

# ***The Baptized Life: A New Reality***

**2 Corinthians 5: 16-21**

PREPARED BY  
KEN GEHRELS  
PASTOR  
CALVIN CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH OF OTTAWA  
ONTARIO, CANADA

Today marks the end of the Church season known as Epiphany. It is the end of the time when we think about the appearing, the revealing of Jesus to the world. We've focussed on how he was revealed

through his baptism. His baptism led us to spend time thinking about our baptism. And our baptism has been considered through the eyes of the early church. We've looked at how they practised the sacrament of baptism. What they did. And what it meant.

Turning away from Satan - boldly.  
Turning towards Jesus - submissively.  
Spiritually washed - willingly.  
Soaked with oil - gladly.  
Coming to Communion - hungrily.

Baptism - as it happened to Jesus, as it has happened to everyone entering the Church of Jesus for some 2000 years - the great identifying mark of people who belong to Christ.

It is who we are - Baptized people.  
Something we never, never, never want to forget.  
As Martin Luther would say to himself each morning -  
*"Remember your baptism."*

Baptism - marking something great, something new, something very distinct has happened and continues to happen in the life of the person who receives it.

When you enter the Church as a convert, and receive baptism, you enter an **entirely new** chapter of your life.

When you have the *enormous* privilege of being born into the Church, and receive the sacrament of baptism as an infant under the covenantal care of believing parents, you are born into an **entirely different** way of living than children born outside of the community of faith.

It's a new way.  
It's a different way.

It's what Paul refers to in 2 Corinthians 5:17 when he says:

*"If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation:  
everything old has passed away;  
see, everything has become new!"*

Baptism is New Creation reality.

It's a break from Old Creation.

It points ahead, in living faith and hope, to the New Creation that will break out when Jesus returns to earth.

And it is a reality that from the earliest days of the Church has been symbolized by the number **eight**. Some of the earliest church buildings had eight sides. And some of the most ancient baptismal fonts historians have been able to uncover were made with eight sides. They often looked very much like the baptismal font that is here at the front.

As has been mentioned at the last couple of congregational meetings, Calvin's old baptismal font has served us well for many decades. Hundreds of children have received the sacrament from it. But it is corroded and worn out. And so the Worship Committee has purchased a new font. Which reflects a that very ancient design of eight sides.

Eight representing the new reality in which baptized believers live.

*"If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation:  
everything old has passed away;  
see, everything has become new!"*

The "eighth day" is a phrase that we can find back to about 140AD, describing the day of Easter and the Resurrection of Christ. Why? Because it's breaking out of the mould of the First Creation, the Old Creation.

Jesus breaks out of the tomb, out of the world bound by death, and into a order of Creation, a new reality, a new power, a new life. Beyond anything that this world has ever seen before - this world created in the first **seven** days. Yes, the world as we know it is described in days one to seven. God created the world in those seven days - made it in six and celebrated it on day seven. Day one to day seven - where we get our week. Week after week we live the seven day cycle. Originally it was a good and perfect cycle. *"God saw all*

that He had made, and indeed it was very good” says the Bible in Genesis 1:31. The world of the seven day cycle.

And then came the horrible part, the tragic part, the sin part.  
The Fall.  
The curse.  
Death strangling the world of the seven day cycle.

Until Christ - Dying on the Friday, and laying dead in the tomb on the Saturday, the seventh day of the week. And then -

- wonder!!!!  
The next day  
Resurrection Day  
Easter Day.

Jesus lives again!!  
Death is defeated.  
The curse of sin is broken.  
The Fall is undone.  
Tragedy is vanquished!

So - what do you call a day like that?  
What do you call Easter Sunday?  
Is it sufficient to call it “*the first day*”?

Hardly!  
Because we’re not dealing with the same old.  
It’s not just the “same old” redone, or cleaned up.  
We’re dealing with a whole new order of things.  
Stretched further than anything ever seen in days one to seven.  
Beyond the seven day week -  
“*If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation:  
everything old has passed away;  
see, everything has become new!*”

The newness of baptism.  
Baptism, we’ve said, identifies us with Christ’s death and resurrection.  
Buried with Christ.  
Rising with Christ.  
Sharing these through baptismal water.  
New Creation water.  
New reality.  
Beyond the Day 1 to Day 7 realities of the Old Creation.

And so the Church looked back into Bible history, saw a pattern there, and came up with “Eighth Day” as a description of it.

And began to baptize in eight-sided baptismal fonts.

What’s the pattern that the Church saw in Bible history?

Well, it begins in early Genesis. Back in the time of Noah. The earth is thoroughly corrupt and God vows to destroy it. Some people will be saved to make a new beginning. Can you guess how many?  
Eight.

