

Baptizes IN and WITH the Spirit

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- [0 : 0 0] Living God, we believe that you enabled John the Apostle to remember the words of John the Baptist and to write them down accurately for us. I pray now in your mercy and grace that you will help us understand these words and more than understand that you would help us actually live the reality to which the words point.
- This we pray in Jesus name. Amen. Who is he? Jesus of Nazareth.
- About whom more books have been written than any other person in history for whom more songs have been written and sung than any other person in history.
- Firstborn son of a humble maiden, adoptive son of a rugged carpenter. Who is he? We are a community following Jesus. We say at first Baptist, we are a community following Jesus with a heart for the city.
- Okay. So who is he? Who is this Jesus? We are seeking to follow in this place at this time. The fact is, we will never be done with the question.
- [1 : 1 6] We'll never be done asking the question, let alone answering it. Given who he is, given who the New Testament says he is, no one will be able to say, well, that's it.
- I've mastered Jesus. I want to move on to something more important. As my friend Dale Bruner says, there are no graduates from the Jesus school. There are only and always undergraduates.
- Who is Jesus? No question comes with higher stakes. For given who he is, given who the New Testament says he is, everything, everything, literally everything hangs in the balance in our answer.
- Last Sunday, we turned to John the Baptist for help. We do so again today. Why John the Baptist? Because all four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John began their telling of the Jesus story with John the Baptist.
- Why John? John is the last in a long line of prophets, beginning with Elijah and Elisha, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Jonah, Amos, on to Malachi, and then finally to John.
- [2 : 3 6] But whereas the other prophets looked for the day when the promised one would come, John actually gets to announce that the promised one has come.
- To John was given the great privilege to be the first human being to actually introduce the coming one to the world. So we asked John the Baptist, who is Jesus?
- And oh, what an answer he gives. The Lord. Verse 22 in our text. I am a voice crying in the wilderness.
- Make straight the way of the Lord. John is quoting the prophet Isaiah chapter four, verse 30. A voice is calling clear the way for the Lord in the wilderness.
- Now, in that context, the Lord is the God of Israel. In that context, the Lord is the creator of the universe. Jesus. In that context, the Lord is Yahweh.
- [3 : 3 8] The one true living God. Make straight the way for the Lord, says John. Jesus, Lord. Jesus, the God of Israel.

Jesus, the creator of the universe. Jesus, Yahweh. Come to earth. Yahweh in human flesh. The name Jesus is English for the Greek.

Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Is the Greek for the Hebrew. Joshua or Yeshua. Yeshua means Yahweh saves or better. Yahweh to the rescue.

Jesus of Nazareth. John, the Baptist cousin. Yahweh to the rescue. Make straight the way for Yahweh to the rescue.

No wonder John preached with such passion and such a sense of urgency. And no wonder John says he existed before me.

[4 : 36] Verse 30. Although Jesus is born six months after John, Jesus existed long before John was conceived in his mother's womb. And no wonder John says, verse 27, I am not worthy to untie the strings of his sandal.

Who is? And no wonder John says this is the son of God. Verse 34. At least at minimum, the creator in our flesh is the son of God.

The only begotten son of the father. God, the son, as the rest of the fourth gospel will tell us, who from all eternity exists in the heart of the father and who in word and deed reveals the father.

That is who the great Baptist thinks Jesus is. Make straight the way for God to the rescue. And then John tells us why the Lord comes.

Why he comes the way he comes. John tells us that Jesus comes to do a twofold work. And this twofold work is expressed in two provocative titles.

[5 : 40] They are the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. The title we focused on last Sunday. And this is the one who baptizes in and with the Holy Spirit.

The title I invite you to focus on this Sunday. The two titles belong together. The two works belong together. Takes away and baptizes.

And it is when these two titles, the two works are kept together, that the gospel of Jesus Christ is really, really good news. Yahweh to the rescue takes away.

Yahweh to the rescue takes away the sin of the world and then baptizes human beings in and with the Holy Spirit. John Stott of England put it best in a sermon that he preached to an Urbana conference in the early 1970s.

He writes, we must never conceive of salvation in purely negative terms as if it consisted only in rescue from sin, guilt, wrath and death.

