

Water Changes Everything

Lake Cumberland is one of the largest man-made bodies of water east of the Mississippi. Its shoreline measures 1,255 miles; most the shoreline is in its natural state. The lake supports over 65,000 acres of water with an average water depth of 90 feet at its normal pool level.

At one time, this area was only populated by tobacco farmers. Most of my wife's family moved to Cincinnati during the Depression and World War 2 to get jobs. Today, however, the lake has transformed the area not just physically, but also mentally. Nearly everyone living in the area is in one way or another affected by the tourism industry that the Lake has created. Nearby Monticello, KY even calls itself the "Houseboat Manufacturing Capital of the World."

Creation

Genesis 1:1-10 (KJV)

1 In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. **2** And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. **3** And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. **4** And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. **5** And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day. **6** And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. **7** And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so. **8** And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day. **9** And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so. **10** And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that it was good.

In this story, the world is "without form;" without function and without purpose. The world just 'is,' but then the Lord comes along and moves upon the "face of the waters." After that, the world is changed.

Through this first act, the Lord begins to mold and change the Earth. First, He separates light from darkness. Then He separates Heaven from Earth. Next, He separates the sea from dry land. In each instance, the Lord can be seen separating elements which already existed. Later in the story, He creates objects that are new; plants, birds, fish, and eventually man. Most of these elements are created out of raw materials He created in the beginning. Earth, sea, sky, and light form the canvas unto which the Lord paints the rest of the picture.

So many of us were like the world when the Lord found us. We just existed without any real purpose. We lived our lives in a routine that was likely dictated by someone else; we went through our day without a clear purpose or direction, we existed to serve the routine. Our lives were void and without form.

Then the Lord moved upon our life. He began to separate the good from the bad. He set aside our talents for His purpose. He purged our instincts and raised our higher moral purpose. These elements serve as the starting canvas onto which the Lord paints the picture of our life.

There's a concept in science called 'entropy.' Entropy is disorder; chaos. One of the truths in science is that entropy always increases. Whenever anything occurs in the Universe, the overall disorder of the Universe increases. The world started out as a highly organized state, but has been continuously becoming more disorganized over time.

For example, you might say, "I'm going to organize my house." However, to organize your house you must eat food for energy. The food you eat gets metabolized to create energy for your body. The food itself was created by sunlight. The sun fused hydrogen atoms into helium to create energy to grow the plants. So, tons of hydrogen atoms were fused into helium to create the energy to grow the plants which you ate to extract a small amount of energy for your body to use to clean the house. The area inside your house became more organized, but the universe became more disorganized as well.

Our lives aren't immune to this effect. The Lord separates the "land" from the "water" in our lives when we're saved, but over time the water and land tend to re-combine into mud again. We must constantly work to keep the carnal and spiritual parts of our lives separate and under control.

Noah

Genesis 6:5-7 (KJV)

5 And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. **6** And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. **7** And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them.

Genesis 6:17 (KJV) And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die.

Notice two things from these verses. First, the Lord “repents” creating man. So, He responds by washing man from the Earth with water. In doing so, the Lord marks a point in history that separates ‘then’ from ‘now.’ In Biblical literature, there’s even a word: ‘antediluvian,’ which means ‘before the flood.’ These are events that took place both before and after the flood. The Flood marks a solid line in the history for the world. The Lord used water to mark a change from one state to another.

Red Sea

Exodus 14:19-22 (KJV)

19 And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them: **20** And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these: so that the one came not near the other all the night. **21** And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. **22** And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left.

1 Corinthians 10:1-2 (KJV)

1 Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; **2** And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;

The Red Sea serves as a physical boundary of Pharaoh's influence. The town where Pharaoh overtook the Israelites, Pihahiroth, was within the kingdom of Egypt. The Egyptians had lookout towers placed on mountain tops throughout their kingdom. The soldiers stationed at those locations could use mirrors to signal each other. Messages from the farthest reaches of the kingdom could reach Pharaoh's ear within hours. That's how he knew where to find the Israelites. So, when the Israelites crossed the Red Sea, they went from the rule of Pharaoh to the rule of Moses; he's saying that Moses became their "king."

Once again, we find a change occurring in the water. It's not simply a symbolic transformation from one form of life to another; there's a physical change in their location and with it, the authority under which they serve.

