

## “Baptize You With The Holy Spirit And Fire”

Matt. 3:11, 12

### Introduction

1. One of the difficult passages of the Bible is found in Matthew 3 and Luke 3. (Matt. 3:11,12; Lk. 3:15-17).

MAT 3:11 "As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; **He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.**

MAT 3:12 "And His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

LUK 3:15 Now while the people were in a state of expectation and all were wondering in their hearts about John, as to whether he might be the Christ,

LUK 3:16 John answered and said to them all, "As for me, I baptize you with water; but One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals; **He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.**

LUK 3:17 "And His winnowing fork is in His hand to thoroughly clear His threshing floor, and to gather the wheat into His barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

2. The words of John have been misunderstood by many, and greatly abused by many others.
3. It is important that we carefully analyze this important passage.

### Background

1. Matthew and Luke are giving a very brief account of John’s ministry.
  - a. It began in the 15<sup>th</sup> year of Tiberius. (Lk. 3:1).

LUK 3:1 Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip was tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene,

- 1) This was about A.D. 11.
  - 2) John began his ministry in roughly A.D. 25 Jesus was born around 5 to 6 B.C.. about 30 to 31 years earlier.
  - 3) Herod died in about 4 B.C. and Jesus was about 2 years old when he died. (Matt. 2:16, 22).
- b. It began about six months before Jesus launched His ministry when He was about 30 years of age. (Lk. 3:23).

LUK 3:23 And when He began His ministry, Jesus Himself **was about thirty years of age**, being supposedly the son of Joseph, the son of Eli,

2. John was held in high esteem by Jesus. (Lk. 7:28).

LUK 7:28 "I say to you, among those born of women, there is no one greater than John; yet he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he." "Greater" refers to the blessings and privileges of those "in the kingdom of God."

a. He was held to be a prophet by the majority of the Jews. (Matt. 21:23-26).

MAT 21:23 And when He had come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to Him as He was teaching, and said, "By what authority are You doing these things, and who gave You this authority?"

MAT 21:24 And Jesus answered and said to them, "I will ask you one thing too, which if you tell Me, I will also tell you by what authority I do these things.

MAT 21:25 "The baptism of John was from what source, from heaven or from men?" And they began reasoning among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' He will say to us, 'Then why did you not believe him?'

MAT 21:26 "But if we say, 'From men,' we fear the multitude; **for they all hold John to be a prophet.**"

b He was the prophet spoken of by Isaiah and Malachi. (Isa. 40:3; Mal. 4:5,6). See Lk. 1:15-17.

ISA 40:3 A voice is calling, "Clear the way for the Lord in the wilderness; Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God.

MAL 4:5 "Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord.

MAL 4:6 "And he will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the land with a curse."

LUK 1:15 "For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and he will drink no wine or liquor; and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, while yet in his mother's womb.

LUK 1:16 "And he will turn back many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God.

LUK 1:17 "And it is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous; so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

c. He was also the forerunner to Jesus. (Lk. 1:17; Jn. 1:19-23, 28-30).

d. His ministry began about six months before Jesus and he called upon men to accept Jesus, the Lamb of God. (Lk. 1:26; Jn. 1:29).

3. He informs us that multitudes were going in the wilderness of Judea to hear John.

MAT 3:1 Now in those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying,

MAT 3:5 Then Jerusalem was going out to him, and all Judea, and all the district around the Jordan;

a. The word "all" is a hyperbole meaning "many," but not literally every person.

b. Not every one in Jerusalem and Judea were in the wilderness, and not every one accepted John and responded to his preaching.

c. This is illustrated, in part, by the Pharisees and the lawyers.

LUK 7:30 But the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected God's purpose for themselves, not having been baptized by John.

d. Multitudes did respond to the preaching of John by being immersed **for the forgiveness of sins.** (Mk. 1:4).

MAR 1:4 John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness preaching a baptism of repentance **for the forgiveness of sins.**

**Note:**

- "the wilderness of Judea" was near the Dead Sea not far from the mouth of the Jordan River.

- John had spent a lot of time in the deserts before he began his ministry. (Lk. 1:80).
- 4. John was preaching the message of repentance and informing the multitude that the kingdom was near. (Matt. 3:2).
  - a. Daniel had prophesied the coming of this kingdom. (Dan. 2:44).
  - b. Jesus also taught His disciples to pray for it and that it was near. (Matt. 6:10; 4:17; 10:7; Mk. 9:1).
- 5. Many were confessing their sins and were being baptized. (Matt. 3:6).

MAT 3:6 and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, as they confessed their sins.

