

Baptism and the Ministry of Elijah

by Steve Barwick

In this study, we're going to learn what our Father's Word has to say about baptism, as opposed to what man or man's traditions teach on the subject.

We'll start by examining the difference between a "Christening" and a baptism. Then, we'll move on to learn the simple basics of baptism: what baptism is, what it means, why we are to be baptized, and even *how* we are to be baptized..

Finally, in Part II of this study we will dig a little deeper and look at baptism in terms of its relevance to the ministry of Elijah, which is the ministry of these end days which precedes Christ's *second* advent, just as John the Baptist's ministry preceded Christ's *first* advent.

The Difference Between a "Christening" and Baptism

There is a big difference between a baptism and a Christening, and we will cover that difference first because it helps bring a more complete understanding to the subject of this study.

The word "baptism" means to be totally submerged.

Strong's 907 *baptizo* – to immerse, submerge, to make overwhelmed (i.e., fully wet)

It comes from the root word *bapto*, which has to do with dying a cloth.

Bapto is Strong's 911 – to overwhelm; i.e., cover wholly with a fluid...to stain as with a dye.

The definition of the root word *bapto* paints a picture for us that helps us more fully understand the meaning of the word *baptize* or *baptism*, and differentiate it from what is commonly called a *Christening* or a *baby dedication*. If you want to fully dye a white cloth red, you must completely submerge the white cloth into the red liquid dye. It is the complete submersion of the white cloth into the red liquid dye that turns the cloth completely red.

Hence, a *baptism* is a complete submersion under water of the person being baptized. It should not be confused with a Christening, or baby dedication, which is a *sprinkling* of water upon a child that is being dedicated to Christ by its parents or guardians.

Hence the difference between a *Christening* and a *baptism*:

Christening – In a *Christening*, or baby dedication, the parents or guardians are the responsible parties. They have the child sprinkled with water as a symbol of *their commitment to raise the child in a Godly manner*, which means to raise the child in the knowledge of Christ, Who is the Living Water (John 4:10-14). The parents are actually dedicating the child to Christ, placing the child into His hands (spiritually speaking), and committing themselves to raise the child in accord with God's Word. Therefore, in a *Christening*, the child is generally not the decision-maker. The decision is not made between the child and God, but between the parents (or guardians) and God.

Baptism – On the other hand, in a *baptism* – which is a full submersion under water, rather than a sprinkling – the person being baptized is the responsible party. The baptism is undertaken by a person *on his or her own accord*, at a point in life when the person is mature enough to understand the commitment they are making to fully follow Christ. Therefore, in a baptism the person being baptized is the decision-maker. Getting baptized is not something anyone else can decide for you. Unlike a Christening, which is between the parents or guardians and God, *a baptism is solely between the person being baptized, and God.* The person being baptized is simply affirming his or her own solemn commitment to Christ.

With those important distinctions in mind, we will now continue our study on baptism.

Baptism Basics

Let's begin by learning what our Father's Word has to say about the true meaning of baptism. We will start in the great book of Romans where the beloved St. Paul is teaching:

Romans 6:1-12

1 – What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?

In Paul's time some people were saying that since God's grace – His unmerited favor – comes upon us after we repent of our sins, we should just sin all the more so we can repent again and again, and continue to experience God's favor day by day. Of course, this is silly. It is the result of an immature understanding of our Father's Word. And it makes a mockery of Christ's sacrifice on the cross.

2 – God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?

In the flesh, habitual sin, or perhaps better stated, *sin as a way of life*, can only lead to our spiritual death. You see, the whole point of Christianity is that whereas we were once dead in our sins, spiritually speaking, in Christ we have now become *dead to sin as a way of life*.

In other words, we have cast off the life of habitual sin we once lived before coming to Christ. And although we will never be perfect while we are still in these sinful flesh bodies, we nevertheless make the *conscious effort* to turn away from sinful behavior as a way of life. And we turn to God's Word for guidance in how to live a life pleasing to Him. Living in sin as a way of life is no longer an option. We have turned from that body of sin, and joined the body of Christ.

3 – Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?

When you are submerged in the water, it is symbolic of entering into that tomb with Christ, in which He was buried after His crucifixion.

4 – Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

As you are raised back up out of the water, it is symbolic of Christ's resurrection from the dead. You are then walking in the "newness of life," which is to say, through your heartfelt commitment to Christ you have now taken the first steps in moving forward toward eternal life in the kingdom of God.

5 – For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:

In other words, when these flesh bodies pass on, we are resurrected into eternal life *with Him*. And there is no resurrection into eternal life without Him. As St. Paul would later teach in I Corinthians 12:15-58, if Christ was resurrected, then so will we be.

6 – Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

Without Christ, we are a slave to sin. But when we repent of our sinful ways of life and are baptized to Christ, which is to say we make that decision to serve Him as our Lord and Savior, Christ's sacrifice cleanses us of those sins. We are no longer enslaved by sin. There is a way out, and it is through Christ.

Of course, we will never be perfect in these flesh bodies, but as we grow and mature in His Word it strengthens us and we become less and less the slave of sin. As we mature in His Word through study and begin to implement what we learn into our lives, habitual sin as a way of life is replaced by *life in Christ* – a life that is pleasing to our heavenly Father, and which leads to eternal life.

7 – For he that is dead is freed from sin.

This means the only way you are never going to sin again in this flesh is when your flesh body dies. If you are in the flesh, you are going to mess up from time to time. You can count on it. And when you mess up and sin, always be sure to repent and turn away from that sin. Your heavenly Father is faithful to forgive you, as long as you are sincere.

8 – Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him:

The word “believe” means a firm commitment of trust. That is speaking of your faith. You know for a fact that Christ's death paid the price for you sins, and when you repent of them, they are forgiven. And through that forgiveness you have eternal life with Him. He rose from the dead, and through Him so will you!

9 – Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.

He died and He rose from the dead. And He cannot be killed again because He openly triumphed over death. In the same manner, as a believer in Christ, when you die and are resurrected into eternal life with Him, you cannot be killed again, either. Death has no more power over you than it does over Him.

10 – For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.

This is talking about eternal life. The flesh body dies. You only get this one flesh life. But if you live unto God in this flesh life, which is to say if you accept Christ Jesus and follow God's Word, you will gain eternal life through Christ. Just as He lives forever after the death of the flesh, so will you.

11 – Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Living a sinful way of life is no longer appealing once you have experienced the mercy and grace of God. So we can count ourselves dead to sin, but alive unto God through Christ Jesus. Sin simply does not have the same death grip on you it once had. Even when you mess up, and you occasionally will, you have a way out, and that is through repentance, which means to apologize, and turn away from the sinful behavior.

