

“I baptize with water those who repent of their sins and turn to God. But someone is coming soon who is greater than I am—so much greater that I’m not worthy even to be his slave and carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.”
Matthew 3:11 NLT

lectio // Matthew 3

Everyone’s got that one cousin, you know the wild one. This was John in Jesus’ family tree. Because John’s mom, Elizabeth, was Mary’s aunt, it meant John is a first cousin to Jesus and he was older than Jesus by a few months. I’m sure that Mary and Elizabeth were close because Mary went to Elizabeth right after finding out she herself was pregnant. And when Mary arrived, John leaped inside Elizabeth’s tummy. So, I’m sure that Jesus and John were close when they were young. John’s a different guy altogether. I wonder if he was so intense growing up that he didn’t make Jesus laugh at how serious his older cousin was. John’s life and lifestyle only reinforced the fact that he was mission driven and could only think about one thing - pleasing God (and maybe speaking the truth 😊). Here John put it straight out there, his sole mission in life, but in this one statement alone he causes theological and denominational trouble for eons to come. I baptize with water, Jesus baptizes with the Holy Spirit and 🔥! No modern day Christ follower denies the need/command to be baptized in the waters of repentance. You go down under water, signifying death to your old life, then come up out of the water, signifying resurrection and your new life. Boom, done, got it. But what’s the mystery of this second baptism that Jesus brings? What’s the purpose and significance of those words...Holy Spirit? Does one go under or into the Holy Spirit and the fire? Is one submerged in this third person of the trinity? And submerged in this fire? John certainly makes it sound necessary and urgent. Many have tried to explain this by isolating it or limiting this experience to only that time period, like it was a one time command or offer. But what if it was also intended to continue just like water baptism? What if there are still two baptisms, even today? Peter certainly believed this to be the case at Cornelius’ house. As Peter was telling the greeks the gospel, God just dropped in on them, “For they heard them speaking in other tongues and praising God. Then Peter asked, “Can anyone object to their being baptized, now that they have received the Holy Spirit just as we did?” So he gave orders for them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.” Acts 10:46-48 NLT. Obviously, the greeks experienced the BAPTISMS backward! First the Holy Spirit, then the waters of repentance. Can God do that? And Paul seemed to believe John was telling the truth when he said, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” he asked them. “No,” they replied, “we haven’t even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.” “Then what baptism did you experience?” he asked. And they replied, “The baptism of John.” Acts 19:2-3 NLT. Water baptism has been a stable, significant sacrament for centuries, but what about this other, second baptism? Nope, not too much. Makes you wonder huh?

Dad,
I just want folks to do what you’ve ask to have what you freely offered. For water baptism, a new transformed life. For Spirit baptism, a new power to not just survive as a believer, but to thrive as a believer.