

What Baptism is all About



Matthew 3:13-17 TEXT, EXPOSITION AND PRACTICAL HELPS

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THE PREPARATION FOR THE MESSIAH'S COMING, [Matthew 3:1-4:11](#)

Jesus' Baptism: What Baptism is All About

[\(Matthew 3:13-17\)](#) **Introduction:** What is baptism all about? The answer is found in studying Jesus' baptism and John's reaction to Jesus' baptism.

1. **The startling request of Jesus: to be baptized (v.13).**
2. **The humbling reaction of John: humility and need (v.14).**
3. **The godly purpose of Jesus: to fulfill all righteousness (v.15).**
4. **The unusual signs of Jesus' baptism (v.16-17).**

[DEEPER STUDY #1 \(Matthew 3:13-17\) Galilee to Jordan](#) (see page # 9 for more discussion.)

1. [\(Matthew 3:13\) Jesus Christ, Baptism: the startling request of Jesus—to be baptized.](#)

1. Note the words "**to be baptized of him [John].**" Jesus came specifically to John to be baptized. Jesus was compelled to be baptized, but not *just* to be baptized. He was compelled to be baptized *by John*. He was to identify Himself with John's ministry. He was the Messiah, the Lamb of God, being proclaimed by John.

2. Note why Jesus would seek to be baptized. The very fact that the Son of God would be baptized is startling. He was the Author and Finisher of our faith, the Founder of the movement of Christianity. He was the One who was making baptism *possible and effectual* (working) for man. John's baptism was a call for men to take a stand and to become identified with a life of repentance and righteousness. Jesus needed no repentance; He was already perfectly righteous. He was the *Purchaser* of righteousness, the Ideal Man (see [Deeper Study #2—Matthew 8:20](#) see page # 9 for more discussion). His righteousness was the pattern, the very righteousness that could stand for and cover every man. Why then would Jesus be baptized? Very simply, in His own words, "**to fulfill all righteousness**" (see note, pt.5—[Matthew 3:15](#) see page # 5 for brief explanation.)

2. [\(Matthew 3:14\) Humility: the humbling reaction of John—humility and need.](#)

John argued against Jesus coming to him for baptism. Why? John simply said, "**I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?**"

He was saying at least two things.

1. He was not worthy to baptize Christ. Christ's coming to him was too great an honor for him. He did not deserve the privilege of baptizing the Messiah, the Lamb of God ([John 1:29](#)).

John's humility was most unusual, for John was the *great one* in the eyes of the people at this time. Multitudes of people were flocking to him ([Luke 3:7](#)): the general public ([Luke 3:10](#)), tax collectors ([Luke 3:12](#)), soldiers ([Luke 3:14](#)), and religionists ([Matthew 3:7](#)). He had reached the summit in the public's eye. He was honored above all by vast numbers of people despite being opposed by religionists and traditionalists ([Luke 7:28](#)). Yet when Christ approached him, he lowered himself and acknowledged that he was nothing in comparison.

2. He personally needed the baptism of Christ. He needed what Christ had. Christ was to baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire, and John was confessing his need to receive the Holy Spirit and fire from Christ (see [Deeper Study # 3—Matthew 3:11](#) see page # 10 for more discussion).

Thought 1. No one is worthy of God's call; no one is worthy to minister to Christ. The fact that God allows any kind of relationship with Himself is beyond comprehension. Yet He has. He calls man to be with Him and to serve Him. This fact is too much for the human heart to contain.

"The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed" ([Matthew 8:8](#)).

"Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?" ([Matthew 25:37](#)).

"When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord" ([Luke 5:8](#)).

"For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building" ([1 Cor. 3:9](#)).

"For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead" ([2 Cor. 5:14](#)).

"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ" ([Ephes. 3:8](#)).

Thought 2. Everyone needs what John had and what Jesus had. (See above note—[Matthew 3:14](#).)

- 1) John had humility.
- 2) Jesus had the Holy Spirit and fire (see [Deeper Study #3—Matthew 3:11](#) see page # 10 for more discussion).

"Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven" ([Matthew 18:4](#)).

"For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith" ([Romans 12:3](#)).

"Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others" ([Phil. 2:3-4](#)).

"Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up" ([James 4:10](#)).

Thought 3. It is no disgrace to confess one's need for Christ and for what He offers. John so confessed. How can a person be disgraced by confessing what everyone else already knows?

- 1) Man dies and desperately needs God to give him life—eternal life.
- 2) Man misbehaves and desperately needs the fullness of the Holy Spirit, that is, love, joy, peace..... ([Galatians 5:22-23](#)).

Thought 4. The great (famous, powerful, wealthy) as well as the lowly need what Christ gives: the Holy Spirit and fire.

Thought 5. The believer always needs more and more of the infilling of the Holy Spirit. John had been "filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb" ([Luke 1:15](#)). Now with Christ confronting him face to face, he confessed his need for more of the Spirit of God and of the Lord's fire (see [Deeper Study #3—Matthew 3:11](#) see page # 10 for more discussion.)

"Be filled with the Spirit" ([Ephes. 5:18](#)).

Thought 6. The closer a person lives with Jesus Christ the *clearer* he sees his need for more humility and more of God's Spirit. John was already close to God; in fact, he had been "sent from God" ([John 1:6](#)). But he saw his need for what Christ had to give. (See [Deeper Study #3—Matthew 3:11](#) see page # 10 for more discussion.)

3. ([Matthew 3:15](#)) Baptism: the godly purpose of Jesus—to fulfill all righteousness.

Jesus was baptized primarily "**to fulfill all righteousness.**" He was symbolically predicting what He was going to do for sinful man.

1. He was going to fulfill every law of God for man. Baptism was one of those laws. Therefore, he had to be baptized. ([Exodus 29:4-7](#).)
2. He was going to pay man's penalty for having broken the law—the penalty of death. His immersion was a symbol of His coming immersion into death.
3. He was demonstrating to the fullest extent His humiliation in becoming a man. He had emptied Himself and "**made himself of no reputation and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men**" ([Phil. 2:6-7](#)).
4. He was identifying with those He came to save, and He was insisting that all who follow Him become so identified.
5. He was pioneering the movement of repentance and righteousness which John was proclaiming. In founding the movement, that is, the life of righteousness, Jesus had to set the Ideal and the Pattern for every man. Every man was to be baptized, so the Son of God pioneered and established the ordinance of baptism.
6. He was initiating His ministry. John shows this ([John 1:31-34](#)). The High Priest had always entered his ministry in such a special ceremony ([Exodus 29:4-7](#)).

Thought 1. There are several lessons to learn from Christ's request to be baptized (see above note—[Matthew 3:13](#)).

- 1) **Righteousness.** Every man must determine to "**fulfill all righteousness**" just as Christ did. Every commandment of God must be fulfilled in the believer's life (see [Deeper Study # 4, Righteousness—Matthew 5:6](#) see page # 11 for more discussion).

"And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another" ([1 John 3:23](#)).

- 2) **Sacrifice.** Every man should be *so willing* to give of himself that he would die in order to live for God (see [Deeper Study # 5, Belief—Mark 16:16](#) see page # 13 for more discussion).

"And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" ([Luke 9:23](#)).

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" ([Romans 12:1-2](#)).

"But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" ([Hebrews 13:16](#)).

- 3) **Humility.** Every man should demonstrate to the fullest extent his willingness to serve others. He should become one with others and set the example of such before all.

"Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble" ([1 Peter 5:5](#)).

- 4) **Identifying with others.** Every man should become one with all others, excluding no one from his life or service.

"We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves" ([Romans 15:1](#)).

"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ" ([Galatians 6:2](#)).

"For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" ([Hebrews 4:15](#)).

"Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body" ([Hebrews 13:3](#)).

- 5) **Pioneering the life of repentance and righteousness.** Every man should repent and live the life of righteousness, and every man should pioneer and proclaim such a life to all other men.

"Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee" ([Acts 8:22](#)).

"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" ([Isaiah 55:7](#)).

"Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame" ([1 Cor. 15:34](#)).

"Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God" ([Phil. 1:11](#)).

"That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ" ([1 John 1:3](#)).