12 – Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Don't let sin be in charge. When you choose to embrace the Word of God and make Christ your King, then sin has a heck of a hard time reigning in your body, because you resist it.

This does not mean you will never sin. It just means sin is not your king. Instead of rejecting Christ, you embrace Him and reject sin as a way of life. And if you should slip and sin, you repent from your heart, putting your firm commitment of trust in Christ *that His death paid the price* for your errors.

Let's learn a little more about baptism by going to the great book of Ephesians...

Ephesians 4:1-7

1 – I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,

That vocation is called Christianity. You are a man or woman of Christ. Act like it. Learn His Word, rather than the silly and vain traditions of man. And then implement His instructions into your life. In that way you “walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called.” This is part of being dead to sin.

Today, much of what passes for Christianity walks in the vain traditions of man, and *calls it religion, mistakenly thinking it is of God*. Everything from Easter traditions to fairy tales like the rapture theory or “Eve ate an apple.” And this “religiousness” disguised as Christianity becomes a way of life.

But as we learn our Father's Word, and mature in it through diligent study, and begin to implement it into our lives, we cast off those vain traditions of man and begin to “walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called.”

In essence, we become dead to those empty traditions of man disguised as Christianity, and begin walking in the newness of life, which is to say, living our lives based upon what God's Word actually says, rather than what man's traditions tell us it says.

2 – With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;

We all have faults. But love your fellow brothers and sisters in Christ, in spite of their faults. For you have your faults too. Forbearing means to endure, to “put up with” or even to use your own body as a pillar to hold something else, or someone else, up.

In other words, we help each other, bear each others burdens, put up with each other's little idiosyncracies and personality quirks. Hey, we're "can do" people. We can handle it for the sake of the body of Christ, of which we are all members if we follow Father's Word.

3 – Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

How do you endeavor to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"? For one, you don't let the minor faults of your fellow brothers and sisters in Christ get in the way of your love for them. And above all, you don't let *anything* get in the way of your love for your Father and His Word.

You study your Father's Word, and you share what you learn, where appropriate, *so that you are all on the same page*, spiritually speaking. You come to understand God's basic overall plan, and then you stick with it.

That is what we are doing here, in this study, today. In other words, you work to grow in your understanding of God's Word, leaving behind the vain traditions of man which cause so much conflict and division. Haven't you noticed how churchianity has divided itself into so many denominations – so many divisions – each one *differing with the other*, holding varying traditions, and thereby splintering themselves apart from one another rather than "endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"?

That is what failure to study God's Word will do for you. It gets everyone running off in different directions, forming different denominations based upon different traditions. As brothers and sisters in Christ, we keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace by learning and following our Father's Word, sticking to it in a united front.

4 – There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;

There is only one body of Christ, not a bunch of divisions all disagreeing with each other. There are indeed many members in the body of Christ, but they are in unity of the Spirit, meaning they understand God's overall plan and agree on it and work together within it. And there is only one Spirit that leads this body of Christ, which is the Holy Spirit of God. You are either a part of it, or you are not.

There is no such thing as "denominations" (i.e., divisions) in God's family household. You can't divide the Spirit of God into different parts with different beliefs and traditions. This is why it is so important to come out of the traditions of man that now make up what can only be called churchianity. And answer that call to come firmly into the Body of Christ, which is God's Unified Family Household, where there is only one Spirit leading the way – the Holy Spirit of God.

5 – One Lord, one faith, one baptism,

There is only one Lord, which is to say Christ Jesus. And there is only one faith, which is to say faith in Christ. And there is only one baptism, which as we have learned is to representative of His death, His burial and His resurrection.

That is what baptism is symbolic of. It is your willing immersion into that faith in Christ, as signified by the act of being baptized. Don't get caught up in the schisms and divisions and denominations

fostered by churchianity. If it is walking in the vain traditions of man rather than in the Word of God, then it is not part of that “one body...one faith...one baptism.” It is outside of it.

And that is why, at Christ’s arrival, there will unfortunately be so many who run up to Him shouting “Lord, Lord” only to be told “Get away from Me, I never knew you.” (Matthew 7:21-23) They participated in the schisms and divisions, also known as denominations, rather than sticking with the one Lord, one faith, one baptism of the Word of God.

6 – One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

There is only one God, the Father of all, which means the He is the Father of every soul in every human body, regardless of race. Don’t ever let anyone tell you different!

7 – But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

You have that grace – that unmerited favor and forgiveness of sins – through Christ. And you have it to the extent of your faith in Christ. Great faith, great forgiveness.

So build your faith in Christ by studying His Word. The more you immerse yourself in His Word – which is to say, the more you immerse yourself in the Living Water – the greater your faith in Christ becomes. You begin to see how the whole Bible is about Christ. Everything in it points toward Him, because He is the author and creator.

Keep in mind, you cannot truly be faithful to something you are unfamiliar with. You can only be faithful to something you are *intimately* familiar with. Become intimately familiar with your Father’s Word, and your faith will grow as your understanding of His Word grows.

Let’s move along to the great book of Colossians to gain an even greater understanding of baptism:

Colossians 2:8-17

8 – Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

This is what we have been discussing. Your baptism is an immersion into the Word of God, which spiritually speaking is the Living Water. When you drink of this Water, which is to say when you partake of your Father’s Word through diligent study, you learn His ways. St. Paul is saying in this verse not to let yourself get caught up in the traditions of men, which sound so religious, but in reality have nothing to do with your Father’s Word.

9 – For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

Don’t gloss over that. The subject in verse eight above was sticking with Christ so as not to get caught up in the vain traditions of man. Here we learn that in Christ “dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.”

Simply put, that means Christ is God. Period. The word “dwelleth” means to “house permanently” (see Strong’s 2730-G). And the word “all” means every last bit...the whole shebang (see Strong’s 3956-G). In short, the full Godhead – which is to say the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit – is

housed *permanently* in that one called Christ. He is all three in one. You can't go wrong sticking with Him!

10 – And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:

Whoa! You are *complete* in Him! The word “complete” (Strong’s 4137-G) means “fully furnished” or even “crammed full.” You can be filled with the traditions of man, or you can stick with Christ and be filled with the Word of God, which brings eternal life. The choice is yours.

11 – In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:

Christ willingly gave up His flesh body at the crucifixion, fulfilling the Old Testament “type” which was the circumcision of the male foreskin. He cast off His flesh body, offering it as a sacrifice for *your* sins. And now, in Christ, you cast off that “body of the sins of the flesh” by accepting His sacrifice as the full payment for your sins.

In short, your baptism symbolizes your willingness to gratefully and humbly accept Christ’s death in place of your own. It is a spiritual circumcision in which you make the conscious decision to turn your back on sinfulness as a way of life, and turn your face toward Christ instead, knowing that He is the Way back to your eternal home.

