

Immersion in Water - Part 1

by Derek Prince

Baptism is a transition that signifies a new life in the power of the Holy Spirit, and it is a commitment to identify with Jesus in his death, burial, and resurrection.

Duration: 29:00

Scripture: Matthew 3:11

Topics: "Christian Baptism", "Holy Spirit"

Description

This sermon delves into the significance of three distinct baptisms mentioned in the New Testament: John's baptism, Christian baptism, and baptism in the Holy Spirit. It emphasizes the Greek origin of the word 'baptize,' meaning 'to immerse,' highlighting the total transition and immersion involved in baptism. The sermon explores John the Baptist's baptism of repentance, preparing the way for Jesus, and the importance of repentance, confession of sins, and a changed life. It also discusses the limitations of John's baptism and the necessity of Christian baptism as an act of fulfilling righteousness and identifying with Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection.

Transcript

I need to say a little first of all. Well let me just mention briefly the three particular baptisms. Number one, John's baptism, the baptism of John the Baptist.

Number two, Christian baptism, which is not the same. And number three, the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Those are three distinct baptisms, all of which play an important part in the New Testament.

Now I need to say something about the meaning of the word baptize. It's not really an English word. It's a Greek word written in English letters.

What they say technically, transliteration. The word baptize is taken directly from a Greek word, baptizo, and just not translated but written over in English letters. As to why that happened, there are various possibilities.

It may just be church tradition. Or it could be that the translators of the King James didn't want to offend the Anglican Church by coming out with the right meaning of the word. I don't know and I'm not asserting any particular view.

But if you go back to Greek, there is absolutely no question about the correct meaning of the word. It means to immerse. To immerse.

And you can immerse in two ways and both of them are relevant to the New Testament. You can immerse by putting something down into the water so that it is fully covered. Or you can immerse something by pouring water over it.

But whichever way you do it, it's total. It's not partial. Baptism really is a transition.

Every kind of baptism spoken of in the New Testament really represents a transition. You move out of one thing into another. And the whole of you moves, not just part of you.

For that reason I believe it's important to emphasize that baptism is total immersion. It's not just a little part of you that's affected. It's all of you that is affected by this process of baptism.

Now the word is used with two or three different prepositions. And so we need to just explain that. It's used with the preposition in and it's used with the preposition into.

Or sometimes just to. The preposition in refers to the element in which you are immersed. It may be water or it may be the Holy Spirit.

The into describes the end product or result of being immersed. What do you pass into as a result of the transition of baptism? For instance, John the Baptist's baptism was in water, into repentance or forgiveness of sins. So there's an in and an into.

The baptism in the Holy Spirit, which we will not be speaking about just yet, is in the Spirit and it's into the body of Jesus Christ. We'll come to that later. But when you're considering baptism you need to ask these two questions.

What is it in and what is it into? Now let's look at John's baptism. The baptism of John the Baptist, who got his name from the fact that he was the baptizer. This is referred to in Mark chapter 1, verses 2 through 5. As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you.

The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare the way of the Lord, make his path straight. That was the ministry specifically of John the Baptist. He was to go before the Messiah and prepare his way.

And his message basically was very simple, be summed up in one word, repent. And it says in the next verse, John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. But the word is into the remission of sins.

So they were baptized with a baptism of repentance that led to the remission or forgiveness of their sins. Baptized in water into the forgiveness of sins. And the purpose of this was to prepare the way for the coming of Israel's long-awaited Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth.

And I think it's very significant that Jesus could not come. God would not release him to come until the hearts of God's people had been prepared by repentance. And I'm inclined to think that the same is true of the coming again of Jesus.

The hearts of God's people will have to be prepared by repentance. I think in some ways repentance is the most crucial single message that God's people need today. That's just a suggestion.

John's ministry was also a very important dispensational link between two different periods of God's dealings, or two different dispensations. The dispensation of the law and the prophets and the dispensation of grace and the gospel which came with Jesus. So John is a crucial figure in the whole unfolding of God's purpose.

We know relatively little about him. And I myself have been, I think, inclined to underestimate the importance of his ministry. But his ministry was brief but it was crucial.

It prepared the way for Jesus. And his impact on his people was really tremendous. If you look in the next verse of Mark chapter 1, verse 5, it says all the land of Judea and those from Jerusalem went out to him and were all baptized to him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins.

So he reached in a very brief period of time doubtless hundreds of thousands of people. The whole population of Jerusalem, Judea and so on. As I've already said, John's baptism was into the forgiveness of sins.

He was a dispensational link between the law and the prophets and between the gospel. And Jesus brings this out in Matthew 11 and verse 13, speaking about John. He says for all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.

John was the end of that dispensation. He was a transitional link to a new dispensation of the grace of the gospel. But that makes him an important man.

In a sense he bisected the history of God's people. He ended one period and initiated another. I've often thought myself that I haven't fully appreciated the significance of John the Baptist.

Because the Bible doesn't say very much about him. But all that it says is extremely significant. Now John's baptism, he required three things of the people who came to be baptized.

Number one, it was a baptism of repentance. We've dealt already with repentance. It's not an emotion, it's a decision.

