

Sermon #14

Baptism

God is good.

He is Spirit and truth, not legalism or deception.

God looks at the heart. He is never deceived by
false confessions or baptisms done for show.

God is holy and just, righteous and pure.

He is clean and bright, through and through.

We were created in His image and likeness;

Therefore, we are called to be like Him:

holy, just, righteous, clean and pure.

But we have all sinned and become polluted and dirty.

We need a way to get clean,

so we can once again be bright and clean and pure like our Father.

Baptism is God's provision for our need to be cleaned up.

It is a gift from God to be received,

not a religious duty to be legalistically performed.

There is only one true baptism, but it is a two-stage process which
fulfills all the washing and anointing rituals of the Law of Moses.

The first stage of baptism is baptism with water.

This is the baptism of John,

and it is the fulfillment of the washing rituals in the Mosaic law.

The second stage of baptism is baptism with the Holy Spirit and fire.

This is the baptism of Jesus Christ,

and it is a fulfillment of the anointing rituals in the Mosaic law.

Water baptism by a disciple of Christ symbolically washes away
your sin, and reassures you that God has forgiven your sins
and accepted you.

Holy Spirit baptism by the Messiah kindles a fire in your soul that burns evil out of your heart.

It also energizes and empowers you to do God's will.

Water baptism is an outward confirmation of your decision to come to your senses and change direction from faithlessness to righteousness, from selfishness to Godliness, from delusion to truth, from pride to humility.

Holy Spirit baptism is an internal event that confirms and reveals God's presence in your heart and life.

When a person truly repents, there is great rejoicing in heaven!

When a person is baptized with the Holy Spirit and realizes that God is living in him, there is great rejoicing in his own soul!

Baptism is a gift to people of all ages, cultures, nationalities, and religious affiliations. Whoever desires and is willing to receive God's gift of baptism can do so.

Water Baptism

As far as the water baptism ritual is concerned, it is irrelevant whether one is sprinkled, dunked, splashed or immersed. It is also irrelevant where baptism occurs.

A baptismal font in a church building is fine; so is a clean river, stream, lake, creek, or even a bathtub or shower.

And, contrary to many religious doctrines and traditions, it isn't even important who physically baptizes you or what church group, if any, witnesses or endorses it, as long as you are baptized "**in [or into] the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.**"

Matthew 28:19

However, there is one thing that is very, very crucial and completely relevant in water baptism:

The heart attitude and will of the person being baptized.

Water baptism is for repentance, so unless the person's heart is truly repentant, the ritual of water baptism has no effect.

What is a repentant heart? One who

- ◆ realizes his own moral failure
- ◆ knows and admits he has done wrong and cannot in himself be good or righteous
- ◆ feels deeply sorry and grieved about the wrong he has done
- ◆ desires to **be** good like God and **do** good like God
- ◆ is willing to say “Yes” to God and do things His way instead of his own way
- ◆ is willing to give up his old life and receive new life from God
- ◆ humbles himself and becomes like a little child

A repentant, forgiven heart is a pure heart, and Jesus said, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” Matthew 5:8

Until you repent and receive forgiveness, you will not be able to see or understand the reality of God or his truth, mercy and love.

Repentance and water baptism clean the heart and prepare it for its rightful occupant—God—who includes the Father, the Son (Jesus Christ, the Lamb) and the Spirit of truth.

There are many arguments and divisions among church groups about the ritual of water baptism. Avoid these and follow Christ. Be baptized into God, not into a church, and follow as He leads; this will set you free from the confusion of the various church doctrines and the manipulations of church leaders.

Baptism with Fire: the Holy Spirit

The second part of baptism is to be baptized by Christ.

Christ did not baptize with water; His disciples did that.

Jesus baptized with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

Anyone who gets baptized with water but does not go forward to receive baptism in the Holy Spirit will end up worse off than if they had not gotten baptized at all. Jesus said,

⁴³“When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none. ⁴⁴Then he says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’ And when he comes, he finds *it* empty, swept, and put in order. ⁴⁵Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last *state* of that man is worse than the first. So shall it also be with this wicked generation.”

Matthew 12:43-45

This is why it is so important to be fully baptized by Christ, not just water baptized by man.

Jesus said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.”

John 3:5

So how do you receive this baptism from Christ that causes you to be “born of the Spirit”?

First of all, don’t look to man for it. No church, pastor or religious institution can convey this to you or perform this baptism.

If you want to be baptized with the Holy Spirit, you must turn to Christ. You cannot coast on someone else’s spirituality or get the Holy Spirit through human fellowship or osmosis.

No amount of religiosity will earn you the Holy Spirit, nor can you buy it—not even with a double tithe.

Nor is it something that just happens because you want it to.

Jesus says you will be baptized by Him with the Holy Spirit

when you repent and receive forgiveness, then go forward in obeying His teachings, asking for what you need to do His will.

When you do these things,

the Father will send the Holy Spirit in Christ’s name.

Although the Holy Spirit is given freely to whoever asks, it is only active in a person who repents of sin and chooses to obey Christ’s teachings. Heartfelt obedience shows that you love God, and God comes to live in the hearts of those who love Him.

Two things to bear in mind is that Christ baptizes with the Holy Spirit *and* with fire, and His baptism is an ongoing process—not just something that happens once and then it is over.

He likened it to threshing—separating and blowing away the outer husks and then throwing them into an unquenchable fire, then gathering the kernels into the barn.

The husks symbolize the worthless part of us: our facades and pretenses, our lies, deceptions, false ideas, idolatries, greed.

The kernels of grain symbolize the good and valuable part of us: truth, love, goodness, faith, righteousness, humility, generosity, etc.

When we receive the Holy Spirit—the breath, person and word of God—He begins separating what is good and true in us from what is evil and false.

All that is evil and false is blown away by the Spirit of truth and thrown into the fire of God’s love to be burned and eliminated. All in us that is good and true is preserved, protected and shielded.

Jesus also likened this process to a gardener pruning his vine.

The unfruitful branches were cut off and thrown into the fire, while the remaining branches were cleaned (pruned) so they would be more fruitful.

Likewise, the Spirit of Truth cuts off all that is false and unproductive in our lives, and the fire of God consumes those worthless parts.

So, if you have already been baptized with the Holy Spirit and with fire, don’t resist when the Spirit cuts or blows away and the fire burns. It is all for your good.

God is refining, cleansing, purifying and restoring you to your true identity and rightful place in communion with Him.

This does involve some losing, cutting and burning, but the benefits are well worth it.

It is spiritual surgery that saves your soul and gives it new life.

If you haven't been baptized by Christ with the Holy Spirit and fire, do you really want to be? It usually involves radical changes, great adventure, and some suffering.

Consider the costs and whether or not you're really willing to pay them.

Once you receive and submit to the Holy Spirit, you no longer require human teachers, priests or organizations to do your religion for you. The Spirit of Truth residing in you can and will guide you into all truth and teach you all you need to know. And it will always be consistent with the life and teachings of Jesus Christ; this is the way you can know for sure you are hearing the Holy spirit and not just your own thoughts or someone else's words.

When you are contrite in heart, love and obey God, and are baptized by Christ with the Holy Spirit and with fire, your whole life preaches the good news, and those with eyes to see will see it and give glory to God.

And you will have crossed over from death to life;
from the kingdom of this world into the kingdom of God;
from bondage into freedom;
from lack into fulfillment;
from resistance to God into intimacy with your eternally
loving Father.

Jesus said,

“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.

¹⁶He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.”

Mark 16:15

and

“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

¹⁹Go 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,

²⁰teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age.”

Matthew 28:18

Amen.