

**J**esus was not teaching that the new birth comes through water baptism. In the New Testament, baptism is connected with death, not birth, and no amount of physical water can effect a spiritual change in a person. The emphasis in John 3:14–21 is on believing, because salvation comes through faith (Eph. 2:8–9). The evidence of salvation is the witness of the Spirit within (Rom. 8:9), and the Spirit enters your life when you believe (Acts 10:43–48; Eph. 1:13–14). ~ *Exposition Commentary on the New Testament, volume 1, Matthew – Galatians, p. 295.*

### Calvinist Denial & My Response

I recommend that people purchase and use Warren Wiersbe's Commentary Set because he has much practical, down-to-earth information. But like all human writings, one has to be careful and read with a critical mind. Mr. Wiersbe is a Calvinist, which means he believes the Holy Spirit operates directly on your heart to save you, and that you are saved by a God-infused faith, which you cannot obtain on your own. So when it comes to "water baptism" he has to deny its necessity for salvation or deny his Calvinistic prejudices. So let's review his comment above.

1. **"Baptism is connected with death, not birth."** This sounds good on the surface, but read **Romans 6:3-5** and notice that (1) we are buried with Christ in baptism, but (2) we are raised with Christ to "walk in newness of life." That sounds like a spiritual birth to me! Baptism *imitates* the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It requires *true faith* to submit to the process of faith, repentance, confession and baptism.
2. **"...No amount of physical water can effect a spiritual change in a person."** This is true, but baptism is not a matter of "getting wet." Peter explained the spiritual aspect of baptism when he wrote "There is also an antitype which now saves us – baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (**1 Peter 3:21**). How does baptism give one "the answer of a clear conscience toward God"? By complying with the Lord's **command** to be baptized for the remission of sins, and therefore **knowing** that you have met the conditions of salvation. Salvation is **in** Jesus Christ, not **in** the water. But Jesus Christ **did** make immersion in water (baptism) a *condition* of our salvation. It takes faith to believe that and then to do it!
3. **"The emphasis in John 3:14-21 is on believing, because salvation comes through faith (Eph. 2:8-9)."** Let me go one step further and say that the **emphasis** in the entire Bible is on *believing* – but it is always an obedient faith that saves, **Hebrews 11; James 2:14-24**. Ephesians 2:8-9 does **not** say "grace *alone* through faith *alone*." But that is exactly what Mr. Wiersbe has been taught to see in that passage. The proper understanding of that passage can be seen by the conversion of the Ephesians in **Acts 19:5** ~ "When they heard this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus." **God's grace** provided the price for sin – the death of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Our faith** (the proper response to God's grace) is to comply with Jesus' conditions of salvation – hear, believe, repent, confess, be baptized. These steps earn nothing. These steps are the acts (works) of an obedient faith. The "works" of **Ephesians 2** by which we are **not** saved are the works of one's own righteousness (**Titus 3:5; Romans 4**). Such does not exclude acts (works) of obedience to the faith.
4. **"...The Spirit enters your life when you believe (Acts 10:43-48; Eph. 1:13-14)."** **Acts 10** is the case of the first Gentile convert, Cornelius, and his household. Peter preached to them, they heard the gospel, believed it and were baptized. The Holy Spirit falling upon the Gentiles and causing them to speak in tongues was not for the purpose of salvation, but as a witness to the Jews that God had accepted the Gentiles by the same Gospel that saved them (**Acts 10:45; 11:17-18**). Seeing God's miraculous testimony, no believing Jew could forbid the Gentiles from being baptized! (**vv. 47-48**).