God commands Noah to go into the ark and says that he will destroy the earth in seven days (Gen 7:10). The day after is the beginning of the new world order for those people in the ark. What day is that?

The eighth day.  
For how many people? Eight.

Go to the next chapter. The flood is now over. Noah sends out a dove to see if it is safe to leave. Not quite. Wait seven more days. Send out another dove. This dove doesn’t return and the eight people on the ark are able to come out, stand on firm ground, and begin human life on earth all over again.

What day is that?  
The eighth day.

Want more?

When the Temple of Israel is dedicated, the Israelite nation holds a solemn assembly. It marks a new beginning in Hebrew religious life.

Guess on which day the assembly was held.

The eighth day. (2 Chron 7:9)

Same deal after the return from exile under Ezra and Nehemiah. The people have been purged of idolatry. They begin life all over again in a new Jerusalem and a new Temple. They read the law for seven days, and then hold a solemn assembly to dedicate this new reality to God, doing so on the....

....do I even have to say it?

....the eighth day (Neh 8:18).

In Jewish rabbinic teaching, dating from even before Jesus' time, it was said that when the Messiah comes, Creation would begin its eighth day. In the Old Covenant the Seventh Day was hallowed because God had rested on that day; but when Messiah comes, it would be the dawning of a New Day.

Christ is born.

He is brought to temple to be circumcised and to be given the name that God's messenger said he should have,

the name Jesus - meaning *Saviour*.

Guess on which day of his life this happened?

Yup.

One of the oldest Christian documents known is called *The Letter of Barnabas*. It was written somewhere around 100 AD. This letter gives insight into what early Christians believed and did. And in it we read this -

*We keep the Eighth Day with joy, the day when Jesus rose from the dead. (15:8)*

And so early churches were built as octagons - eight-sided buildings.

And baptismal fonts had eight sides.

Listen to what Martin Luther wrote about that day of resurrection -

*"For Christ rested in the sepulcher on the Sabbath, that is, during the entire seventh day, but rose again on the day which follows the Sabbath, which is the eighth day and the beginning of a new week, and after it no other day is counted. For through His death Christ has brought to a close the weeks of time and on the eighth day entered into a different kind of life, in which days are no longer counted but there is one eternal day"*

Easter - New Creation Day. Eighth Day.

Baptisms - New Creation events. Eighth Day events.

Sunday - each and every Sunday, reminders of the Day of Resurrection.

Little Easter, some theologians call them.

Every Sunday a little reminder of the Eighth Day.

A reminder that we are people of a new way of living.

That we are in Christ, we are new creations.

The old part of us has passed away.

And everything in our lives has become new.

We are reminded of that every time we come into this place to worship.

We'll be reminded of that every time we dip water from this eight sided font.

Someone said to me this past week, "*Sunday is the day to get my life grounded, to remind me about what's important and to remind me about who I am.*"

Well said!

We come here and remember that we are -

what?

New Creation people.

Eighth Day people.

People of new beginnings.

We are given new beginnings by Christ. Full forgiveness and acceptance. Called, then, to share that kind of forgiveness and acceptance with others. Christ looks at us in new ways. Doesn't make sense, then, for us to run around hanging on to old grudges and memories against others. Instead, we reach out a hand with Eighth Day moments of new beginning for them.

Eighth Day kind of people. Don't only offer forgiveness to others. Please offer it to yourself too, believer. While forgiving others proves often to be a real challenge, forgiving ourselves is often a far more difficult issue. We can often beat ourselves up for something we messed up **long** after everyone else has dropped it and moved on. We're good at clinging to shame and regret and guilt. Eighth Day thinking gently nudges us and say, "*You can let it go. It's OK. You're free!*"

Eighth day - in how we treat others. And how we treat ourselves. And then this - We are people who care for Creation in an eighth day sort of way. We don't just accept pollution and resource exploitation as necessary or inevitable or justifiable. For those are all after-effects of the Fall, of sin's staining the first seven days. We - eighth day people - are praying and longing for the day of Christ's return, the day when He will remake Creation and remove - forever - all effects of sin. The Eternal Eighth day. We pray for that. Long for that. Work towards that.

And we long for Eighth Day - curse-removed - living for all humanity. True justice. Real freedom. And do our best to make that happen. Whether it be in little ways, by purchasing products that don't exploit workers or voting for leaders who promise to speak and work for international relief and development in significant ways or continuing to speak for the vulnerable right here in our nation.

Martin Luther would say to himself each morning, "*Martin, remember your baptism.*"

A very good practise.

For him.

And for us.

Believers at Calvin - remember your baptism.

And keep the eighth day with joy - the day of Christ's resurrection.

Remember...

*"If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation:  
everything old has passed away;  
see, everything has become new!"*

You are new.

Life is renewed.

Forever.