- a. The element of John’s baptism was water. (Matt. 3:11).
- b. He was baptizing [immersing] in the Jordan River.
- c. The word “baptism” has the meaning of being immersed.
- d. Baptism [immersion] was always in water. (Acts 2:36; 10:47; 1 Pet. 3:21).
- e. The Jordan River provided plenty of water and space for baptizing such large numbers. See Jn. 3:23.

JOH 3:23 And John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, **because there was much water there**; and they were coming and were being baptized.

- f. It was a “baptism unto repentance.” (Mk. 1:4; Lk. 3:3; Acts 13:24; 19:4).

MAR 1:4 John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness preaching **a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins**.

LUK 3:3 And he came into all the district around the Jordan, preaching **a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins**;

ACT 13:24 after John had proclaimed before His coming **a baptism of repentance** to all the people of Israel.

ACT 19:4 And Paul said, "John baptized with **the baptism of repentance**, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus."

1) “unto” is from the Greek “eis” [ace]. This word occurs 1750 times in the New Testament and is a word that always looks forward, and not backwards. Some translations render it “so that” in a few verses. (Acts 2:38).

- It is translated in a variety of ways such as “unto, to, for, into, in order to.” It is sometimes translated “at, in face of.” (Matt. 12:41; Rom. 4:20). See NASB & NIV for the use of “at.”
- In the case of Jonah “they repented at [eis] the preaching of Jonah.” Literally it can be rendered “into the preaching of Jonah.” The idea is “into what Jonah demanded.” It was necessary that they not only repent while Jonah was there, but also after he left Nineveh. A temporary repentance would be of no value.
- It never has a causal meaning as some have attempted to translate it. (Acts 3:19; Rom. 10:10; Heb. 10:39; Acts 11:18; 2 Cor. 7:10; Matt. 26:28).

MAT 3:11 "As for me, I baptize you with water for [eis] repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

- The word “eis” here does not mean “because of.” Jesus would have used the Greek “dia” [**dee** ah] if this is

what He meant. The Greek “dia” means “because of.”

- Though they had repented and were confessing sins (Matt. 3:6), John was not baptizing solely for that reason.
  - He was baptizing them “unto” a life of continuing repentance. They were to bring forth fruit “worthy of repentance” the balance of their lives. (Matt. 3:8). Lit. “fruit worthy of the repentance”
  - The object of their baptism was to lead to a life of doing God’s will - “into” a state of repenting and confessing sins.
  - Repentance is not a once for all act, but it is continual. John taught Christians to confess sins and seek forgiveness. (1 Jn. 1:7-10).
- g. John’s baptism was “for” the forgiveness of sins. (Mk. 1:4; Lk. 3:3). “for” has the meaning of “in order to receive.” See Acts 2:38.
- h. John refused to baptize some because they had not repented (Matt. 3:7, 8), and once baptized this would not change because of their sinful hearts.

6. John makes reference to the vain boast of the Jews.

MAT 3:9 and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father'; for I say to you, that God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham.

- a. John indicated it was not special to be a mere physical descendant of Abraham.
- b. This agrees with what Paul later revealed. (Gal. 3:26-29).

GAL 3:26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

GAL 3:27 For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

GAL 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

GAL 3:29 And if you belong to Christ, **then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.**

- c. Paul also affirmed that the true Jews was one who has experienced circumcision of the heart and that this is what counts with God. (Rom. 2:28,29).

ROM 2:28 For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh.

ROM 2:29 But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.

7. John refused to baptize those who were insincere and warned them “to flee from the wrath to come.” (Matt. 3:7-10).

MAT 3:7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"

MAT 3:8 "Therefore bring forth fruit in keeping with repentance;

MAT 3:9 and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father'; for I say to you, that God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham.

MAT 3:10 "And the axe is already laid at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

- a. John shows that only those who are repenting should be baptized.

b. He also reveals that the wrath of God awaits those who refuse:

- 1) To repent - This is produced by “godly sorrow” (2 Cor. 7:10).
- 2) Be baptized
- 3) Bring forth fruit worthy of repentance.

### **John’s Statement**

1. John informs us that he was baptizing “in water unto repentance,” that is, continual repentance.
2. He then speaks of the One coming after him.
  - a. It is clear he is speaking of Jesus.
  - b. He says of Jesus “but he who comes after me is mightier than I, whose shoe I am not worthy to bear.”
  - c. John had earlier spoke of Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away sins. (Jn. 1:29).
  - d. He knew he must decrease, but Jesus must increase. (Jn. 3:30).
3. John says Jesus would baptize them “in the Holy Spirit and fire.”