[6 : 43] Thank God that it is all these things. But it also includes the positive blessing of the Holy Spirit to regenerate, indwell, liberate and transform. What a truncated gospel we preach if we proclaim the one without the other.

And what a glorious gospel we have to share with the city when we are true to scripture. Jesus of Nazareth, the eternally existing son of the father, God, the son, comes to take away sin and then to baptize us in and with the spirit of God.

Like his cousin, John, Jesus also baptizes. Jesus also is a Baptist. John, the baptizer, baptizes Jesus in and with water.

And then Jesus, the baptizer, baptizes John and anyone who will welcome Jesus in and with the Holy Spirit. The best baptism of all. Now, I want to ask two questions of this second of Jesus twofold work.

Question one. What does it mean? Baptize in and with the Holy Spirit. What does it mean? And is there another way to put it? And question two.

[8 : 00] When does Jesus do it? When does Jesus baptize us? What does it mean? And when does he do it? What does it mean?

For one thing, it means that history has reached a climatic point, a climatic stage. It means that a great promise is being fulfilled. God's promise.

God's promise to send the Holy Spirit upon humankind in a new way. It's Ezekiel 36. I will vindicate the holiness of my great name. I will sprinkle clean water on you and you will be clean.

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you. I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my ways. Joel chapter two. It will come about after these days that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh.

Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your old men will dream dreams and your young men will see visions. In Jesus, the great expectation of God himself pouring himself onto humanity is beginning to be realized.

[9 : 08] The future is arriving in the present. But why this term baptized? This is the one who baptizes in and with the Holy Spirit. What is John the Baptist getting at?

Well, you probably know that in both pre-biblical and biblical Greek, baptism simply means to wash or to soak or to immerse.

It's used of sinking in the mud. It's used to describe plunging beneath the surface. In its passive form, be baptized. It means to be overwhelmed, to be inundated.

Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, baptizes in and with the Holy Spirit. He immerses us in and overwhelms us with the Holy Spirit.

Now, you may have been noticing that I have been using two prepositions, in and with. The English text uses only one. Either it uses in or it uses with.

[10 : 14] But I've been using two, in and with. That's because the preposition that John uses means both in and with. And as is often the case in the New Testament, when they use one word with multiple meanings, the author intends all the meanings.

Jesus baptizes us in and with. The in calls attention to that into which we are immersed. The with calls attention to that which overwhelms us when we are immersed.

Here's the gospel. Here's the good news. Just as John the Baptist immersed repentant sinners in the waters of the Jordan River.

So Jesus, the Baptist, immerses repentant sinners in the spirit of God. Mercy. And just as those who went into the Jordan River were thus overwhelmed with water.

So those whom Jesus baptizes in the spirit are overwhelmed with the spirit. Mercy. Mercy. Or to put it more graphically.

[11 : 26] John. Jesus, the baptizer, submerges us in and soaks us with. Jesus, the baptizer, dunks us in and drenches us with the very life of the triune God.

Mercy. Mercy. Mercy. Mercy. Mercy. Now, being baptized by Jesus, the Lamb of God. Ought to manifest itself in our lives in some way.

Ought it not? Thomas Smale puts it this way. It may be sudden, critical and sensationally transforming. Or it may be slow and quiet and spread over a period of time.

The spirit is symbolized in scripture by dew as well as by wind. And then he writes. But even when the dew falls silently, it will make the leaves wet, fresh and sweet.

I like that. Wet. Wet. Wet. Wet. Wet. ■ifi.

[13 : 25] else free flow, effusion. Isn't that a cool word? Now, theologians use this word effusion in conjunction with two others, creation and incarnation. All three are the works of the triune God, the work of creation, mostly associated with God, the father, the work of incarnation, mostly associated with God, the son, and the work of effusion, mostly associated with God, the spirit professor of systematic theology. J. Rodman Williams makes the point this way.

We are dealing in effusion with that activity of the Holy Spirit, not possible adequately to describe wherein he moves in freedom, pervading and filling human reality.

