

## **JOHN THE BAPTIST – Baptism of repentance**

All God's children have read the Bible, and all know the storey of John the Baptist. This is not in any way written with the goal to tell the storey of John the Baptist, it is neither written with the aim of teaching people. It is simply written to try and encourage people to search deeper to ensure that we all come as close as possible to the exact meaning of God's word. I say as close as possible because every time one reads the Bible, God reveals something new to us. The Bible says search and you shall find. Searching is a lifelong commitment. Searching God's word should never stop. No one person can say "I know it all" for the Bible says we only know in part and one day, in heaven we will know in full.

The bible is written to tell us the storey of God's children from Adam all the way to the end times. The Bible is also written to guide us in our own life. We should apply the Bible to ourselves from Genesis to Revelation.

The Bible can have different meanings for different people. Some people read the Bible and they interpret it a way that suites their own belief system. They read it with a certain mindset. Most of us read the Bible based on what we already know. This is unfortunate, because it has been proven that when one reads something with a preconceived idea, one tends not to allow yourself the opportunity to read it as if is the first time one reads it.. We are more attentive when we read something for the first time in understanding it.

Christians who want to make sure they find the true meaning of God's word should read the Bible as if they have never read it before. This might sound strange taking into account that most Christians think that they know the Bible and that there is not much more they need to know. However, nobody can say "I know the Bible well enough." Jesus tells us that we should be like children when we read the Bible. That means we must read it as if it is the first time we read it and we must ask questions and seek clarity and the meaning for everything we read.

God says that the Holy Spirit will teach us all things. The Holy Spirit works in certain ways and one of the ways is that we must read the word of God and by reading it and pondering on it, the Holy Spirit will reveal its meaning to us. We must not assume what the meaning is, instead we must ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the meaning of scripture to us. This does not happen as a once off exercise. The more we read the Bible, the more the Holy Spirit will reveal it to us. Many Pastors have admitted that they had received the true meaning of certain parts of the Bible from all their years of studying and preaching about it. Some will even admit to tell you that they wished they could replace some of the things they had said years ago. Jesus explains to His disciples that the Bible has been given to those that believe and to those that eagerly and earnestly seek to find the meaning of scriptures. Unbelievers will not be able to understand the Bible, as for seeing they do not see and hearing they do not hear. It is in light of this that I would encourage you to have a fresh look at John the Baptist and the baptism of repentance.

Why was John the Baptist born?

As children of God we are all born with the main purpose of finding our way back to God and to help others to find their way to or back to God as well as to help each other stay on the right track with God. The Bible tells us John came to prepare the way for Jesus Christ. John was only six months older than Jesus. There was therefore not much time for him to prepare the way for Jesus. Many of the Jews expected someone like John to come because the Old Testament clearly tells us that someone will come before Jesus to prepare the way for Him.

How did John prepare the way for Jesus?

He told the people that they must repent of their sins and that they must be baptised. This was completely against what the Jews practised. Baptism was new to the Jews, as in the past they had to annually sacrifice animals to cover and cleanse them of their sins. Now John told them to repent, only once they had fully repented of all their sins, could they be baptised, this being as a sign of full repentance. True and sorrowful repentance meant, that they had turned

away from their sinful life.. Being baptised meant that they had changed their lives and they had returned to God as their only hope of salvation.

John also told them that someone will come that will be far greater than him that will baptise them not with water but with the Holy Spirit. John had Apostles that helped him. We do not know how many and exactly what was expected of them as helpers. .

When Jesus began his ministry, , the people were prepared by John and they accepted Jesus. Keep in mind that Jesus was born some thirty years before He started His ministry and they all knew about the birth of Jesus. Jesus could therefore preach the gospel to them, knowing that many of them had been baptised by John and those that were not baptised yet, knew about Him.

The Disciples of Jesus also baptised people. Jesus did not baptise people with water himself. We can be certain that the baptism that the Disciples baptised people with was the same baptism of repentance that John did.

The same process applies to each one of us today. We must first be prepared before we can be baptised. We must understand what repentance is and bear fruit of this repentance after the baptism. The path must be prepared in us to enable us to receive Jesus as Lord and Saviour. All obstacles must be removed. The removal of obstacles include the removal of all our sins as well as any idolatry (worshipping Idols and being controlled by unclean spirits). We are born as children of this world where Satan is the ruler. As sinners we are under Satan's control until we are delivered from our sinful ways. We must be delivered from all evil and darkness so that we can turn around and walk in the light with our eyes on Jesus, away from the darkness (Evil and sin).