- 6) **Ministry.** Every man should minister to others; he should let his willingness to minister be known.

"Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that showed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise" ([Luke 10:36-37](#)).

"If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet" ([John 13:14](#)).

"As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" ([Galatians 6:10](#)).

Thought 2. Christ calls and insists that a person accept His call, and Christ does not back down.

Note four facts.

- 1) A person may feel unworthy and lacking in ability, but Christ has both the power and gifts to enable the person to accept His call.
- 2) A sense of unworthiness and inability is understood by God, but *refusal is not*.
- 3) Christ accepts only one answer to His call: "Yes, Lord—here am I" ([1 Samuel 3:4-6, 8](#); [Isaiah 6:8](#)).
- 4) Humility does two contradictory things: it confesses unworthiness and inability, yet it yields and accepts the task or gift.

4. ([Matthew 3:16-17](#)) Jesus Christ, Baptism: the unusual signs of Jesus' baptism.

Three signs in particular are mentioned by Matthew.

1. The heavens were opened. This may be a scene of the clouds being rolled back and the dove descending from the heavens (clouds and sky). Or it may be some special vision given to Jesus and John, revealing that God was opening up heaven for the full approval and manifestation of God's power upon His Son. ([Ephes. 1:1](#); [Acts 7:56](#).)

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" ([Ephes. 1:3](#)).

"But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" ([Ephes. 2:4-6](#)).

2. The Spirit descended like a dove. The dove was given to John as a special sign that Jesus was the Son of God (See [Deeper Study # 6, Holy Spirit--John 1:32-33](#) see page # 15 for more discussion).

Thought 1. Signs in Jesus' ministry were given to stir belief ([John 5:36](#); [John 10:38](#)). Most believers can point to very special signs and circumstances that were given by God to stir their faith and give direction to their lives. (See [Deeper Study # 7, Signs—John 2:23](#) see page # 16 for more discussion).

Thought 2. There are very special signs that prove a person has received the Holy Spirit.

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law" ([Galatians 5:22-23](#)).

3. The voice of God was heard.

Three significant things are said here.

1. *My Son*: this points to the deity of Christ ([Matthew 14:33](#); [Matthew 27:43](#); [Matthew 27:54](#); [Mark 1:1](#); [John 1:34](#); [John 3:18](#); [John 10:36](#); [John 11:4](#); [John 20:31](#); [Acts 8:37](#); [Romans 1:4](#); [Hebrews 4:14](#); [1 John 3:8](#); [1 John 4:15](#); [1 John 5:5](#), [10](#), [13](#), [20](#)).
2. *Beloved Son*: this points to the love within the Godhead (Trinity) ([John 3:35](#); [John 10:17](#); [Col. 1:13](#); [Isaiah 42:1](#)).
3. *Well pleased*: this points to the perfect life Jesus lived. He was "yet without sin" ([Hebrews 4:15](#); [Hebrews 7:26](#); [2 Cor. 5:21](#)).

Thought 1. The one thing that a believer should want to hear is what Jesus heard: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

- 1) Believers are adopted as children of God ([Romans 8:15](#); [Galatians 4:4-6](#)).
- 2) Believers can have their lives and service approved by God.

"Well done, thou good and faithful servant" ([Matthew 25:21](#)).

"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" ([2 Cor. 5:21](#)).

"Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" ([2 Tim. 2:15](#)).

Thought 2. God saw the life and behavior of Christ, and He judged Christ as *well pleasing*. God sees every man, and shall judge the life and works of every man. Nothing is hid from His eyes.

"For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known" ([Luke 12:2](#)).

"Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God" ([1 Cor. 4:5](#)).

"For though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked before me, saith the Lord GOD" ([Jeremiah 2:22](#)).

"For mine eyes are upon all their ways: they are not hid from my face neither is their iniquity hid from mine eyes" ([Jeremiah 16:17](#)).

[DEEPER STUDY # 8 \(Matthew 3:16\) Spirit of God](#) see page # 18 for more discussion).

DEEPER STUDY #1

([Matthew 3:13-17](#)) Galilee to Jordan: Mark said that Jesus came "from Nazareth of Galilee" ([Mark 1:9](#)).

Note several things.