This is the coming of God to occupy and possess, to pervade and permeate, to fill and fulfill. It goes beyond creation and incarnation, not as a kind of third on the same plane, but passing through them, transcending both. Hearing God, while remaining transcendent, nonetheless possesses the heights and depths of creaturely existence. It is the filling of human existence with the glory of God. Can you handle that? The coming of God to occupy and possess, to permeate and pervade, to fill and fulfill. Here is the gospel. Jesus of Nazareth, the creator to the rescue, the lamb of God who redeems the world's sin, baptizes, baptizes us. He immerses us in and he overwhelms us with the very life and glory of the living God. This wonderful dimension of the gospel is, for me, most powerfully expressed in a hymn I grew up on. Spirit of the living God descend upon my heart, written in 1854. Listen to the poetic rendering of this part of the gospel. Many of you know this hymn. Spirit of God

God descend upon my heart. Wean it from earth through all its pulses move. Stoop to my weakness, mighty as thou art and make me love thee as I ought to love. Teach me to love thee as thine angels love one holy passion, filling all my frame. The baptism of the heaven descended dove, my heart and altar and by love, the flame. The composer of that hymn knows this diffusion. That composer had been baptized by Jesus.

We come then to the second question I want to ask of John the Baptist witness. When, when does the lamb of God baptize a person in and with the Holy Spirit? When does this effusion take place? And here I now wade into deep waters. As I see it, there are three possibilities, each advocated by serious students of scripture, and I'm going to give them the label sacramental option, evangelical option and charismatic option. Option one, the sacramental. It is argued that this effusion happens when we are baptized in and with water. This is the answer most often given by those who hold a high view of the efficacy of the ordinances. The view that baptism in the Lord's Supper not only symbolize gospel realities, they actually affect gospel realities. Being baptized in and with water in the name of the Trinity in this option issues in being baptized in and with the Holy Spirit. When a person is sprinkled with or lowered into H₂O, Jesus immerses the person and overwhelms them with in the person of the Holy Spirit. Option two, the evangelical. It is argued that this effusion takes place at a time when a person says his or her yes to Jesus. It's argued that this is what makes a person a Christian. It's argued that when Jesus baptizes us in and with the Holy

[17 : 46] Spirit, he's initiating us into the Christian life. When we turn around, put our trust in Jesus Christ and Savior and Lord, he takes away our sin and that effuses us with his life. Option three, the charismatic.

It's argued that this effusion takes place sometime after conversion, sometime after becoming a Christian, and therefore it is often called the second blessing. It's argued that first one comes to know the risen Lord and begins the journey of discipleship. And then after walking with Jesus for a while, Jesus baptizes the Christian. First, we are born again. We are regenerated and indwelt. And then one day we are anointed and flooded and empowered. It's argued that this is Jesus own experience conceived by the spirit, filled with the spirit from infancy, and then at his baptism, empowered by the spirit for ministry. It's argued that this second blessing pattern is the pattern worked out in the book of Acts in the story of the emerging church. First, folks are converted by the spirit and later on, they are baptized in and with the spirit. So which of these three options is correct? Sacramental, evangelical or charismatic? I, we just ran out of time. I'll have to pick that up next. Just kidding. Now, as I have wrestled with this over the years, I've come to the conclusion, ready? That each of these options is wrong.

And that each of these options is right. And that each of these options is wrong and right for the same reason. Should I say that again? I believe that each of these options is wrong. Each of them is right. And each of them is wrong and right for the same reason. You see, each option works from the same assumption. The assumption that Jesus baptizes only once. We make that assumption because ordinarily we are baptized in and with water only once. But that is not how John the Baptist sees it.

Listen carefully, very carefully. Verse 33. The one who sends me, the father said to me, he upon whom you see the spirit descending and ascent remaining. This is the one who baptizes in and with the Holy Spirit baptizes present tense. This is critical to observe in the new Testament. Greek. The tenses of the verbs do point to the time of the action past, present and future. But more importantly, they point to the kind of action in new Testament. Greek, the present tense emphasizes continuous action and is best rendered. Keep on.

