

“Jesus’ Baptism and Yours”

Matthew 3: 4-17



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Today we are looking at the baptism of Christ as we continue in our journey together, studying Jesus of the gospels. We hear of John the Baptist (John who baptizes) and about his teachings of repentance through baptism. John was a radical man. He called it as he saw it. You knew where you stood with John the Baptist. He is my kind of guy. He taught that by being baptized with water you were summoned to righteousness. This was a bit different than the ceremonial cleansing of the day because this was a one-time act. You repented of your sins, received the baptism, and strived the rest of your life to walk in righteousness until the one who would come to baptize them by the Spirit and Fire. John the Baptist was an influence of his day. He had a following and was a constant thorn in the establishment’s flesh. He wanted no recognition for himself but always pointed to the coming of God. His message was intricate and had many meanings but all tied to the greatness of God and the Messiah.

Now think about this with me. John the Baptist was a Jew and he was speaking to Jews. His terminology might be a bit misconstrued when we think of it today as Christians. His message was in the thinking ways of the Jews. He told people that one would come to baptize them in the spirit and with fire. Here is the promise of the Spirit of God that was to come according to John the Baptist:

Life

When we translate the word “spirit” which is “Ruach” it means both spirit and breath. We all know that breath is life so the spirit is the promise of life. God’s breath into all us gives us eternal life. But it means that and more.

Power

“Rauch” not only means breath but also “wind.” Wind is power as described of the winds once heard by Elijah. We all know here in West Texas that wind means power, so the Spirit of God is also the Spirit of Power. When the Spirit of God enters in to us, our weakness is made strong by his power. We are enabled to do the undoable. We are able to face the unfaceable. We are able to bear the unbearable. Frustration is banished and victory arrives in our lives.

Truth

The Spirit of God is truth. It turns our minds from the world towards heaven. Our human guesses turn to divine certainty. It allows us to wade through the deceitfulness of the world and see the truth of God’s light.

Creation

The Spirit of God is connected with the work of creation. It was the Spirit of God who swept over the waters and made chaos in to cosmos, turned disorder in to order and made the heavens and earth out of an uncreated mist of nothingness. The Spirit of God is the power to create and re-create you and I. Before God we are disorderly, uncontrollable, masses of messes, and just nothing of much consequence. But

when the Spirit of God enters our lives we are shaped and formed into the harmony of all that is good and right in God.

Choice

Now there is also a threat in the promise and that is where the baptism by fire comes into the story. You see the fire illuminates the world for us all to see the truth. The fire brings warmth to the heart of repentant sinners. The fire brings purification and drives out the evil. But if you choose not to accept Christ, you are consumed by the fire, not protected from it. The message is a choice of one or the other. You are either for or against Christ. There is no middle ground. In the final analysis, you will either be cleansed or consumed in this baptism by fire.

Identity

-Let God Tell You Who You Are

Once we allow that spirit of God to enter into our lives, it is extremely important that we, then, let God tell us who we are. It is so tempting to let other people tell us who we are; but, we are called upon to let God tell us who we are. The Bible tells us that we are created in the image of God. We look in the mirror and say, "Wow, God, you did a good job!" The Bible tells us that we are part of the family of God.

Matthew 3:17 17: and lo, a voice from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

Once Jesus was baptized he heard a voice speak and say, "You are my beloved son in whom I am well pleased." I would hope that each and every one of you when you are baptized would hear God say to you, "You are my beloved son - you are my beloved daughter." We are part of God's family. God wants what is best for us. Jesus said, "God sent me so that you may know the way and the truth about life." "God sent me," Jesus said, "because God wants you to have abundant life." Now that does not mean that you are going to go home and win the lottery tonight! It does mean that God wants you to have a rich, full, meaningful, abundant life and you might win the lottery too. God wants what is best for you. So, let God tell you who you are.

We need to be really careful. You, especially young people, need to be really careful when someone calls you stupid, that you not believe that. If someone describes you in terms that are inconsistent with what God tells you who you are, you need to listen to God. Parents, when your teenagers and young adults get to an age when they are really struggling with their own self-identity, and they say some pretty nasty things to you, do not believe it. Let God tell you who you are.

- Let God Tell You Who Others Are

We should not only let God tell us who we are; but we should let God tell us who other people are. I heard the other day that the moment we meet someone for the first time, we hear their name and we automatically fill in about 2000 bits of information about that person. If one of you whom I have never met before walked up here and I said, "Hi, I'm Joyce" and you introduced yourself, within moments I would have 2000 bits of information in my mind about you. I would probably guess whether you are male or female. Maybe I would know by your name and maybe by your appearance. Maybe it would be a guess! I would guess at your approximate age. I would make some assumptions because I met you here. Where and how we meet people dictates presumptions as well. I would have different bits of information about you if instead of meeting you at church I meet you when I arrested you for a crime. We fill in about 2000 bits of information when we meet someone. If we are filled with God's spirit, that information that gets filled in will be very different as opposed to being filled with some other spirit.

No matter who you are or what you have done, Jesus, being filled with the Spirit of God, looks at you and says, “You are created in the image of God! You are a valuable member of God’s family, a beloved child of God.”

Me. Look at me today. When I came into ministry many people said (including myself at times), “Can you believe it? Can you Matt as a minister? After all you have done and said in life you think you have the ability to go out and share the gospel of Jesus Christ with others? Are you nuts?” Praise God that Jesus sees more of us than do others or that we see of ourselves.

The message of Jesus’ baptism and yours is not about necessity, it is about nurturing. Jesus’ choice to include himself in the baptisms performed by John the Baptist indicates to me his intention to line up with John’s message and the revival movement it had created. Jesus wanted to show his enrollment as a member of those who were purified and prepared for God. It is this point, rather than any need to obtain forgiveness which brought Jesus to the water. I agree with John the Baptist that no baptism should just be ceremonial, but rather personal. I agree that baptism by water is not required for salvation, but rather encouraged as a continual commitment to Christ and another step towards him in our faith. The Baptism of Jesus did not change who he was. It did not make him something he was not already but solidified and launched him forward in his mission and calling. I am sure there are some here today that have never been baptized. I am sure there are many here today that were baptized as infants but never came to an understanding or acceptance of that baptism. I would guess there is someone here today that were “sprinkled” but really feels like they would rather was been “immersed.” Some have only seen “immersions” and would rather be “sprinkled.” I would even bet that there are some here today that wished they would have had a better understanding of baptism or their relationship with Christ when they were baptized because they feel it didn’t do much for them the first time. All those thoughts are feelings are legitimate and if you fall into any of those categories, then I hope you will come talk to me. I know Christ can resolve those issues for you and fill you with all the cleansing hope and joy which is meant to be the result of that encounter with him.

Life, Power, Truth, Creation and Identity! The meaning of Jesus’ baptism and yours!