

The Baptism Of Christ

Backdrop:

John the Immerser, was the son of “a certain priest named Zacharias” (*Lk 1:5, 13*), a descendant of Levi (*from which the priesthood came- Jos 18:7*), and Elizabeth his mother was a “wife from the daughters of Aaron” (*also a descendant of Levi*). Both he and Jesus, as “the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David” (*Rev 5:5*), Whose lineage was both legal (*via Joseph His ‘legal’ [step] father*) and genealogical (*via Mary His mother by blood*), would have been descendants of two brothers (*Judah and Levi*), who were sons of Israel. Thus, they were considered cousins as were their mothers Mary and Elizabeth according to *Lk 1:36*.

Mat 3:5 Then Jerusalem and all Judaea and all the region about Jordan were going out to him, 6 and were baptized (*Gk.907- to make whelmed [that is, fully wet]*) by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins (*“because water was plentiful there”- Jn 3:23*).

Immersion was a common practice for the Jews under the Old Covenant since every Aaronic priest had to perform such for initiation into the priesthood before being permitted to enter the Holy Place.

Lev 16:4 He shall put on the holy linen coat and shall have the linen undergarment on his body, and he shall tie the linen sash around his waist, and wear the linen turban; these are the holy garments. He shall **bathe his body** in water and **then** put them on. (*emp. added- As for us in Gal 3:27, it is to enter the N.T. priesthood.*)

This is what Peter was referring to in his statement concerning baptism, in that under the Old Law any Levite who entered the O.T. priesthood, before donning the garment of the priest, was immersed into the laver to ceremonially remove the “filth of the flesh”. That was the shadow of the requirement for entering the N.T. priesthood (*i.e., the church*) where “calling on the name of the Lord” (*Act 22:16*) in baptism is for “the answer of a good conscience toward God” (*1 Pet 3:21*). This “calling” is similar to *Gen 4:26* and *6:2* where the “sons of God”, those in covenant with God, differentiated from “the daughters (*sons*) of men”, those who were estranged from Him. Therefore, under the N.T., the “calling” is an “appeal” (*ESV*) to God to be in fellowship with Him via a clean conscience obtained through the resurrection of His Son. If Jesus never resurrected, the appeal would be null and void.

Even though immersion was a commonly understood practice in Israel, in this case it took on a whole new meaning, under a whole new priesthood with an entirely new High Priest Who came from the tribe of Judah of “which tribe Moses said nothing about priests” (*Heb 7:14*). Our baptism into Christ via the “washing of regeneration” (*Titus 3:5*) is our garment of invitation to “the wedding supper of the Lamb” (*Rev 19:9*). And anyone without such an invitation wearing that garment, Jesus said will

be thrown “into outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (*Mat 22:13*).

Mat 3:7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. 9 And do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father*,' for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. 10 Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

In a way, the Pharisees and Sadducees were accurate in rebuking John’s baptism since under the Mosaic, immersion pertained only to Levites who were being added to the priesthood (*not “all Israel”*); along with the fact that it was only to be done in the laver and not the filthy Jordan (*Naaman- 2 King 5:12*).

*Also, these ‘elites’ among the Jewish nation felt that their lineage going all the way back to Abraham secured their favor with God. Having such records gave them all the proof they needed. Through God’s providence, though, when Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed (*70 AD*) those records were destroyed along with them. A spiritual Jew (*Rom 2:29*) only needs to trace his lineage back to the “incorruptible” seed of God’s pure word (*1 Pet 1:23*) to prove his initiation into the family of God.

Mat 3:11 "I baptize you with water for 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 (*Thayer: “to imbue richly with the Holy Spirit [just as its large bestowment is called an outpouring]”*) and fire. 12 His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will clear His threshing floor and gather His wheat into the barn, but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire."

John employed water as the means through which obedience was achieved “for repentance”.

