

QUESTION: What is meant by baptism of repentance, baptism for remission of sins, and baptized by fire?

ANSWER: Repentance means turning away from your sins and going in the opposite direction, which would be towards God. Remission is the act of having something remitted. **To remit means to release from the guilt or penalty, as of sins; to cancel or refrain from inflicting a penalty.** We must look up the Scriptures where these terms are mentioned, and read them in context, before we can answer the question.

1.) Baptism of repentance and baptism for remission of sins:

- **Mark 1:4** "John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching **a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.**"
- **Luke 3:3** "And he went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching **a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.**"
- **Matthew 26:28** "For this is **My blood** of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the **remission of sins.**"
- **Acts 2:38** "Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let every one of you **be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins**; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'"
 - **Acts 19:3-5** "..... 'Into what then were you baptized?' So they said, 'Into John's baptism.' Then Paul said, '**John indeed baptized with a BAPTISM of REPENTANCE, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would COME AFTER him, that is, on Christ Jesus.**' When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus."
- **Acts 10:43** "To Him (Jesus) all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive **remission of sins.**"

John the Baptist was the forerunner of the Messiah, and his purpose was to prepare the hearts of the people for the coming of the Messiah, Jesus. Acknowledging and repenting of their sins was God's way to have them prepare their hearts, and baptism in water was symbolic of the washing away of their sins.

- **Luke 1:16-17** "And **he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God.** He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, **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.**"
- **John 1:22-23** "Then they said to him, "**Who are you**, that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?" He said, "**I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness: make straight the way of the Lord**, as the prophet Isaiah said."
- **Malachi 3:1** "Behold, I send My messenger, and **he will PREPARE the way before Me.** And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight....."

John's ministry was to have people come out to him in the desert, at the Jordan River, and they would confess their sins, and be dunked in the water, symbolizing the washing away of their sins. They were being made ready and prepared for the Lord Jesus, and their repentance was a preparation for the remission of their sins when they would fully come to believe in Jesus as their Savior. John's baptism did not save them, and was only looking forward to when their sins WOULD BE remitted (taken away) through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Until Jesus went to the cross and shed His blood for our sins, there was no remission. John's baptism of "repentance for the remission of sins" was two-fold: the act of REPENTANCE

was NOW, but the "remission" part was **looking to the future, when Jesus would shed His blood for the remission of our sins.**

- **Matthew 3:5-6** "Then [*the people of*] Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him and were baptized by him in the Jordan, CONFESSING their SINS."
- **Luke 24:46-47** ".....thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that **repentance and REMISSION of SINS** should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."
- **Hebrews 9:22** "And according to the law almost all things are purged with blood, and **without shedding of BLOOD there is no REMISSION.**"
- **Hebrews 10:18-19** "Now where there is **remission** of these, there is no longer an offering for sin. Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest **by the BLOOD of Jesus**, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us....."

John's baptism was a baptism of repentance ONLY, **preparing the way for Christ.** John's message was not the complete gospel, and John's baptism is NOT the same as Christian baptism which we have now. In Acts, Apollos and the disciples in Ephesus **were not yet saved**, as they had **ONLY received the baptism of John**, and had not yet heard the gospel and believed in Jesus.

- **Acts 18:24-26** "Now a certain Jew named Apollos.....had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, **though he knew only the baptism of John.** So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and **explained to him the way of God more accurately.**"
- **Acts 19:3-5** "And he said to them, 'Into what then were you baptized?' So they said, 'Into John's baptism.' Then Paul said, '**John indeed baptized with a BAPTISM of REPENTANCE, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.**' When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus."
- **John 1:26-27** "John answered them, saying, "**I baptize with water, but there stands One among you whom you do not know. It is He who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose.**"
- **John 1:28-31** "These things were done in Bethabara beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing. The next day **John saw Jesus** coming toward him, and he said, "**Behold! The LAMB of GOD who TAKES AWAY the sin of the world!** This is He of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me. I did not know Him; but that He should be revealed to Israel, **I came baptizing with water**'"

