

WATER BAPTISM Matthew 3:13-17

Introduction

Matthew Chapter 3 begins with John the Baptist baptizing in the wilderness of Judea. Verse 1 says,

"In those days, John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying: "THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS: 'PREPARE THE WAY OF THE LORD; MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT.'" (Matthew 3:1-3 NKJV)

Verse 13 records the Baptism of Jesus.

"Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. And John *tried to* prevent Him, saying, "I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?" But Jesus answered and said to him, "**Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.**" Then he allowed Him. When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly, a voice *came* from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Matthew 3:13-17 NKJV)

We have the privilege of witnessing several baptisms this morning. At each baptismal service, I like to teach about water baptism and explain what we are doing and why we are doing it. Baptism is really a very special hallmark event in a believer's life. It is a profound way of publicly proclaiming your faith in Christ. It also demonstrates our obedience to Christ, who commanded baptism for His followers.

The Bible uses the term "baptism" in a variety of ways. The Greek word "baptizo" migrated into the English language, essentially unchanged. But had it been properly translated, rather than transliterated, it would have been rendered "immerse." *Baptizo* was a common word in Greek vocabulary. For instance, you essentially "baptized" dishes when you washed them because you immersed them in water. The New Testament Greek Lexicon says that the word "baptizo" –means: 1. to immerse, to submerge (like a sunken vessel), 2. to cleanse by submerging, to wash, to make clean with water.

There's an example of the meaning of baptizo in a text from the Greek poet and physician Nicander, who lived about 200 B.C. He writes a recipe for making pickles, which is helpful because it uses both words. Nicander says that to make a pickle, the vegetable should first be 'dipped' (bapto) into boiling water and then 'immersed' (baptizo) in the vinegar solution. Both actions involve the use of water. "Bapto" consists of a temporary action – a "dipping." But the second involves a

more permanent act of baptizing or immersing to produce a more permanent change.

John the Baptist immersed people in the Jordan River as a sign of true repentance and their belief in the coming Messiah. But the word embraces more than just water baptism. In Acts 1:5, Jesus assures His disciples that, even though they'd been immersed in water, they would also be immersed in the Holy Spirit, something that would occur at Pentecost when the tongues of fire appeared on each of them, and they manifested the gifts of the Spirit.

In Mark 10:38, Jesus asks His apostles, "Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" In his Exposition of the Bible, John Gill writes, "Christ says this partly because his sorrows and sufferings had already begun. Jesus was already drinking from the cup and becoming a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Jesus waded in the waters of affliction all his days until He was finally fully immersed in affliction and sorrows.

So, the word *baptizo* has a variety of applications, whether it has to do with being immersed in water, fire, the Holy Spirit, or the wrath of God. When we apply it to water baptism, it refers to being immersed in water.

I. Baptism of Repentance - John's Baptism

First, let's talk about the baptism of John. John's baptism was a baptism of repentance.

The people of Israel engaged in various ceremonial washings. In fact, the teaching of ceremonial cleanliness permeates the Law of Moses. But the Old Testament washings were usually physical and for the cleansing of the body. The practice of immersion for the remission of sin or as an act of repentance was really unknown in the Old Testament.

John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. It had no direct reference to the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. John never baptized in the name (or "in the authority") of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. John's baptism was a call to repentance of sins and an acknowledgment that the Messiah was coming soon.

It's important to realize the Jews assumed that since they were descendants of Abraham, they were guaranteed a place in God's kingdom. That makes John's baptism quite revolutionary. He was calling Abraham's descendants to repent and be baptized for the remission of their sins, without any reference to animal sacrifice or the shedding of blood.

John advocated more than a ceremonial cleansing; he promoted a spiritual cleansing to prepare a person for the appearance of the Messiah.

II. Baptism of Faith - Jesus' Baptism In His Name

The New Testament baptism was a baptism of faith in Jesus as the Messiah. After His death, burial, and resurrection, Jesus instructed His apostles about this baptism of faith.

Matthew 28 records that instruction.

Verse 18 says, "And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 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.*" Amen.

(Matthew 28:18-20 NKJV)

We call this a believer's baptism. A believer's baptism is a public proclamation of faith that you have asked Christ to be your Savior and forgive you of your sins. It is also a public declaration that you have chosen to follow Jesus and be a member of the body of Christ, the Church. As a follower of Jesus Christ, it requires your continuing choice to live your life as a Christian.

We have become so familiar with this baptismal "formula" that it's easy to overlook how earth-shattering Christ's declaration really was. First, the Old Testament scriptures were full of references to God's sovereignty and authority over all the earth.

