

Two Baptisms

First Baptism

- *Matthew 3:13-15; 28:18-20; 1 John 2:3; 1 Corinthians
15:3-4; Colossians 2:12; Luke 15:7, 15:10*

Second Baptism

- *Matthew 3:11; Acts 8:14-17, 19:1-6; Matthew 5:6;
James 4:9-10; Psalm 10:17, 25:9, 29:19; Isaiah 57:15;
Luke 11:5-13*



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Michael O'Neill

Two Baptisms: Part One

Baptism is one of the greatest events in the life of a believer and of the church family, and of heaven itself. I can't think of a more vivid image than what baptism gives us of a life that has been made clean and new, brought back from death to life, from sin to set-free by Christ.

Today we are celebrating with three people in our church family who are being baptized, and we are doing more than dunking them into some water. Baptism has been a part of the Christian faith since the very beginning, and for some very good reasons.

The people you see being baptized today are first of all following the example set by Jesus:

"Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan River. He wanted to be baptized by John. But John tried to stop him. He told Jesus, "I need to be baptized by you. So why do you come to me?" Jesus replied, "Let it be this way for now. It is right for us to do this. It carries out God's holy plan." Then John agreed."
(Matthew 3:13-15, nirv)

These who are being baptized today are also being obedient, because Jesus commanded the church to baptize believers:

(Jesus) said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. So you must go and make disciples of all nations. Baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And you can be sure that I am always with you, to the very end." (Matthew 28:18-20, nirv)

So the people being baptized today are following Jesus' example and being obedient to Jesus' command, and therefore they are publicly demonstrating that they are indeed believers in Jesus. There are multiple examples in the Scripture that tell us it is expected that *every* believer in Jesus would be baptized into this faith. The Bible tells us:

"Here's how we can be sure that we know God in the right way: Keep his commandments." (1 John 2:3, the message)

...and Jesus has definitely commanded us to baptize!

What you are going to see this morning is a living sermon that preaches the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Do you understand that? Every time we baptize someone, a visible sermon is preached. The Bible says:

“...it is the most important of all. Here is what it is. Christ died for our sins, just as Scripture said he would. He was buried. He was raised from the dead on the third day, just as Scripture said he would be.” (1 Corinthians 15:3-4, nirv)

That is the most important message of all, and baptism preaches that message:

“For when you were baptized, you were buried with Christ, and in baptism you were also raised with Christ through your faith in the active power of God, who raised him from death.” (Colossians 2:12, gnb)

And by the way, as you see this, I want to ask you if you have been baptized? The Bible expects that every believer in Jesus would be baptized, and to do so as soon as they have the opportunity to. So have you? It isn't being baptized that saves you from sin and puts you in a right relationship with God as Father; only trusting what Jesus does for you, and as you give your life to Him, He gives you new life. But baptism *is* the outward and visible sign of the inward and invisible work that Christ has done in you. It is an obedience issue. If someone is a Christian and is not baptized, when they die and stand before God in heaven, they won't be told, “Oh – we could almost let you into heaven; if only you'd been baptized.” But I can guarantee that when you do get into heaven, Jesus will ask you, “Why *weren't* you baptized? I told you to; I wanted you to make that public profession of your faith in me. Why didn't you?”

So I want to encourage you; take advantage of the next time we offer a baptism service. We want to celebrate what Christ has done in YOUR life, too. And that's exactly what this is: a celebration of the miracle work of Christ in each person's life. They truly are saved, cleansed, buried, and resurrected in Christ. What they demonstrate is the most amazing miracle that can happen in this life. So for every single person we baptize this morning, I expect you to celebrate. When that person comes out of the water, I want you to make noise like you would if the Seahawks had actually won the Superbowl. *At least* that much – even more!

I believe that heaven itself watches on, participating in and with us, especially in sacramental moments like these. Jesus said that:

“In the same way, there is more joy in heaven over one lost sinner who repents and returns to God than over ninety-nine others who are righteous and haven't strayed away!” (Luke 15:7, nlt)

...and again,

“There is joy in the presence of God's angels when even one sinner repents.” (Luke 15:10, nlt)

That tells us a couple of things: someone putting their faith in Jesus and becoming a Christian—a child of God—is a really, really big deal in heaven. All of heaven celebrates and throws a party! It's more reason to celebrate in heaven than over those of us who are already Christian. I hope you choose to celebrate today!

