



ROMANS Part 52

Chapter 6:8-11



Death of the Old Humanity

Now if we died together with Christ, we believe that we shall be living together with Him also, 9 having perceived that Christ, being roused from among the dead, is no longer dying. Death is lording it over Him no longer, 10 for in that He died, He died to Sin once for all time, yet in that He is living, He is living to God. 11 Thus you also, be reckoning yourselves to be dead, indeed, to Sin, yet living to God in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

BAPTISM INTO HIS DEATH

I wish I had talked more two weeks ago about verse three of Romans six: “Or are you ignorant that whoever are baptized into Christ Jesus, are bap-

tized into His death?” Allow me this luxury now as a springboard to verses 8-11.

Many religious people vex themselves over baptism. I have a friend who was very excited and proud to have gone to Israel and been baptized in the Jordan River. I cringed to hear him relate the tale, for water baptism is a giant step backward for anyone, even an Israelite. It’s akin to slaughtering sheep for sin and camping beneath Sinai. It certainly removes one far from Paul, who was not commissioned to baptize at all (1 Corinthians 1:17). Water baptism hearkens to the Circumcision gospel (law) rather than Paul’s gospel to the nations (grace). It hearkens to a temporary cleansing rather than to a permanent death and resurrection.

As a minister of the Circumcision confirming the patriarchal promises (Romans 15:8), Jesus Christ was baptized in the Jordan River to identify Himself with Israel. It was a prime time for God to announce His approval of His Son, and this He did (Matthew 3:17). The baptism of John was ceremonially cleansing and unifying. Physically, it did nothing besides make you wet. Same with Jesus. It was all ceremonial. Everyone who went into the Jordan River with John came out as co-members of the same club. It was a public acknowledgment that, “I’m with the program being heralded by *this* guy.” Answering “Yes” to “Were you baptized into John’s baptism?” meant that you identified with the coming kingdom and its Messiah. Jesus, in the flesh, was certainly identifying with it. It was a public demonstration that He was the Messiah of Israel. Contrast this with something unknown and unpreached to Israel: the baptism into His death.

IDENTIFICATION WITHOUT WATER

The baptism into Christ’s death spoken of by Paul is in no way related to John and the Jordan, for in the days of John’s watery tenure, Jesus had yet to die. Bap-

tism into Christ's death identifies one with the organization known as the body of Christ. It's a mental assent to a God-stated fact, namely, that God now sees us as a new creation based *in toto* upon Jesus Christ's work on the cross. This baptism does not require a towel afterward. Israel had never heard of anything so radical, and very few who had heard of it went for it. Baptism into Christ's death was, and is, too mental for an Israelite. It's too deep. Israel needs outward signs and ceremonies. She needs the literal water. She wants to be physically cleansed, or at least to feel like it. She's scared of faith.

Our baptism is not a cleansing at all, but rather the acknowledgment of the death of the old humanity. Israel's old humanity is still intact; even in the kingdom, redeemed Israel will be of the old humanity. Immortal old humanity? Yes. New birth, but old humanity. I know this is shocking. It is important to be an Israelite in the kingdom. Each disciple will be sitting on one of twelve thrones in the kingdom (Matthew 19:28), judging the twelve tribes of Israel. What is this but identity with Israel? National distinctions can belong only to the old humanity. In the new humanity, national distinctions necessarily disappear, for in the new humanity there is neither Jew nor Greek (Galatians 3:28). Even in the millennial kingdom, this message would be disastrous to an Israelite.

Like Adam, the body of Christ has begun from scratch. Was Adam a Jew? Of course not. He wasn't anything but

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a human. In this sense we are like Adam, but we are the new Adam. When humanity was new, there were no national distinctions. Humanity is new again, and there are no national distinctions again. But again, this applies only to the body of Christ. The bride of the Lamb-kin, that is, Israel, is founded, not on the death of Christ, but on the truth that here, stand-

ing in the Jordan River, is the Messiah of Israel.

The old humanity is given neither a bath nor a rebirth; it is killed. Someone who is merely cleansed gets dirty again. Someone who dies and raises from the dead, on the other hand, is delivered from everything of the flesh, especially baths. Freed from all ceremonies! Freed from the guilt of sin! Freed from fleshly advantage or worry! (As I rarely use exclamation points, please pay close attention to this. I am having to pay close attention



to it myself; I'm as surprised as you are with the exclamation points. I want badly to delete them but don't seem able to do it.) Baptism into Christ's death unites members of His body, not with His kingdom on earth (the baptism of John did that), but with Christ Himself and the deeper spiritual truths of His conquering of sin and mortality.