12 – Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.

The “operation of God” is to bring that which was dead back to life again. As we have learned, in baptism, as you are lowered under the water, you are symbolically taking part in Christ’s death and burial in the tomb. And as you are raised from the water, your baptism symbolizes Christ’s resurrection from the dead into eternal life.

Your baptism, then, is your public act of faith in Christ – your public statement of your firm commitment of trust in the fact that just as your heavenly Father raised Christ from the dead to eternal life, so He will raise you from the dead to eternal life.

13 – And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;

“Quickened together” means “revitalized in companionship.” When you accept Christ and are baptized, you become a companion in both His death and His resurrection. That companionship with Christ is what revitalizes you, which is to say, brings you back to spiritual life, even giving you eternal life in Him. There is no eternal life outside of Christ Jesus.

This is what “being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh” means. Before accepting Christ you were a dead man, spiritually speaking. But through *His* sacrifice, the price was paid for your sins. And through *His* resurrection from the dead, *your* resurrection from the dead was brought about. Be sure to thank Him for it, dear one.

14 – Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;

He fulfilled that which was written in the law of God concerning sacrifice for sins. He gave His own life for you, beloved.

15 – And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

You can read of this in I Peter 3:18-22, where it is documented that upon His resurrection, Christ “went and preached to the spirits in prison,” which is to say, He went into the spiritual realm and preached to those sinners on the other side of the gulf (Luke 16:19-26) who had already died down through the ages, with no hope of salvation because there was no sacrifice yet given for their sins.

By appearing to them, He showed them openly that He had triumphed over death – which means he triumphed over Satan who had the power of death (Hebrews 2:14). And you can bet that many of those “spirits in prison” gratefully accepted His sacrifice and followed Him out of that prison of sin, and back into the realm of life eternal.

16 – Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days:

Don’t let anyone tell you that you have to follow their empty traditions in order to be saved. Stay in Christ every day.

17 – Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.

Christ became our sabbath, which is to say, He became our day of rest. For God’s faithful servants, the sabbath day is no longer one day of the week.

The Old Testament sabbath day was merely a “shadow of things to come.” In other words, the sabbath day was a symbol or representation of the fact that Messiah would come to this earth and give *spiritual rest and revitalization, through His Word, to those who accepted Him.*

We are to rest in Him *every day*, by studying His Word and then implementing what we learn into our life. His Word refreshes and revitalizes us *spiritually*, just as taking a day off from hard labor refreshes and revitalizes us *physically*.

Now that you have a good understanding of the meaning and purpose of baptism, let’s see what God’s Word says about the physical act of being baptized. Is it really necessary to be baptized once you have accepted Christ?

Indeed, some churches today teach that baptism is no longer necessary, that “having the Holy Spirit” is all that is necessary. They call it a spiritual baptism. And it is true that Christ baptizes us with the Holy Spirit, which means He places the Holy Spirit of understanding upon us so that we can understand His Word on all levels as we grow in maturity in His Word.

But let’s see what God’s Word says about the physical act of baptism, and whether or not it is still right to be baptized. Indeed, as we will see, Christ set the example for us by being baptized Himself.

Matthew 3:13-17

13 – Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.

Here we see Jesus approaching John the Baptist at the river Jordan. Christ has come to be baptized by John.

14 – But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?

15 – And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him.

Being baptized was the right thing to do. Christ set the example for us by being baptized Himself. .

16 – And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:

17 – And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

Are we better than Christ, that we don't have to be baptized? And do we not want our heavenly Father to be well-pleased with us? I hope you know the answer to those questions intuitively. Naturally, if Christ set the example for us by being baptized Himself, then baptism is an important part of being a Christ-man, which is to say a Christian.

St. Paul was also baptized...

You likely also remember the story of St. Paul. Long after Christ's death, Paul, who was then known as Saul, persecuted the fledgling Christian church fiercely. But God called him into His service, literally knocking him off of his horse and blinding him while he was on his way to Damascus to persecute Christians there.

Here, in the great book of Acts, God is telling His servant Ananias to go to Paul and restore his sight, for God has plans for Paul, who would go on to write the vast majority of the New Testament, and become one of Christianity's most effective teachers.

Acts 9:13-18

13 – Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem:

Saul, who would later be re-named Paul by God, had been persecuting Christians unmercifully. When God told Ananias to go to Paul and bless him, Ananias protested.

14 – And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name.

Paul had the legal authority to arrest Christians and drag them away to prison.

15 – But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:

Paul would become one of God's most faithful and effective servants.

16 – For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.

And indeed, over time, Paul did suffer immensely for His faith in Christ.

17 – And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.

18 – And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.

As you can see, long after Christ's death and resurrection, St. Paul himself was baptized. Are we better than St. Paul – the writer of most of the New Testament – that we don't need to be baptized?

Again, the answer to the question should be obvious. Paul was a sinner, and so are we. We need to repent of our sins, and be baptized in Christ's name, casting off that body of sin and embracing the one and only path to eternal life Jesus Christ.

Finally, it is important to note that Christ commanded baptism. In fact, after His crucifixion, when Christ appeared to His disciples for 40 days, He commanded the disciples to go forth and to baptize "all nations" which means anybody, of any race, who will repent of their sins and accept Him as their Lord and Savior.

Matthew 28:19-20

19 – Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

20 – Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

Hopefully, that cements your understanding of the essential role of baptism in Christianity. Don't ever let anyone tell you baptism is irrelevant. Christ Himself was baptized. And Christ Himself ordered the act of baptism to be continued by those who serve Him.

All of that said, it is important to understand that it is not baptism itself that gets you into heaven. Many people mourn for a relative or friend who has passed on, lamenting that because he or she was not baptized they did not make it into heaven. But it is repentance of sins, and one's love for God that are most important.

And indeed, there are some who have entered the kingdom of heaven *without being baptized*, because of the circumstances in which they came to their faith. Let's take a quick look at one example of this, which occurred when Christ was hanging on the cross:

Luke 23:39-43

39 – And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us.

One of the criminals who had been crucified nearby Christ began to ridicule and blaspheme Christ. The implication of what this criminal was saying is, “You’re no savior. Look at you hanging there unable to help yourself or us.”

40 – But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?

But a second criminal who had also been crucified nearby Christ began to rebuke the first criminal. He basically told him, “Considering the fact that you’re about to die, don’t you think you should be showing a little reverence toward God, rather than mockery?”

41 – And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss.

The second criminal admits that their sentences were just. In other words, he admits that whereas Christ had been crucified even though He was innocent of any wrongdoing, they on the other hand completely deserved their punishment, because of their crimes.

In short, he is admitting his guilt, and proclaiming Christ’s innocence.