Call up Pastor Casey for baptisms

Two Baptisms: Part Two

I remember on one of our family vacations we spent the day at a big amusement park in Virginia. On one particular ride, our middle son, Ryan, and I rode together. He was ten years old at the time, and it was his first time on rollercoasters. Halfway through the ride, the cars went up a high hill and then raced down a high steep ramp and into a series of dips, turns, and corkscrews. When we got to the top of the hill Ryan said, "Oh great." (He wasn't very eager.) Then, as we started going fast downhill, he said, "Okay, smile!" When we got to the end of the ride, I asked him why he said that. He said, "Because when you smile, you can't throw up!" We got off, and waited for Sean, our oldest who was twelve at the time. He was in another car behind us because he wanted to ride in the last car of a train – that was supposed to be the most fun to ride in. So when we were done, we watched and waited for him to finish. While he was on it, there was some trouble with the ride, and the car stopped with Sean still on it – his car was just six feet from the platform where he could've climbed out and gotten off the ride. For a half hour he sat in the car, hanging in mid-air, waiting for people to either fix the ride or get him down. They finally took a ladder out to him so he could climb off – just six feet shy of the platform. But there was another car ahead of him, too, – on the other side of the platform, stuck at the very beginning of the ride, hanging in the air, waiting to get moving. Think about how it would be to anticipate an exciting roller coaster ride, to get on it, but then how disappointing it would be to get stuck and miss the best part of the ride. That is very similar to what happens to a whole lot of believers in Jesus: they get on this great adventure ride called the Christian life, but never get to the exciting part. Christian, there is a thrilling fully alive life in Christ that you might be missing out on, and it's called the second baptism.

Yes, there are **Two Baptisms** for believers. The first baptism is what we've enjoyed together already: water baptism, which John the Baptist initiated for us, and is also called a *baptism of repentance*. In Matthew 3:11, John the Baptist said this:

"I baptize with water those of you who have changed your hearts and lives. The one who is coming after me is stronger than I am. I'm not worthy to carry his sandals. *He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.*"
(Matthew 3:11, *ceb italics added*)

The first baptism is in *water*, and is the outward sign of an inward work of God. It demonstrates when we've become a Christian. The second baptism is *Spirit* – when the Holy Spirit fills you with Himself. This distinction is important for you to understand if you honestly and deeply intend to live out your Christian life. The majority of the church in the US today, maybe even many of us in this room, only know about and have only experienced the first baptism. But listen to me: if your Christian life is bland, if it is without joy, if it is missing the kind of power and passion that you know instinctively is missing, and that you read about in Scripture, if you are continually struggling with sin or just not growing in your faith, if you haven't introduced anyone around you to Jesus or helped lead someone to faith in Jesus, then more than likely you too have yet to understand this second baptism.

The second baptism is where the really great Christian life is. It's what Jesus promised his disciples and us that we could experience, after he had been crucified and then risen from the dead. The result, as we talked about last week, was a supernatural ability to share the Good News with people across cultural and language barriers. The disciples had become powerfully effective at helping other people become Christians, and did so in ways that were far beyond their own natural abilities.

Once this happened, we can see later in the Book of Acts that the Good News began to spread beyond Jerusalem to others of different cultures – even to those who were not Jewish.

One of the examples of this is in chapter 8 of Acts. Philip had gone to Samaria and shared the Good News with the people there. We are told in verse 12 that the people of Samaria repented and believed and were baptized in water. We'll pick it up in verse 14, and as I read this, watch for the two baptisms:

“When word reached the apostles in Jerusalem that Samaria had accepted God's word, they commissioned Peter and John to go to Samaria. Peter and John went down to Samaria where they prayed that the new believers would receive the Holy Spirit. (This was because the Holy Spirit had not yet fallen on any of them; they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) So Peter and John laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 8:14-17, ceb)

When the Bible is describing the state of the Samaritan Christians, the original Greek language indicates that they were in a *continual* state of being baptized with water. That means that *they were living the repentant life* – they were saved, they were Christians, and they were growing in their faith, despite the fact that the Samaritans were the object of the Jews' racial prejudice – even from some Jewish Christians! This reminds us that it is the responsibility of Spirit-filled Christians to reach out to people of different cultures and introduce them to Jesus. So let me speak to the 90+% of us here who are white: we have almost half of our West Valley community that are a different culture than us – they are Hispanic, primarily from Mexico. And many of them need to be introduced to Jesus too! West Valley Church is filled with the Spirit to do so – right?

Now, here's where that story gets interesting: in verse 16 it says that the Samaritans had not yet been filled with the Spirit. So John and Peter prayed and laid hands on them, and then they became filled with the Spirit. Clearly, they have *both distinct baptisms*. Do you see that?

Another example of this is in chapter 19 of Acts, where we see the example of the people in the town of Ephesus who were Christians.

“Paul ... came to Ephesus, where he found some disciples. He asked them, ‘Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you came to believe?’ They replied, ‘We've not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.’

Then he said, ‘What baptism did you receive, then?’ They answered, ‘John's

baptism.’ Paul explained, ‘John baptized with a baptism by which people showed they were changing their hearts and lives. It was a baptism that told people about the one who was coming after him. This is the one in whom they were to believe. This one is Jesus.’ After they listened to Paul, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in other languages and prophesying.” (Acts 19:1-6, ceb)

Notice that the passage says that they were *disciples* – this is a word that is used exclusively for the disciples of Christ. In other words, these were Christians – but they had not yet been baptized in the Spirit. Paul then asks them if they have received the Holy Spirit. They say they haven’t even *heard* of the Holy Spirit let alone be baptized by the Spirit, so Paul explains to them the difference between the baptism of repentance and the baptism of the Spirit, and then he laid his hands on them to pray, and they received the Holy Spirit.

