

He will Baptize you with the Holy Spirit

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[0 : 00] It's in Matthew's account of the gospel we read in chapter 3, verses 11 and verse 15. At verse 11, John the Baptist says, 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 and with fire. And then at verse 15, Jesus said, Let it be so now. In other words, let me also be baptized.

For thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness. What we see here is a recognition, first of all, by John, that what he is doing is not itself the outpouring of God's Spirit.

It is not enough. He is only the servant. And what we have also is a recognition by Jesus, that although he has the power to give the Spirit, to anoint with it, to baptize with it, yet it is fitting that he himself should submit, if that is the word, to the symbol, the sign of that reality.

This is one of the things that we have to understand when we come to a baptismal service, as we have today. It's not that the sacraments, baptism and the Lord's Supper are more important than the preaching of the Word and the expounding of God's truth.

[1 : 26] But because we have them less often, it is necessary for us to understand what we are doing in these things, in these sacraments, these signs and seals of God's covenant of grace.

In the sacrament of baptism, there is both connection between the sign and the things signified, a connection, and yet at the same time, there is a distinction.

They are connected, but they are not entirely the same. They are not unconnected, they are interrelated, the one being ideally a normal part or expression of the other.

However, the water and the symbol is not a mere empty symbol. There is purpose, there is meaning, there is interconnectedness between the baptism of water and the baptism of the Holy Ghost.

And we will see this as we look at the scriptural examples, which we'll do in just a moment. But nor are they exactly the same thing. It is not enough just to say, oh, well, I've been baptized, you say, that's me saved, that's me born again.

[2 : 42] No, it isn't. This is a mistake that some people do make and some branches of the church make, but we'll see that that also is not what the scripture teaches. The water is not itself the spirit and the servant.

As John the Baptist makes clear, the servant who may administer the water is not the master who alone can baptize with the Holy Spirit. Now, people can get into all sorts of problems when they mix up the two.

One of the errors which we've just spoken about, and there are three basic errors I suppose we can recognize here, is first of all, that people assume that the water of baptism, baptism with water, is the same as being baptized with the Spirit.

This is what's called in some churches baptismal regeneration. As though simply the fact of baptizing a child or an infant or another person means that's them saved, that's them born again, they've got the Spirit now because look, they've had the water of baptism.

Baptismal regeneration is not taught in the scriptures. It is not, the water is not the Spirit, though they are interconnected. Likewise, it is not the case that just because Jesus may have set apart his apostles and they may have set apart others, there's not some sort of magic power in the hands that are laid on people from generation to generation to generation and that if you're lawfully ordained by those who've gone before and those who've gone before and somehow this sort of magic is coming through the hands of those who administer it, the servant is not the master.

[4 : 17] It doesn't matter how faithful or diligent the servant is and these two errors, these two mistakes, John the Baptist answers in verse 11 that we looked in, I baptize you with water.

That's all I can do, he's saying, for repentance. It's right that you come, it's right that you receive the symbol, but that's all it is at this stage, he's saying, I, the servant, can only baptize you with water, but he who is coming after me, he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

Only the master can give the Spirit, not the servant. And John the Baptist answers that. And all that he can give is water, he can't give the Spirit. Now, if John the Baptist is saying that, what are other ministers or priests or bishops of far lesser quality or power or calling or devotion to the Lord, who are we, who are they to say, oh yeah, but for me, it's different, I can give the Spirit.

I can make people converted just by virtue of what I do. That is not what the Scriptures teach. It is not what this faithful servant, John the Baptist, teaches. It is not what Jesus teaches.

There is no baptismal generation in and of itself. The water does not make the Spirit happen. And the servant is not the master. He cannot do it just by virtue of what he does going through the right form to administer baptism.

[5 : 43] But another error is that people would say, oh, so it doesn't really matter. It doesn't really matter whether you get baptized or not because it's all irrelevant. You know, if you're going to be saved, you're going to be saved. And if you're not, well, then the baptism doesn't do you any good.

So why bother? They treat the sign, the symbol, as though it is irrelevant. You know, if that's not the Holy Spirit, why bother with the water? What's the significance of it? It's just like a certificate. It's just like a little piece of paper. It's just a token. It doesn't mean anything. There's no substance there. Well, that's an argument you could make in some instances, but it's not the argument Jesus makes.

If we are to follow Jesus, we follow his teaching and his example. If anyone didn't need to be baptized, it was Jesus.