The Laver in The Temple

Exodus 30:17-21 (KJV)

17 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, **18** Thou shalt also make a laver of brass, and his foot also of brass, to wash withal: and thou shalt put it between the tabernacle of the congregation and the altar, and thou shalt put water therein. **19** For Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet thereat: **20** When they go into the tabernacle of the congregation, they shall wash with water, that they die not; or when they come near to the altar to minister, to burn offering made by fire unto the Lord: **21** So they shall wash their hands and their feet, that they die not: and it shall be a statute for ever to them, even to him and to his seed throughout their generations.

In order to enter the Holy of Holies, the priests had to do two things: they had to make a sacrifice and wash themselves. The washing took place within a big brass cauldron. They weren't allowed to enter the Temple interior without undergoing a ritual bathing to clean their bodies. A physical immersion within water facilitates a transition from one place to another.

Separation from The Congregation

There's several scriptures that deal with the necessity of water for entering the congregation:

Leviticus 13:6 (KJV) And the priest shall look on him again the seventh day: and, behold, if the plague be somewhat dark, and the plague spread not in the skin, the priest shall pronounce him clean: it is but a scab: and he shall wash his clothes, and be clean.

Leviticus 13:34 (KJV) And in the seventh day the priest shall look on the scall: and, behold, if the scall be not spread in the skin, nor be in sight deeper than the skin; then the priest shall pronounce him clean: and he shall wash his clothes, and be clean.

Leviticus 13:54 (KJV) Then the priest shall command that they wash the thing wherein the plague is, and he shall shut it up seven days more:

Leviticus 14:8 (KJV) And he that is to be cleansed shall wash his clothes, and shave off all his hair, and wash himself in water, that he may be clean: and after that he shall come into the camp, and shall tarry abroad out of his tent seven days.

Leviticus 14:47 (KJV) And he that lieth in the house shall wash his clothes; and he that eateth in the house shall wash his clothes.

Leviticus 15:5-6 (KJV)

5 And whosoever toucheth his bed shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even. **6** And he that sitteth on any thing whereon he sat that hath the issue shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even.

Leviticus 16:26 (KJV) And he that let go the goat for the scapegoat shall wash his clothes, and bathe his flesh in water, and afterward come into the camp.

Leviticus 17:15-16 (KJV)

15 And every soul that eateth that which died of itself, or that which was torn with beasts, whether it be one of your own country, or a stranger, he shall both wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even: then shall he be clean. **16** But if he wash them not, nor bathe his flesh; then he shall bear his iniquity.

Numbers 19:7 (KJV) Then the priest shall wash his clothes, and he shall bathe his flesh in water, and afterward he shall come into the camp, and the priest shall be unclean until the even.

Deuteronomy 23:11 (KJV) But it shall be, when evening cometh on, he shall wash himself with water: and when the sun is down, he shall come into the camp again.

There were several mandates for people to be washed before they could meet with others in the congregation. The washing ritual is what separated the sick or the unclean from the clean.

2 Kings 5:10 (KJV) And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean.

In Jewish life, this ritual washing is called the Mikveh. There are several rabbinic laws that state what must be done for a ritual washing to be 'kosher:'

The water must be "living water." That is, it must be running water as from a stream. Stagnant water is prone to disease as is therefore not acceptable. It must be at least 400 gallons.

The person being immersed must not have anything that separates them from the water. If they are wearing clothes, they should move while under water to ensure that every part of them touches the water.

These ritual immersions were a fundamental part of Jewish life. Even Jesus tells the people he heals to wash and show themselves to the priest.

John's Baptism

At the time of John the Baptist, this ritual bathing was still routinely practiced. John's message was, "Repent for the Kingdom of God is at hand." To prepare for the coming of the Messiah, it would have been natural in their minds to go through the ritual 'mikveh' in preparation for the coming of the Lord.

John's baptism was a preparation for the coming of the Lord. John's baptism was a Jewish ritual that prepared the congregation, much as a bride would anoint herself while waiting for her husband. The anointing is not the marriage, and John's Baptism was not salvation. John's baptism was for repentance.

