

THE DISCIPLESHIP SERIES

By Brother Johnny

BAPTISM: THE CRUCIBLE



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BAPTISM: THE CRUCIBLE PART I

We cannot say that “*Baptism is like a crucible,*” because it suggests that if one has doubts, he can choose for it not to be. **Baptism is a crucible.** *Okay, I’m being dogmatic.*

What is the definition of a crucible?

Crucible: Situations of severe trial, or in which *different* elements interact, leading to the *creation* of something new.

“It is the Refining Pot” of Biblical portion.

Proverbs are considered to be sayings that are for life applications. They capture the wisdom that God gives to us. They help us maintain a right standing by keeping a godly mindset toward God. Proverbs encourage us to live righteously before man as well.

The ESV Bible says, “Proverbs often contrasts the benefits of seeking wisdom and the pitfalls of living a fool’s life. While the wicked stumble in “deep darkness, **Prov. 4:19**, the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until full day, **Prov. 4:18.**”

Proverbs 17:3 (NKJV) The *Refining Pot* is for silver and the furnace for gold, But the LORD tests the hearts.

Proverbs 17:3 (ESV) The *Crucible* is for *silver*, and the furnace is for *gold*, and the LORD tests hearts.

Proverbs 17:3 (NLT) Fire tests the purity of silver and gold, but the LORD tests the heart.

INTRODUCTION

James and John are in what is called the inner circle along with Peter. Being this close to Jesus, closeness appears to give rise to a desire to receive a special reward.

Jesus takes this opportunity to teach us a valuable lesson and at the same time shows us the difficult road ahead.

Mark 10:38 (NKJV) But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, and be *baptized* with the *baptism* that I am baptized with?"

Baptize, a *verb or an action*, means to make whelmed, i.e. *to make fully wet*.

Baptism, a *noun*, (*names a person, place, thing, or idea*), means *you are fully wet*.

James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Jesus with a desire. One thing is for sure, I do not think they fully understood baptism, *except for the John the Baptist's repentance of sins*; but they did have something going for them.

They were willing. They did not know that they needed the Holy Spirit to give them power from within to be a disciple. *Pastor Gary Brumfield's definition; "A disciple is one who follows Jesus at all costs."*

The New Living Translation of the Bible adds a *living* aspect to Jesus' answer to James and John.

Mark 10:38 (NLT) But Jesus said to them, "You don't know what you are asking! Are you able to drink from *the bitter cup of suffering* I am about to drink? Are you able to be baptized with the *baptism of suffering* I must be baptized with?"
Emphasis mine

Jesus assures them that they will drink from the cup, but to the reward they sought is up to the FATHER. Their answer was;

Mark 10:39-40 (NLT) ³⁹"Oh yes," they replied, "we are able!" Then Jesus told them, "You will indeed drink from my bitter cup and be baptized with my baptism of suffering. ⁴⁰ But I have no right to say who will sit on my right or my left. God has prepared those places for the ones he has chosen."

Baptism is like a crucible because we believe Jesus went through severe trials so that we can be one with Him, as He was ONE with the Father. Jesus was the pure Lamb of God without sin, and we were born in sin and shaped in iniquity. **God's plan brings the two together at the Cross.**

What God creates is like the crucible. It describes a process to make something new. We join Christ Jesus by faith and this creates **ONE NEW MAN**.

Ephesians 2:15-16 (HCSB) ¹⁵ He made of no effect the law consisting of commands and expressed in regulations, so that *He might create in Himself one new man from the two*, resulting in peace. ¹⁶ He did this so that He might reconcile both to God in one body through the cross and put the hostility to death by it. *Emphasis mine*

What are the common beliefs about baptism?

- An outward show of an inward faith
- Our way of joining a local church
- Proof of what we believe
- It is the right thing to do
- We just wanted to satisfy someone urging us to do it
- It is a requirement to be part of a church program or ministry
- Maybe we are indifferent to any of the above and say baptism does not require any real understanding

Most of us were baptized at an early age because our parents wanted us too. *Note: There are exceptions no doubt.* Our purpose is shed light on a subject that most of us take for granted.

Let's take the approach as we study this topic, that we are all new believers. The believer should ask this question before they go into water.