Now think about this whole scenario for a moment. These criminals, having been crucified alongside of Christ, had just heard Him teach the 22nd Psalm from the cross, through which it was revealed that He was indeed the promised Messiah of God Who would give His life for the sins of all people.

One criminal then begins to ridicule and blaspheme Christ, while the other criminal sternly rebukes the blasphemer, invoking reverence for God, and admitting his guilt under Roman law. And he even proclaims that Christ was crucified even though He was innocent of any wrongdoing. This man has just admitted that Christ is the Messiah of God, sent to give His life for the sins of the world. In short, he has just accepted Christ as His Lord and Savior.

42 – And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.

Note he calls Jesus “Lord,” which is *kurios* in the Greek, meaning Supreme Authority. Hanging on that cross listening to Christ teach while dying, this criminal openly admits his sins, accepts Christ as His Lord and Savior, understanding that indeed Christ Jesus is God.

43 – And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.

No baptism. No big ceremony. Just a heartfelt conversion to Christ. And this man was with Christ that day in paradise, which is to say, heaven.

This does not negate in any way the importance of baptism, for Christ Himself was baptized... His disciples were baptized...and Christ ordered His servants to continue the act of baptism all of the way to the end.

But physical baptism is not the end-all and be-all of Christianity. It is simply your open act of commitment to Christ. This man committed himself to Christ while hanging on that cross, and you can rest assured His sins were forgiven on the spot, even without the physical act of being physically baptized with water which was not possible under those circumstances. He was spiritually baptized with the Living Water while hanging on that cross listening to Christ recite the 22nd Psalm.

The bottom line is that you do not know what occurs in the very last hours or even the very last moments of someone's life before their death. Therefore, the fact that a person was not physically baptized with water should not in your mind come to mean that person was not saved. He or she could have sincerely repented of their sins, even at the last moments of their life, and been saved. It is not up to you or me to judge. Christ is the judge.

How to Baptize

With that said, let's move on to the act of baptism.

First it is important to understand that a baptism doesn't need to be held in a church. John the Baptist baptized out in the countryside at the Jordan River. Countless millions of baptisms have been held in lakes, ponds, streams, private swimming pools, water tanks...even bathtubs. It is not the *place* that matters to God, but the heartfelt intent and understanding of the believer being baptized.

Nevertheless, a baptism should be conducted with respect and proper Christian dignity and decorum. And that includes the surroundings. It is not a public spectacle. So use common sense. A wild beach party, for example, is not the place to conduct a baptism. Nor is a public swimming pool full of people. (Although a public swimming pool that's been closed to the general public for the purpose of the baptism is perfectly fine.)

Nor does a baptism need to be conducted by a priest, pastor, preacher, or other church official. Any fellow Christian in good standing with the Lord can baptize another.

Remember, it is Christ Jesus – through the work of His Holy Spirit -- Who leads a man or woman to God in the first place. Not man. And it is Christ Jesus – through the work of His Holy Spirit – Who places that holy unction upon them to even want to be baptized. Not man. So it is Christ Jesus – the Living Word of God -- Who does the baptizing, through the work of His Holy Spirit. Not man. The person conducting the baptismal service is merely a servant of God.

So how do you baptize someone and what are you supposed to say?

In baptizing we use both the Sacred Name and the English name.

We first anoint the forehead of the person being baptized with a touch of the oil of our People, which is to say, olive oil. This represents the Holy Spirit. The person is essentially being anointed into the service of the King, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Yeshuah Messiah. You simply say, "You are anointed in the name of YHVH our heavenly Father, Yeshuah Messiah our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ruach" (i.e., or Holy Spirit).

We then baptize the person essentially same way, "You are baptized in the name of YHVH our heavenly Father, Yeshuah Messiah our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ruach" (i.e., or Holy Spirit). You then submerge the person in the water, and bring them back to the surface.

If you are baptizing in an open source of water, such as a stream or lake, or even a private swimming pool (or a public swimming pool that's been closed to the general public for the occasion of the baptism), and the water is high enough where you can wade out safely, it is often easiest to have the person being baptized stand before you in the water, crossing his or her arms over their chest. You can then put one of your arms behind the person around their upper back to help steady them, and one hand on their chest, and then lower the person backward into the water until they are fully submerged. Then raise the individual back up out of the water. If you need a person to help you with this, that is fine. Sometimes it is easier if two people help lower the person being baptized into the water and raise him (or her) back out again.

If you are baptizing in a more enclosed space, such as a hot tub, or even a bathtub, it is pretty much the same. One hand on the upper back to hold the person steady, and one on the chest. Then lower the person gently under the water, and raise him or her up again out of the water.

If the person is elderly or frail, then he or she can sit in shallower water, and the person conducting the baptism simply follows the same course of action, lowering the person gently backward into the water from their sitting position. And then raising them back up again.

Above all, always remember that it is our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who does the baptizing. It is not you. And it is strictly between the person being baptized and Christ. Not you and the person being baptized.

After the baptism, we then thank our heavenly Father in Yeshua's Name for His precious gift and for this great blessing, and we ask Him to be with us always. And that's it. There's no need to make any big show of it. It is a simple act of faith on the behalf of the person being baptized.

Part II – Baptism and the Ministry of Elijah

To obtain a deeper and more spiritual understanding of baptism, we will start by learning about John the Baptist, the man of God who actually initiated the practice of baptism.

Why did he baptize people, and what did that baptism signify? We shall see as we look more closely at John's ministry, beginning with the words of the angel Gabriel to John's parents in the great book of Luke.

Luke 1:13-17

13 – But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.

Gabriel had been sent to tell Zacharias that his wife Elizabeth would bare him a son in her old age, and that they were to name that son John.

14 – And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth.

Indeed, even today we rejoice at the birth of John, for the Old Testament Scriptures prophesied that a man would be sent by God *to pave the way for the advent of the Messiah Himself*. You will find that prophesy in Isaiah 40:3. John the Baptist would indeed usher in the ministry of Christ Jesus.

15 – For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb.

Unlike other religious leaders of his time (and ours), this man John would not be a spiritual drunkard, meaning he would not be caught up in the false spirit, but instead, would be filled with the Holy Spirit of God. He would be able to recognize the truth of God's Word, and bring it forth to the people.

16 – And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God.

Take special note of this verse. The job of John the Baptist was to “turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God.” The act of baptism therefore, is part of the process of turning God's children back to Him through Jesus Christ!

17 – And he shall go before Him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

The ministry of John the Baptist would “go before,” or *precede* the ministry of Christ. John the Baptist would, in a sense, blaze the initial path, preparing or *readying* God's People for the first advent of the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

As we will see shortly, John preached “the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.” In other words, he preached that you had to repent and be washed clean of your sins in preparation for the Lord's arrival.

