TODAY'S ORDER OF WORSHIP

Welcome by: Don Taylor / Opening Prayer by: Robert Ward
Morning Assembly Song Leader: Danny Balch

#469 Faith Is the Victory
#539 Higher Ground

Scripture Reading by: Rock Cary
#586 My Faith Looks Up to Thee

Communion Devotional by: Daniel Balch
Lord's Supper and Contribution

#452 Standing on the Promises
Sermon: "The Chosen: James"
Acts 12:1-2

#909 There's A Fountain Free
#679 'Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus
Closing Prayer by: Ross Ward

Robert Ward's small group meets today
at 5:00 pm at the building

Other Opportunities For Spiritual Growth

Sunday: 9:00am — Bible Study Classes, 10:00am — Worship
Wednesday: 6:30pm — Bible Study Classes

Mar. 30, 2025

"Stand Firm in…Liberty"

Galatians 5:1

John's Baptism

Many things change in the 400 years between the close of Malachi and the opening words of Matthew. Baptism is one of those things. It seems to appear from nowhere; suddenly, it is everywhere. John the Baptist emerged, and he was baptizing **(Mk 1:4).** As an adult, Jesus was baptized by John **(Mk 1:9-11).** Jesus himself then started preaching baptism, and his disciples baptized people for him **(Jn 3:4, 22; 4:2).** After his resurrection, Jesus said to make disciples by baptism **(Mt 28:18-20).** Peter preached it as means of conversion on Pentecost and 3,000 were subsequently baptized (**Acts 2:38, 41).** Throughout Acts, baptism went everywhere the gospel went: the Ethiopian, Cornelius, Lydia, the Philippian Jailer. Paul's letters assumed that if you could be called a Christian, it is because you had been baptized, *For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.* **(Gal 3:27**, among many other passages).

We do not find baptism in the OT, but it is everywhere in the NT. And it all starts with John the Baptist.

The "What" of John's Baptism
What in the world is baptism anyway? Well, it certainly involves water—folks were *baptized him in the Jordan River* **(Mk 1:5).** The baptism of Jesus resulted in his *coming up from the water* **(v. 10).** In fact, John himself told listeners he baptized *with water* **(v. 8).** What did John do with the water? Did he pour it over people's heads? Did he dunk them completely under? Did he sprinkle a few drops over the face? All of these are sometimes called baptism in today's religious world. But what did John do?

Baptism as practiced in NT was complete immersion in water. For one thing, we can simply look at the meaning of the word. The Greek verb *bapto* originally meant "to dip, to plunge." Later, it gained the meaning of "to dye" because common method of dying was dipping. So another term, *baptize*, came to be used instead of *bapto*te—technically, this is an intensifier "I dip, plunge, immerse." *Baptizo* meant to dip, usually through a thorough submerging. It was accordingly used for a ship sinking, for example, or for drowning. By extension, it took on a metaphorical meaning of overwhelming. Pouring and sprinkling were distinct actions, with different verbs.

So the word refers strictly speaking to a complete immersion in water. Scripture says literally John taught *immersion of repentance for the forgiveness of sins* **(Mk 1:4).** *I immersed you with water*, **(v. 8).** When we see the word baptism, we could plug in words like immerse, submerse, or plunge, to better understand what Scripture is saying. This is supported by the NT descriptions of baptism. It is called a *burial* on more than one occasion (**Rom 6:3-5; Col 2:12).** Burial implies complete placement under ground or in a tomb, doesn't it? So the burial of baptism implies complete placement of the body in water. This is precisely why John baptized in places where there was much water **(Jn 3:23),** why Jesus came up from the water at his baptism **(Mk 1:10),** why Philip and the Ethiopian both go down into the water **(Acts 8:38).** All evidence points to complete immersion under water; that is what baptism is.

The "Why" of John's Baptism
With that established—why did John start doing this? Washings for purification were common in Judaism (and paganism too, for that matter). They employed water for purification from impurity, and immersion was prescribed for this. Pools called mikvahs were employed specifically for this purpose; over 150 have been found in Jerusalem alone dating to 1st century. John's baptism shared with Jewish washings the theme of purification or cleansing.

Family News & Notes

WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH YOUR CHURCH FAMILY

Our Sick

Steve Lunceford has cancer.

Kim Berka is having health problems.

Continued Prayers
(Need cards, phone calls & visits)

Steve Ward, Caitlin Smith, Virginia Cole, Ken Coleman, Joe Edd Stifflemire, Donna Wilson, Jo Ella McKewen, Oscar Cantu, Jennifer Stelly, Steve Ward, Geri Cryer, Gloria McKelroy, Scott Overton, Rickey Lucas, Debbie Lynn, George Votaw

Shut Ins
(Need cards, phone calls & visits)

Jim Smith, Catherine Parker, Peggy McIntosh, Lois Watts, Willo Dean Ellis

Our Missionaries

Aaron & Marisa Bailey in Montepuez, Mozambique , Rod Kyle in the South Pacific, Mani Pagidopali in India

Upcoming Activities

Elders, Minister meeting Monday, Mar. 31st at 5:30 p.m.