And John the Baptist himself says, you know, you're coming to me for baptism? I'm the one that needs to be baptized by you and you're coming to me? And what does Jesus say there, verse 15?

[6 : 45] Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness. So as the old Bible has it, suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness.

Now, if Jesus recognized that there would be something in his life, in his ministry, that would be as yet incomplete, if he did not receive this sign, this symbol of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, if he didn't get the sign and the symbol, then there would be something missing, something incomplete, in his ministry, in his life.

Who are we to say, oh, yeah, me, Jesus may have needed it, but me, I don't need it, no, I'm better than him. If he needed it, we need it. If his life, his ministry, his service to his father was incomplete without it, who are we to think, oh, no, but it's okay, I can manage, I'm fine.

There is an interconnectedness of baptism with water and baptism of the Spirit. When God's servants are faithful, those seeking after Christ, wanting to follow him and love him and obey him, and likewise, those coming for baptism, they are faithfully seeking, asking for God's blessing in this way.

When the servants are faithful, the master will bless. Although it is only ever the master, only ever the Lord who can, in the fullness of time, baptize with the Holy Ghost.

[8 : 24] As and how and upon whomsoever he pleases. And yet he desires that we do our part.

We do as he commands us. We can't make it happen. We can't force his hand. But we are called upon to be faithful in doing what he commands us.

That he may show us how faithful he is to what the fruitfulness and what the faithful will ask of him. He is faithful to what we ask of him. Let's look at some of these scriptural examples. I mean, baptism is used, there's a lot of examples in the New Testament. And sometimes, as we'll see, God's spirit may be given after the water baptism.

Sometimes it may be before. Sometimes it may be dramatic. Sometimes it may be quiet. There is no one size fits all in God's word. If we look first of all in Acts chapter 2, we see verses 37 to 39.

[9 : 29] We're on the day of Pentecost. Peter is preaching. And we read that when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brothers, what shall we do? And Peter said to them, Repent and be baptized, every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.

And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. In other words, then, afterwards, you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit for the promises to you and to your children and for all who are afar off, everyone whom the Lord, our God, calls to himself.

So, in other words, Peter is saying, get baptized first and then afterwards, you'll receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. In Acts chapter 8, we read of Philip going down to Samaria, Philip the evangelist. It says, Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ. And the crowds, with one accord, paid attention to what was being said by Philip when they heard him and saw the signs that he did.

For unclean spirits crying out with a loud voice came out of many who had them and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed so there was much joy in that city. And in verse 12, but when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

[10:44] Now, when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit.

In other words, so far they had believed, they'd been baptized, but they hadn't received any baptism with the Holy Spirit. For he had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

And then further on in that same chapter, you've got the Ethiopian eunuch. Again, Philip the evangelist, he opened his mouth and beginning with this scripture, he told them the good news about Jesus. As they were going along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, see, here is water.

What prevents me from being baptized? And he commanded the chariot to stop and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. And when they came up out of the water, the spirit of the Lord carried Philip away and the eunuch saw him no more and went on his way rejoicing.

In chapter 9, you've got the conversion of St. Paul. And after he is three days and three nights without eating or drinking, he's been fasting and he's been blind. And then Ananias, remember, is called to go and visit him so that he can receive his sight.

[11:51] Verse 17, we read of chapter 9, so Ananias departed and entered the house and laying his hands on him, he said, Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.

And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized. Now in the case of Paul, it would imply the Holy Spirit fell on him first and then he was baptized afterwards.

Then you've got the case of Cornelius. Turn the page, chapter 10, where Peter proclaims the good news to Cornelius, who's a Gentile, not a Jew, and to his followers. While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word and the believers from among the circumcision who had come with Peter were amazed because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles for they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God.

Then Peter declared, can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days. So what you've got there, you've got some instances where it's dramatic, some instances where it's quiet, quiet work like with the eunuch.

[13:14] You've got some where it is beforehand like with St. Paul and it would appear with others. You've got some where the Holy Spirit is given afterwards like in the case of the believers at Pentecost.

And you've got a whole variety of how and when the baptism with the Holy Spirit may come upon people who receive baptism with water.

Sometimes the water comes afterwards. Sometimes it is before. God is not bound. He can do as he pleases when and how and with whom he chooses. But there is, you will notice, an interconnectedness.

Ananias does not say, Oh well Saul, now you've got your sight back. That's it. Who needs water? Who needs baptizing? He arises, he gets baptized, and then he eats and drinks after that.