This is the same reason for baptism today, as we have seen in the previous lesson. We cast off that old body of sin by turning our backs on sin as a way of life. And we embrace Christ's death and resurrection.

And although John was not Elijah the prophet, he would indeed conduct his ministry as the verse above explains “in the spirit and power of Elijah” the prophet – the greatest of all of the Old Testament prophets.

Why is this important to understand?

Because, in John the Baptist's day, just as it was in Elijah's day, the children of Israel were caught up in the false religious system. Religious deception and empty traditions of man had left them blinded to the truth of God's Word. There is certainly nothing new under the sun. It was that way in Elijah's day, it was that way in the days of John the Baptist, and it is that way *again today*.

So part of John's job was to set the people straight on God's Word, just as the prophet Elijah had done centuries before him. Let's take a quick look at the work of Elijah, in order to better understand why the Scriptures tell us that John the Baptist came “in the spirit and power of Elijah.”

Keep in mind as you read the following account that there is a false god soon coming to this earth – the spurious messiah, the false Christ, also known as the antichrist. Even though it is the devil himself, our old adversary the dragon, he will make himself out to be the very Lamb of God, Jesus Christ (Rev. 13:11).

And as we know from Revelation 12:9 and II Thessalonians 2:4, when he arrives he will deceive the whole world into believing he is indeed “God.” But as we have learned in the previous lesson, there is only one God.

Therefore, when this false Christ arrives, God’s elect will stand up against this imposter (Ephesians 6:10-18; Daniel 11:32; Revelation 12:11), just as John the Baptist stood up to the false religious community of his time.

And because of the great controversy that will ensue, people are going to have to make a choice, whether to accept the false Christ as their “God,” or wait for the true God, the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, to arrive.

I Kings 18:21-39

21 – And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.

The people didn’t know the difference between the true God Yahveh and the false god Baal back then, any more than they understand the difference between the false Christ and Jesus Christ today.

22 – Then said Elijah unto the people, I, even I only, remain a prophet of the LORD; but Baal’s prophets are four hundred and fifty men.

It would certainly seem that the multitudes of preachers are always on the wrong track, leading the people to Baal, which is to say false religion, rather than leading the people to God Almighty through His Word.

23 – Let them therefore give us two bullocks; and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under: and I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under:

24 – And call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD: and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken.

25 – And Elijah said unto the prophets of Baal, Choose you one bullock for yourselves, and dress it first; for ye are many; and call on the name of your gods, but put no fire under.

26 – And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was made.

27 – And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked.

28 – And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them.

29 – And it came to pass, when midday was past, and they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded.

30 – And Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me. And all the people came near unto him. And he repaired the altar of the LORD that was broken down.

31 – And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of the LORD came, saying, Israel shall be thy name:

32 – And with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD: and he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two measures of seed.

33 – And he put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid him on the wood, and said, Fill four barrels with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice, and on the wood.

34 – And he said, Do it the second time. And they did it the second time. And he said, Do it the third time. And they did it the third time.

35 – And the water ran round about the altar; and he filled the trench also with water.

36 – And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word.

37 – Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the LORD God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again.

38 – Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench.

39 – And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The LORD, he is the God; the LORD, he is the God.

As you can see, Elijah was able to turn the hearts of the children back to their true Father in heaven. He did so by showing them the power of God, compared to the puny power of mere men and their empty traditions which made up the religious system of the that time.

That fire is symbolic of God's Word of truth, for as it is stated in Hebrews 12:29, our Father is a consuming fire. In Elijah's day, it was that great *physical* fire, having come down from heaven and

consuming the sacrifice, that revealed to the people who the true God is. When the people of Israel saw the fire, they got the message!

Similarly, in John the Baptist's day, that great fire came in the person of Jesus Christ, who *became* the once-and-for-all-times sacrifice for our sins, thereby consuming (i.e., putting an end to) all other animal sacrifices.

Remember, John the Baptist came *in the spirit and power of Elijah*. This means that great fire from God would be part of his ministry. And indeed, it was John the Baptist who first pointed Christ out to the people of Israel, saying, "Behold, the Lamb of God."

As Christ later stated in Luke 12:49, "I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled?"

In other words, with great demonstrations of miraculous power Christ would pay the price for our sins, revealing Himself as the promised Messiah of God.

Indeed, for those with eyes to see and ears to hear, He would even reveal that He *is* our heavenly Father (John 14:9). As we learned in the previous lesson, all of the fullness of the Godhead bodily dwells in Christ. Which means that *Christ Jesus is that consuming fire* of Hebrews 12:29, symbolically speaking. It is His powerful and eternal Word of truth that burns away the lies and allows us to distinguish the true God from the false god – which is to say, Christ from the antichrist.

And it is Christ that fills *us* with that fire of His great truth, through the Holy Spirit, so that we too can go forth and help others learn to distinguish the true God from the false. Like Elijah, we too can demonstrate to His children Who the true God is.

Indeed, today that great ministry of fire continues, which is why it is stated in Hebrews 1:7 that He "maketh...His ministers a flame of fire."

We now carry forth that great fire of truth – the very Word of God that was first brought forth by Elijah, and would later be brought forth by the ministry of John the Baptist (for Christ *is* the living Word of God). And we will bring it forth until Christ arrives to this earth, for we are indeed paving the way for His second advent, just as John the Baptist paved the way for his first advent.

Those who have studied their Father's Word in any depth know that ultimately this is all in regards to Father's promise in chapter four of the great book of Malachi – that last great book of the Old Testament in which our heavenly Father states that shortly before the "great and dreadful day of the Lord" He will send Elijah the prophet to "turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers..." As it is written:

Malachi 4:5-6

5 – Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD:

6 – And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

So we now await Christ's second advent – the coming of that great and dreadful day of the Lord (dreadful only for His enemies) – at which time He will arrive as Lord of lords and King of kings to institute His heavenly kingdom on this earth.

And you can rest assured that your heavenly Father will fulfill His Word by sending Elijah the prophet before that “great and dreadful” day of the Lord. In fact, that great ministry of fire burns bright this very day, working to prepare God's children for Christ's second advent.

With all of this in mind, let's now take a quick look at the very beginning of the ministry of John the Baptist, so we can better understand it, and in so doing better understand the meaning of baptism.

Matthew 3:1-17

1 – In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea,

In what days? The days just before Christ Jesus began His ministry. John's ministry came first, and paved the way for Christ's advent.

2 – And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

What was John the Baptist's message? Repent of your sins, for the kingdom of heaven is coming!

Which is to say, he preached that the King and His eternal Dominion were about to arrive onto the scene. And indeed, Christ Jesus our King was getting ready to step onto the scene. But John the Baptist would first pave the way, operating in that great spirit and power of Elijah, while preparing the people to meet their Lord and Savior face-to-face.