After the Resurrection, Jesus equates Himself with God the Father and states emphatically that all authority is now His. That had to be shocking even to the apostles' religious sensibility. After declaring His authority, Jesus instructed them to do four things:

- Go (Evangelize)
- Make Disciples (Instruct and train others)
- Baptize Them (Water Baptism by Emersion)
- Teach Them - Release Them - (Empower them to evangelize)

Rather than concentrate exclusively on the descendants of Abraham, the apostles were now to go to "all the nations." And as they went, they were to "make disciples," which requires teaching people to observe everything that Jesus said and taught. Those who were discipled this way were immersed in water under the authority of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

The Apostle Paul writes in Romans 6, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be *in the likeness of His* resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with *Him*, that the body

of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him." (Romans 6:1-9 NKJV)

In Colossians 2:9-12 he writes, "For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power. In Him, you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with *Him* through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead." (Colossians 2:9-12 NKJV)

Unlike John's baptism, the New Covenant baptism that Paul advocated is a public proclamation of faith in Christ, identifying yourself with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. Baptism does not save you; Jesus saves you! Baptism is your testimony of Christ's saving work in your heart and that now you are a follower of Christ and a member of His body. Baptism does not wash away sin. That idea was associated with John's baptism in keeping with Jewish ceremonial washings. Our sins are washed away by the finished atoning work of Christ at Calvary. Christian baptism is an obedient response to that fact.

Christian baptism says, "I believe Jesus' death on the Cross paid for all my sins, and I now choose Christ to be my Lord and Savior."

III. Baptism of Power – Holy Spirit Baptism

John the Baptist mentions one other baptism recorded in Mathew Chapter 3.

In verse 11, John says, "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan *is* in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." (Matthew 3:11-12 NKJV)

Acts 19 reveals a fascinating exchange between Paul and some disciples at Ephesus.

Verse 19 says, "And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples, he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" So they said to him, "We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit." And he said to them, "Into what then were you baptized?" So they said, "Into John's baptism." Then Paul said, "John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus." When they heard *this*, they were baptized in the name of the Lord

Jesus. And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied." (Acts 19:1-6 NKJV)

John's baptism was a baptism of repentance designed to pave the way for the coming of "The Christ." After Christ came and died, and was resurrected, and ascended into heaven, the Spirit of God came to dwell within believers. A Holy Spirit baptism was necessary for the church to ministry with Christ's authority and demonstrate the miraculous signs and wonders performed by Christ. It was this Holy Spirit baptism that confirmed the deity and teachings of Jesus after He returned to heaven.

We have three baptisms mentioned in the New Testament.

1. We have the baptism of John the Baptist – a baptism of repentance and belief in the coming Messiah.
2. We have the baptism of faith in Jesus Christ. – a baptism into the body of Christ. (It is this baptism that we are recognizing today.)
3. We have a baptism into the Holy Spirit. – a baptism by Christ of powerful witness and miraculous ministry.

The baptisms we are doing today are baptisms of faith in Jesus Christ. As the candidates today are immersed in the water, they are declaring that they are true believers and followers of Christ.

Not only did the disciples believe Jesus was the Messiah sent from God, but they also received the power of the Holy Spirit to manifest Christ's life and ministry through obvious and verifiable gifts. John the Baptist acknowledged Christ's authority to immerse his followers with the Spirit and with fire. To be "baptized in the Holy Spirit" is not simply a formality or ceremonial observance. According to John the Baptist, it is entirely distinct from water baptism.

Peter clarifies that receiving the Holy Spirit is a gift from God and is the same as being baptized (or immersed) in the Holy Spirit. Acts 11:15, the Apostle Peter says, "And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, as upon us at the beginning. Then I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, 'John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' (Acts 11:15-16 NKJV)

"Baptism in the Holy Spirit" occurs when you receive the power and giftedness of the Spirit and allow it to be released through you. In this way, it is an experience that is separate from and subsequent to salvation and baptism into the body of Christ. However, it is not a ritual. Nor is it simply a charismatic event superior to the common experience that regenerates all Christians.

Thank God for the organizational skills, special abilities, and training that Christians today have experienced. But human giftedness alone will never convince anyone that a supernatural God loves us so much that he sent his Son to be our Savior. That message requires the anointing of Christ and power from on High!

Only the Holy Spirit can draw a person into a faith relationship with Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

In Ephesians 4:5, Paul suggests that there is one baptism that is essential above all others. It is the baptism into the body of Christ or what we call Salvation. It is a baptism that requires faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God.

In Ephesian 4, Paul writes, "*There is* one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all." ([Ephesians 4:4-6 NKJV](#))

John's baptism was a baptism of repentance and faith in the coming Messiah. The believer's baptism was a baptism of faith in Jesus as the Messiah. It was a baptism into the body of Christ through His death and resurrection. A Holy Spirit baptism was a baptism of power and effective witness that connects the natural with the supernatural.

One last point:

There is no conflict between Jesus' instruction to baptize "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" and later accounts of the apostles baptizing "in the name of the Lord Jesus." The phrase "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" was important because it went beyond John's baptism of repentance toward God. Before the cross, no one was ever baptized in the name (or authority) of Jesus or the Holy Spirit.

When Jesus called His apostles to baptize according to this new formula, He made Himself equal with God and instructed that His baptism would include more than just God the Father. When we read in the New Testament that the apostles baptized in the name of Christ, they were doing precisely what Jesus had told them to do.

However, remember: It is Jesus who saves, not baptism. Baptism is much more than a ritual or rite of the church. It's one of only two ordinances that Christ left to His church: Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Both practices memorialize Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. They both focus on Him and His finished work. And both are to be observed by those who have consciously decided to follow Christ.

Participating in these ordinances connects us with 2,000 years of Christian faith, teaching, and practice. It is really a very remarkable thing. We don't take it lightly, but joyfully, reverently, and gratefully. Remembering always the words of our Lord, "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved." (Mark 16:16a)