When anyone asks me if I've ever been baptized, I answer, "Yes. Two thousand years ago."

REWIND

When I see someone going into a lake with a preacher and a towel, I can't help but think, "That person is not identifying him or herself with the same organization God has called *me* into." When I hear of a person going into the Jordan River, it's doubly galling. They're not only resorting to an Israelite rite, but to an *old* Israelite rite associated with the Old Covenant. (The spirit baptism at Pentecost blew the wind of the New Covenant; yet even that came with visible flames of fire and a perceptible wind; verily I say unto you, Israel needs to see and feel stuff and God gives it to them.) Not only this, but these modern-day Israel-o-philes think that there is something magical about the waters of the Jordan. There isn't. Like Sinai, its glory is past. The waters are as worthless now as the remnants of Noah's ark—if there are any.

Jesus has already done His Jesus thing, and what is left for us members of the body of Christ is to identify ourselves with Him, not as He stood in the Jordan River with John, but as He hung alone on the cross, lay in the tomb, and now sits at God's right hand. The shoving of Christ Jesus into

the tomb and His resurrection is what baptism *ultimately* points to. It is the ultimate identification. After realizing this, there is no more water baptism possible. Oh, you can do it, but it's meaningless. It's worse than meaningless. It slaps Christ in the face. Paul says we are "complete in Him" (Colossians 2:10). Are you now going to add to a Christ-declared completeness? I wouldn't if I were you.

For us, Christ's death is the death of the old humanity, and His resurrection is the first time God can look at us and say, "You are righteous!" Jesus Christ sitting now at the right hand of God in glory is God's guarantee that we, too, shall be glorified with Him (Romans 8:30; Colossians 3:4). Jesus did what He did because we couldn't do it. While my friend was in the Holy Land he may as well have just walked out of the Jordan and got himself crucified. That's how stupid the whole thing is. Ride into the city on a donkey while you're at it. In contrast to all this, Paul writes in Romans 6:11, "Thus you also, be reckoning yourselves to be dead, indeed, to Sin, yet living to God in Christ Jesus, our Lord." This saves on plane fare, burial spices, and that literal crucifixion thing, which reportedly hurts.

PERCEPTION DETECTION

"Now if we died together with Christ, we believe that we shall be living together with Him also, having perceived that Christ, being roused from among the dead, is no longer dying" (Romans 6:9).

"Having perceived that Christ, being roused from among the dead, is no longer dying." What does Paul mean when he says, "perceived"? Have you perceived that Christ was roused, let alone no longer dying? No, but we believe Paul's testimony concerning it, and he was an eyewitness. This is helpful. Faith is "a conviction concerning matters which are not being observed" (Hebrews 1:11), but it is not a conviction concerning matters that didn't happen or had no eyewitnesses. In other words, while we have never seen the resurrected Christ, a bunch of other people have, including the man who wrote the letter we're dissecting. This is why Jesus, after rising from the dead, made sure He got around. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15:3-8—