### **Questions Arise About This Statement**

1. What is John referring to in this passage when he says Jesus would baptize “in the Holy Spirit and fire.”
  - a. This is something future for Jesus was baptized with John’s baptism. (Matt. 3:13-17).
  - b. The disciples of Jesus also baptized for the forgiveness of sins. (Jn. 4:1,2).

JOH 4:1 When therefore the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John

JOH 4:2 (although Jesus Himself was not baptizing, but His disciples were),

- 1) There is no indication that the disciples were baptizing for a different reason than John.
  - 2) There is merely the statement that the Pharisees were aware that the disciples of Jesus were baptizing more disciples than John.
2. Bible students have tried to explain John’s words about the Holy Spirit and fire in many ways that are not founded in the scriptures.
  3. We shall examine what is meant by the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the baptism of fire.

### **Baptism Of The Holy Spirit**

1. Baptism is used here in a metaphorical sense as is the case in some other scriptures. (Mk. 10:38; Lk. 12:50; 1 Cor. 10:2).

MAR 10:38 But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking for. Are you able to drink the cup that I

drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?"

LUK 12:50 "But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is accomplished!

1CO 10:2 and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea;

2. These words ‘baptize you with the Holy Spirit,’ in Matthew 3 and Luke 3, refers to the apostles.
3. There is no record of anyone being baptized in the Holy Spirit in the gospels.
4. Jesus did promise His apostles would receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit. (Lk. 24:49; Mk. 9:1; Acts 1:5, 8).

LUK 24:49 "And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."

MAR 9:1 And He was saying to them, "Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who shall not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come **with power**."

ACT 1:5 for John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now. "

ACT 1:8 but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth. "

- a. Three of these passages were spoken directly to the apostles. (Lk. 24:49; Acts 1:5, 8).
  - b. We have no record of Jesus promising the baptism of the Holy Spirit to any other than the apostles.
5. This promise was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost - the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus. (Acts 2:1-4).

ACT 2:1 And when the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place.

ACT 2:2 And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent, rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.

ACT 2:3 And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them.

ACT 2:4 And they were all **filled with the Holy Spirit** and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.

- a. The Greek “baptizo” [bahp **tid** zo] means “to dip, immerse, submerge, overwhelm.”
- b. The apostles received “the power from on high” that Jesus had promised. (Lk. 24:49).
- c. They initially demonstrated this by being able to speak in “tongues” [languages] they had not studied. (Acts 2:4, 6- 11).

ACT 2:6 And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were bewildered, because they were each one hearing them speak in his own language.

ACT 2:7 And they were amazed and marveled, saying, "Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans?"

ACT 2:8 "And how is it that we each hear them in our own language to which we were born?"

ACT 2:9 "Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,

ACT 2:10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes,

ACT 2:11 Cretans and Arabs-- we hear them in our own tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God. "

- 1) There is not a word about the multitude receiving the miraculous gift of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost.

2) Some or many later received the Holy Spirit through the laying on of the apostles' hands. (Acts 6:6; 8:14-17; 19:1-6; 1 Cor. 12:4-11).

5. There is no evidence that believers were baptized with the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, or they received any miraculous power.
  - a. Following Pentecost it was the apostles who were performing miracles. (Acts 2:43; 5:12). See Acts 11:15-18.
  - b. It was several years after Pentecost before we read of anyone other than the apostles being baptized in the Holy Spirit. (Acts 6:8; 8:13).
  - c. The Bible reveals that Cornelius and his family were baptized with the Holy Spirit. (Acts 10:44, 45).

ACT 10:44 While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message.

ACT 10:45 And all the circumcised believers who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out upon the Gentiles also.

- d. The baptism of the Holy Spirit gave them power to speak in tongues [languages] .

ACT 10:46 For they were hearing them speaking with tongues and exalting God.

- e. It did not save them or give them the many powers of the apostles, but it manifested that Gentiles could be saved. (Acts 11:15-18).
      - f. They still needed to be baptized. (Acts 10:48).
6. The New Testament does not record it, but by implication it teaches us that Paul at some point was baptized with the Holy Spirit.
  - a. Acts 9:15-18 could be a reference to the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

ACT 9:15 But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel;

ACT 9:16 for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake. "

ACT 9:17 And Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight, and **be filled with the Holy Spirit.**"

ACT 9:18 And immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he regained his sight, and he arose and was baptized;

- 1) The words "be filled with the Holy Spirit" were used to record the 12 apostles receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:4). See Acts 1:2, 5, 11.
      - 2) Reference is made to Paul being "filled with the Holy Spirit" is made later in Acts. (Acts 13:9).
      - 3) Being "filled with the Holy Spirit" does not always denote Holy Spirit baptism (Acts 13:52), but it is very probable this is the meaning of Acts 9:17.

