

Pastor Kyle Lake was electrocuted while baptizing a new member. Pastor Lake at University Baptist Church in Waco, Texas on October 30, 2005, grabbed the microphone while standing in the baptistery and was electrocuted. Doctors who were in the service tried unsuccessfully to revive Pastor Lake with chest compressions for 40 minutes. The woman, Lake was baptizing was not hurt. Pastor Kyle Lake leaves a wife and three children.

Most of us do not think of baptisms being life threatening. But baptisms can be more dangerous spiritually than physically if not properly viewed. There has been and still is much confusion about baptism. A proper understanding of Jesus' baptism, however, will clear up the confusion. Such churches teach

1. *Infant baptism.* When churches make pedobaptism necessary for salvation they mix works with grace which is contrary to the doctrine of Justification by grace alone (Romans 3:28). Jesus was not baptized as an infant.

2. *Baptismal regeneration.* Entire denominations teach that baptism is necessary for salvation. Then you have some in Baptist churches who practically believe in baptismal regeneration. They are credobaptist only in theory. You ask them if they are saved and they proceed to tell you when they got baptized as if baptism washed away their sins. Obviously, Jesus was not baptized to be regenerated.

3. *The mode of baptism is not important.* Jesus was baptized by immersion as well those baptized by the early church. Jesus was not sprinkled nor poured. A few years back there was a debate between Wayne Grudem and John Piper over the requirement of baptism by immersion for church membership. Piper took Grudem to task for saying baptism by immersion should be a requirement. I agree with Grudem.

4. *Baptism is not important just as long as you are saved.* You have ultradispensationalist of the Grace Movement, such as Charles Baker, who even say that baptism is not an ordinance for today. Then why was Jesus baptized? Why did Jesus baptize more converts than His disciples? Why did Jesus commission the church to make disciples by baptizing converts in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? I know that moderate ultradispensationalists like Baker reject water baptism because it is a ritual. But they don't reject the Lord's Supper which is just as much a ritual.

Matthew, in his account of Jesus' baptism, jumped 30 years of Jesus' life to what he considered the next important event in Jesus' life after His virgin birth. Matthew skips the "hidden years" of Jesus' life in Nazareth. Matthew did not mention Jesus' circumcision when Jesus was eight days old nor Jesus' trip to Jerusalem when he was 12 years old. Matthew like all the Gospel writers (Mark, Luke, and John) writes about His baptism. After the virgin birth of Christ, Matthew highlights Jesus' baptism.

Part of the confusion about baptism maybe the fact that there are different baptisms in Scripture. There are four different baptisms in story of Jesus' baptism.

The first is the baptism of John (Matt 3:6). Matthew is the Kingdom Gospel and John's baptism was a kingdom baptism. The recipients of John's baptism were identifying with his kingdom message concerning Christ's offer of the kingdom to Israel. Believer's baptism today is not the same as John's baptism of repentance for the nation of Israel. Because John's baptism was an OT baptism, Paul required the believers at Ephesus who had been baptized by John to be re-baptized in the name of Jesus (Acts 19:1-7).

John mentions two future baptisms that involve no water. The first was a baptism of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11) which was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost. This Spirit baptism happens today at the moment of conversion and identifies the new convert with the Body of Christ or the universal church (1 Corinthians 12:13). The next future baptism was the baptism of fire (Matt 3:11) which is a baptism of judgment for the unsaved. Obviously there is no water in this baptism or immersion in the Lake of Fire. Last, there is the baptism of Jesus (Matt 3:13) which is in a category of its own. While Jesus identified with John's kingdom message, He did not need to repent. This was the reason John refused to baptize Jesus.

I was baptized twice before I was saved. Once after VBS. The second time I was baptized, it was after some of us young people made false professions of faith in a church service. Finally, when I was genuinely saved at age 18, I then followed the Lord in believer's baptism. The first two were duds, blanks, and empty of meaning. The last was an act of obedience that God blessed.

The importance of baptism is seen in the prerequisite for baptism and the person who was baptized.

I. The Prerequisite for Baptism (Matthew 3:1-12)

A. Only the repentant could be baptized.

John preached repentance. Repentance means to change your mind which results in turning from sin. We must change our mind about ourselves (we are sinners) and Christ.

