



PROPHECY ODYSSEY

6

The Spirit and Power of Elijah

AN AMAZING FACT:

The Jordan River is not very wide or long—nevertheless, it is among the most famous and unique rivers in the world. The site of several biblical miracles, the Jordan is considered holy by Jews, Christians, and Muslims. Though only 156 miles long, the river supplies most of the water for two seas—the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea. It is also the lowest river in the world, emptying into the Dead Sea at 1,430 feet below sea level.

One of the last prophecies in the Old Testament foretells the return of Elijah (Malachi 4:5, 6). This mighty prophet boldly stood alone against 400 false prophets on Mount Carmel. He prayed, and fire came down from heaven. Later that same day, he prayed again, bringing a thundering downpour of rain that ended three and a half years of drought. This loyal prophet brought a great revival to Israel.

At the conclusion of his ministry, God sent him to the Jordan River. When Elijah, along with his assistant Elisha, reached the swollen waters of the Jordan, he struck the river with his robe, and the waters parted, creating a dry path to the other side.

As they walked toward the wilderness, Elisha requested a double portion of Elijah's spirit. Soon the skies parted, and God sent "a chariot of fire" to snatch up Elijah and escort



him to heaven. The Bible records that as Elisha returned to the Jordan River, the spirit of Elijah rested upon him (2 Kings 2:1–15).

This story has profound implications for your spiritual life. Let's consider those now ...



When you see a blank, use your Bible to look up the missing word and fill it in.



What New Testament prophet came in the spirit and power of Elijah?

MATTHEW 11:3, 14 *For all the prophets and the law prophesied until _____. And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come.*

LUKE 1:17 *He will also go before Him in the _____ 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.*

NOTE: There were strong similarities in the ministries of John the Baptist and Elijah. John reflected the Old Testament prophet's bold preaching and simple lifestyle. Besides never being married, both wore a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt, both fearlessly rebuked kings, and both ministered around the Jordan River.

John the Baptist was not a reincarnation of Elijah. We know this because Elijah and Moses appeared personally to Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration (Mark 9:4).



What unique ministry was John chosen for?

MATTHEW 3:1, 5, 6 *In those days John the _____ came preaching in the wilderness of Judea. ... Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him and were _____ by him in the Jordan.*



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NOTE: The Gospel stories begin and end with the subject of baptism. It was such an important teaching to Jesus that He taught about it at the start of His earthly ministry and at the end (Matthew 28:18, 19).



What essential Bible truth is symbolized by baptism?

ACTS 22:16 *Arise and be baptized, and _____ away your _____, calling on the name of the Lord.*

NOTE: The Bible ordinance of baptism symbolizes the cleansing from sin in a person's life, as well as the new birth.



According to the Bible, how many different kinds of baptism are acceptable?

EPHESIANS 4:5 *One Lord, one faith, one _____.*

NOTE: At least 15 different ceremonies are called baptism today, but according to the Bible, there is only one true baptism. The Greek word *baptizo* means "submerge," "plunge under," or "immerse." A person has not been baptized unless he has been completely submerged, or buried, in water. The word *baptizo* is always used in the Bible in reference to the sacred ordinance of baptism. The Greek words for "sprinkling" or "pouring" are never used.



Jesus is our example. How was He baptized?

MARK 1:9, 10 *Jesus came ... and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And immediately, coming up _____ the water, He saw the heavens parting.*

NOTE: John baptized Jesus by immersion in the same river where Naaman the Syrian was miraculously cleansed from leprosy after immersing himself seven times (2 Kings 5:1–14). Note that they were “in” the Jordan, not on its banks, and that Jesus came “up from” the water. John baptized “in Aenon near Salim, because there was *much water* there” (John 3:23, emphasis added). Christians are to follow Jesus’ example (1 Peter 2:21); He was baptized by immersion “to fulfill all righteousness” (Matthew 3:15).



How did Philip baptize the treasurer of Ethiopia?

ACTS 8:38, 39 Both Philip and the eunuch went _____ into the water, and he baptized him. Now when they came up _____ of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away.



What other truths are symbolized by baptism?