What will baptism do for me?

Once the believer is baptized, they should ask another question.

What is the meaning of baptism?

What does Jesus say to John the Baptizer?

Matthew 3:15 (NKJV) ¹⁵ But Jesus answered and said to him, "**Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.**" Then he allowed Him. *Emphasis mine*

After Jesus of Nazareth is baptized by John, God gives His approval and the Holy Spirit descends. Yep, we got the *“Triune God working as ONE.”*

Matthew 3:16-17 (NKJV) ¹⁶ When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. ¹⁷ And suddenly a voice *came* from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

In Christ Jesus, our testimony of the *“Divine Life”* is threefold.

- The heavens are open to us.
- The Spirit of God indwells us.
- The Father says, “We are a beloved Son, in whom He is well pleased.”

Okay, I admit, He judges us according to the righteousness of His only begotten Son.

However, we all want God to speak of us in this way. Therefore, *baptism is our way of telling the world*, we are sons of God and we belong to Him.

WHY BAPTISM?

When we talk about the subject of baptism, most say, “Baptism is an outward testimony of an inward faith,” and that’s the end of the discussion.

The objective of our study is not to change a tradition, or say something is wrong with the way things are now, but to give more meaning and understanding to the act of baptism.

We know that parents or grandparents will bring their children to the baptizing ceremony in hopes that their place in heaven is assured if the child dies.

When we ask the children to speak for themselves, they say, I want to join the church. *If they say anything at all.*

There are, of course, many reasons why people submit to baptism. All are admirable and with good motives. What does the Pastor tell the audience about the ways to become part of the local fellowship.

- Christian experience, meaning you are a believer, and desire to a member of the local fellowship
- By letter from another local assembly – *notification to be removed from their roll and added to the present one*
- Candidate for baptism
- And Watchcare

When the local church takes in the new members, these might be some questions that we ask.

“Are you a Christian?”

“Are you saved?” *This question is for curiosity to determine if more teaching or instruction is needed.*

Often, we might ask after the previous question, “Are you born-again?”

Once someone said, “I am saved, but I’m not sure if I am born-again.”

We may find that having an enlightening discussion on baptism might settle the doubt. Remember, the whole purpose is to improve the next set of training.

We will not, during our discussion, talk about sprinkling, immersion, or the method of baptism.

What is our purpose? Present what we believe the Bible says about baptism to strengthen our faith. Therefore, we hope the results will minimize some fallen away from the local church.

Romans 1:17 (KJV) For therein is the *righteousness of God* revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith. (Emphasis mine.)

The *righteousness of God* is key to understand baptism.

BAPTISM: THE CRUCIBLE - LOOKING AHEAD

Context Scriptures: Eph. 4:14, 30; Gen. 6

Lesson Scriptures: Eph. 4:14; Gen. 6:5-9

Why Have a Discussion on Baptism?

Ephesians 4:14 (KJV) That we *henceforth* be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, *and* cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

Every believer who seeks to grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ must have faith in Christ that can survive any teachings or circumstances in his life.

Ephesians 4:14 (NLT) Then *we will no longer be immature like children*. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. *Emphasis mine*

Let's review Noah's experience as an example of baptism as a shadow of things to come. By doing so, we hope we can see the reality of two aspects of baptism listed in the questions below.

(1) *What can baptism do for a person?*

(2) *What is the real meaning of baptism?*

Genesis 6:8 (KJV) *But Noah* found *grace* in the eyes of the LORD. *Emphasis mine*

What did GOD see happening in the world during Noah's generation? ***When we read these verses, we might say that GOD sees the same thing today.***

Genesis 6:5 (ESV) The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that *every intention of the thoughts of his heart* was only evil continually. *Emphasis mine*

Even though GOD knew in advance what man would do, God shows us how He feels.

Genesis 6:6 (ESV) And the LORD regretted that He had made man on the earth, and *it grieved Him to his heart. Emphasis mine*

It is needful to inject what Paul says in **Eph. 4:30** to plant a seed in our minds as we consider baptism.

Ephesians 4:30 (ESV) And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom *you were sealed* for the day of redemption. *Emphasis mine*

Paul's statement shows us that God does *all the work* in salvation. Our part is to believe and have faith in what He does. The other key is to walk by faith.