But when Pentecost came (*after Christ’s ascension*) baptism focused on repentance and immersion in water **for** the remission of sin with Holy Spirit given as a security (*Act 2:38; Eph 1:13-14*). Water, in and of itself, cannot save. Neither can Christ’s blood, in and of **itself**, save without obedience “from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed” (*Rom 6:17- i.e., emulating Christ’s death, burial and resurrection through baptism*).

John then focused on Christ’s baptism “with the Holy Spirit and fire”. He was speaking of the **non**-miraculous ‘pouring out’ of the Spirit that obedient believers would receive later, on the day of and after Pentecost (*Holy Spirit was responsible for the miraculous indwelling that was given to the apostles on Pentecost- Act 2*). On the other hand, John was preaching that those who would **not** accept Jesus as

the Christ, would suffer His wrath at the judgment according to the context of separating the two ‘baptisms’ in verse 12.

Pour out- Gk.1632- to *pour forth*; figuratively to *bestow*.

Baptize- Gk.907- to *make whelmed* (that is, *fully wet*).

Holy Spirit (*N.T.*) is only recorded to have fallen on, first Christ after His baptism, the apostles on the day of Pentecost (*Act 2:4*) and on Cornelius with his household in Acts 10 (*who only received the gift of tongues as proof to Peter that Gentiles were accepted into the church- Act 11:14-17*). Besides Christ (*Lk 4:1*), only the apostles received all the gifts.

(Obviously we can infer that Paul was immersed in the Holy Spirit as in Acts 9:17.). Acts 2:17-18 (in fulfilling Joel’s prophesy- 2:28-29) references a “pouring out” of the “Spirit on all flesh” (the same as what John the Immerser preached) yet this is not to be considered the same as what the apostles received. **This** has to do with being immersed into Christ “by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, Whom He **poured out** on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior” (*Titus 3:5-6*). Thus those who **now** receive **this** “pouring out” (*i.e.*, ‘bestowment’) must, before they can receive it, be repentant and obedient to the ordinance of baptism in being immersed for remission of sins. Therefore, “the gift of the Holy Spirit” (*Act 2:38*) is not to be considered an indwelling but a “seal” and “guarantee” (*Eph 1:13-14*) that faithful Christians have an “inheritance” that is “reserved in Heaven” (*1 Pet 1:4*).

But, Christ’s own baptism seems to create a problem for some (*as it did John*) since He “in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin” (*Heb 4:15*).

Mat 3:13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. 14 John would have prevented Him, saying, "I need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?"

Through inspiration John knew Jesus’ role as “the Lamb of God” Who was to take “away the sin of the world” (*Jn 1:29*). In understanding Jesus as being sinless, John felt unworthy to even untie Jesus’ sandal (*Jn 1:27*).

Mat 3:15 But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." (*Gk.3956/1343- “every righteous ordinance”- Adam Clarke- see Lk 1:6*) Then he consented.

Jesus lived under the O.T. Law which He had not yet ‘fulfilled’ (*Lk 24:44*). Since Aaron, as O.T. high priest (*along with his sons and those who replaced them*), was commanded by Moses to be initiated into the priesthood to serve in that office via the immersion process (*ordinance- Ex 29:4-9; Lev 16:4*), it was necessary for Christ to obey such in order to become our High Priest (*Heb 2:17; 5:5*) under the New Covenant, which He did “to fulfill all righteousness” (*see Heb 7:27; 9:12; 10:10*); as the ‘example’, per se, that we are to follow via baptism into the N.T. priesthood (*Heb*

7:12). Our baptism is to remove sin and thus “qualifies” us (*Col 1:12*) to enter into the priesthood (*Col 1:13*), whereas His (*Who “knew no sin” -2 Cor 5:21, as the “Lamb without spot”- 1 Pet 1:19*) was as an initiation into the office of our High Priest **whereby that process could be completed** (*Him becoming our Mediator as the O.T. high priest was to the Jews*) via His fulfilling “every righteous ordinance”.