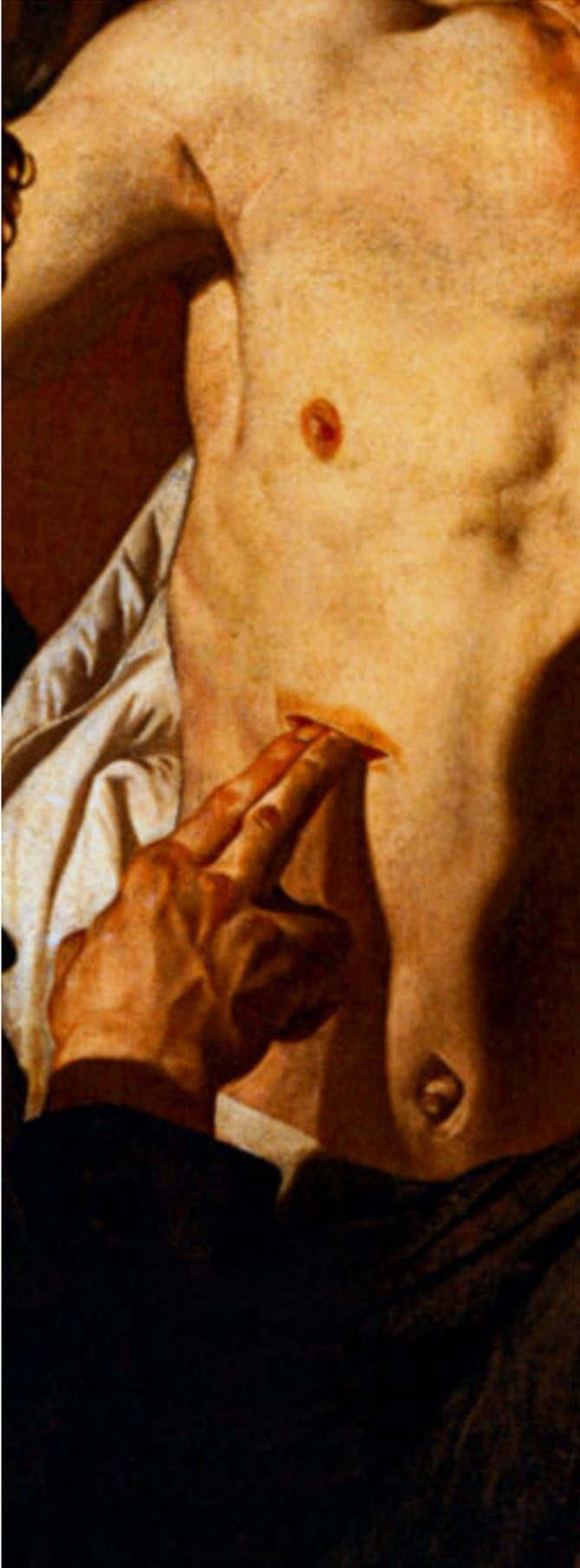
For I give over to you among the first what also I accepted, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was entombed, and that He has been roused the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, thereupon by the twelve. Thereupon He was seen by over five hundred

brethren at once, of whom the majority are remaining hitherto, yet some were put to repose also. Thereupon He was seen by James, thereafter by all the apostles. Yet, last of all, even as if a premature birth, He was seen by me also.

Paul knows that our faith needs help, so here is the help: Our Savior rose from the dead after three days and, according to Paul's account, was seen by more than 500 people. That's half a grand. No one, ever, walked around with crucifixion wounds. Why? The answer is obvious: no one ever survived crucifixion. Neither did Jesus survive it (He gave up His life), but He did something no one else managed: He rose from the dead. (I take that back; not even Jesus could manage rising from the dead; His Father had to rouse Him, and He did—Acts 2:24). When "Doubting Thomas" finally met the resurrected Christ, Jesus had him put his fingers into the lance wound on His side. As our Lord was immortal, there were no worries about infection. Thomas didn't have to scrub his hand with an anti-bacterial soap or wear Latex gloves. Jesus had no fear. He simply said, "Stick it in there. Check it out. Move it around." Thomas may even have touched His heart.

The Romans drove the nails through Jesus' wrists, not His hands; the hands cannot support body weight. Hold up your right wrist. Now extend your left index finger perpendicularly toward your wrist. See how your finger is longer than the width of your wrist and could easily pass through your wrist and out the other side were there a hole drilled cleanly through your wrist. Jesus Christ had a hole "drilled" cleanly through His wrist. Keep in mind how Jesus proved Himself to Thomas in the intimacy of the upper room. He stripped to the waist, exposed His injured side, and invited the fingers of Thomas. Now He's in public. It is my conviction that, when Jesus appeared publicly to crowds of people, as a demonstration/shock-value-act-of-proof, I believe that He either shoved His left index finger clear through His wrist, or invited other people to do it. Not a bad "parlor trick." It would have been an unforgettable "Oh, my God" moment for many people, who then became believers.

We need this. Paul knows we need it. Don't feel bad that you need it. Okay, so now you've got it. We know that Christ was roused from among the dead. But now here is something that depends on Paul's word only: "He is no longer dying; death is lording it over Him no longer." Not even those who saw the resurrected Lord could know that He was no longer subject to death, and would never again die. Perhaps Thomas got a clue here had he



literally touched the Lord's heart, which would have no longer been beating. Christ had no more blood—Luke 24:39. A blood-pump was therefore useless. Spirit animated His flesh. His heart and His wounds remained as a monument to what He had accomplished. His heart, therefore, was more of a museum piece than a functioning organ.