John's baptism caused a stir as seen in 3:4-6. Even though John was called the Baptist, he was not your typical Baptist preacher. He did not preach in a three-piece suit. He wore a camel hair mini shirt with a leather girdle. This is not what drew a crowd. I doubt if John's hairy legs were provocative. He immersed Jews. In the OT only Gentile proselytes were immersed because they were considered unclean. A Gentile would make a profession of faith. Males would be circumcised. Then the gentile who was considered unclean would cleanse himself by immersing himself with a spiritual bath. John preached to the Jews, "It is not just gentiles who are spiritually unclean so are you."

B. The unrepentant will be judged (3:7-12)

John refused to baptize the religionists who did not think they needed repentance (3:7-10).

There are two future baptisms that involve no water in 3:11-12. For future believers there is the baptism of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. Today the baptism of the Spirit takes place at conversion (1 Corinthians 12:13). For the unsaved who do not repent there is a baptism of fire in the future judgment when the unsaved will be immersed in fire for eternity.

II. The Person who was Baptized (3:13-17)

All four Gospel writers mention Jesus' baptism and together give us the complete picture of the importance of His baptism.

- 1) Mark informs us that Jesus came from Nazareth to Jordan river. Jesus travelled three days to be baptized (Mark 1:9).
- 2) Luke adds that Jesus publically was baptized (Luke 3:21).
- 3) John says that the Baptist knew he was baptizing the Son of God (John 1:28) and that knowledge was probably part of the reason he was hesitant to baptize Him.
- 4) Matthew gives the reason why Jesus was baptized.

A. Why was Jesus baptized?

Not because He was sinful. As has been said, John had refused to baptize the Pharisees because they were unworthy and now he refuses to baptize Jesus because He is too worthy (3:14). Before John baptized Jesus, John declared, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world" (John 1:29). How could he baptize Jesus with the baptism of repentance who would take away sin?

Jesus was baptized because it was right to be baptized. Just as the Jews needed to identify with John's Kingdom message so did Jesus as their Messianic King. Jesus set an example of obedience. This was Jesus' first public act. Unlike the imputed righteousness in Paul's epistles, righteousness in Matthew refers to practical righteousness as in Matthew 1:19 when Joseph thought he must do what was right in divorcing his out-of-wedlock pregnant bride to be.

It is right for believers to be baptized. In Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus commanded the church to baptize. The early church followed Christ's example and obeyed Christ's command. F. F. Bruce says there are no unbaptized believers in the book of Acts. Neither should there be unbaptized believers in our churches.

B. How was Jesus baptized?

Practically baptism means to immerse, submerge or dip as in Luke 16:24. John was called the Baptist because he introduced a new method. In Matthew 3:6, the text says that the Jews "were baptized of him **in** the Jordan" not "beside" the Jordan nor "with" the Jordan as in

pouring or sprinkling but “in” as in immersing. “In the OT they washed only for religious significance. John immersed.

Doctrinally baptism means to identify. Jesus used the word “baptize” only two more times and both referred to His death on the cross (Luke 12:50; Mark 10:38).

Our baptism pictures our identification with Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection according to Romans 6:1-4. Only immersion properly portrays the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus.

Our baptism also identifies us with a local church according to Acts 2:41-42. When we get saved and baptized we are publically committing ourselves to be disciples of Christ. The command of the great commission in Matthew 28:19-20 is to make disciples. We are not just getting all wet in water we are getting immersed into the life of the church. On the day of Pentecost the believers were baptized and joined the church and sat under the apostles teaching (Acts 2:40-41). Church membership is part of discipleship. It is our public commitment to discipleship.

C. What were the Results of Jesus’ Baptism?

Jesus was empowered by the Holy Spirit in 3:16. As Jesus was coming up out of the water in obedience at that precise moment the Holy Spirit was coming down to empower Him for His public ministry. Some call this a theocratic anointing just as David received in order to be Israel’s king (1 Samuel 16).

In Matthew 12:28, Jesus said He cast out demons by the power of the Holy Spirit. In Luke 4:18, Jesus said, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel.” Obedience in our lives will also unleash God’s power.

Jesus was also approved by the Father in 3: 17. At the same time the Holy Spirit came down from Heaven God the Father spoke approvingly from Heaven. Our obedience pleases God. There is no higher nor important accomplishment in our lives. With God’s help we can bring Him pleasure: “For it is God who works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure” (Philippians 2:13).

The Trinity showed up at Jesus' baptism at the beginning of Jesus's public ministry. Jesus also included the Trinity at the end of His public when He commanded His disciples to make disciples by winning sinners to Christ and baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. Baptism sounds important!