Abide in me and I in you literally keep on abiding in me and I in you all who come to me and believe in me will never hunger, never thirst. Literally all who keep coming to me and keep believing in me will never hunger and never thirst. John the baptizer is saying that Jesus the baptizer is the one who keeps on baptizing. Continuous tense keeps on baptizing. That is John is telling us something about the nature and character of Jesus of Nazareth. John is telling us that is the nature of Jesus, the savior of the world to baptize and keep on baptizing, to immerse and keep on immersing, to soak and keep on soaking, to flood and keep on flooding, to fill and keep on filling. This is the one who baptizes not once, not twice, not three times, but again and again and again and again. This is the one who infuses his disciples with divine life and will keep on effusing disciples until every fiber of their being radiates with the glory of God. How's that for good news?

[22 : 07] You can see them that option one, the sacramental is right. When we are baptized in and with water, Jesus baptizes us in and with the Holy Spirit. But the option is wrong. That's not the last time he will do it.

You can see that option two, the evangelical, is right. When we surrender to Jesus Christ, the savior and Lord, he baptizes us in and with the Holy Spirit. But option two is wrong. That's not the last time he'll do it.

And you can see that the third option, the charismatic, is right. There is a time subsequent to conversion when Jesus baptizes us in and with the Holy Spirit. But option three is wrong. The second blessing is not the last time he will do it.

Jesus, the baptizer, does not baptize just once. It is his nature to baptize and keep on baptizing. It is his nature to dunk his people in and drench his people with his spirit again and again and again. Now, this, I think, is what is developed in the book of Acts. It begins with Jesus promise one five. You will be baptized in and with the Holy Spirit not many days from now. And then on the day of Pentecost, the risen Lord pours out the spirit on the first band of disciples. The text says to four. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and people thought they were full of sweet wine. Then a few days later, the living door, the Lord does it again.

Acts four thirty one. The place where they had gathered together was shaken. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit. Great power was given to the apostles to witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And abundant grace was upon them all. And when you read the story, Jesus does it again and again.

[23 : 52] Now, why this keep on baptizing? I've already given the chief reason. It is the nature of Jesus to keep on giving his life to us. There's another reason we keep on quenching and grieving the spirit.

Do not quench the spirit. Paul exhorts the Thessalonians. Do not grieve the spirit. He tells the Ephesians by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Again and again, we do and say things that wound and offend the Holy One. We harbor anger. We nurture bitterness. We speak gossip and slander about others. We are therefore in constant need of a cleansing bath of a new shower of grace. There's yet another reason, I think, for this keep on at the beginning of the journey with Jesus Christ. None of us is ready to handle the fullness of the effusion. I mean, after all, we're talking about being invaded and permeated by the third person of the Trinity who can handle this effusion all at once. That's why John says it happens in stages.

Grace upon grace. Paul speaks of being transformed from glory to glory. Yet there's one more reason for this keep on. Not only are we not ready. More often than not, we are not willing for this effusion to happen. Not willing. Why? Fear. Am I right? We're afraid. We're afraid that if we were to open up fully to Jesus baptism, we might get swept up into something beyond our control. Bingo. Beyond our control.

Of course. Of course. Of course. It is beyond our control because he's beyond our control. After all, we're talking about the living God, the creator of all things coming to occupy and possess who can control him. So sadly, out of our fear, we settled for a manageable form of religion, thank you, and hold the full reality at arm's length. We try to domesticate the wind and fire of God and settle for the predictable, even though it is no longer satisfying. But the fact is, we do not need to fear the effusion for the simple reason that this is what we were made for. From the beginning of God's dealing with humanity, God has revealed his passion to give his very self to the world. From the beginning, God has made it clear that he intends to fill the whole created order with his glory, with all that makes God be God. The effusion does not make us weird. It makes us human. We are finally human. We are finally all that we were made to be when we are filled by and animated by the life of the triune God. So who is he? This Jesus we are seeking to follow in the city.

God to the rescue. Come as the lamb to take away the sin of the world and come to baptize again and again in and with the Holy Spirit. And whenever he does, says William Barkley, there enters into our helplessness and fatigue, a new surge of life. And we are freshly empowered to do the undoable, to face the unfaceable and to bear the unbearable. I know. Blessed be his name. Amen.

[28 : 07] Amen. Lord Jesus Christ. You keep getting bigger and bigger and better and better. Thank you that you know each of us this morning. You know where we live and what we're facing. You know what we need.

And we thank you that it is your nature and character to give us your very life again and again.

Thank you that you come not only to take away, but to occupy and possess and fill.