

SEED & BREAD

FOR THE SOWER ISA. 55:10 FOR THE EATER
BRIEF BIBLICAL MESSAGES FROM

THE WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRY

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BAPTISM IN MATTHEW

If baptism, the water ritual, is as important and meaningful as the declarations of many would seem to indicate, then it behooves every professed lover of God's truth to take a searching look at every Biblical passage that speaks concerning it. My Bible is open before me, and if the reader will open his we will do this together.

Matthew 3:1. Here we meet up with a man called John the Baptist. He is the first and only man in Scripture who had this descriptive title added to his name. His authority to baptize came from God. As God's deputy he could officially identify, relate and merge individual Israelites with the submissive portion of Israel. He was a member of that family in Israel (the family of Aaron) to whom belonged the priestly functions. Thus, under God, he was a Jewish Priest performing a divine service for multitudes in Israel. His ritual was an addition to the many faceted divine religion that God had given to Israel through Moses and others. It signified that those who received it were identified with the submissive ones in Israel, a position that laid upon all who professed it great responsibility. We should not rush in here and try to appropriate this Jewish ceremony. It does not belong to the new life we are living in Christ Jesus.

Matthew 3:5-7. John was God's herald. The movement of people toward him began on a small scale, then grew until it reached enormous proportions. He was God's agent to bind these people to lives of submission toward God. This work was climaxed and made official by a God-given ceremony, and this was called by the same name as that which it accomplished, identification. Thus their response to his heralding was an oath in advance, pledging submission to any and all demands that God should later make upon them. They could not at that moment know what the requirements of God's government would be, but they were saying, "Whatever they are we will fulfill them."

The coming of the Pharisees and Sadducees to John's baptism is not easy to explain, since it is difficult to judge motives. However, since the movement toward John had grown immensely, it could be that they had decided to join it in the hope of assuming control. But since there was nothing in their lives that indicated submission to God

even in the least matter, John refused to perform for them the divine ritual that would identify them with the submissive in Israel.

Matthew 3:11. That which is here called *eis metanoian* (translated, "unto repentance") has to be the designation of something that was the result of John's water ritual. This should be translated "unto submission." (See Issues No. **SB106, SB107.**) These words indicate the position of all in Israel who were then living as professedly submissive ones, a definite company in Israel, known and recognized as such by God.

This is the first of eight references to "**baptism in the Holy Spirit**" (*baptisei en pneumati hagio*). The Lord Jesus is revealed as being the One who will do this. He is also declared to be the One who will identify them with "fire." This has to be a metaphorical use of the word "fire." Something is called "fire" that is not at all literal fire; that is, it is not the light and heat that is caused by the combustion of flammable material. To be "tried by fire" (1 Pet. 1 :7) was a common expression among the Hebrews, usually signifying the most searching and revealing judgment.

If the Bible is searched it will bring the conviction that when the word fire is used metaphorically, it often has to do with the judgments (not, punishments) of God. See Psalm 97:3, 104:4; Jer. 5:14, 23:29; Obad. 1:18; Mal. 3:2. The promise made in Matt. 3:11 is that the saints in Israel are to be identified with the judgments of God in the day when He governs. See Matt. 19:28; 1 Cor. 6:2.

Matthew 3:13, 14, 16. Since a new ordinance and command had been added to the divine religion that God had given to Israel, it became God's will that all in Israel should submit then and there (in advance) to His coming government. They were expected to be identified by John the Identifier with the submissive company in Israel. It was obedience to a divine directive, an act of righteousness, when an Israelite fulfilled God's requirement. Our Lord was an Israelite, and as such He came to John in order to be identified with the body of the submissive. When John raised an objection to doing this for the Lord, Jesus declared that it was becoming to both of them to do all that was proper and right. Since our Lord came to earth committed in advance to do the will of God, it was His desire to be identified with the submissive ones in Israel.

Matthew 11:11, 12; 14:2, 8; 16:14; 17:13. Six occurrences of John's official and descriptive title are found in these passages. They reveal many facts concerning John but nothing as to the significance of water baptism.