Be sure to note carefully from the verse above and the following verses that repentance of sins comes first, and then baptism follows. In other words, you must repent of your sins before you can be baptized. This is why it is called “the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.”

This is another reason why the act of *Christening* is for babies and young children who have not yet reached the age at which they can decide on their own, whereas *baptism* is for those who are mature enough to make the decision to serve Christ on their own free will. Babies are innocent and have nothing to repent of. In short, you must have enough understanding of God's Word to know that you are a sinner in need of repentance before you can be baptized. A baby or young child is innocent in God's eyes.

3 – For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

“Esaias” is the Greek spelling of the name *Isaiah*. Indeed, as it is recorded in Isaiah 40:3, the prophet Isaiah foretold of the coming of this one John the Baptist, stating that when he arrived, he would help “prepare the way of the Lord” by working to make the crooked paths straight again.

Which is to say, just as Elijah taught the straight-on truth of God's Word to the people and showed the power of the true God, so John the Baptist would help bring God's people out of the crooked teachings that had been foisted upon them by the false religious leaders, and show them their Messiah, Jesus Christ, Who was right there with them!

4 – And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey.

John the Baptist was not a fashion plate, a socialite or a sophisticated man. God's true servants rarely are. He was a man on a mission. He lived simply, and he knew how to get the job done.

5 – Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan,

6 – And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.

The people began to come out in droves to hear this man John preach his message of repentance, and the coming of the kingdom of heaven. The multitudes confessed their sins to God, repented, and were baptized by John in the Jordan river.

7 – But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

Here come the leaders of the religious community. I'm sure they were dressed in long flowing robes and looked very holy. But when John the Baptist saw these Kenite religious leaders coming to spy on him, pretending they were there to hear his message, he really lit into them. As the original Greek has it, he boldly said to them, "*You offspring of poisonous snakes, who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come?*"

In other words, John the Baptist knew they were nothing more than the children of Cain, the offspring of the serpent in the garden. They were pretending to be children of Abraham. And John boldly called them on it, knowing their true and malicious intentions were to do whatever they could to disrupt the first advent of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. John the Baptist would have none of their shenanigans.

8 – Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:

John didn't mince words. Here he demands that the religious leaders show by their *actions* that they have truly repented of the empty traditions they had been using to deceive and rip off the people, and lead them away from the truth of God's Word. He told them to repent, and straighten up their act immediately.

9 – And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

John the Baptist knew that these false ones would try to say they already had peace with God through their blood lineage, which they claimed was of Abraham. But he boldly called them on that lie too, making it clear to them that salvation was not based upon one's blood lineage.

The prerequisite for peace with God is repentance of sins, and baptism, which entails acceptance of the *true* Messiah of God, Jesus Christ. That is what makes you a true child of Abraham, spiritually speaking. A true child of Abraham does as Abraham did – i.e., he or she follows God's Word and not the empty traditions of man.

10 – And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

This of course is looking forward to that great day at the end of the millenium when the tares will be gathered and burned in the fire, because they refused to repent and return to our heavenly Father through His Living Word Christ Jesus, even after the one thousand years of teaching under Christ have been completed.

Here, John the Baptist clearly explains to the religious leaders that if they refuse to produce good fruit, which is to say, if they do not repent of their empty traditions and start setting forth God's Word of truth to His children so that they can learn of Him and return to Him through His Word, then they will no longer exist at the end of the millenium. They will be lost to the lake of fire, never to exist again.

11 – I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire:

John's ministry was to preach repentance of sins and the coming of the kingdom of God, and to baptize the repentant with water. But that Holy One Who would come *after* John's ministry – Christ Jesus – is the One Who baptizes with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

Which is to say, once you have taken the first steps of repentance and baptism, Christ's own Spirit – the Holy Spirit – enters into you and begins to guide you. And as you willingly begin to move forward in your Father's Word, maturing through disciplined study, the Holy Spirit begins to work in you even stronger, revealing His Word to you on a deeper level than ever before. This is your baptism, or immersion, if you would, in the cleansing fire of God's Word.

There may even be some "refining" take place, just as fire is used to refine precious metals such as silver and gold. In other words, God uses the truth of His Word to help purge you of sinful ways, clean you up, strengthen you and make you a worthwhile servant for His intended purposes, just as a refiner uses fire to purge the dross and slag from silver or gold so that what's left afterwards is pure and useful for its intended purposes.

As it is stated in the great book of Malachi, chapter 3, verses 2 and 3, "*But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness.*"

Remember that we are told in Hebrews 12:9 that God is a consuming fire. This means that like fire, the Truth of God's Word is very cleansing because spiritually speaking it consumes, or burns away, the lies and replaces those lies with the truth.

And as *you* grown stronger in His Word through study, your heavenly Father increases that Truth – that cleansing fire – *within you*. You become immersed, or baptized, in the cleansing fire of His Word to the point that *you* are able to help burn away the lies out of the minds of your fellow Christians, by planting seeds of truth there instead.

Whether through the example you set in your daily life, the ministries of truth you support, or the words you speak when you plant seeds, you become more and more able to open people's hearts and

minds to the truth of God's Word. You become part of that continuing ministry of Elijah – that great ministry of fire – that precedes Christ's *second* advent and “makes straight the paths” and works to “turn the hearts of the children back to their fathers.”

12 – Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

Indeed, as it is explained in Matthew 13:36-43, the time will come when Christ makes His second advent, arriving to this earth to “purge His floor,” which means to clean up this old earth. He will gather His wheat into the garner, which means He will bring those who truly love Him and serve Him into His eternal kingdom. And at the end of the millenium, He will “burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire,” which means those who still reject Him will no longer exist.

Why? Because they continue to reject the truth and embrace the lie. Therefore, they will exist no longer at that point. He has promised us that there will be no more trouble makers in the kingdom of God. No more disruptions. We will not have to put up with those who prefer to do evil rather than good any longer.

Are you beginning to get a better idea of what is entailed in baptism? On the deeper level, it entails a rejection of the lies and deceit and vain traditions which make up the doctrines of the false religious system of these end times, which you might call churchianity.

And more importantly, it entails a firm commitment to Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. In baptism, you are joining that many-membered body of Christ that works to usher in His second advent, just as John the Baptist did, by helping boldly bring forth His Word of truth to His children.

Let's visit the book of John briefly to see that a little more clearly:

John 1:19-37

19 – And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou?

The Kenite religious leaders wanted to know who John the Baptist was proclaiming himself to be. Of course, John the Baptist never made himself out to be more than he was. That is a good lesson for all of us.

20 – And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ.

He told them straight out that he was not the promised Messiah.

