paul declares that those who are baptized with the Holy Spirit are reckoned as both dead and alive in Christ. He says, “If we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”—Rom. 6:8-11

To his Colossian brethren, the apostle explains that it is by their faith in Christ’s death and resurrection that they can be both dead and alive in Christ, “And in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. When you were dead in your transgressions and

the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions.”—Col. 2:11-13, *New American Standard Bible*

INDWELLING SPIRIT

When it came time, Jesus’ disciples were likewise begotten of the Holy Spirit of God. “When the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. . . . And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” (Acts 2:1,4) The Apostle Paul exhorts his brethren to understand that, since Pentecost, they are seen of God to be no longer in the flesh but in the Spirit of Christ. The apostle says, “The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”—Rom. 8:7-9

Thus, the Spirit of Christ is the Spirit of God indwelling as the apostle taught the Romans, Galatians, and the Colossians alike. “If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.” (Rom. 8:11) “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) “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as

ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.”—Col. 2:6,7

DIVINE EMBRACE

The Apostle Paul confirms that those upon whom the Holy Spirit is bestowed during this present Gospel Age have been embraced as sons by Almighty God. To these he says, “Brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.”—Rom. 8:12-17

The gift of the Holy Spirit is a sign of sonship with God as Paul says. “Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.” (Gal. 3:26) He exhorts all who receive the Holy Spirit to rest assured that they are among the elect, the chosen, of God, “Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit.”—I Thess. 1:4,5

INHERITANCE OF THE SAINTS

Paul impresses upon his brethren all that is signified by the baptism of the Holy Spirit, “Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in

light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

“For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouable in his sight: If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister.”—Col. 1:12-23

FURTHER EXHORTATION

The Apostle Peter reminds his fellow disciples that their baptism of the Holy Spirit and the subsequent opening of the mysteries of salvation to their understanding is a marvelous privilege that

was denied to the ancient prophets, and even to the angels. Praising the prophets of old who faithfully preached a future salvation that they longed to understand Peter says, “Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.”—I Pet. 1:10-12

It is only through the baptism of the Holy Spirit of God that these things of the Divine plan of the ages can be seen. They were previously sealed not only from the worldly wise, but by both the prophets and angels who sought to look into them. Only those who are fully consecrated unto death will understand and be truly thankful for having received of the wonderful love and grace of the Heavenly Father. ■

“All thy works shall praise thee, O LORD; and thy saints shall bless thee. They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power; To make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom.

—Psalm 145:10-12