Unlike the apostles, the disciples and the 500 people, Paul witnessed Christ in His immortal glory, a glory so bright that it temporarily blinded him. We take Paul's word that our Savior rose from the dead to be forever free from the possibility of death. Think about that: "Forever free from the possibility of death." What better way to be free from the fear of death than to be free from the possibility of it. This is important, because it is the key to how we are now to live and think.

"Death is lording it over Him no longer, for in that He died, He died to Sin once for all time, yet in that He is living, He is living to God" (Romans 6:9-10).

Jesus Christ is in heaven "living to God." This means He's not looking back. Earth holds terrible memories for Him. When I was a kid staring at the crucifix at my Catholic church, I was so happy that Jesus was no longer on the cross. I was glad He was in heaven with God having a much better time of things. Little did I know how "on to something" I was. In Philippians 3:13, Paul exhorts us: "forgetting, indeed, those things which are behind, yet stretching out to those in front ..." If mere human beings are exhorted to do this, don't you think Jesus Christ now does it? He is not living so that He can look back on His trials. He's not living so that He can be like my friend and go back to the Jordan River and "re-live the good old days." He is living to God. He thinks about God, tends to God, loves God. It doesn't mean we're not on His mind. We are. He thinks about, tends to, and loves us too, but in relation to the day when He will present us to His Father and to the universe in glory (Colossians 3:4). For Him, it's all about the happy expectation of our gathering to Him. He is lonely for the completion of His body (Ephesians 1:22).

Needless to say (which is why I'm about to say it), death is no longer "lording it over" Jesus Christ. The weight that hovered continuously over His head in the days of His earthly sojourn is gone. What a lovely change of pace for Him. As I think Fulton Sheen put it, "Jesus Christ came into the world to die." The cross cast a shadow over His entire life. Just when Jesus would get happy

about something—maybe His mom would make a nice lunch, or He'd be sunning on the roof—the coming trial would hit Him and sour His mood again. It's like when something horrible happens to you and you go to sleep to forget about it. You wake up and, for a moment you're fine—unconsciousness has mercifully relieved you of the burden—but then in the next moment reality returns like the whack of a stick and the thing hits you anew. You get that terrible but familiar pit in your stomach all over again. It was like that for Jesus. He rarely got a break from it, and when He did, the slightest thing jarred Him back to His awful reality.

No more! Death is lording it over Him no longer. Nothing now spoils His good feelings. All the hard work is done and now it's just a happy expectation for Him. I can't even imagine what that's like. But guess what? Paul is telling us *to* imagine what it's like. In fact, he is telling us not only to imagine what it's like, but to live as though it's true. Paul is telling us to live as though we are already resurrected from among the dead, saying, "Present yourselves to God as if alive from among the dead" (Romans 6:13). Pretty straightforward there, Paul is. Look at the ways Paul tries to make us live and breathe in accord with our expectation and the teaching of the new humanity:

- ▶ 6:4— "We should be walking in newness of life"
- ▶ 6:11— "Be reckoning yourselves to be living to God"
- ▶ 6:13— "Present yourselves to God as if alive from among the dead"

This isn't some crazy fantasy pulled down from the sky. This new way of life and thinking is based on the fact that Someone Else is already living it: Jesus Christ. This is not just any "Someone Else," but the Head of our body:

- ▶ 6:4— "even as Christ was roused from among the dead"
- ▶ 6:5— "planted together in the likeness of His death"
- ▶ 6:6— "our old humanity crucified together with Him"
- ▶ 6:8— "we died together with Christ"
- ▶ 6:9— "Christ, being roused, is no longer dying"
- ▶ 6:10— "He died to sin once for all time"
- ▶ 6:10— "He is living to God"

HEAD OF THE BODY

Tell yourself to flex the fingers of your right hand. Did your fingers obey? That's because your head is vitally connected to your body. The human body is a type of what Christ is to us. This is one reason why we have a body and



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that our body has a head and that the brain is in the head and the brain directs everything: this is the analogy God planned to use to introduce us to what would otherwise be a mere "concept" relationship to Christ: head to body. Do the finger thing again. This is how guaranteed your resurrection is. Do the finger thing again. This is how guaranteed your being seated at the right hand of God in glory is. It is the divine analogy. It is why God gave us a body directed by a brain—by a head—and then chose the analogy "body of Christ." It is why Paul says that "He is the Head of the body" (Colossians 1:18). Do the finger thing again. Whenever you get depressed and you imagine that this transformation from humiliation to glory and from death to life is never going to happen, do the finger thing. To God and Christ, it's this easy. The nerves are vitally connected in both examples: head to body, Christ to us. We are this vitally connected to Christ. It remains only a matter of when the thing happens.