(Once the Levite was immersed and donned the priestly garments he only needed to wash his hands and feet afterwards each time he was to serve in the Holy Place [Ex 30:19, 21]. That was a shadow of 1 Jn 1:7 concerning our continued “walk in the light” as the N.T. priesthood.)

Mat 3:16 And when Jesus was baptized, immediately He went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and he (*John*) saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on Him (*notice how Holy Spirit is always involved **after** obedience to the ordinance of baptism; for Him miraculously, for us as a ‘bestowment’- Act 2:38**); 17 and behold, a voice from Heaven said, "This is My beloved Son, with Whom I am well pleased."

(The only exception was with Cornelius which was evidence to Peter that Gentiles were accepted into the kingdom/church. Cornelius and his household were not saved though until they were baptized [Act 10:44-48] upon being commanded by Peter. [Mat 16:19; 18:18- ...having been bound... YLT])

Mar 9:7 And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, "This is My beloved Son; listen to Him."

Jesus was “transfigured” (*Mat 17:2; Mk 9:2*) among God’s “two witnesses” (*Rev 11:3*) who represented the Law (*Moses*) and the prophets (*Elijah*) but since His purpose was to “fulfill them” (*Mat 5:17*) God’s instruction to Peter, James and John at that time was to honor that fulfillment (*of following Jesus rather than the Law and prophets since He is greater than they were- Mat 12:6*).

...Deity “cannot be tempted with evil” (*Jas 1:13*) so how then could Christ have “been tempted as we are, yet without sin” (*Heb 4:15*)? He first had to become “the Son of Man” (*Mat 9:6*) via the “body [that God] prepared for [Him]” (*Heb 10:5*) since, as God, the devil could not tempt Him, but as man through flesh and human nature, he could (*Heb 2:18- “He Himself hath suffered being tempted”, i.e., human nature made it possible for Jesus to have sinned against His Father*). In *Mat 3:17*, Jesus was here ‘introduced’ as God’s Son once He was immersed into the New Covenant office of High Priest, at which point He could be “able to sympathize with our weaknesses” (*Heb 4:15*) as the Son of Man. He was always God’s Son, but in order to “fulfill all righteousness” in bringing man into a covenant relationship with His Father **as** His brethren (*Heb 2:11*), a “propitiation” (*Gk.2435- an atoning victim*) had to become the final substitute (*Heb 7:27*). The sacrificial system had already been “weakened by the flesh” (*Rom 8:3*).

Because God expected Israel to choose the best of their flocks to be their Passover lamb (*Ex 12:5*), He also gave of His best to become our Passover (*1 Cor 5:7*) through the “body” that was “prepared” for Christ (*Heb 10:5*); Jesus, then, as the Son of God became the Son of Man in order for “all who did receive Him, who believed in His name”, from among the children of man, to be given “the right to become children of God” (*Jn 1:12*). The Son of God became the Son of man in order for the sons of man to become the sons of God!

Luke 4:1 And Jesus, **full** of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness...

There is absolutely no evidence whatsoever, even as God in the flesh since His birth, of Jesus ever performing one miracle before (*John*) “saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on Him”. His first miracle, as recorded in scripture, was at the wedding feast in Cana of Galilee where He “manifested His glory. And His disciples believed in Him” (*Jn 2:11*); thus showing here, among other passages, that Holy Spirit at that time was the part of the Godhead responsible for such events that occurred outside the natural realm. Apart from being immersed in the Holy Spirit, not even Jesus performed miracles. John knew Jesus to be the Messiah (*Jn 1:29*) but His ability to perform miracles **after** His baptism and immersion of the Holy Spirit evidenced it (*Mat 11:3-6; 1 Cor 14:22*).

Mat 4:1 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

Jesus, as Son of man, voluntarily became vulnerable to temptation but was victorious over sin and thus “He is able to help those who are being tempted” (*Heb 2:18*).

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