1. The last recorded event of Jesus' childhood was His return to Israel from Egypt. He was only a "young child" at that time ([Matthew 2:19-21](#)).
2. The only other event recorded about Jesus' childhood and early manhood was His sharing with the religious authorities in the temple at age twelve ([Luke 2:42](#)).
3. Jesus' hometown was Nazareth. He apparently lived there between His return from Egypt until the launch of His ministry when He was about thirty years old.
4. The distance from Galilee to the Jordan river was a long journey on foot.
5. Jesus deliberately chose Jordan as the place to launch His ministry. It was in Jordan that His forerunner, John the Baptist, had been preparing the way for Him. Many were now waiting "for the consolation of Israel," that is, the coming of the Messiah.

DEEPER STUDY # 2

([Matthew 8:20](#)) The Son of Man: Jesus is not only what an ordinary man is, a son of man; Jesus is what every man ought to be, the Son of Man Himself. He is the Ideal Man, the Representative Man, the Perfect Man, the Pattern, the Embodiment of everything a man ought to be. Jesus Christ is the perfect picture of a man. Everything God wants a man to be is seen perfectly in Jesus Christ ([John 1:14](#); [Col. 2:9-10](#); [Hebrews 1:3](#).)

The title also means the Ideal Servant of man. It stresses His sympathy for the poor, the broken-hearted, the captives, the blind, the bruised, the outcasts, the bereaved ([Luke 4:18](#)). Jesus is the Pattern, the Model, the Perfect Example of concern and caring. He served and set a perfect example of how every man ought to serve other men.

Jesus calls Himself "**the Son of Man**" about eighty times. It is His favorite term. The title Son of Man is probably based upon the Son of Man in Daniel ([Daniel 7:13-14](#)). Scripture also gives a picture of Jesus as the heavenly Son of Man contrasted with Adam as the earthly Man ([1 Cor. 15:45-47](#)). Each serves as a Representative Man for the human race in God's plan for world history.

"But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house" ([Matthew 9:6](#)).

"When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?...And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" ([Matthew 16:13, 16](#)).

"Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" ([Matthew 20:28](#)).

"Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels" ([Mark 8:38](#)).

"For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" ([Luke 19:10](#)).

"For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man" ([John 5:26-27](#)).

"Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you" ([John 6:53](#)).

"Therefore, when he was gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him" ([John 13:31-32](#)).

"And [Stephen] said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God" ([Acts 7:56](#)).

"And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks [churches]; and in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle" ([Rev. 1:12-13](#)).

DEEPER STUDY # 3

([Matthew 3:11](#)) Baptism— Jesus and John: the word "baptism" (*baptisei*) means to dip, to immerse, to submerge, to place into. John's baptism was with water, but Jesus' baptism was "in [*en*] the Spirit and fire."

1. John's baptism was both a preparation and a symbol of the spiritual baptism that Jesus was to bring.

John's water baptism meant two things.

- a. It symbolized cleansing from all sin. A person was being prepared for the cleansing that Christ would provide.
- b. It symbolized separation or dedication. A person was setting his life apart to God in a renewed spirit of dedication. He was committing himself to the Christ about whom John was preaching.

Note: John's baptism is called "**the baptism of repentance**"; that is, the person who repented was baptized. There could be no question; it was understood: **if a person repented and actually turned to the Lord, he was baptized.**

2. Jesus' spiritual baptism was a double baptism. (Only one preposition is used in the Greek for "**the Spirit and fire,**" the preposition "**in.**")

- a. Jesus baptizes the person *in the Spirit*. He dips, immerses, and places the person in the Spirit. Whereas the person was carnal and materialistic minded, he now becomes spiritual minded ([Romans 8:5-7](#)). The Jews had looked and longed for the day when the Spirit would come. The prophets had predicted His coming time and again. Therefore, the people knew exactly what John was predicting. The Spirit was expected to awaken and excite the people to such a degree that they would mobilize behind the Messiah and follow Him in the overthrow of all oppressors. The Spirit was to lead the people in freeing Israel and establishing it as one of the greatest nations on earth ([Ezekiel 36:26-27](#); [Ezekiel 37:14](#); [Ezekiel 39:29](#); [Isaiah 44:3](#); [Joel 2:28](#)).
- b. Jesus baptizes the person *in fire*. Fire has several functions that graphically symbolize the work of Christ. It illuminates, warms, melts, burns, and utterly destroys. The difference between baptism with water and fire is the difference between an outward work and an inward work. Water only cleanses the outside; fire purifies within, that is, the heart. Jesus Christ separates a person from his former life and purifies him within by the fire of His Spirit. It should be noted that in John's mind the "**baptism of fire**" meant that the Messiah was to destroy the enemies of Israel. It was "the messianic fire of judgment" that was to come from the throne of David.