Where the Head goes, the body follows. This is the simplicity and the profundity of Romans, chapter 6. Paul wants us to anticipate it to the extent that we live as though it's already true. This is extreme and wonderful thinking. Since it is so soon going to be true, we might as well get a head start on it in our minds and get a new lilt to our step as we forget the world. Basically,

Paul is saying: screw the world; screw your old self. Paul says just this in his own lingo in Galatians 6:14— “The world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.”

NEW EARTH/NEW BODY

It will make this life much more bearable for us when we give up not only on the old creation that is our old self, but this old earth as well. This old earth holds nothing for us. For us, it's as good as destroyed. This is why I am no longer impressed with it. When offered traveling opportunities on another's nickel to exotic places, I politely decline. If it's not my celestial home, I haven't the time or the desire for it. I'm too busy writing about the new creation.

We should live already anticipating the new earth of Eon 5 (Revelation 21:1). That's more like it. The new earth corresponds, physically, to our present spiritual state. In our present spiritual state, we skip the regeneration process of Israel—the baptisms and ceremonies, the many exercises and anguishes designed to reform the flesh—and consider ourselves to have died with Christ. You can't reform a corpse. This knowledge ought to calm you. Reflected upon, it brings peace.

In the physical realm corresponding to this spiritual truth, we skip the regenerated earth of Israel and Eon 4 (it returns to an Edenic state; nice, but no thanks), and skip ahead to the time of the new earth, which arrives from a fresh womb following the demolition of this present earth. Like the Herodian temple, not one “stone” of this present earth will be left upon another after the Millennium. Traces of it will be sought, to no avail. The whole damn thing will be gone. To review: The earth of the Millennium will be a reborn earth. It will be an earth that has come out of Eon 3 and been reformed. This lasts one-thousand years. This corresponds to Israel still being Israel, still recognizing national distinctions, and still participating in the old creation. (In the Millennium, they're finally doing the law—Micah 4:2.)

Not so the new earth. We see radical change there. There is nothing regenerated about the new earth. There is no reformed old creation here, as with the millennial earth. The new earth comes on the heels of this present earth being blown to smithereens (2 Peter 3:7) with a loud bang (2 Peter 3:10) at the end of the Millennium, approximately one-thousand years from now. I know I keep repeating this. Do you now see the correspondence between this and our old humanity being crucified with Christ? The new earth starts from scratch. In Christ, we

start from scratch. The new humanity brings nothing of the old creation with it. Forget a return to Eden. Not even Israel gets this truth, not even in the Millennium. Why should they? They're not living on a new earth, are they? As for you, you're getting this truth now. We hop, skip and jump over Israel. Remember? For us, there is neither Jew nor Greek (Galatians 3:28). Peter never taught that; he couldn't. Only Paul writes,

So that we, from now on, are acquainted with no one according to flesh. Yet even if we have known Christ according to flesh, nevertheless now we know Him so no longer. So that, if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: the primitive passed by. Lo! there has come new!

—2 Corinthians 5:16-17

In Colossians 3:10-11, Paul exhorts us:

Put on the young, which is being renewed into recognition, to accord with the Image of the One Who creates it, wherein there is no Greek and Jew, Circumcision and Uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, freeman, but all and in all is Christ.

Put on the young. That's a nice figure of speech for changing a shirt, which is my figure of speech for shedding the old humanity and its impossibilities and disappointments and donning this new happy thought of resurrection life among the celestials handed to us by Paul. Backing off all analogies now, all that's needed is a recognition of what already exists for Christ, our Forerunner. It's a thinking thing. Once you think it, it “accords with the Image of the One Who creates it.” A Zender paraphrase of this would read:

Christ is already in the New Creation, so why not join Him there by thinking about how real it is for Him. Flex your fingers. Did your fingers obey your head? Ha! Life among the celestials with Christ will soon be this real for you, and this is so easily accomplished when the time is right.

In two weeks: Since death is not lording it over us, how can sin do such a thing?

I remain your servant and brother in Christ,

Martin