

2 • Baptism is a Birth

What is baptism? One very real way of thinking about it: **Baptism is a birth.** Listen closely to what the apostle Peter wrote:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead... (1 Pet 1:3)

Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God... (1 Pet 1:22-23)

In 1 Peter 3, having talked about what Jesus accomplished and referencing the example of Noah building an ark, notice especially what the apostle writes in 3:21-22:

Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.

Where did Peter get this good news? He didn't come up with it on his own. In John 3, during a really important conversation with a Pharisee named Nicodemus, Jesus said:

"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3:3)

"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." (John 3:5)

Finally, notice how the apostle Paul gives us a great summary of everything we've heard in this lesson:

For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. (Titus 3:3-7)

What is baptism? There are many ways to answer. For one, **baptism is a birth.**



For Class & Family Discussion:

- Let's open our Bibles back to **1 Peter 1** and think carefully together through what the Holy Spirit has communicated to us through the apostle Peter. Why do you think he describes disciples of Jesus as having "a living hope" in **1:3**?
- Why would my soul even need to be "purified" (**1:22**)?
- What does "the living and abiding word of God" have to do with all of this (**1:23**)?
- What's the connection Peter wants us to see between Noah (**1 Pet 3:20**) and baptism (**3:21**)?
- When Peter emphasizes that baptism doesn't involve "removal of dirt from the body" but *does* involve "an appeal to God for a good conscience" (**3:21**), what does he want us to understand?
- We've heard Peter bring up the resurrection of Jesus Christ twice now (**1:3**; **3:21-22**). Why is that event absolutely key to our entire discussion?
- Let's go back in our Bibles to **John 3**. Jesus makes a very blunt statement in **3:3**. Why? Didn't he know that Nicodemus was a descendant of Abraham, an expert in the law of Moses, and a ruler of the Jews? Why would Nicodemus even need to be "born again"?
- Let's zero in on Jesus' statement in **3:5**. In what way does baptism involve being "born of water and the Spirit"?
- Maybe **Titus 3:3-7** will help us pull all the threads of this session together. What do you see? What sort of things need to be left behind at the "funeral" of baptism? In what way does baptism involve "the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit"?