After Jesus ascended to Heaven, Peter told people to repent and to be baptised in the name of Jesus for the forgiveness of sins Matthew 28:19. Tells us that Jesus, after He was resurrected, told the Disciples to go out and baptise people in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The question here raised, is whether Jesus referred: to one event whereby a person gets baptised in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit or separate events. We are used

to it being one single event, but the Bible tells us that there is a baptism of repentance with water and that there is a baptism of the Holy Spirit with fire. The first one is a baptism performed by a human and the baptism of the Holy Spirit is done through Jesus Christ. It therefore points to separate events.

The baptism of repentance and accepting Jesus as Lord and Saviour gives people the gift of the Holy Spirit but it is only once someone has laid hands on them, that the Holy Spirit is poured out on them –This baptism gave them the gift of the Holy Spirit. A gift is something we must open before we can use it and appreciate it.

How do we open the gift of the Holy Spirit?

We read that Paul baptised people in the name of Jesus and only once Paul had laid hands on them, did the Holy Spirit come upon them. Even the Disciples only received the Holy Spirit when Jesus breathed on them and gave the Holy Spirit to them. We read that those that are baptised with the Holy Spirit shall receive power and only those that obey God will be baptised with the Holy Spirit. The baptism of the Spirit joins every believer to the body of Christ.

In Acts we read that the people of Samaria had been baptised into the Name of Jesus but only when Paul prayed for them and laid hands on them were they baptised with the Holy Spirit.

Paul tells us that the churches throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied. We are the church. We must walk in the fear of God and the Holy Spirit must be at home in us. It is only if we walk in the fear of God that the Holy Spirit can be at home in us. We will only grow spiritually (multiply) once we comply with these conditions. The parable of the Sower tells us that the seed will only grow and take deep roots and cause fruit to bear in those that overcome evil. This being from the seed that fell in the good soil, soil that was well prepared, where evil has been removed. There will however still be tares amongst us that is planted by Satan, but evil will no longer be in us and it will not control us.

Paul reminds us that even Jesus of Nazareth had to be anointed by God with the Holy Spirit to receive power from God. Only after Jesus received the power of the Holy Spirit, He went about doing good, healing all that were oppressed of the devil.

Many wannabe Christians seem to think it is easy to become a Christian, being told to can come as you are does not mean you must stay as you are, in your sinful ways. This is where the meaning of Gods grace is misinterpreted and misunderstood . We are to ask the question – why do so many baptised Christians fall away? Could this be because they never really repented? They never turned away from their sinful ways? The seed is sown but the soil it fell on, was not good, it had not been well prepared, the thorns and rocks (evil) was not removed? Jesus said that no one should build a house unless he first sits down and plans exactly how and with what he is going to build the house, and how much it is going to cost to build the house. Were people not told, did they not understand what it takes to become a child of God? Were they setup for failure before their Christian walk even began?

Repentance means “to stop” sinning. We must do our utmost best to stop sinning. We ourselves cannot do it on our own and we need Jesus and the Holy Spirit to help us overcome and stand against evil. God will know whether we are truthful in our decision to stand up against evil and our sinful ways, is a serious and honest attempt to overcome evil. We are not to look back but to go forward and walk in the Spirit not in the flesh.

In The days and months after a person has repented and decided to turn away from evil, should be like being a patient in ICU. All effort should be made by fellow Christians to be right beside them . Satan will come with vengeance to try and get the repented soul to sin again. Our defence system relies mainly on two things- the Blood of Jesus and His power to overcome evil. We need the baptism of the Holy Spirit to and His power.

The blood of Jesus does not work unless we apply it in accordance with the Bible. The Israelites had to apply the blood to the doorpost for the angle of death to pass over their house. We must apply the blood of Jesus in accordance with

what the Bible tells us. "The redeemed must say so" and we as believers must testify to what the Bible says the blood of Jesus does for us and is still doing for us. Only then will the blood become effective. Similar principle applies for the Holy Spirit. As believers we must apply what the Bible tells us to do before the Holy Spirit will empower us. Firstly we must repent, then receive the baptism of repentance, then accept Jesus as Lord and Saviour and like the Disciples, we must earnestly and diligently seek and pray for Jesus to baptise us with the Holy Spirit. We must pray to God the Father in the name of Jesus and Jesus will baptise us with the Holy Spirit if the Father in His foresight knows that we are sincere and eager to be God's children.

The baptism in the name of Jesus can only happen once we repent and accept Jesus as Lord and Saviour, We must be well prepared and most obstacles need to be removed, the soil must be prepared. Baptism in the Name of the Father can only happen if we have a reverent fear for God and the baptism of the Holy Spirit can only happen when we seek for it and the Holy Spirit is at home in us.

In the book of John we read: "Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."

We must also put on the full armour of God that will enable us to stand against the onslaught of evil and to overcome evil. This is a lifelong spiritual battle and the book of Revelation tells us that only he that overcomes evil will receive the crown of life.