It's coming to the end of something, turning around, facing the opposite way and going in the opposite direction. And John demanded that those who came to him for baptism would meet that condition. It was first a decision, then an action.

Secondly, John demanded the public confession of sins. This seems to have dropped out of the thinking of so many people in the church today. But I have learned by observation that it's extremely powerful when God's people are sufficiently convinced by the Holy Spirit to confess their sins.

It has been the key that has sparked various revivals in the past. Especially the Welsh revival in 1904. It was marked by people confessing their sins.

And let me say something to you. You don't necessarily have to confess your sins in public. But you do have to confess your sins.

Because the only sins that God is committed to forgive are the sins we forget, that we confess. John says in his first epistle, the other John, John the apostle. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

But that sentence starts with a little word, if. If we confess our sins. If we don't confess, we have no guarantee that God will forgive.

I've dealt with many, many believers over the years who have a pile of unconfessed sin behind them. Then they come for healing or for blessing and they wonder why they don't get healed. They have a tremendous burden.

David said my sin are like a heavy burden over me. Dear friends, there are some of you here today who have a heavy burden over you. Because you've piled up sins which you haven't confessed.

And some of you would do well to get alone with God. Open your hearts to the Holy Spirit and say God show me what I need to confess. But please remember what I've said.

If you don't confess, you have no guarantee that God will forgive. If we confess, He will forgive. The third thing that John the Baptist demanded was evidence of a changed life.

He demanded evidence that people had repented. And when people came to him who apparently had not repented he refused to baptize them. And particularly those were the religious people of the day.

The Pharisees and the Sadducees. Jesus pointed out to the Pharisee's lady said the publicans, the tax collectors and the harlots believed John and you didn't. And he said they will go into the kingdom of heaven before you.

It's rather characteristic. It's very hard for strongly religious people to come to grips with a new dealing of God. And you listen to what John said.

A lot of preachers wouldn't talk like that today. But in Matthew 3 verse 7 through 9. But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism he said to them brood of vipers, who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance or answerable to a change of life. Don't think to say in yourselves we have Abraham to our father.

He said God can raise from these stones children to Abraham. It's an amazing statement, isn't it? So don't rely on your pedigree. Don't rely on your background.

You have to meet God's conditions personally. So those were the three requirements of John's baptism. Repentance, public confession of sins and evidence of a changed life.

And I want to point out something here, because it applies with every place where baptism is used. It says he baptized them into repentance. But he wouldn't baptize them unless they had already repented.

So the baptism did not produce the repentance. It was the seal and evidence that they had repented. And you'll find this will be true of every place in which the phrase baptizes into is used.

It's not used to indicate that that brought them in. But it's used to indicate that's the seal upon their being in. We'll come to this later.

Now there were limitations to the baptism of John. It only took people a certain distance. First of all, it did not produce the new birth.

Matthew chapter 11 and verse 11. Jesus says of John the Baptist, Assuredly I say to you, Among those born of women, there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist. But he who is least in the kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven, is greater than he.

So John was born of women but he was never born again. He didn't enter into the new birth. Because that was not possible till Jesus came.

So he was one of the greatest of those born of women. But he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than John. Not because of what we are, but because of where God has put us.

He has brought us into the kingdom, through the new birth. You remember Jesus said unless a person is born again he can either see nor enter the kingdom of God. So John had his limitations, God-given limitations.

Secondly, this is important, after Pentecost the baptism of John was not accepted any longer as valid. This is revealed in Acts chapter 19. Acts 19, just the first few verses.

And it happened while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul having passed through the upper regions came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples he said to them, did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? Now it doesn't, we're not told what they were disciples of. Apparently Paul was not clear.

But he asked a question which I imagine he asked everywhere he went. Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? Which proves that it's possible to believe without receiving the Holy Spirit. My first wife was like that.

She was a tigress about receiving the Holy Spirit. Whenever she met anyone she said, did you receive the Holy Spirit? And I think we are pretty slow today to raise this issue with people. Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? Well then Paul made a discovery.

They said to him, we have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit. And he said to them, into what then were you baptized? So they said, into John's baptism. Now there are different ways of understanding that.

But if they said, we have not heard that there is a Holy Spirit. Why did John say, why did Paul say, into what then were you baptized? Why the then? How come that they could not have been Christians without hearing about the Holy Spirit? One explanation is Jesus told his disciples in Matthew 28 to baptize in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. So if they had had that baptism, they must have heard of the Holy Spirit.

So Paul realized that they were never baptized as believers in Jesus. They were only baptized with the baptism of John. So Paul went on, John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance.

Saying to the people that they should believe on him who would come after him. That is, on Christ Jesus. So Paul said that was a preparatory baptism.

But now that Jesus has come, died and risen again, it's not any longer sufficient. So in verse 5, when they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. That's the critical thing.

You have to acknowledge Jesus as Lord and Messiah to qualify for baptism. And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them. They spoke with tongues and prophesied.

So Paul was thorough. He didn't accept anything superficial. He wanted the real thing and he wanted it thorough.

