



“ May I
Have This
Dance? ”
- God

By Tim Onnen



Made For A Love-Dance

There's a magical beauty in a kite dancing with the wind. Air currents cause the kite to skip here



and there. It responds with joyful delight, depending on the wind and trusting where it leads. We could say that the dance between the kite and wind

reflects a relationship of love and harmony.

That's the kind of spiritual relationship God created mankind to have with Himself. Man was given an eternal soul. Being spiritually alive is having our soul in harmony with God's holy character, with His thoughts, and with His good purposes. Like the wind, God is the love-force, the provider, the director. Man, like the kite, was made to joyfully receive and respond to all God is and does. The result would be a God-led dance of perfect mutual love and absolute harmony.

The first people, Adam and Eve, experienced this. God caringly provided for all their needs, giving them all of paradise as their home, and they responded by joyfully worshiping and enjoying God in all of His awesomeness. Sounds fantastic. But, Adam and Eve weren't mindless robots; God

also gave them the freedom to fully embrace or to reject this special relationship. One simple rule was announced: In this vast paradise, do not eat fruit from one particular tree; disobey and the result will be death.

Adam & Eve Turned Away

Sadly, Adam and Eve responded to a “down-draft” of the devil (an angel who had forsaken God). He tempted them to think God was withholding something good from them and to believe they could keep themselves aloft without God’s air currents. They sinned or rebelled against God, choosing the devil’s deceptive lie over God’s instructions, and they took an immediate nose-dive to the ground. Their love-dance with God was ended. Realizing their nakedness, they knew something had changed; they had become self-focused rather than God-focused. Suspicion and fear replaced trust; self-centeredness replaced love; disrespect replaced reverence; in short, harmony became disharmony. Their attitude and desires were now at war with God. Spiritual death had occurred - alienation and separation from God, the very source of life and goodness.

God is infinite in every aspect of His character. (And we wouldn’t want Him to be anything less.) Being infinitely holy, God couldn’t just overlook Adam and Eve’s disobedience; being infinitely just, He had to impose the consequence of death.

They tried to hide, trembling to think what would become of them. But God did not destroy them. Instead, because He is infinitely loving and gracious, God initiated restoration. He wanted the love-dance to be revived again.

God Sought Them Out

As we all know, hiding from God doesn't work. When Adam and Eve hid, God came right to them. He still identified with them as their loving God, and He wanted them to identify with Him as the vulnerable and dependent creatures that they were. He immediately promised that He would send them a Savior Who would defeat the devil and save them from spiritual death. God even affirmed His Fatherly love for Adam and Eve in a very practical and visible way by making them long-lasting clothes -- what we would call designer fit.

The Power of God's Promise Created Trust

God's love and His unexpected mercy and promise changed despair to hope in Adam and Eve. Being infinitely faithful, God would always keep His word. His promise of a Savior was absolutely certain, making it alive and powerful. It required trust, and at the same time it initiated that trust. All of God's promises initiate the trust they ask for. His divine character and His Spirit are at work in every promise. That is why the Bible speaks of faith (or trust) as a gift from God.

God's promise of forgiveness through a Savior sparked Adam and Eve's hearts to trust again, and with that trust, God considered them His forgiven children. Their dead spirits became alive again, and they were restored to loving harmony with God. Their dance was revived.

But, now their spiritual relationship with God had new challenges. Now they felt temptation to doubt and abandon God even from their own sin-stained hearts. Brokenness and pain would challenge their trust of God. Worldly pursuits and selfish pleasures would also seek to pull them down. Even so, God's goodness and trustworthy promise, which they could constantly cling to, would keep their spiritual relationship with Him alive. And eventually, at the end of their lives in this world, they would be fully restored with God, face to face and side by side with Him in a new eternal paradise.

God's Desire for All of Us



Down through the ages this has been God's desire for each person living in this death-infected world

(you and me included) - that all of us might trust in Him, in His promises and in His gracious, saving acts, and so be restored to Him now and forever.

