

# BAPTISM

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Baptism and the words derived from it are not found in the Old Testament. These words first appear in the Bible where we read John the Baptist was baptizing Jews for repentance (Matt. 3:11). Verses 13-17 tell us, Jesus came to John at the Jordan River to be baptized by him. At first John, knowing that Jesus was not a sinner, resisted Jesus' desire to be baptized but finally gave in at the Lord's insistence.

## Numbered with the Transgressors

It is interesting to note the words of Isa. 53:12: *"... He poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."* Jesus was "numbered with the transgressors" three times during His earthly lifetime: at His birth (Mary was not married when she conceived him); at His baptism, (John was baptizing for repentance); and at His crucifixion (accused of blasphemy).

## Jesus' Baptism

In Matt. 3:11 John the Baptist says to the people, *"I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come One who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire."* John's baptism was for the purpose of preparing the hearts of the people for the coming of their Messiah. Vs. 1-3 is a quote from Isaiah: *"In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea and saying, 'Repent for the kingdom of heaven is near.' This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah: 'A voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'"*

## Baptism by Immersion

Let us look more closely at what it means to be *"baptized with water."* As already stated, John's baptism was for repentance. Water baptism symbolizes that the one being baptized is truly sorry for his past life of sin, has been converted (turned around), and has made the decision now to take God's will as his own. It is important to understand that baptism was always done by completely immersing the person in water. For the Christian, this is a symbol of baptism into Jesus' death, and the coming up out of the water symbolizes the resurrection into Christ and their new walk with Him (Rom. 6:3-5). Baptism also symbolizes the washing away of sins and a complete immersion into the will of God. *"Not my will but Yours be done"* were Jesus' words and should now be those of the one being baptized.

## Baptism of the Spirit

What did John mean when he said Jesus would baptize with *"the Holy Spirit and with fire?"* How are we baptized with the Holy Spirit? At Pentecost, Jesus' followers received the Holy Spirit. Acts 2:1-4 says, *"When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them."* This was the initial baptism of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit guides those born of the spirit into understanding God's truth and regulates their conscience to choose the way of righteousness. Many miraculous things were performed and recorded in Scripture due to the power of the Holy Spirit indwelling Jesus and His followers.

### **Baptism Of Fire**

Closely aligned with the baptism of the Holy Spirit is the baptism of fire. Fire has a broad application. It warms and comforts. Jesus promised that His Father would send the Comforter (Holy Spirit) after He went away (John 14:16). Fire provides light in dark places. Jesus told His disciples that the *"Spirit would guide them into all truth"* (John 14:26). Fire purifies. The Holy Spirit convicts us of sin and God overrules many *"fiery trials"* to purify us (1 Peter 4:12). These fiery trials work out for the good of those who love God, for they are accomplishing His purpose in our lives, cleansing and purifying our hearts so we become *"conformed to the image of His dear Son, Jesus."* We need to be aware of Heb.12:11, appreciating the work that God is doing in us. It says, *"No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those being trained by it."*

### **How Much Knowledge?**

How much understanding do you need to be baptized? Acts 8:30-38 tells us, *"Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. 'Do you understand what you are reading?' Philip asked. 'How can I,' he said, 'unless someone explains it to me?' So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. The eunuch was reading this passage of Scripture: 'He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before the shearer is silent, so he did not open his mouth. In his humiliation he was deprived of justice. Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from the earth.'* The eunuch asked Philip, *'Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?'* Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus. As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, *'Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized?'* And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him."

Throughout the Book of Acts, the requirements for baptism are simply stated: Repent of your sins, and believe on the Lord Jesus as your Savior for salvation. Jesus paid the price for our sins on Calvary's cross. Salvation is a free gift and comes from believing this fact, acting on it, and declaring our faith in the finished work of Jesus.

### **Salvation and Discipleship**

Salvation leads us to discipleship. Jesus said in Luke 9:23, *"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."* When the step of discipleship is not taken, one is taking the *"grace of God in vain"* (2 Cor. 6: 1). Discipleship is a choice we are urged to make. Anyone who truly appreciates Jesus' sacrifice will desire to offer their sacrifice of thanksgiving by presenting their body a living sacrifice. (See Rom. 12:1, 2; Heb. 13:15).

### **Baptized into Christ's Death**

Let us now consider Romans 6:3-5 in more detail: *"Don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were, therefore, buried with Him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we, too, may live a new life. If we have been united with Him like this in His death, we will certainly also be united with Him in His resurrection."* What is taught here is a funeral and a resurrection. The old self (the old man) yields its human will and dies to itself (just as Jesus did) and is buried. It is only by this death into Christ that the new creature (new man) can be raised that *"we too may live a new life,"* a resurrected life as a *"new creature"* in Christ (2 Cor. 3:6). Then, we can live a life that is pleasing to God by His Spirit that dwells in us, and only thus are we able to bear the fruit of the Spirit in our lives and not live as we formerly did. *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit"* (Gal.

5:22-25 NIV). This must be the goal of the baptized disciple of Jesus. God will accomplish all this in the life of the one who trusts and obeys Him. Phil. 1:6 says, *"Being confident of this, that He (God) who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."*

### **Commission to Baptize**

Jesus gave His disciples a great work to do for Him. *"Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them and teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age"* (Matt. 28:19-20). The King James Version says *"teach all nations"* instead of *"make disciples of all nations."* If one is to make disciples for Jesus, they must all make known and teach the potential disciple what is necessary for them to understand and prepare them for baptism. Even after baptism, much more instruction needs to be given so that they will understand the depths of God's Word and thus be able to faithfully follow Jesus. This honor of teaching and making disciples has been given to all of Jesus' followers. Let us share the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and His Kingdom at every opportunity we have, encouraging any with listening ears to repent and be converted, accept Jesus as their Savior, and dedicate their lives to follow Him.

***"And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on His (Jesus') name."***

Acts 22:16 (NIV)

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