God first, and then his own bodily needs afterwards. And likewise, those at Cornelius' house upon whom the Holy Spirit falls and they're speaking in tongues. They're filled with the Spirit.

[14:14] And somebody might say, Oh well, they've already got the Spirit. What do they need the water for? But Peter doesn't say, Oh well, that's it. Forget about the water. He says, No, no. Now we've got to do the water. Can anybody withhold water?

Can anybody say they shouldn't have the sign, the symbol, now that they've got the substance? You see, God is not bound with how he works and when he works. But the two are interconnected. Between the baptism of water and the baptism of the Spirit. And this, Jesus himself would seem to be making a reference to when he speaks to Nicodemus in John chapter 3.

Remember, Nicodemus comes to see Jesus in John chapter 3 at night. And one of the things Jesus says to him in John 3 at verse 5 is, Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

Now, if he's not referring to water baptism, then what is he referring to? Some people say, oh no, that's not what he means at all. It means something totally different. Well, if it's something totally different, it's pretty obscure. The normal inference would be, born again of water, in other words, baptized with water and baptized by the Spirit.

[15 : 27] He cannot enter the kingdom of God. But also, we can't say that that's exclusive and permanently all the time. If you think, for example, of the thief on the cross, he wasn't baptized, not with water anyway, and yet he entered the kingdom of God.

Jesus says, today, you will be with me in paradise. He was an exception. There are exceptions that prove the rule. Just like we might say, human beings have two arms and two legs and they walk upright.

You'll always be able to find people who either through disability or handicap or injury maybe don't have two arms and two legs, who maybe can't walk upright. That doesn't make them less human, nor does it mean that the rule is wrong.

It just means that normally, in ordinary circumstances, human beings have two arms, two legs, they walk upright. That won't be the case in every instance, but these are exceptions. Normally, they do. It won't be the case in every instance that unless you are baptized, unless you've got the Holy Ghost, well, that's you, you can't be saved. There's the thief on the cross. No doubt there are other instances too of people to whom the sacrament could not be administered, but the reality, the substance, is still given by God.

[16 : 45] The master is the one in charge, not the servant. There are exceptions, but just because there are exceptions, we shouldn't treat them as the rule. We should recognize that whilst it's not exclusive, it is the general rule there is an interconnectedness between the baptism of the water and the baptism of the Spirit.

It is the general rule and it is a sin to neglect what Christ has commanded as though it were of no importance because to Jesus, clearly it is of importance.

What does he say to John? Let it be so now. It's right for us to fulfill all righteousness. In other words, I need this just as much as anybody else in order to make my ministry, my witness, complete.

If Jesus needs it and commands it, who are we to say, oh no, we don't need it. But there is more than just water and spirit being talked about here.

When Jesus is speaking to Nicodemus, if we go back to John chapter 3, he's speaking to him about his own death upon the cross. We read in John 3, verse 14, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up.

[18 : 04] He's referring to being lifted up on the cross. That whoever believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life, have eternal life.

Now, if we go then to 1 John, we see in chapter 5, this is John, the Gospel of John, now he's writing his letter. 1 John chapter 5, and verse 6, this is he who came by water, baptism, and blood by his death upon the cross.

Jesus Christ, not by the water only, but by the water and the blood. It's not just the case of, oh, he was baptized and he did good things and he taught people and he healed people. The blood, the death of Jesus is vital here.

And the Spirit is the one who testifies because the Spirit is the truth. For are the three that testify, the Spirit and the water and the blood and these three agree. If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater.

For this is the testimony of God that he has borne concerning his Son. So, we have this that Jesus teaches that it is both his Spirit but also his death into which we are trusting and believing.

[19 : 18] If we look in Romans chapter 6, we see in verse 3, Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with

him by baptism into death in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

This is what he says. Verse 11 then, So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. If we are baptized into Christ, we are baptized into his death.

There is no benefit to being a Christian if we are not trusting in what Christ has done upon the cross. That is the only way our sins can be forgiven. That is the good news that Christ has died for the sins of all who trust and believe in his name.

That is what you are testifying to. That is what you are being baptized into when you are baptized. And also, there is the sense that we must be prepared to die to the old self, the old life, the world, and give it all to the Lord.

Now think of the example with the children. Give them the whole banana. Give them your whole life. Give them everything that you have got left. You may be 80 before you come to know Christ or you may be older than that.

[20 : 37] But whatever you have got left, you have given the Lord. And he can do amazing things with it. I may have given an example before in the first congregation I was in. And I love using this example.