DEEPER STUDY # 4

[\(Matthew 5:6\)](#) **Righteousness:** What is righteousness? In the Bible "**righteousness**" means two simple but profound things; it has a double meaning. It means ***to be right*** and ***to do right***. It may be said another way: to ***be good*** and to ***do good***. This is critically important in the Bible.

"There is none righteous, no, not one" ([Romans 3:10](#)).

"There is none good but one, that is, God" ([Matthew 19:17](#)).

"All...come short of the glory of God" ([Romans 3:23](#)).

What is being said is that God alone is righteous; He alone is perfectly good. Man is not perfectly righteous; he comes short. How then can a man become perfectly righteous?

What is the answer? The answer is what Christ says: "**Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.**" What happens is this.

God takes a person's "**hunger and thirst after righteousness**" and *counts* it as righteousness. The person is not righteous, but God counts him righteous. This is the great love of God. A man hungers and thirsts after righteousness; therefore, God fills him.

Several things need to be said about righteousness.

1. Righteousness is explained throughout Scripture in the word *faith*. Faith is believing God and trusting the goodness of God to take our faith and count it as righteousness. [Hebrews 11:6](#) says it clearly: "**But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.**"

It is the person who *diligently seeks God* who really believes God. The man who so *hungers and thirsts after God and His righteousness* shall be counted righteous and shall be filled.

2. The righteousness of God has been shown to man. Just what God wants man *to be* and *to do* has been demonstrated perfectly in Jesus Christ. This is the love of God. God has not given man just the written Word describing His righteousness; He has given man a life—the life of His own Son—to show what He means by righteousness. Jesus Christ is perfect righteousness; He did nothing but good. This is what the Bible means when it talks about Christ being "**the righteousness of God.**" Christ is the picture, the expression, the pattern, the very image of righteousness—of *being right* and of *doing right*.

"Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us...righteousness" ([1 Cor. 1:30](#)).

"...the righteousness of God in Him [Christ]" ([2 Cor. 5:21](#)).

"Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith" ([Phil. 3:9](#)).

3. Righteousness involves the mind. Scripture says it involves being "**renewed in the spirit of your mind**" ([Ephes. 4:23](#)), and being "**renewed in knowledge**" ([Col. 3:10](#)).

What does this mean? Very simply, the man who seeks "**after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.**" He "**puts on the new man**" and is "**renewed in the spirit of [his] mind**" ([Ephes. 4:23](#)).

Another way to say the same thing is this: the man who seeks after God has "**put off the old man with his deeds; and [has] put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him**" ([Col. 3:9-10](#)).

DEEPER STUDY # 5

(Mark 16:16) Baptism—Belief—Salvation—Obedience: two things are said to be essential for salvation—belief and baptism.

There are two basic positions on baptism: **first**, one must be baptized to be saved, and, **second**, baptism is a symbol or sign that one believes and has been saved.

Note four things.

1. Perhaps what is often overlooked by both positions is this: **belief is an act of obedience** to God's demand if a person wishes to be saved, and **baptism is an act of obedience** to God's demand if a person believes.

Baptism is an act of obedience to God's demand just as belief is an act of obedience to God's demand. Very simply, if a man wishes to be saved, God says (demands that he) *believe*; and if a man believes, God says (demands that he) *be baptized*.

A legitimate and straight-forward question needs to be asked: **"How can a person honestly be saved if he immediately rebels against being baptized? How can a person really believe, be genuine in his confession, if he rebels at obeying His Lord about baptism?"**

Facing the reality of the situation, Scripture is strong: a person who truly believes in the Lord will not refuse to follow His Lord *in baptism* or in anything else ([Luke 9:23](#)). To believe and to obey are the same thing.