21 – And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No.

He told them flat out that he was not Elijah (though he came in the spirit and power of Elijah). And he told them flat out that he was not that great prophet spoken of by Moses in Deuteronomy 18:15-19, which was the promised Messiah, although the Kenites did not understand this.

22 – Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself?

In other words, they asked, “Okay then, hotshot, who do you think you are?”

23 – He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias.

John told them he was that one prophesied of in Isaiah 40:3, who would begin his work just before the Lord’s first advent and work to prepare the people by giving them the straight on truth about who the Messiah really was.

24 – And they which were sent were of the Pharisees.

Probably Kenites, every one, or else they would have repented and been baptized.

25 – And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet?

They did not understand the Holy Scriptures at all, and their questions proved their ignorance. First of all “that Christ” and “that prophet” are one and the same person. Jesus Christ was the Messiah of God, and He was that great Prophet of God of whom Moses foretold in Deuteronomy 18:15-19.

26 – John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not;

In other words, John told them they didn’t recognize the Messiah even though He was standing right there among them. It was Jesus Christ, of course.

27 – He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose.

Christ’s ministry would start after John the Baptist’s, but it would be greater than John’s, because only Christ could give His life as the sacrifice for the sins of mankind.

28 – These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing.

29 – The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

Here it is. John the Baptist is nearing the end of His ministry, and Christ is just beginning His. And John points Him out to the people, clearly stating that He was the promised Messiah Who would give His life for the sins of the world.

30 – This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me.

Christ is that one Who would come after John, yet would be far more important than John.

31 – And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water.

John the Baptist had likely known Jesus all his life. After all, they were cousins, born only six months apart. But John did not know Jesus was the Christ – which is to say, the Messiah of God – until after his ministry of baptism had begun. How did John the Baptist find out that Jesus was the Messiah of God?

32 – And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him.

John the Baptist saw the Holy Spirit descend upon Jesus.

33 – And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.

God Himself had given John the Baptist his ministry of baptism. And it was God Himself who now spoke of Jesus to John, saying “This is the Messiah.”

34 – And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.

John says, “I proclaimed it publicly, once I understood it.”

35 – Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples;

36 – And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!
John the Baptist continued to publicly proclaim that Christ was the promised Messiah of God who, as the sacrificial Lamb, would give His Life for the sins of the God’s children.

37 – And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.

This was essentially the beginning of the end of John the Baptist’s ministry, and the start of Christ’s.

Yes, John preached repentance and the coming of the kingdom of God, and baptized those who chose to partake. More importantly, just as centuries earlier Elijah had publicly pointed out who the true God was, and led the people to worship Him, so John the Baptist likewise publicly “bare record” that Christ Jesus was indeed the promised Messiah, the Son of God, that great Lamb of God Who would be sacrificed for the sins of mankind, and led others to Him.

As just about every student of God’s Word knows, John the Baptist would later be arrested by Herod and subsequently beheaded. After John’s arrest, Christ spoke these words about him to the multitudes. Listen carefully, and learn some more about what is entailed in baptism:

Matthew 11:7-15

7 – And as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind?

Remember, John the Baptist had been boldly teaching repentance and forgiveness of sins, and baptizing the people of Israel in preparation for Christ's entry onto the scene. Like Elijah, he didn't mince words. He was bringing the people to the truth, so that they would be prepared to meet their Messiah when He stepped onto the scene.

And now, with John the Baptist in prison and soon to be beheaded, the multitudes were indeed coming to Jesus, and He was teaching them, and healing the blind and the lame and the sick, and even raising the dead. In other words, He was *demonstrating* to them through His profound teachings and miracles that the kingdom of God – which is to say the King and His Dominion – was right there with them, just as John the Baptist had told them it would be.

8 – But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? behold, they that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses.

Christ asks the multitudes, “When you went out to see John the Baptist, were you expecting some kind of royalty all gussied up and spit-shined?”

9 – But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet.

Indeed, John the Baptist was more than a prophet, for he was the one chosen to usher in the first advent of the Living Word of God Who would bring salvation to all who would partake of it. (Likewise, beloved, as part of the same ministry – the ministry of Elijah – you are among those chosen to help usher in the *second* advent of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.)

10 – For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

Here Christ documents and verifies that John the Baptist was that one whose coming was foretold of in Malachi 3:1, “*Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.*”

Of course, if John the Baptist was this great messenger foretold of, then who was Jesus Christ? Naturally, Christ is that One Who would *come after John the Baptist* – the promised Messiah of God, which is to say, God Himself, in the flesh.

11 – Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

This is verse 11, and because of the acrostics of the elevens, you should always ponder the 11th verses, and multiples thereof carefully, for they often contain very important information.

Here we learn that although John the Baptist was the greatest of all prophets, even a newborn, newly baptized Christian is greater than Him. Why? Because that is what the kingdom is all about – bringing the lost children (regardless of age) back to their heavenly Father through the Word of God, and thereby restoring them.

As Christ would later say in Matthew 18:6, “*But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.*”

This is an important lesson for all of us. We are not great in God’s eyes. What is truly great is the newly born Christian, coming home to Father through repentance of sins, baptism and that innate yearning for the truth of God’s Word. Indeed, it is said in another place in the Scriptures that even the angels rejoice when another person returns to Christ.

12 – And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.

The violent ones, which is to say the Kenites, work to take the kingdom of God by force. Indeed, they would even have Christ crucified in a vain attempt to prevent Him from ushering in the kingdom.

13 – For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.

Indeed, all of the prophets and the law prophesied *of the coming of Christ* all the way up to John the Baptist.

14 – And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come.

Christ now verifies flat out that John the Baptist would be counted as Elijah, *if* the people would receive (i.e., accept) it.

15 – He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

Do you have ears to hear? Then try to grasp this reasoning:

John the Baptist was not Elijah. He even admitted so himself, to the Pharisees. But had the people listened to his message of repentance and baptism, and if the people would have believed on Christ Jesus as the Lamb of God as John the Baptist had taught them repeatedly, then John would have been *counted as Elijah*, and the prophecies in the great book of Malachi concerning Elijah’s return just before the “great and dreadful day of the Lord” would have been fulfilled.

Christ could easily have defeated His enemies on the spot at that point, and ushered in the eternal kingdom of God then and there.

Of course, that was not to be. The Old Testament prophecies foretold of the Messiah’s sacrifice on the cross, and so it would come to pass. The people simply could not grasp John’s beautiful message, because of the deception that abounded from the religious community.

The people had been taught, through the vain traditions of the religious elders, that when the Messiah arrived he would come with great power, and would rise up and physically free the people of foreign rule, and restore the kingdom of Israel, and ultimately place the people of Israel in charge of the world.