An old lady who finally professed faith at the age of 92. And at that time, she was coming out one end of the day. And I thought, yeah, okay, fair enough. She is 92.

You know, we can't expect too much out of her. From the time that she professed that faith and came forward and professed herself converted, after that, this 92-year-old lady who lived for another 12 years and finally died at 104, after she professed this faith at 92, she started coming out both ends of the day and the prayer meeting when we and the ladies' fellowship.

In fact, anything that was going, she couldn't get enough of it. She got this new lease of life at the age of 92. Whatever is left in your life, the point is not, well, it's only a few years.

It's not worth it now. You give it all to the Lord and you see what He will do with it. We are baptized into His death and we die to the old self and we give the Lord all that we have now of the new life and you see what He will do with it.

[21 : 59] There is nothing that we can make of ourselves that's going to impress God. Nothing we can do ourselves that is going to impress God. It is Christ. He is the alone foundation. 1 Corinthians 3, read in verse 11, For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Now, if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become manifest for the day will disclose it because it will be revealed by fire and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done.

If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only us through fire.

What that means is if you're building your life on Christ, you may make a fantastic job of building on that foundation. You might build the equivalent of gold and silver and precious jewels.

Your life might really shine for the Lord. Or you might not be quite so capable and it might be the equivalent of wood, hay, straw, stubble. And when the times of testing comes, well, it might all be burned up and you might think my life doesn't amount to terribly much.

[23 : 10] But if you are built on the foundation, although your work may be destroyed and all the things you think you've built up in your life may not stand the test of judgment, the foundation will stand sure and you yourself will never be lost if you are built on that foundation.

And that foundation is Christ. That is what we are baptized into, baptized into his death and into the life that he gives us. Now we've spoken about the interconnectedness of the water and of the spirit.

There is an interconnectedness with the reality that Jesus himself has said, except you be converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

And some people say, oh well, yes, but there's got to be testimony. There's got to be the witness of the person being baptized. If you don't have that, whether it's a little child or whether it's an infant or whether it's a baby, none of that can count. That can't really matter.

There's got to be the witness. There's got to be the testimony. Remember that God's covenant is a covenant of grace. That means free gift of God. It's not about what we testify.

[24 : 16] It's not about what we do. It is what God does in us and through us. Remember what we read in 1 John chapter 5 at verse 9. If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is

greater.

For this is the testimony of God that he has borne concerning his son. Whatever we may be able to say or do, that's just what we build on the foundation. It is the foundation itself which is important, which is the thing that matters.

All our work may be burned up. All our testimony, all our witness, all our words may be burned up at the foundation. We'll stand sure. That is what we build on. Whether it was with a child, whether it was a baby, whether it was an infant in arms, whether it was an older person.

It's not about what we can do for the Lord. It's about what he has done for us. That is what we testify to. Now of course, some people will say, yes, but you cannot have baptism without faith. Because everywhere in Scripture it says repent and believe and be baptized. There's got to be faith. And I would agree absolutely there's got to be faith where there is baptism.

[25 : 22] There must be faith present that any genuine baptism and there is, there must be or it's not going to take place. The faith of the parents or the sponsor of the child is being testified to.

What they are believing about their child and its relationship with the Lord, that is being testified to at any baptism. Now, somebody of more Baptist sympathies with a capital B might say, that doesn't count.

That's not real. That doesn't count. To whom does it not count? I mean, one has to have full respect for the Baptist church and that branch of the Christian church because they testify faithfully to the Lord in so many things.

They are brothers and sisters in Christ. We're not rubbishing them. But we can't agree with them on everything. Because we have to say, to whom does such faith not count?

To you? To me? To Christ? It cannot be to Christ. For the unequivocal, consistent witness of Scripture is that the faith of others is repeatedly accepted by the Lord in the place of those for whom blessing or healing or help is sought.

[26 : 42] I'll say that again. The testimony of Scripture, the unequivocal, consistent witness of Scripture is that the faith of others is repeatedly accepted by the Lord in the place of those for whom blessing or healing or help is sought.

Think, for example, of Jairus in Mark chapter 5 where he's asking for help for his daughter who is dying. Jesus says when they say don't trouble the master anymore, the child is dead, says don't be afraid, only believe.

He doesn't go and say it to the little girl. He doesn't go and wake her up and say it's okay, believe, I'm here. He says it to Jairus who has asked help for his dying daughter. He says to Jairus, believe. He wants the parent to believe for the help that is sought for the child. If we think of those who let down the man on the bed who has the palsy, who's let down through the roof, they break up the roof to let down the man on the bed.