But sin-infected people naturally resist God's ways. They're inclined to ignore God or to re-fashion Him to their own liking. Adam and Eve had the advantage of knowing what they had lost; they could long to have it back. But every life since has come into existence having no idea what complete harmony with God is like. There's a drive within us to be autonomous or self-governing, to regard the wind of God as foolish or as an enemy that would take us to harmful places. Our fallen nature has no desire to dance with God, let alone have God lead the dance.

God Attached His Promises to Visible Things

Because God knows how weak humans are, He initiated restoration with more than just words of promise. He graciously attached His promises to visible things, to help weak humans more easily acknowledge, trust and cling to those promises and to Him. Visible things like . . .

Noah's ark - which took decades to build - had God's judgement and saving purpose attached to it. Yet only eight people took that visible promise seriously, entered the ark, and were saved.

Circumcision - the irreversible removal of flesh from the body - identified infant and adult males, and the women under their care, with God's promise to remove their sin once for all.

Blood on the doorposts of the homes of His people in Egypt had God's promise of salvation from the angel of death attached to it.

A Pillar of Cloud and Pillar of Fire portrayed the promise of God's presence and His guidance. Through these He led His people from Egypt through the desert to a land He had promised them called Canaan.

God attached His promise of deliverance to the **waters of the Red Sea**, when Moses urged the people to trust God and walk through the parted waters. The water drowned the pursuing Egyptian army and so delivered God's people.

Moses, God's hand-picked deliverer for His people from the slavery of Egypt, foreshadowed



Jesus as God's ultimate deliverer from the slavery of sin. As the people trusted in Moses, they were showing trust in God. That is

why the Bible states that the people were "baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea." (1 Corinthians 10) Trusting and following God's working through Moses established them as God's people and was their only way to survive in the desert journey.

A bronze serpent held up on a pole had God's promise of forgiveness and healing attached to it. Looking at that snake spared a person from dying.

Many water-cleansing rites had God's promise of acceptance attached to them. Cleansed persons were viewed by God as pure and undefiled, suitable to again fellowship with Him.

The water of the Jordan River had God's healing promise attached to it for Naaman, a man with leprosy. At first he refused to believe God's instructions, that washing in the river would cure him. (Imagine Naaman's hesitancy: An ordinary river? . . . that people wash in all time? . . . Is God serious?) Encouraged by a friend, eventually he did wash and his leprosy was cleansed. The ordinary, used by God, does the extraordinary.

God worked through the above things under what we call His Old Covenant. This was before Jesus lived on the earth. (A Covenant of God is a way in which God pledges to act.)

God's New Covenant Promised

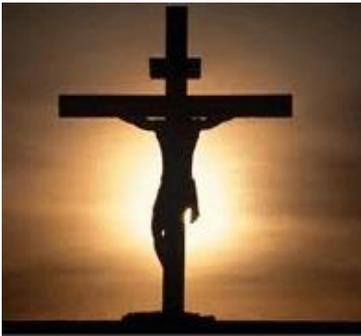
When Jesus came, He ushered in a New Covenant. God had promised this New Covenant hundreds of years before Jesus' birth:

"The days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant . . . "I will put My law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be

their God, and they will be My people. . . “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.” (Jeremiah 31:31-34)

“For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit in you and move you to follow My decrees and be careful to keep my laws. “ (Ezekiel 36:24-28)

What God had already been doing under the Old Covenant to restore people to Himself, He would now *perfect and complete in Jesus*. That’s because God’s saving acts culminated in Jesus.



Jesus’ sinless life, sacrificial death and victorious resurrection fulfilled the promise God first made to Adam and Eve; Jesus paid for mankind’s sin and defeated the devil.

“It is finished,” Jesus said right before He died (John 19:30). With the promise fulfilled, God would now attach Jesus’ completed salvation-work to visible things in a new way.

God's Transition into the New Covenant - His Word Attached in a New Way

God chose a man named John to prepare the people for Jesus and the New Covenant. This



man became known as John the Baptist, for baptizing people was the key ministry God called him to do.

John preached a baptism of repentance (which is turning to God) for the forgiveness of sins (Mark 1:4). God's promise of forgiveness was attached to John's baptizing so that recipients received the forgiveness of their sins as they looked forward with trust to the Savior.