So they had to be believers in Jesus. They were baptized in water. And after they were baptized in water, as a distinct experience, Paul laid his hands upon them and they spoke in tongues and prophesied.

So that's trying to set the limits to the baptism of John the Baptist. Now we want to come to Christian baptism. Which is the word that I use.

What it means to be baptized as a believer in Jesus. And I would have to say that this is a far more important thing than the average Christian today realizes. Even the Baptists, generally speaking, have very little understanding of the real significance and importance of being baptized in water.

And let me say, you are not baptized into Jesus Christ because you're a sinner. It's not a baptism of repentance. Let's look at it.

Matthew chapter 3, verses 13 through 17. Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. And John tried to prevent him saying, I have need to be baptized by you and are you coming to me? Now at that moment John did not know that Jesus was the Messiah.

Because in John's gospel he says I only knew he was the Messiah when the Spirit of God descended upon him and remained on him. So that's a testimony to Jesus' life. Even though he didn't know he was the Messiah.

He said you're more righteous than I am. I couldn't be, shouldn't be the one to baptize you. But Jesus answered and said to him, Permit it to be so now.

For thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he allowed him. Then Jesus when he had been baptized came up immediately from the water.

And behold the heavens were opened to him. And he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon him. And in John's gospel it says and abiding on him.

And then there came a voice from heaven saying, This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased. It is impossible to overemphasize the importance that the New Testament attaches to being baptized in water. Because in this scene all three persons of the Godhead endorsed it.

Jesus went through it. The Holy Spirit descended upon him and had not descended upon him until he was baptized in water. And then God the Father spoke from heaven and said, This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased.

God, if you might say reverently, went bent over backwards to emphasize the extreme importance in his eyes of being baptized in water. Now I want to point out the nature of Christian baptism. It is not a baptism of repentance.

Because Jesus had no sins of which to repent. He was not baptized because he'd repented. He was baptized by John but he was not baptized with John's baptism.

What was the purpose? He states it himself. Permitted to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness. He doesn't say for me, he says for us.

He identifies himself with all who will follow him through the waters of baptism. And he says it is fitting, it is appropriate, it is becoming, in this way to fulfill all righteousness. That's what you do when you're baptized in the name of Jesus Christ as a follower of Jesus.

You are not baptized with a baptism of repentance. You have repented. But that's not why you're baptized.

You're baptized to fulfill all righteousness, to complete all righteousness. This is such an important point that I want to emphasize it. If you turn to Romans chapter 5 verse 1. Paul says of us as believers in Jesus.

Therefore having been justified by faith. We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. So Paul says through our faith in Jesus we have been justified.

Now that's one of the most important terms in the New Testament. Very little understood. I say it has a number of different meanings.

Acquitted, declared not guilty, reckoned righteous, made righteous. It has all those meanings. But through our faith in Jesus we have been acquitted.

We're declared not guilty. We've been reckoned righteous and we've been made righteous. And that's why we should be baptized.

Not because we've repented of our sins. But because it's the way to complete our righteousness. We already have righteousness imputed to us through our faith in Jesus.

Now water baptism is the appropriate way to fulfill or complete or carry out that righteousness. I think this is very, very little understood today. Now baptism essentially is a commitment.

I'm talking about Christian baptism. It's an identification with Jesus in his death, burial and resurrection. Romans chapter 6 verse 3. Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we were buried with him through baptism to death that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father.

Even so we also should walk in newness of life. So Christian baptism is identification with Jesus in death, burial and resurrection. We died with him, in the watery grave we're buried with him and then out of the watery grave we arise with him to walk in newness of life.

A different kind of life from what we've led before. And Paul says he was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father. But if you go back to Romans chapter 1 verse 4 you find he was raised from the dead by the Holy Spirit.

So when we are baptized it signifies we've come to the end of our own life. We've come to the end of doing things in our own strength and righteousness and power. From now on we're going to be like Jesus.

When we come out of the tomb, the watery tomb, it's to walk in the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus did not raise himself from the dead, that's very significant. He was raised from the dead by God the Father through the Holy Spirit.

And Paul says in Romans 1 verse 4 he was declared to be the Son of God by the Spirit of holiness through the resurrection of the dead. Two different courts, one Jewish court, one Roman court had sentenced him to death as a criminal. But on the third day when the tomb opened and he rose from the dead God reversed their decisions.

He said this is my son, he's altogether righteous and I'm bringing him back to life because he's going to be the author of life and godliness to all who will believe in him. Oh how important the resurrection is. And you see, in water baptism we act out the reality of the resurrection.

I used to be a teacher of African students years ago, training them to be teachers. And basically I told them this, people remember 30 percent of what they hear, 60 percent of what they hear and see and 90 percent of what they hear, see and do. So don't leave your pupils just sitting at a desk listening to something.

Get them involved in doing something which indicates they've understood the lesson. And God follows the same principle. So he doesn't just teach us in theory.

He lets us see things and he lets us enact things. And water baptism is an enactment, a fresh enactment every time it takes place. Of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

And in the early church you could not get into the church unless you went through that enactment of the faith that you professed. See it wasn't enough just to say I believe. They had to act out their belief.

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