Matthew 20:22, 23. In this passage we find six occurrences of the word "baptism," none of which can possibly refer to the water ritual. The two brothers to whom these words were directed understood them in the light of truth that had already been

revealed to them (See Matt. 16:21). Among all those who used the Greek language at this time, the word *baptizo* had many meanings, one of which signified a calamity of overwhelming nature. In Classical Greek it was used to describe a man going through deep water that covered his head. It was used of a ship so baptized (overwhelmed) by waves that it sank; also of men so deep in debt that they were overwhelmed by it. Our Lord used it in this sense here, asking James and John if they could be overwhelmed by the overwhelming *calamity* that was even then overwhelming Him.

Matthew 21:25. In this passage the word "heaven" is used as a synonym for God, a positive fact that many professed teachers of the Word stubbornly refuse to recognize. My answer to this question is that John's baptism was from Heaven, and by "Heaven" I mean God. See Issue No. 34 for a fuller study of this word.

Matthew 26:23. The word "dippeth" here is *embapias* which is a cognate of the word *embapto*.

Matthew 28:19. This passage has for so long been called "the great commission" that many Christians believe it is God's supreme directive for today. It could be more accurately called "the apostles commission" since these words were spoken directly to the eleven apostles. (Matt. 28:16), Judas at that time being out of the picture. It was to these men just before His arrest that the Lord Jesus said, "**You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and appoint you that you should go and bring forth fruit**" (John 15:16). He did not tell them when or where they should go, but they knew from His words that in due time they would be going. After His death, burial and resurrection, He took up the same theme again by saying "having gone" or "going then." This is one word in the Greek (*poreuthentes*). It is a participle which is an auxiliary to the main verb which is *matheteusate* (disciple). He did not say "Go" or "Go ye," as many wish that He had, and finish up putting these words into His mouth.

I remember well, a good many years ago, attending what were called "Missionary Rallies," the chief purpose of which was to produce "missionary volunteers," then raise money to "send these fine young people out." On several occasions I heard the speaker say: "It is not a call, it is a command - Go ye into all nations." The ironical discrepancy of his bombast was that he had not himself gone to any nation except his own. The Greek here is not difficult. It says: "**Having gone, disciple all the nations.**" This is the heart of this commission - disciple nations, and it does not have to do with individuals. The nations are to be discipled and then are to be identified with or related to the name (character) of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Thus they will be merged into all the programs and purposes of the Deity in the day when God governs the world. The words "in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit" were never intended to be some magic formula that a clergyman was supposed to repeat as he dipped someone into water or sprinkled water upon them.

This commission cannot be carried out until Jesus Christ makes request of the Father and the nations are given to Him as His portion (Psa. 2:8; 82:8), not until God is governing the nations upon the earth (Psa. 67:4). At this time the men to whom these words were spoken will be "**sitting upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel**" (Matt. 19:28). Because of their positions under God, their powers, their past history, they will be the most honored and revered statesmen upon the earth. And since the nations at that time will want to be identified with the Deity (Psa. 67:4; 72:11, 17; 138:4; Isa. 55:5; Matt. 12:21; Rom. 15:12), these powerful men will go forth and relate nations to God in Christ in a formal and declared union. Furthermore, they will instruct the nations in regard to their responsibilities and conduct under God's government.

These words of the Lord Jesus will provide guidance to the apostles in a day that is yet future. It will be after He has shown judgment to the nations, after He has sent forth judgment and gained the victory. It will be when the nations are trusting in Him (Matt. 12:18-21). The great truths of this commission should not be stultified and ignored so that men can use it as the foundation of their own programs.

Thus we have looked at every passage in Matthew where "baptism" is mentioned. And as a result there are no facts that stand out more clearly than that baptism was a divine addition to the divine religion God had given to Israel. It was performed by one who was a priest in Israel, and was not heralded to anyone except Israelites living in the land of Palestine. There is nothing in the first gospel that tells us to baptize anyone or to go out and find someone who will do it for us. Men will ever argue as to the mode of baptism whether it is sprinkling, pouring, or immersion. And when they have settled upon a certain mode they will go out and find someone who will do it for them that way. They will then think they have been baptized, but most of them won't even know what the verb *baptizo* means. Neither will they know the difference between the ritual and the reality. However, there are many more passages to be considered, and final conclusions must wait until we have examined them.

End Issue No. SB143