The two, belief and obedience, are one and the same. This is non-negotiable!

"He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" ([Hebrews 5:9](#)).

Another way to say the same thing is this. **There is no such thing as faith alone, not without works or fruit. Faith without obedience is not what the Scripture means by faith.** In the Scripture faith is the movement of the heart which embraces the Lord, the Lord who is the fulfillment of the law ([Matthew 5:17-18](#)). Faith is that which **"cometh to God believing that He is, and...diligently seeking Him"** ([Hebrews 11:6](#)). Faith, Biblical faith, diligently seeks to obey the Lord. Therefore, the man who truly believes will follow the Lord in baptism and in everything else.

This does not mean the person will be perfect and never fail. Far from it. He will fail, but he will **not continue in sin**. He will get up out of his sin, ask God to forgive him, and begin to follow the Lord even more diligently. His faith works and bears fruit, for he knows that God exists, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.

"What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?" ([James 2:14](#)).

"Faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works" ([James 2:17-18](#)).

"But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only" ([James 2:20-24](#)).

Thought 1. There is no such thing as cheap salvation, not the kind that is too often preached and stressed. Following Jesus or being saved costs. It costs all that a person *is and has*. A man is not saved without following Jesus ([Luke 9:23](#)), and following Jesus means being baptized and diligently seeking Him (living righteously).

2. The person who is condemned is said to be the person who disbelieves, not the person who is not baptized. This is a matter for close attention. The word "**baptized**" is omitted from *disbelieveth*. Not being baptized is not mentioned as a reason for being condemned. This does point toward *disbelief* being the reason for condemnation, and conversely, toward belief being the reason for salvation. However, as discussed above, it is very difficult to explain how a person can be genuinely saved and not be baptized if he is physically able to be baptized. Believing is commitment, doing what God says, and commitment is believing. Therefore, a man is saved by doing what God says: believing, being baptized, living righteously. A man is not saved if he does not believe, that is, refuses to do what God says. To truly be saved a person must be committed to Jesus Christ, committed to being baptized and to living righteously.

3. Something that should be looked at is the nature of belief and baptism. Belief and baptism are two different substances, of two different natures, of two different dimensions. In dealing with belief, the same things can be said about belief that is said about salvation. Both are of the spirit, not of the body nor of the physical world of man. Belief is a spiritual thing or substance. Its nature is spiritual; it is of the spiritual dimension of being; it is an act of the spirit of man.

However, baptism is of a different nature. It is man's physical body being placed into water (a material thing or substance). Baptism is of the physical or material dimension of being, it is an act of the body of man.

4. Very practically, in a world of billions of people, some are born mentally alert and responsible; yet they are tragically deformed, or injured, or diseased. Some are so deformed and physically affected they could never be immersed in the waters of baptism.

Some of these do come to believe in Christ and do live righteously, obeying God in so far as their heart and body allows them.

In conclusion, the thrust of Scripture seems to be that a person who genuinely believes *is* baptized, and will not fail to be baptized unless it is physically impossible, nor will he fail to live righteously. **Yet the moment of salvation is not at baptism nor at any other act or work of doing righteousness.** It is at the moment of believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. When a man really believes and really *entrusts* his life into the hands of Christ, **God knows that moment**, the very second of trust. Therefore, at that very moment God quickens his spirit, causing him to be *born again*, and making him alive spiritually (not physically. It is not a physical thing or substance.) Then the man arises from confession on his knees, is baptized, and begins to follow the Lord in righteousness.

DEEPER STUDY # 6

(John 1:32-33) Holy Spirit: Jesus Christ is the Messiah, the One upon whom the Holy Spirit of God remained.

Note several facts.

