

# The 3<sup>rd</sup> Baptism

by

Bryan Craig



*“I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.” Matthew 3:11*

My family and I currently attend a Baptist church. You wouldn't necessarily know it was Baptist at first glance, and the name "Baptist" is not in the name of the church. However, if you attend long enough, you will see the strong emphasis on Baptism. Our pastor consistently and passionately invites people to accept Christ as their Lord and Savior and then, strongly emphasizes that Baptism is the first step of obedience as a new follower of Christ. And we're not talking about sprinkling...we are talking about full immersion in the baptismal waters. It is always explained as a "Believer's Baptism" and symbolic of dying to sin as one goes down under the water, and arising clean and new in Christ. It is a beautiful sight to see, when you see someone submitting to Christ in this way.

I realize there are many different theological views of Baptism, but as I read the Gospels, it is clear to me that this first Baptism is just like the type of Baptism that John the Baptist was practicing. It was:

## *A Baptism of Repentance for the Forgiveness of Sins*

However, John the Baptist foretells Jesus Christ's coming and the Baptism He brings. He talks about a *Baptism of the Holy Spirit*. This has always intrigued me, and I've searched my thoughts and my experience and the Spirit for understanding of this.

Some believe this Baptism of the Holy Spirit occurs at the same time as the 1<sup>st</sup> Baptism, as it did with Jesus when He was baptized and the Spirit of God descended on Him. Others believe it is a separate event. This would concur with Acts 1:5, when Jesus tells His believers they will soon be *“baptized with the Holy Spirit.”* He was, of course, referring to Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came in power upon a group of believers. Further evidence that the Baptism of the Holy Spirit is a separate event is found in Acts 19, where Paul is speaking with some disciples. Yes, these were “disciples”, believers in Christ. Read this conversation:

Paul asked them, *“Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?’ They answered, ‘No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.’ So Paul asked, ‘Then what baptism did you receive?’ ‘John’s baptism,’ they replied. Paul said, ‘John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus.’ On hearing this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. When Paul placed his hands on them, they Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied.”*

Similar to how the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost, a 2<sup>nd</sup> Baptism occurs where a believer is baptized in the Holy Spirit. Luke’s account above says this is a Baptism in the Name of the Lord Jesus. Perhaps, some want to turn from sin, but they still don’t really know Jesus or His Spirit. For these early believers, the coming of the Holy Spirit was accompanied by words spoken in “tongues” and prophecy. It was evidence of the Holy Spirit’s power and presence.

I can tell you that I don’t believe I have had an experience like this where I was overcome by the Spirit and uttered words in other languages or prophecy. However, I fully believe I have the Holy Spirit within me. I believe some may have a miraculous encounter like the early believers did. However, for most, like me, I believe this moment happens somewhere along our spiritual journey, when we surrender our will and decide to make Jesus our Lord. It’s no less miraculous! It’s one thing to repent (or turn) from our sins, but it is yet another, to fully give our lives to Christ. In the Journey, we guide men to understand that as you begin to Abide in Christ, God disciplines and prunes you to make a way for the Holy Spirit to take over your life. I’ve seen evidence of this in my own life and in the lives of countless men who I’ve guided in The Journey.

But there’s one more baptism. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Baptism is the *Baptism of Fire*.

*“He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will clear His threshing floor, gathering His wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” Matthew 3:11b-12*

I have been experiencing this 3<sup>rd</sup> Baptism, and I’ve seen it happening with others, as well. Many have repented of their sins and have given their lives to Christ, receiving the Holy Spirit. Yet, they are hungering and thirsting for more and more of God, and He is answering their desire by refining them by Fire. It’s the only way! He must burn away all our worldly thoughts and desires, our pride and judgment, our hopes and dreams, our expectations and biases. He is trying to purify us to the best form of who He created us to be, vessels which can be used for His Glory.

*“For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man’s work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping the flames.” 1 Corinthians 3:12-15*

*“Everyone will be salted with fire.” Mark 9:49*

*“Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our ‘God is a consuming fire.’” Hebrews 12:28-29*

Brothers, if you are following the Lord, yet you are feeling the Heat in your life through struggles, persecution, fears, pain, I tell you that you should be encouraged. You are undergoing a very special Baptism. It is a Baptism by Fire. In a devotional I wrote a few months ago, entitled “The Crucible”, I wrote how God revealed this to me. *A crucible is a container designed to withstand intense heat, which will melt and alter its contents.* We are like Crucibles, and He is melting our hearts. Only recently did I make the connection to the Baptism by Fire foretold by John the Baptist.

I thank God for His refining work. I praise Him for changing me. It is truly a Gift. Like Paul, I encourage you to keep giving your lives to Christ and ....

*“Fan into flame the gift of God” ...2 Timothy 1:6*