What does God see in Noah?

Genesis 6:9b (ESV) Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. *Noah walked with God. Emphasis mine*

How does the flood in Noah's time help us to understand baptism?

These are points to keep in mind:

- What was the world's standing before God?
- What was Noah's standing before God?
- Judgment had to come.
- Noah and his family are saved.
- Salvation is for those who do believe.
- Termination or condemnation was for those who do not believe.

Before baptism, the believer should look ahead and ask;

“Now that I am going into the water, what will baptism do for me?”

But after baptism, the believer needs to cast a backward look and ask the second question.

“What is the meaning of baptism?”

The first is foresight and the second is hindsight.

If we are not in the refining pot or furnace, God cannot remove the impurities.



BAPTISM THE CRUCIBLE - LOOKING AHEAD

Context Scriptures: Mark 16:15-16; John 3:18; Rom. 5:12-19

Lesson Scripture: Mark 16:16

What Can Baptism Do For A Person - Part 1

Scripture: Mark 16:16 (KJV) He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned.

Some of the time, **Mark 16:16** is said differently. Some say the verse should read this way, *“He that believeth and is saved shall be baptized.”*

Of course, saying it that way allows everyone to be comfortable and not get bent out of shape.

The ESV has several complimentary scriptures that brings LIGHT to **Mark 16:16**.

He or Whoever

John 3:18 (NKJV) ¹⁸ He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. *Emphasis mine*

Is

John 3:5 (NKJV/JDRV) ⁵ Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one *IS* born of water (*come out of the water*) and the Spirit (*come out of the world and born into the Spirit*), he cannot enter the kingdom of God. *Emphasis mine – Okay, lets hold the thoughts about coming out of the uterus. Nicodemus taught us not to go that route.*

Baptized will be saved – What say you, Peter?

Acts 10:47-48 (NKJV) ⁴⁷ "Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we *have*?" ⁴⁸ And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay a few days.

*Note: At this early stage of a new believer, we do not want to be dogmatic on the way the verse reads, "Baptized in the name of the Lord." We do not need to chase the "ism" by saying, "You must say in the name of the Father, in the name of the Son, and in the name of the Holy Spirit." **Hear, oh Israel, our God is ONE.** Everyone has their reward.*

What say you, Paul?

Acts 16:31 (NKJV) ³¹ So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household."

But

Acts 28:24 (NKJV) ²⁴ And some were persuaded by the things which were spoken, and *some disbelieved.*

The goal is not to defend or offend anyone. We know that God has a perfect track record. God has a reason for allowing John Mark to write it this way. *Probably to test our heart toward one another. Can we love unconditionally like God?*

New believers, but not all, might forget what the objective of salvation. No matter what we believe this verse is saying we must hear these three words.

SHALL BE SAVED. We all need to hold onto those words not matter what. Let's shed some more light.

The Objective Of Salvation Is Coming Out Of The World

Here is a quotation from Brother Watchman Nee's book, *A Living Sacrifice*, published by Christian Fellowship Publishers, Inc. 2004.

"The Scriptures point out that salvation is related to the world, not to hell. If we say that the opposite of eternal life is perdition (condemnation), then the opposite of salvation is the world. As believers, we are saved out of the world. As long as anyone belongs to the world, he or she is in the state of perdition (condemnation)." *Emphasis mine on the word perdition meaning condemnation.*

Maybe this is why most pastors suggest that new members and converts read the gospel of John first. Jesus speaks on the subject this way.

John 3:18 (NKJV) *He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*

Perdition or Condemnation is like - that's all she wrote kind of statement.

Jesus does not hide the fact of who Judas Iscariot was influenced by.

John 17:12 (NKJV) *While I was **with them in the world**, I kept them in Your name. Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except **the son of perdition**, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.* *Emphasis mine*

People of the world today do not need to do anything to cause them to perish. Remember Noah's example?

Where are Noah and his family when God passes judgment on the world? They are in the boat which symbolically represents being in Christ Jesus.

The Gospel is like the fisherman casting a net. We were in the world, but our faith in Jesus Christ pulls us out of the death water.