God's New Covenant for You and me

Today we look back on what the Savior did. We're living under God's New Covenant where He promised: *"I will put My Spirit in you and move you to follow My decrees"*. After Jesus died, rose again and returned to heaven, God's Holy Spirit could be given in a much fuller way, for the Spirit's primary work is to connect each of us to Jesus' *completed* salvation-work.

And the Spirit does connect us, through hearing or reading about what Jesus did to save us. The Spirit moves us to trust in Him, and our spiritual dance with God begins. And still, because of the great weakness of our human nature and emotions and reason, doubt can easily plague us. So God also graciously attaches His word, and Jesus' saving acts, and His irrevocable adoption of us - God attaches all of these to the visible sign of water. This is what Christian baptism is - God's visible way of connecting us to Jesus' *completed* salvation-work.

Just before Jesus returned to heaven, He told His disciples:

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20)

To make disciples of all nations, God's faith-creating *message* of all Jesus did, was now to be linked with God's faith-creating *action* in baptism. God would initiate trust in Himself and restore loving harmony with people through both of these means.

God At Work

God commanded baptism. But it's not like a command given with a stern pointed finger; but rather given with open arms. It's like His command to believe. It's a gracious invitation to receive His Salvation. God's promise, connected with baptism, creates the faith to desire baptism and the faith that receives all the gifts of baptism.



When Jesus said baptize “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” He meant in the stead of, or in place of God.

God is really the One baptizing you and me. It is His gracious act. He is initiating restoration. God is bringing to us personally, in this present time, all that Jesus did to save us more than 2000 years ago.

What God Says About Baptism

The Bible describes what God is doing and giving us in Baptism with these wonderful words:

Christ loved the church and gave His life for it. He did this to make the church holy by cleansing it, washing it using water along with spoken words. Then He could present it to Himself as a glorious

church, without any kind of stain or wrinkle—holy and without faults. (Ephesians 5:25-27) God cleanses us from the stain of sin, declaring us holy and acceptable to Him.

What are you waiting for now? Get up! Be baptized, and have your sins washed away as you call on His name. (Acts 22:16) God washes away our sins.

In Jesus you were also circumcised. It was not a circumcision performed by human hands. But it was a removal of the corrupt nature in the circumcision performed by Christ. This happened when you were placed in the tomb with Christ through baptism. In baptism you were also brought back to life with Christ through faith in the power of God, who brought Him back to life. You were once dead because of your failures and your uncircumcised corrupt nature. But God made you alive with Christ when He forgave all our failures. (Colossians 2:11-13) As circumcision of infant boys and men under the Old Covenant removed flesh, in baptism God joins us to Christ, removes our corrupt nature and forgives us.

And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to Himself.” (Acts 2:38-39) God gives us forgiveness and the Holy Spirit.

God saved us, but not because of anything we had done to gain His approval. Instead, because of His mercy He saved us through the washing in which the Holy Spirit gives us new birth and renewal. (Titus 3:5) God saves us and gives us new birth and renewal.

You are all God's children by believing in Christ Jesus. Clearly, all of you who were baptized in Christ's name have clothed yourselves with Christ. (Galatians 3:26-27) God covers us with all that Jesus did for us.

[Wicked spirits] are like those who disobeyed long ago in the days of Noah when God waited patiently while Noah built the ship. In this ship a few people—eight in all—were saved by water. Baptism, which is like that water, now saves you. Baptism doesn't save by removing dirt from the body. Rather, baptism is a request to God for a clear conscience. It saves you through Jesus Christ, who came back from death to life. (1 Peter 3:20-21) God saves us and gives us a clear conscience.

Don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? When we were baptized into His death, we were placed into the tomb with Him. As Christ was brought back from death to life by the glorious power of the Father, so we, too, should live a new kind of life. (Romans 6:3-4) God identifies us

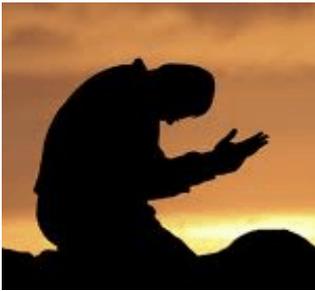
with Jesus' death died in our place and the victory of His resurrection, and He gives us power for turning from sin and living for God.