1. This is the "**record**," the strong witness of John.
2. The dove was a sacred bird to the Jews. It was a symbol of peace and gentleness, of purity and innocence; but even more significant, the dove was often identified with the Spirit of God. When the dove descended upon Christ, it symbolized the Spirit of God Himself descending upon Christ. The dove identified Jesus as the Messiah and endued Him with the power of God.
3. In the Old Testament the Spirit of God came upon men only on special occasions. He never came and remained upon men. John went out of his way to point out that the Spirit's descent upon Christ was unique: He abode **(John 1:32)** and He remained upon Christ **(John 1:33)**. The Holy Spirit entered the life of Christ once-for-all, permanently and powerfully, in His full manifestation and unlimited power.

Thought 1. When a person is baptized by the Holy Spirit into Christ, the Holy Spirit enters the life of the believer and becomes a permanent experience of the believer.

"Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you. These things I command you, that ye love one another" (John 15:16-17).

"Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you" (John 16:7).

"But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness" ([Romans 8:9-10](#)).

"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" ([1 Cor. 12:13](#)).

4. John repeated, he did not know who the Messiah would be. God's sign to John was the Holy Spirit coming upon the Messiah in the form of a dove.

5. Christ is the One who baptizes believers with the Holy Spirit.

Thought 1. It is the person who receives the Spirit of God that has the presence and care of God looking over his life.

DEEPER STUDY # 7

([John 2:23](#)) Signs— Miracles— Power— Works— Sensationalism: there are four Greek words used in the Bible for miracles or signs. These words are used to describe the works of God and they show why people believed in Jesus.

1. ***Teras*** means the spectacular, staggering, amazing, dazzling. Many believed in Jesus because of the spectacular signs He performed. However, such belief made a person only a spectator, not a participant in His life. The word ***teras*** also means the sensational; that is, it appeals to the sensations of men. Many believed and followed Jesus because it made them feel good and comfortable and secure. Such belief is weak and often fails. This word is never used by itself to initiate faith in the Lord Jesus. If a person is to have genuine faith in the Lord Jesus, he must have some basis other than the spectacular sign (***teras***).

"And some [seed] fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture....They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away" ([Luke 8:6, 13](#). See note, pt.2— "[Luke 8:11-15](#) for discussion of this person.)

"And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" ([Luke 9:62](#)).

"Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him" ([Hebrews 10:38](#)).

2. *Dunamis* means power—unusual, extraordinary power; effective, explosive power. There were those who were attracted to Jesus because of the unusual power (*dunamis*) they witnessed. They believed because of the power. Such is a legitimate belief and leads to salvation for everyone who believes.

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" ([Romans 1:16](#)).

"But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God" ([1 Cor. 1:24](#)).

"And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them. And he marvelled because of their unbelief. And he went round about the villages, teaching" ([Mark 6:5-6](#)).

3. *Ergon* means distinctive works, deeds, and miracles. Such works come from God ([John 14:10](#)) and bear witness to Christ. They point men to Christ ([John 5:36](#); [John 10:25](#)). Some men look at the very special works of Christ and believe because of the works (*ergon*).

"If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him" ([John 10:37-38](#)).

"Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake" ([John 14:11](#)).

4. *Sēmeion* means a sign that characterizes the person, his nature and character. A few throughout Jesus' ministry did believe because they saw in the miracles exactly who He was, the very Son of God.

"This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him" ([John 2:11](#)).

"And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name" ([John 20:30-31](#)).

However, the word *sēmeion* is also used of those who believed the signs, but *did not have* the highest or right kind of faith. Their faith was *not a faith that committed itself*.

a. It was a faith that arose only from.....

1. a mental conviction, a head knowledge, an intellectual belief.
2. a surface acceptance of the fact that Jesus was the Savior.

"Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men" ([John 2:23-24](#); believe and commit are the same words).

b. It was also a faith.....

1. that only sought Jesus for what a person could get out of Him.
2. that never gave any thought to what a person might do for Christ.
3. that was unaware of the cost of discipleship, unaware that a person had to sacrifice himself and give all he was and had to Christ in order to become a follower of His.

"Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled" ([John 6:26](#)).

DEEPER STUDY # 8

([Matthew 3:16](#)) **Spirit of God**: this is the first time the Trinity, the three persons of the Godhead, is clearly seen in the New Testament. The Son, Jesus Christ, was being baptized; the Holy Spirit descended upon the Son; and God the Father voiced His approval.