Acts 19:1-5 (KJV)

1 And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, **2** He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. **3** And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. **4** Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. **5** When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Baptism for Us

Baptism comes from the Greek word "baptimos" which means, "To dip or immerse." Just like the Jewish 'mikveh,' a precursor to the Christian baptism, it requires that a person be fully immersed. The formula of the baptism may have been represented by the 'mikveh,' but it was not until Jesus' resurrection that we could see the full meaning of the symbolism.

Remittance of Sins

Acts 2:38 (KJV) 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.

Acts 22:16 (KJV) And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

Some argue that Baptism is simply an outward sign that one's repented; just at the 'mikveh' allowed an unclean person to enter the congregation, so baptism allows a person to enter the church. This assertion isn't substantiated by the Bible. Just as the man received his sight by bathing in the pool at Siloam, so we have our sin removed by being baptized.

Others argue that the Greek word translated as "for" in Acts 2:38, eis, means "because of." However, this isn't supported by scripture. The word eis is used several times in the Bible and in every case it means "in order to cause;" in no cases does it mean "because of."

Therefore, when Acts 2:38 says, "for the remission of sins," it means 'in order to cause the sins to be removed.'

Sins are removed in every sense of the word at baptism. God's record of us as sinners is wiped out and the penalty for sin, eternal spiritual death, is removed. Remission applies to all sins from which we repent, regardless of when they are committed.

Identification with Death, Burial, and Resurrection of Jesus

Romans 6:3-14 (KJV)

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 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. **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 unto 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. **14** For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

Just as Jesus was buried and rose again, so we experience that death during baptism. We come into the church as sinners, we die to our sin through repentance, we are buried to our sin through immersion of baptism, and we are resurrected to a new life in Jesus when we rise from the water. As Paul says, we aren't subject to our old sin before baptism, because we are dead to our old selves.

Spiritual Circumcision

Genesis 17:10-11 (KJV)

10 This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised. **11** And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you.

Colossians 2:11-13 (KJV)

11 In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: **12** Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. **13** And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;

The circumcision was the act by which someone entered the covenant. Paul says that baptism is the circumcision of the heart. By entering baptism, we take on the covenant of God.

The Baptism Formula

Acts 2:37 (KJV) Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?

Now that we understand the history and importance of baptism, how do we accomplish it? What must we do to be saved? The first place we must look for answers such as these is to the scriptures:

Acts 2:38 (KJV) 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.

Acts 8:16 (KJV) (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.)

Acts 10:48 (KJV) And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

Acts 19:5 (KJV) When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Romans 6:3 (KJV) Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?

Galatians 3:27 (KJV) For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

As you can see from above, whenever the Bible describes the manner of someone being baptized, it's always the same formula; baptism in the name of Jesus. There's one scripture that's often quoted by others:

Matthew 28:19 (KJV) Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

Notice, however, that there's no mention of anyone ever performing a baptism this way. Every time baptism is mentioned, it's in the name of Jesus.

Jesus is the manifestation of God in the flesh. It's only by understanding that concept and taking that understanding into our hearts through baptism that our sins are remitted. Belief is not enough. Declaring Jesus as your personal savior is not enough. We must understand, believe, and take on the circumcision of our hearts through baptism before we come under the covenant of Christ.

In Acts 19, the followers of John were re-baptized in the name of Jesus. The former baptism did not remit their sins. It was only through understanding who Jesus is that they were saved. Once they came to that realization, they were re-baptized. Likewise, we all must be baptized when we come into the full knowledge of the Truth. A previous baptism in the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost is not the same and baptism in Jesus Name. There is only one baptism required in our lives, but only if that baptism is in Jesus Name.

Acts 4:12 (KJV) Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

Luke 16:19-26 (KJV)

19 There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: **20** And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, **21** And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. **22** And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; **23** And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. **24** And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. **25** But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. **26** And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.

Note that there is no water in the gulf. The rich man cannot cross from where he is to Lazarus. Likewise, Lazarus cannot cross the gap to him. The formerly rich man feels that if he can only get some water, he will feel better: he is looking for water

to be a dividing line between pleasure and torment. But the gulf is not filled with water; there is no way to pass through the water after death.

There is a river of water called Baptism in Jesus Name. That water divides every one of us from our old life of sin to a new life. It is an antediluvian line that passes through our life and separates what we were from what we will become.

My question to you is: **which side of that line are you on?**