

**GOD SAYS "BE BAPTIZED"**

Another fine winter day! Would you like to be baptized in the river? Only if you could choose pouring or immersion, right? There's lots of discussion about baptism, so let's jump in and splash it around! The gospel of Luke brings up baptism with the entry of John the Baptizer, who prepared the way for Christ.

Luke 3:15 notes, *"the people were in expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Christ. John answered them all, saying, 'I baptize with water, but He who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire.'*" As we unpack this passage, let's look at four baptisms in Luke 3:15-22.

**1- JOHN's baptism - pictures repentance.** In Luke 3:3 John proclaims a baptism of repentance for forgiveness of sins, in anticipation of Christ, the Savior. The Greek *baptizo* means to dip or immerse something in water. This action is not the means of removing the guilt of sin, but a message, a picture of receiving God's forgiveness, as only the blood of Christ washes away sins. The people hearing John understood that being baptized didn't cleanse them. Only the One mighty powerful authority, the One without equal, God's Christ, could do that. So John said, get ready, prepare the way, be baptized!

Repentance is not a one-time event, but a way of life. Luther's 95 Theses begin with, "when Jesus Christ said repent, He called us to a lifetime of repentance." JI Packer notes, "repentance means turning away from as much as you know of your sin, to give as much as you know of yourself to as much as you know of God. As our knowledge grows at these three points, so our practice of repentance is enlarged."

Scripture renews our minds to repentance, turning from sin to God. It begins with confession, agreeing with God about our sin. Then repenting, turning to Him to receive forgiveness, and His power to resist sin, as you trust and obey His Word, and grow in the grace of salvation. Repent and believe, be baptized!

**2- JESUS' baptism - presents righteousness.** Verse 21 gets our attention because it says Jesus was baptized by John! How could Jesus repent, since He had no sin? He is God come in the flesh. All four gospel writers record His baptism. In John 1:29 Jesus had already been identified by John the Baptizer as *"the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world"* and *"He who ranks before me because He was before me."* Christ Jesus is the pre-existent one, the Son of God come in the flesh. John says in verse 31 *"for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that He might be revealed to Israel."*

Matthew 3:13 spells it out, *"then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John to be baptized by him. John would have prevented Him, saying, 'I need to be baptized by You, and do You now come to me?' But Jesus answered him, 'let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness'."* Jesus is baptized to picture what God does for those who trust in Him. RC Sproul notes, "as the Messiah sin-bearer, He had to enter into His people's indebtedness before God. He had to become one with them."

**3- JESUS' baptism - prefigures regeneration.** 1Corinthians 5:21 says, *"for our sake God made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God."* The perfect sinless life of Christ is just as important as His perfect death and resurrection. Sproul says, "as the Lamb of God, heaven requires not only removal of sin but also a positive dimension of righteousness. Christ's atoning death had to be preceded by a life of perfect righteousness, fulfilling every command of God's law."

Luke 3:15-17 underscores this: *"when Jesus was baptized, immediately He went up from the water, and behold, a voice from heaven said, 'this is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased'."* John 1:33 adds, *"He who sent me to baptize said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit, the Son of God.'" At His baptism, Jesus is being anointed with the Holy Spirit, to signify Him as Messiah, the Christ, inaugurating Him as King of the New Covenant.*

**4- YOUR baptism - projects responsibility.** People today speak of "following the Lord in baptism." He began His earthly ministry echoing John, *"repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand, the time is fulfilled, repent and believe the gospel"* (Mark 1:15, Matthew 4:17). John 3:22-4:2 describes how *"Jesus' disciples were baptizing more people than John did"* and how John said, *"Jesus must increase but I must decrease"* because Jesus is the promised Christ, come to save - through the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

At the end of His earthly ministry, in Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus commanded, *"make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you."* In Acts 1:1-11 Jesus told His disciples to *"wait for the promise of the Father,"* the Holy Spirit, *"for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."* Which came true in dramatic fashion in Acts 2 on the Day of Pentecost.

**5- SPIRIT baptism - provides regeneration.** The disciples obeyed and received the Holy Spirit. And the Spirit-filled Peter preached, *"repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins."* And those who received his word were baptized, about 3,000 souls. How are any of these four baptisms like yours? We'll explore this next time, because there's more to examine: how "Spirit baptism" makes a person a Christian, which is what water baptism pictures. More next week! □