And Jesus says to him, your sins are forgiven, take up your bed and walk. But before he says that, we read that he says, when he saw their faith. Now it could be the faith of those carrying the man and the man on the bed, but it doesn't say when Jesus saw his faith.

[27 : 55] He didn't say that. He had said to his friends, come on, come on, break up the roof, put me down here, just get me in front of him, whatever you do. When Jesus saw his faith, it doesn't say his faith, it says their faith.

We don't know if the man himself was even unconscious or whatever. But the point is, whether this is in Matthew or Mark or Luke where this instance is recounted, it says consistently when Jesus saw their faith, not the faith of the individual concerned.

And the centurion who is seeking healing for his servant, we read again that Jesus says that he had not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.

It's not the faith of the servant who's being healed, it's the faith of the centurion who's asking help for his servant. The boy who is demon-possessed at the foot of the Mount of Transfiguration, his father asks healing for him and he says, Lord, if you can do anything, please help us.

And Jesus says, if I can. All things are possible if you believe. And that's the man who falls down at Jesus' feet and says, Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief. It's not the boy who's frothing at the mouth and being thrown about in a fit that is the one who says, oh yes, actually, I believe in you too, Jesus.

[29 : 08] It's the father, not the boy. Jesus accepts the faith of the father. He accepts the faith of the centurion. He accepts the faith of the men letting their friend down through the roof. He accepts

the faith of Jairus for on behalf of his daughter.

He accepts the faith of the side of a Phoenician woman. He says to her, oh woman, great is thy faith. Be it unto you as you have believed. And her daughter was healed from that hour. It wasn't the daughter's faith, it was the mother's faith that Jesus accepted.

He's healed. Likewise, the nobleman of Cana asking for healing for his son, Jesus says, as you believe, so it will be to you. Go home, he's healed. Likewise, we read of Moses in the book of Hebrews chapter 11.

By faith, Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents because they saw that the child was beautiful or a proper child as the old Bible says and they were not afraid of the king's edict.

Moses didn't hide himself in the bulrushes but we're told by faith, Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months. Who hid him? His parents.

[30 : 10] Who had the faith? His parents. Did God accept the faith of his parents? Yes, he did. It wasn't Moses' faith at that stage. He was a little infant. He couldn't do anything about it. But God accepted the faith of his parents, of the girl who was suffering, the Syrophenician woman.

He accepted the parent of the girl, Jairus' daughter, whom he healed. He accepted the faith of the parent, the boy who was a demon possessed at the foot of the Mount of Transfiguration. He accepted the centurion's faith.

He accepts the faith of others on behalf of those for whom help is being sought. The consistent witness of Scripture is that Jesus accepts the faith that brings to him those for whom they are asking help, blessing, anointing by his Spirit or by the symbol of his Spirit.

Yes, this is a sacrament which we know is often abused. People tell jokes about baptism and how as soon as people turn up and get the baptism they want then they disappear.

You could make any number of jokes. I'm not going to recount them from the pulpit. That wouldn't be appropriate. We all know how this sacrament has been abused in the past. And this is one of the things that has lent weight to those who say, you know what, should only be if you can testify yourself of your own faith because it has been so abused in the past.

[31 : 31] It's been used simply as a naming ceremony or just a little sort of lucky charm. I think those days are mostly behind us. Partly because the church no longer is the power in the land that it once was.

And there's no longer this powerful lucky charm as it were in belonging to it. But rather if somebody is seeking this now for themselves or for their child there must be at least a measure of desire of faith of belief because nowadays it's not that which everybody wants.

Yes, it is often abused. But those who do abuse it like the Pharisees they already have the reward. They already have the empty symbol the empty ritual.

They've got the outward ceremony that's all they wanted they go home happy. Makes no earthly or spiritual difference to themselves of their child but they got what they wanted. We know that it's often abused in the past.

But that is all they wanted that is all they get. Jesus said likewise of the Pharisees they already have the reward. But what we have here is something which if it is rightly used is not just a little dribble of water it is as a sign and seal of something sought asked for needed depended upon by the Lord's people asked and asked again Jesus said ask and it shall be given but without this sign this symbol without this benefit there is something missing in a person's life.

[33 : 07] Jesus thought there would be something missing even in his life even in his ministry that is why he said let it be so now that we may fulfill all righteousness this he did and we if we are his followers are called upon to do likewise let us pray everything for on the whatever he had example I they wanted in for I did day I went and that my go and could do that