ROMANS 6:4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was _____ from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

NOTE: Through baptism, we identify with Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection. The baptismal waters symbolize a tomb for the old self and a womb for the new self. Just as Christ died and was buried, so our old self dies and is buried as we are lowered beneath the water while holding our breath. And just as Christ rose again, so our new self rises as we are lifted above the water and take our first breath as a newborn baby. Only baptism by immersion fits this biblical symbolism.



How important is baptism?

JOHN 3:5 Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he _____ enter the kingdom of God.

MARK 16:16 *He who believes and is baptized will be _____; but he who does not believe will be condemned.*

NOTE: Baptism is an essential part of our salvation experience. However, when baptism is impossible, as it was for the thief on the cross, Jesus gives that person credit for His baptism (Matthew 3:15). Notice that being born of the Spirit is likewise essential for entrance into God's kingdom.



What blessed ceremony can be compared to baptism?

GALATIANS 3:27 *For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have _____ Christ.*

NOTE: Baptism is like a marriage ceremony. The Bible says, "For your Maker is your husband, the LORD of hosts is His name" (Isaiah 54:5). As a woman takes her husband's name in marriage, so also Christians take the name of Christ. Both ceremonies must be based on love and commitment if they are to be meaningful. Baptism is as essential to the Christian life as a wedding is to a marriage.



What command did Jesus give to His people just before His ascension?

MATTHEW 28:19 *Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, _____ them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*

NOTE: Peter followed this command when, on the day of Pentecost, he told the penitent people, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 2:38).



What biblical qualifications must precede baptism?

- A. Understand Jesus' teachings (Matthew 28:19, 20).
- B. Believe all of His teachings (Mark 16:16).
- C. Repent and turn from past sins (Acts 2:38; Romans 6:6).
- D. Be willing to confess your sins to God (Proverbs 28:13; 1 John 1:9).
- E. Believe with all of your heart (Acts 8:37).
- F. Accept Christ as your personal Savior and desire to experience the new birth (2 Corinthians 5:17; John 3:3, 5).

NOTE: Since infants cannot comply with any of the qualifications above, it is not scriptural to baptize them. Everyone must be old enough to comprehend the gospel before being baptized.



Where did all of the counterfeit forms of baptism originate?

MARK 7:8 *For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the _____ of men.*

MATTHEW 15:9 *And in _____ they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the _____ of men.*

NOTE: Baptism by immersion was the form of baptism practiced during Bible times and for centuries after the cross. But then, misguided men introduced other forms of baptism for the sake of convenience. Thus, this sacred ordinance was distorted and its rich symbolism obscured.



But doesn't the baptism of the Holy Spirit replace baptism by immersion?

ACTS 2:38 *Repent, and let every one of you be _____ in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the _____.*

NOTE: No! Notice that while Peter was preaching (Acts 10:44–48), the Holy Spirit fell upon all who were listening, many of whom had not been baptized. But even though they had already received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, Peter insisted that they be baptized in water as well.



Is rebaptism ever appropriate?

ACTS 19:2–5 [Paul] said to them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” So they said to him, “We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.” 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 _____ this, they were _____ in the name of the Lord Jesus.

NOTE: When the apostle Paul was preaching in Ephesus one day, he found 12 men who had been baptized by John the Baptist but had never heard of the Holy Spirit. Upon receiving this substantial new light, they were rebaptized. Likewise, if a person has completely lost his Christian experience, he should be rebaptized upon returning to the Lord. Rebaptism is also appropriate if a person was not baptized in the biblical method.



Is baptism connected with joining a church?

ACTS 2:41 Then those who gladly received his word were _____; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.

ACTS 2:47 ... praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the _____ daily those who were being saved.

COLOSSIANS 3:15 You were called in one _____.

1 CORINTHIANS 12:13 *For by one Spirit we were all baptized into _____ body.*

NOTE: Scripture is unequivocal. All of God's people are called into one body, the church, and we enter it by baptism. After birth, a baby must be placed in a family for nurturing, protection, and growth.



If I refuse baptism, whose counsel am I refusing?