They understood not the Scriptures, which foretold the first advent of the Messiah this way, “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, *thy King cometh unto thee: he is*

just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass”
(Zechariah 9:9).

And this way, “For unto us *a child is born, unto us a son is given*: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6).

And this way, “*He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.*” (Isaiah 53:3-5).

In other words, the Holy Scriptures foretold that at His first advent, the Messiah – who is the flesh manifestation of our heavenly Father Himself – would be born of woman, and would come “lowly” which is to say *humbly*, and “riding upon an ass.”

He would not come with great power and glory to restore the Kingdom and His People until His second advent. But instead, He would come for the expressed purpose of giving Himself on that cross as a sacrifice in order to pay the price for our sins – the most precious gift ever given.

But because of the deception inherent in the traditions of man as set forth by the Kenite religious leaders, the people expected otherwise. They expected Elijah to come bursting upon the scene proclaiming the imminent arrival of the Messiah and the immediate physical restoration of the Kingdom of Israel.

And so they did not accept John the Baptist’s message. They utterly rejected the Elijah ministry, because it was unrecognizable to them. And by default they could not accept Christ Jesus as the Messiah of God, either. They simply did not realize Who He was, because of the depth of deception coming forth from the religious community.

As then, so again. The multitudes are blinded with deception that comes forth from the religious community, and from other sources as well. But it is nevertheless our job to plant seeds of truth for them, that they may come to Father’s Word should they so desire.

As Christ would later teach regarding the multitudes:

Matthew 13:14-16

14 – And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive:

“Esaias” is the Greek form of Isaiah. Here Christ is quoting from that great prophesy found in Isaiah 6:9-10. He is saying that the people would be able to hear the words, but not *understand* the meaning because they had not studied their Father’s Word. They were deceived and deluded...steeped in the empty traditions of man and church traditions.

15 – For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.

Had the people bothered to study, had they worked to understand and thereby been converted by the teachings of John the Baptist, Christ would have healed them on the spot.

16 – But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.

Father's elect – who make up the bulk of that great ministry of Elijah – know the truth, and are willing to share it. Just as John the Baptist paved the way for Christ's first advent while operating under the influence of the Spirit of Elijah, so will the elect of this final generation do the same.

It is our job to pave the way for Christ's second advent – to bring forth the Word of God to the People, so those who wish to partake of His Word (and the Baptism entailed therein) will know the difference between the false Christ and the true Christ.

Yes, even though John the Baptist was not Elijah the prophet, if the people would have received John's message of repentance for the remission of sins in preparation for the coming of the kingdom of God, and if they would have accepted the record he bore that the Messiah was then standing among them in the person of Jesus Christ, then indeed John would have been counted as Elijah, and chapter four of the book of Malachi would have been considered fulfilled.

But in the end, the people rejected the message of John the Baptist, as they would soon reject Christ Jesus, allowing Him to be crucified, and setting the stage the events leading up to His second advent at the end of this flesh earth age.

And so it will be again just before the coming "great and dreadful day of the Lord," which is to say, just before Jesus Christ's second advent.

Even now, the ministry of Elijah carries forth the same message of John the Baptist: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." And even now this great ministry bears record of the *true* Messiah, working day and night to teach the people the difference between the false Christ and the true Christ.

But the multitudes do not understand what is right in front of their eyes. Their ears are still dull of hearing, and their eyes are closed to the truth, due to the deception coming forth from the religious community and others.

They have unfortunately been thoroughly deceived by the empty traditions of man, which tell them "Jesus can come at any moment now to rapture you away from here" when in reality the Scriptures tell us that Christ cannot arrive to this earth until *after* the antichrist arrives first and proclaims himself to be God (II Thessalonians 2:1-4).

Only after Satan's great deception can our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ arrive for His second advent, at which time He will have Satan thrown into the pit (Rev. 20:1-3), cleanse Jerusalem of Satan's stench (Mt. 13:2) usher in the millennial reign (Rev. 20:6) destroy all evil in the lake of fire (Rev. 20:7-15), and at the end of the millenium establish the Kingdom of God here on this earth at Jerusalem (Zech. 14:4-21; Rev. 21:3), not at some undisclosed location in the sky.

So even today, that great ministry of Elijah flourishes, bringing forth the truth of God's Word to His children who will listen, helping them understand the difference between the false Christ and the true Christ, and turning their hearts back to the their heavenly Father in the process.

In Summary

To sum up, just as it was foretold by the prophet Isaiah in Isaiah chapter 40, John the Baptist preceded Christ's first advent.

Spiritually speaking, he represented Elijah, which is to say he came in the spirit of Elijah. He baptized with water those who would hear the Word of God and who were willing to repent of their sins, cast away the traditions of man, and commit themselves to God's Word.

And that baptism with water set forth by John then opened the way for the baptism with fire brought about by God Himself through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ – which is to say, the Holy Spirit of God opening up the deeper truths of the Word of God to you as you study, which in turn helps make *you* one of those *ministers of fire* spoken of in Psalms 104:4 and Hebrews 1:7, whose job is to set forth the Truth of God's Word so that it burns away the lies in the minds of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

If you have eyes to see and ears to hear, then this the grand commitment to Christ you are making in baptism.

And just as John the Baptist preceded Christ's first advent, so the ministry of Elijah of today precedes Christ's *second* advent, carrying forth that same truth.

God's Plan, and You're Role In It

Keep in mind that God's entire plan can be summed up in four simple words: TO SAVE HIS CHILDREN.

When we are baptized, that plan becomes our mission. It is the whole point of the Ministry of Elijah. To bring the children, heart and soul, back to the Father through the Living Word of God, which is our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

This is accomplished through teaching His Word, chapter by chapter and verse by verse, exactly as it is written.

Thankfully, the Ministry of Elijah extends all the way into the Millenium, for many will not listen until that time. But for us, it begins NOW, upon our own baptism into His Word.

Can you see now how much more baptism entails than is commonly taught?

If you are an adult, able to make the decision to be baptized, you must know first that it entails a personal commitment to learn your Father's Word, and to work within the Body of Christ, as servants of Christ, helping fulfill his great plan to SAVE HIS CHILDREN by bringing that Word forth to others.

That doesn't mean you have to become a pastor or a preacher. And it certainly doesn't mean you need to go out and stand on some street corner shouting Bible verses. God's servants aren't circus freaks.

It simply means to immerse yourself in the Living Water – God's Word – and allow it to change your life so you can become an example to others of what a true man or woman of God is like.

And when the time comes to plant a seed of truth in the mind of an inquisitive person, you will be ready to participate in the ministry of Elijah by helping them understand the straight-on truth of God's Word, thereby helping them come to better know their heavenly Father and His great plan to save His children through His Living Word.

– End –

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