When John called Jesus "**the LAMB of GOD**", the Jews instantly KNEW that John was referring to the SACRIFICIAL LAMB whose blood would atone for their sins. They were used to the animal sacrifices in the temple, of which a LAMB was one of the animals they were to sacrifice. Also, the Passover Lamb, whose blood was applied to the doorposts of every household, in memory of when God's judgment "passed over" all those who had the blood. **(see Exodus 12:2-14). Jesus is the Lamb of God who TAKES AWAY the sin of the world!** Under the New Covenant (New Testament), **our sins are completely TAKEN AWAY (remitted)** and WASHED AWAY in the BLOOD of JESUS. In the Old Testament (under the old Covenant), their sins were only COVERED TEMPORARILY until **the Messiah, God's Lamb**, would come to die and PAY the PENALTY for the sins of the world. Every year, they would have the Day of Atonement to remind them that God's Lamb was not yet come, and **continual sacrifices and sin offerings** during the year. (See Exodus 30:10, Leviticus 16:30). The literal meaning of the word "**atonement**" is **covering** ("kapporah" in Hebrew, as in Yom Kippur). Now, when we believe in Jesus, and accept His sacrifice on the cross, **our sins are NOT just covered**, they are **REMITTED and TAKEN AWAY COMPLETELY.**

- **Luke 22:20** "Likewise He also took the cup after supper saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in **My blood**, which is shed for you.'"
- **Matthew 26:28** "For this is **My blood** of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the **remission of sins.**"

Again, **John's baptism was symbolic** of the cleansing from sin that would happen when the Messiah would come. Since Christ came, **Christian baptism is SYMBOLIC** of His death and resurrection and our new life in Him. You were DEAD in your sins, and you have been RAISED to NEW LIFE in Christ Jesus. **Going down under the water and coming up again is SYMBOLIC of your dying with Christ and being raised with Him.** Our word BAPTIZE comes from the Greek word "baptizo" which means "to be identified with" and also "to be placed into". When you are baptized in water, you are making a PUBLIC IDENTIFICATION with Jesus Christ! Both John's baptism and Christian baptism today are SYMBOLIC only. Water baptism DOES NOT SAVE YOU or do anything more than GIVE a PUBLIC PROFESSION of your faith in Christ, and is an act of obedience to Him, and **an OUTWARD PICTURE** of what has **already happened to you ON THE INSIDE** when you believed (the "washing" of regeneration).

- **Titus 3:4** "But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, **by the WASHING of regeneration** (being born again) and renewing of the Holy Spirit."

2.) Baptize with Fire: This expression is found in Matthew 3:7-12 and Luke 3:7-17, and is referring to Jesus judging the nation of Israel in particular, but also of His judgment of all people at the Last Judgment. We as Christians, born-again believers in Jesus Christ, have had our judgment placed upon Christ on the cross, so these verses have nothing to do with us as Christians.

- **Matthew 3:7-12** "But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, 'Brood of vipers! Who has warned you **to flee from the WRATH to come?** Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not think to say to yourselves, "We have Abraham as our father." For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore **every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the FIRE.** I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I..... **He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and FIRE.** His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but **He will BURN up the chaff with unquenchable FIRE.**"

Where it says, "**He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and FIRE,**" it is a contrast. For those who believe on Jesus as their Savior, He will baptize them with the Holy Spirit; but for those who reject Jesus, He will be their judge, and He will be the One who must condemn them to **the Lake of FIRE**, which is hell (John 5:24-29, II Thess. 1:6-9, Rev. 14:10, Rev. 20:11-15). Remember, "baptize" means "identified with" or "placed into." Jesus will either place you by the Holy Spirit into the Body of Christ by your faith in Him, or cast you into the Lake of Fire by your rejection of Him.

For more information on the Holy Spirit and being baptized or filled with the Holy Spirit, read ["Being Filled with the Spirit, Abiding in Christ, and Bearing Spiritual Fruit"](#) and ["Questions About the Holy Spirit and Water Baptism"](#).