LUKE 7:30 *But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the will of _____ for themselves, not having been baptized by him.*

NOTE: By His own word and example, Jesus endorsed the sacred right of baptism as an important part of God's perfect plan for His followers.



When Jesus was baptized, what did His Father say?

MARK 1:9, 11 *It came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ... Then a voice came from heaven, "You are My beloved Son, in whom I am _____."*

NOTE: When any of God's children repent of their sins and are baptized, He is well pleased!

» YOUR RESPONSE

Would you like to begin preparing for the sacred rite of baptism so God can say of you, "This is My beloved child, in whom I am well pleased"?

ANSWER: _____

If you would like to know more about baptism, contact the pastor or group leader who is presenting these studies and express your desire.



FURTHER STUDY

The Model Baptism

Jesus was not baptized for the purpose of being cleansed from sin—for He was sinless (1 Peter 2:22). This is why John the Baptist was perplexed when Jesus came to the Jordan River asking to be baptized by him. John said, “I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?” (Matthew 3:14).

So why was Jesus baptized? There are three main reasons.

- First, He was baptized on behalf of those who cannot be baptized themselves. Sometimes, when people accept the Lord in prison or in a hospital, circumstances do not allow them to be baptized. Jesus gives them credit for His baptism. The thief on the cross was one example (Luke 23:43).
- Second, Jesus was baptized as an example that we should follow in His steps (1 Peter 2:21).
- Third, Jesus was baptized so that we can, by studying His experience, know what to expect by faith.

To illustrate, let’s take the following verses word by word and see what we can expect from our baptism. Matthew 3:16, 17 read, “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. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’”

“The heavens were opened” = We receive access to God.

“He saw” = Our spiritual eyes are now opened, giving us new understanding and perception.

“The Spirit of God” = We recognize His leading.

“Descending like a dove” = Peace gently enters our hearts.

“A voice came from heaven” = We will begin to hear the Spirit’s still, small voice.

“My beloved Son” = We are adopted into God’s royal family.

“I am well pleased” = He gives us complete acceptance and forgiveness.

SUMMARY SHEET

6

Please read this lesson before completing this Summary Sheet. All answers can be found in the study guide. Fill in the boxes for the correct answers. **Numbers in parentheses (1) indicate the number of correct answers.**

1. John the Baptist came in the spirit and power of what Old Testament prophet? (1)

- Jeremiah
- Abraham
- Elijah
- Nahum

2. People went to John the Baptist to (1)

- Be baptized
- Be covered in mud
- Hear campfire stories
- Buy lambs for sacrificing

3. Baptism symbolizes (3)

- The new birth
- Becoming a Pharisee
- Cleansing from sin
- Entering a secret society
- Death of the old self

4. According to the Bible, there is only one acceptable method of baptism. (1)

- True
- False

5. What is the one method of baptism taught in Scripture? (1)

- Sprinkling
- Immersion
- Dipping your feet in water
- Taking an ice bath

6. For all who are able, baptism is a necessary part of the salvation experience. (1)

- True
- False

7. Baptism can be compared to what special ceremony? (1)

- Bat mitzvah
- Dance party
- Marriage
- Induction into the Hall of Fame

8. Jesus commanded His followers to make disciples and baptize them. (1)

- True
- False

9. Before getting baptized, a person must (6)

- Run five miles without stopping
- Understand Jesus' teachings
- Repent
- Confess their sins to God
- Visit the tomb of Jesus
- Believe all Jesus' teachings
- Pay the church a thousand dollars
- Believe with all their heart
- Accept Christ as personal Savior

Continued on back ▶▶

10. Where did false methods of baptism come from? (1)

- The traditions of men
- Santa Claus
- Buddha

11. Does the baptism of the Holy Spirit replace baptism by immersion? (1)

- Yes
- No

12. Sometimes, rebaptism may be appropriate. (1)

- True
- False

13. At baptism, we become part of the body of Christ, which is (1)

- The 144,000
- The church
- A gardening club
- A group of prophets

14. If you are physically able to be baptized but refuse, it is disobedience to God. (1)

- True
- False

15. Would you like to commit your life to Christ and be baptized?

- Yes
- No

Be sure to answer all the questions above and on the reverse side!



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