In summary, God, in baptism, places us in Jesus – in all that He is and all that He did to save us. Our inherited identity with Adam, sin and death is replaced with a new identity with Jesus, and with His righteousness and life.

God's Promises Are for All Ages

Disharmony with God, brought about by Adam and Eve's disobedience, affects every person of

every age. Since the fall everyone has been conceived as a "grounded kite," not knowing what it's like to dance with God - not having a spiritual relationship with Him.



Indeed, I was born guilty. I was a sinner when my mother conceived me. (Psalm 51:5)

Even inside the womb wicked people are strangers to God. (Psalm 58:3) This wickedness of self-focus and alienation from God can only be remedied by God's faith-creating promise sparking trust in our hearts.

That which is born of the flesh is flesh. (John 3:6)

Not one person has God's approval. No one understands. No one searches for God. Everyone has turned away. (Romans 3:10-12)

And you were dead in your trespasses and sins . . . and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. (Ephesians 2:1, 3) God hates to pour out wrath, but He must in light of His holiness and justice -- that is why He poured out His wrath on Jesus, that we might be rescued through His gracious sacrifice in our place.

Acts 2:39 stated above, reads: *"the promise is for you and for your children."* All ages are in need of the salvation God initiates.

All Ages, Even Infants, Need and Can Trust God's Promises

You are He who took me from the womb; You made me trust You at my mother's breasts. On You was I cast from my birth, and from my mother's womb You have been my God. (Psalm 22:9-10)

God speaking of John the Baptist: *He will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. (Luke 1:15)*

From the lips of children and infants, You have ordained praise. (Psalm 8:2)

Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of



heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me, but whoever causes

one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea. Matthew 18:3-6

Some people brought infants to Jesus to have Him hold them. When the disciples saw this, they told the people not to do that. But Jesus called the infants to Him and said, “Don’t stop the children from coming to Me! Children like these are part of the kingdom of God. I can guarantee this truth: Whoever doesn’t receive the kingdom of God as a little child receives it will never enter it. Luke 18:15-17

From infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures. They have the power to give you wisdom so that you can be saved through faith in Christ Jesus. (2 Timothy 3:15)

Do not reject me when I am old or abandon me when I lose my strength. (Psalm 71:9) Reasoning or mental failure in old age does not indicate loss of trust in God.

Christian faith is grasped by the heart before it ever affects our reason and intellect. And we



trust in the powerful ability of God's Word to create that faith in the heart, rather than trusting in a certain level of reasoning or

mental ability. Trusting our reason or mental ability is really trusting in ourselves; it will result in nagging doubt, and only wearies the soul.

Baptism Is For All Ages

Baptism is God's irrevocable ceremony of adoption - a settled act on His part that joins our lives to Jesus, the One we can always cling to, always rest in, and always find security in no matter how far we may stray at times. Through the good news of Jesus and baptism God breaks the bonds which chain us to this dying world. Our souls are lifted above it to do what we were always meant to do - dance in love and harmony

with our Creator. And all who are lifted up, He claims as citizens of His kingdom.

Since all ages can trust Him, God desires that people of all ages receive His faith-creating message and His faith-creating action in baptism. No age restrictions are even alluded to in the Bible. Rather, God's Word and baptism were interconnected to bring salvation to individuals and whole households.

Peter will declare to you a message by which you will be saved, you and all your household. (Acts 11:14)

Lydia was baptized, and her household as well. (Acts 16:15)

[The Philippian Jailer] was baptized at once, he and all his family. (Acts 16:33)

Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, together with his entire household. And many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized. (Acts 18:8)

Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 19:14

The Ethiopian man ask, "What prevents me from being baptized?" (Acts 8:36)

To all gathered with Cornelius' household, Peter asked, *"Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?"* And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. (Acts 10:47-48)

The disciples were baptizing people right from the beginning of Jesus' ministry (John 4:1-2). And God's gracious action in baptism permeated their thinking and ongoing ministry. This continued throughout the early church period as noted below in these statements of early pastors:

"The baptism instituted by the visible Jesus was for the remission of sins."¹

"Jesus came to save all through means of Himself -- all, I say, who through Him are born again to God -- infants and children, boys and youth, and old men."²

"The Church had from the Apostles a tradition to give baptism even to infants."³

"Who is he that is baptized with the Holy Spirit but he who is born again through water and the Holy Spirit?"⁴

"The Spirit circumcises the whole man, not simply a part.... When and where? In baptism."⁵

"Baptism washes away all, absolutely all, our sins, whether of deed, word, or thought, whether sins original or added, whether knowingly or unknowingly contracted."⁶

To summarize: Prior to the 16th century, no large segment of the Church practiced only adult baptism.⁷ All ages were believed to need God's grace, and baptism was seen as God's grace at work. The Gospel message and baptism, received with the faith they create, includes us in Christ, in His Family and in the Kingdom of God.

The Importance of Receiving God's Gifts in Baptism

Since God was the one Who attached His promise to many visible things under the Old Covenant, to despise them was to despise God's promise. It is the same with despising baptism.

Jesus answered, "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) Jesus said this to Nicodemus, who rejected the baptism of John. Like many other people of his day, Nicodemus wanted to trust his own acts toward God, rather than the saving acts God initiated for him.

God does save people who trust in Jesus but cannot be baptized, such as the repentant thief on the cross (Luke 23:42-43). At the same time, baptism must never be rejected or held in contempt.

Baptism is not like a promise-to-dance card or like a ticket to heaven that we get and can hide in our pocket until we need it. Baptism is more like adoption papers that bind us to our loving God,

Who claims us as His own, grants us an inheritance of all He owns, and Who leads our spirits in dance with Himself day-by-day through this life and on into eternity. Ignoring God's relationship with me after baptism makes the gifts of baptism ineffective in me. That's like fighting against wonderful life-giving wind currents and heading for a crash landing. That's foolish and destructive.

There are certainly people who believe that baptism is only a symbol, or that it is *our* act toward God rather than God's act in us. But that way of thinking produces doubt rather than reassurance, and such a view is not consistent with God's character or His great passion to save us.

Where Am I

What does my relationship with God look like? Am I spiritually alive? Is God leading my spiritual dance? Am I joyfully following His lead? Or am I like a kite lying dead on the ground - secretly plagued by nagging doubt? Do I trust what Jesus did for me? Have I received His gift of baptism? Am I ignoring God or embracing Him? Am I leading my children or those under my care to embrace Jesus?

God's Love for You

God loves you so very deeply, just as He loved Adam and Eve. He is passionate about adopting

you as His own. He has initiated restoration. Down through history He has used simple things to help people visualize and cling to His restoring work. His promises in His Word are for you. His promises in baptism are for you. He wants you to have rock-solid assurance that You are His, that all Jesus did for you has restored you to Him, that you are spiritually alive in connection with Jesus Who is alive forevermore. God wants you to know you are dancing with Him now and forever, like a kite responding to the wind with joyful delight and trust.

“Dear God, thank You for loving me. I need Your love. I need Your forgiveness. Thank You Jesus for giving Your all for me. Draw me close to You. Amen.”

We’d love to visit with you more about God’s love for you, His promises for you, and His gift of baptism for you.

Footnotes:

1. Irenaeus, Against Heresies I 21:2 Date: c. 180 A.D.
2. Irenaeus, Against Heresies ii 22:4 Date: c. 180 A.D.
3. Origen, Commentary on Romans, V9 on 6.5-7 Date: 253 A.D.
4. Ambrose of Milan, Of the Holy Spirit 3.10.64 Date: 381 A.D.
5. John Chrysostom, Homilies on Colossians 6 Date: 395 A.D.
6. Augustine, Against Two Letters of the Pelagians 3:3:5 Date: 420 A.D.
7. To read more quotes from early church pastors about baptism and related Bible passages click [Here](#) to link to that page.



Heart-Song Fellowship
Branson, MO
www.heart-song.org
417.336.3077