We will have a Houston Food Bank truck on Tuesday, April 1st at 8:00 a.m.

An Appreciation letter is on the bulletin board from Ken Coleman.

Thank You

I just wanted to say, Thank you for the thoughts and prayers during my little heart procedure. They put 2 stents in the LAD.
Love you all,
Bruce Roberts

Barrett Station Church of Christ will be having an area wide tent revival in April. We want to show our support for them. Bryant Perkins will be speaking on Tuesday, April 15th at 7:00 p.m. We will have more information and the dates to follow.

Elders	Deacons	Minister
Bobby Rader	Daniel Balch	Bryant Perkins
Don Taylor	Danny Balch	
Robert Ward	Walden David	
	Gus Tristan	

"Stand Firm in…Liberty"
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There was also a "baptismal movement" at Qumran, the community by the Dead Sea usually identified with the Essenes. These immersed themselves for purification, as other Jews did. But they also practiced it for initiation into the community. Similarly, there is proselyte baptism. According to rabbinic tradition, there were 3 requirements for Gentiles converting to Judaism: circumcision, immersion, and sacrifice. It is worth noting, however, that there is no evidence of this until later time than John, and it could have been performed due to the influence of Christianity. In any case, all of these show a common background to what John was doing. Like all of these, John's baptism was an immersion; like all of them, there was an association with purification and cleansing.

But there are very important differences, too. Unlike these others, John's baptism was administered. That is, in all these Jewish immersions, you dunked yourself; John was administering baptism—he was baptizing others! That is the explanation for his nickname: John the Baptizer. This was something unique, something unusual—that's the whole reason it distinguished him. Further, while it related to cleansing, it operated on a different level. This was not about ceremonial or ritual uncleanness. This was an eschatological act: that just means it was about the last days, about God's coming judgment. His baptism was associated with repentance and forgiveness to prepare people. John's baptism, like proselyte baptism, was a one-time act. Unlike it, it was administered to Jews: they needed repentance and cleansing!

We can survey NT texts to get an idea of the meaning of John's baptism. Pick up your Bible and read **Mark 1:1-8.** Notice the essential points: John was preparing for the coming of the Lord **(v. 2-3);** great numbers came out to be baptized by him **(v. 5);** his baptism was associated with repentance, confession of sin, their forgiveness (**v. 4);** he announced coming of Messiah, who would baptize in the Holy Spirit **(v. 7-8).** And note well that, according to Mark, the gospel—the good news of Jesus Christ—begins with John the Baptist. Now read **Matthew 3:1-12.** John's message was repentance (**v. 3);** it was made urgent by the imminent approach of kingdom of heaven and God's wrath **(v. 2, 7);** repentance requires results, fruits worthy of repentance **(v. 8);** baptism was performed with reference to repentance, accompanied by confession of sin **(v. 8, 6);** it was preparation for the coming of the Lord **(v. 3). John 1:19-37** adds the direct testimony of John to Jesus: John's function was to bear testimony to the lamb of God, who takes away sin; though John was first, he had priority—and he baptizes with the Holy Spirit, not just water.

From this, we can come up with a list of the functions ascribed to or implicit in John's baptism: it expressed conversionary repentance, turning to a new way of life; it mediated God's forgiveness to people; it purified from uncleanness, moral defilement in particular; and it foreshadowed the ministry of an expected figure—Messiah—Jesus.

So why did John start doing this? Most obviously, because God told him to; God sent him to baptize with water **(Jn 1:33).** He didn't suddenly come up with this on his own. The second reason was to point to Jesus; John's major role was to prepare the way **(Mk 1:2-4).** John saw the Spirit descend on Jesus and began telling others to follow him **(Jn 1:34).** Third, John baptized to fulfill God's purpose in the lives of others. God wanted people to be baptized; those who rejected it rejected his will. In fact, this is why Jesus was baptized: to fulfill all righteousness **(Mt 3:15).** In other word, fulfilling God's requirements was not perfectly shown if Jesus was not baptized.

John's role was to point to Christ. That meant his baptism didn't last forever. But it served as a forerunner of Christian baptism—and for us to understand the connection of baptism to salvation. Both are immersions; both are from God; both involve repentance and forgiveness of sins. But, as we will see, Christian baptism is associated with 1) the name of Jesus and 2) the Holy Spirit.

Bryant Perkins