ACT 13:9 But Saul, who was also known as Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, fixed his gaze upon him,

- b. He spoke by revelation of Jesus Christ. (Gal. 1:12).

c. He had all the powers of the twelve apostles, and was not inferior to them in anything. (2 Cor. 12:11,12).

d. He could even raise the dead. (Acts 20:9,10).

## **Baptism of Fire**

1. Some have tried to identify it with the outpouring and baptism of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost.

2. They seek to make it a part of the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

3. This is a false, erroneous conclusion.

4. The context of Matthew 3 suggests it has reference to the final fate of the wicked.

a. Matthew 3:10 says.

MAT 3:10 "And the axe is already laid at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

b. Again John says in Matthew 3:12.

MAT 3:12 "And His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

c. These scriptures are strong evidence that John is talking about hell.

1) The wicked are compared to a tree not bearing good fruit and "the chaff." (Matt. 3:10, 12).

MAT 3:10 "And the axe is already laid at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

MAT 3:12 "And His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

2) This baptism of fire is one and the same as "the lake of fire."

REV 20:14 And death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.

REV 20:15 And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

REV 21:8 "But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

d. There is absolutely no evidence that John has reference to Holy Spirit baptism when talking about "fire."

e. There was no baptism of fire on the day of Pentecost.

f. Luke records,

ACT 2:2 And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent, rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.

ACT 2:3 And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them.

1) There was no fire baptism on that day.



2) Luke says, “there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves.” “as of fire” is not literal fire.

3) It “rested on each one of them” referring to the apostles.

4) They were not overwhelmed with fire on Pentecost.

g. Matthew 3:12 has reference to this.

“Fan” is the coming judgment	“Chaff” is the wicked.	“Threshing floor” is the world.
“Wheat” refers to the just.	The “tree” not bearing fruit is the wicked.	The One with the winnowing fan is the Lord. (Acts 17:30, 31).

h. In Matthew mankind is often divided into two classes.

Wheat and chaff (Matt. 3:11, 12).	Wheat and tares. (Matt. 13:30, 41-32).
Good and bad (Matt. 13:48-50).	Sheep and goats (Matt. 25:31-46).

5. Some have sought to make the baptism of fire refer to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

a. At that time general Titus under the orders of Vespasian burned the city of Jerusalem after laying sieged to it for a long time.

b. This would mean that the baptism of fire, as John used it, has already occurred.

1) This is suspect because John has never made reference to the destruction of Jerusalem in his ministry unless this passage be forced to mean such.

2) This is a subject introduced by Jesus at the end of His ministry. (Matt. 24).

c. Making baptism of fire refer to the destruction of Jerusalem is unlikely and does not seem to fit the way Matthew treats the wheat and chaff, the good and the bad, wheat and tares, and the sheep and goats.

d. The “bad” and the “goats” and “tares” end up in hell. (Matt. 13:30, 41-42; 13:48-50; 25:31, 46).

e. The “chaff” [the wicked] also ends up in hell.

f. John used the word “unquenchable” from the Greek “asbestos” [ahs behs tahs] that is not a description of a regular or ordinary fire that would burn itself out when the chaff was consumed.

g. He is talking about an eternal, unquenchable fire like the fires of hell.

### Two Baptisms

1. These passages are not speaking of one baptism, but two baptisms. (Matt. 3:11,12; Lk. 3:15-17).

2. There is the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the baptism of fire.

3. Baptism of the Holy Spirit was for the apostles and for Cornelius and his family.

- a. The Bible does not record it, but it appears that Paul was also baptized with the Holy Spirit.
  - b. He had the same power as the rest of the apostles.
4. Baptism of fire is for the wicked. (Rev. 20:14,15; 21:8).

REV 20:14 And death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.

REV 20:15 And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

REV 21:8 "But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

#### **What The 3,000 Received (Acts 2:41).**

ACT 2:41 So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

1. They received remission of sins. (Acts 2:38). See Paul - Acts 22:16.

ACT 2:38 And Peter said to them, "Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

ACT 22:16 'And now why do you delay? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.'

2. They received the indwelling measure of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38; 5:32).

- a. See Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 6:19, 20.

- b. This was a sign of their sonship. (Gal. 4:6; Eph. 1:13, 14).

3. They became children of God through faith and baptism. (Gal. 3:26, 27).

GAL 3:26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

GAL 3:27 For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

4. This measure produced "the fruit of the Spirit," but not miracles. (Gal. 5:22-24).

"Scripture taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE®,  
© Copyright 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation

Used by permission." ([www.Lockman.org](http://www.Lockman.org))