Therefore, salvation is now something more than just saying, I'm going to heaven anyhow. Salvation now becomes a matter of position.

Salvation Is A Matter Of Position

What is our position before God *without faith* in Jesus Christ?

Quotes from Brother Watchman Nee's book, *A Living Sacrifice*, published by Christian Fellowship Publishers, Inc. 2004

"It is not necessary for a person to sin in order to be qualified as a sinner. Because of one man's sin, all have been constituted sinners. As long as the person is in Adam, that is, in the world, he stands opposite to God, and is therefore an enemy of God. His position is wrong, for it is a lost position. This, then, is the story of the unsaved."

"Brethren, let us be clear as to the real meaning of salvation. It is a word frequently used but used with such confusion. Salvation speaks of my leaving one brotherhood, and entering into another. Eternal life merely tells me what I have entered into, but it leaves unmentioned from where I came."

So, what does an act of baptism does for a person?

A person can make a physical *audible* testimony to *the world* that his or her position has changed.

How does Apostle Paul through the unction of the Holy Spirit tell us how our position changed through our belief?

Romans 5:14b-17 (NLT) ^{14b} Now Adam is a symbol, a representation of Christ, who was yet to come. ¹⁵ But there is a great difference between Adam's sin and God's gracious gift. For the sin of this one man, Adam, brought death too many. But even greater is God's wonderful grace and his gift of forgiveness to many through this other man, Jesus Christ. ¹⁶ And the result of God's gracious gift is very different from the result of that one man's sin. For Adam's sin led to condemnation, but ***God's free gift leads to our being made right with God, even though we are guilty of many sins.*** ¹⁷ For the sin of this one man, Adam, caused death to rule over many. ***But even greater is God's wonderful grace and his gift of righteousness,*** for all who receive it will live in triumph over sin and death through this one man, Jesus Christ. *Emphasis mine*

These facts are how God sees the world.

- (a) The world is condemned or judged before God,
- (b) The world lies in the evil one,
- (c) The world crucified the Lord Jesus, and
- (d) The world is an enemy to God.

“All who are in the world, irrespective of their personal conduct, are already judged and thus in perdition.” (Brother Nee)

So, salvation deals with deliverance from an improper relationship with, and a person’s position in the world.

Mark 16:16 (NLT) *Anyone who believes and is baptized will be saved. But anyone who refuses to believe will be condemned. Emphasis mine*

Condemnation is only related to not believing in the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as our Savior. It is not related to not being baptized.

However, baptism without believing is an empty ritual.

Believing without being baptized is to be saved inwardly without an outward affirmation of the inward salvation. *Okay, go there if you must, but let me refer you to Brother Lane’s study on Free Will.*

What are we affirming when we submit to the act of being baptized?

We are buried to terminate our relationship with the old creation through the death of the Savior and by being raised up to be the new creation of God through the Savior’s resurrection. It is now an open fact where one stands.

Yes, in some places in the world, this may cause your immediate death.

Isn’t it good to know, we have a fourth MAN in the furnace, and He is the Son of God.

AMEN

House Cleaning for Regeneration After the Cross

The "Wine" or the Fruit of the Vine

We understand that the best wine made by man gets better with age. We heard the master of the wedding feast say to the bridegroom, you have saved the "best" wine for last. The comparison of man's best wine and Jesus' water into wine may appear similar, but they are opposite of each other.

Earthly wine changes over time because it is affected by its environment, but can be extremely good - *human good*.

Spiritual wine or wine that was produce by the Spirit or Word of God, is unchangeable - *Divine good*.

Hebrews 13:8 (ESV) ⁸Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

What the governor of wedding feast enjoyed was just a prelude to the taste of the joy of salvation to come.

Matthew 26:27-29 (NKJV) ²⁷ Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave *it* to them, saying, "**Drink from it, all of you. ²⁸ For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. ²⁹ But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom.**"

Therefore, we see that the "spiritual" has this outstanding characteristic, that it bears no mark of time, and it is not affected by it because it is eternal.

As Hebrews 13:8 attests to, the blood of Jesus, the fruit of the Vine is the same yesterday, today, and forever. We can testify to this being the joy of the Lord for us.