Clearly, the idea of becoming a Christian in these examples is associated with repentance, or water baptism, or John’s baptism, and it is obviously distinct from the second baptism. That’s why we baptize with water – it’s so very important because it represents that we have been forgiven and cleansed and saved by Jesus, we’ve asked him to save us, and we are now Christians.

If you have not become a Christian, before you can ever think about being fully alive in the Spirit, you must first have this baptism of repentance. (Be saved, which is what water baptism represents).

But I hope I’ve shown you clearly that *there is another baptism for you if you are a Christian*. Honestly, many of us live as if we’ve never heard of the Holy Spirit.

The late Dr. A. W. Tozer, author and pastor, said, "If the Holy Spirit was withdrawn from the church today, 95 percent of what we do would go on and no one would know the difference. If the Holy Spirit had been withdrawn from the New Testament church, 95 percent of what they did would stop, and everybody would know the difference."¹

So...How do we receive Spirit baptism?

There are three key things to receiving the Holy Spirit, or the second baptism.

The first is to “be thirsty”: You must have a hunger and thirst for God above all else. Jesus said that you should be happy if you hunger and thirst for this, because you will be filled!

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.” (Matthew 5:6, niv)

Second is to “be humble”: being humble does not mean to be meek or shy; in the Bible humility means brokenness before God. Without brokenness, we will not find God.

¹ Alan Redpath in "Christian Life" magazine. Christianity Today, Vol. 29, no. 18.

When we humble ourselves and are broken before God, we are given several promises: He will lift up those who make themselves low, He will hear their desire; He will prepare their heart; He will cause His ear to hear their prayer; He will guide them in justice and teach them His ways. God also promises that those who humble themselves will not be sorrowful because the Lord will increase their joy and cause them to rejoice. (*James 4:9-10; Psalm 10:17, 25:9, 29:19; Isaiah 57:15*)

God's Spirit dwells with the humble and contrite. Unless I humble myself, *I* am all the power behind my Christian life. But when I humble myself before God, God exalts me so he can show His glory in me and point others to Christ.

Last, you must "be persistent": In Luke 11:5-13 Jesus teaches the importance of this if we are going to receive the Holy Spirit. This is such a key passage, that I'd like to ask you to stand with me as I read it, please:

"Suppose you went to a friend's house at midnight, wanting to borrow three loaves of bread. You say to him, 'A friend of mine has just arrived for a visit, and I have nothing for him to eat.' And suppose he calls out from his bedroom, 'Don't bother me. The door is locked for the night, and my family and I are all in bed. I can't help you.' But I tell you this—though he won't do it for friendship's sake, if you keep knocking long enough, he will get up and give you whatever you need because of your shameless persistence. "And so I tell you, keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. "You fathers—if your children ask for bread, do you give them a stone? Or if they ask for a fish, do you give them a snake instead? Or if they ask for an egg, do you give them a scorpion? Of course not! So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him." (Luke 11:5-13, nlt)

This is the Word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God. You can be seated.

This teaching ties together how we ask for the promise of the Holy Spirit. What was the purpose of the neighbor asking for bread? Not to feed himself, but to meet the need of someone else. Don't miss this: we seek to be filled with the Spirit so that we can meet the needs of others, especially in their greatest need, which is to have the Bread of Life; to be introduced to Jesus. Those who successfully seek for God are always persistent in prayer *for the sake of others*.

But you will continue to struggle with selfishness if you don't seek the Spirit. If you are serious and truly thirst for God, you will never be satisfied until you are filled with God's Spirit. You will find God "When you humble yourself and seek for Him with all your heart." Jesus said the Father is *eager* to give us the Holy Spirit when we ask!

We know for a fact that God wants to give us His Spirit; so what's the hold up? Why don't many of us have the Holy Spirit? All I can say is, ask and keep asking. Don't

stop asking. Not for yourself, but for God's glory and the needs of others to know Jesus.

We celebrate the baptisms we've watched today! And at the same time, this reminds us that there is a second baptism – to be awash in the Holy Spirit of God, filling our lives so we don't have to struggle with sin, we can grow in Christ, and we can introduce others to Jesus like crazy!

Worship team – come lead us in an anthem declaration: we are raised to life because of Jesus our savior and the Holy Spirit!

Prayer

Pastor Roger:

May God himself fill you with his Spirit through and through. May your entire being be free from sin and fully powered to live for Jesus until the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. And God, the One who called you is completely dependable. If he said it, he'll do it!" (1 Thessalonians 5:23, personal paraphrase)