

810321 Baptism HLH Pas Aud AM

Perhaps I should wish you all good morning from Mr. Guy Ames since we sometimes have to correspond in other matters and he's no longer with the congregation here but in the Philippines. I would like to mention also that from time to time we do receive letters from the students who are on the ACEPT project that is the Ambassador College educational project in Thailand assisting the refugees from Laos who are in the very north eastern area near the Laos and Burmese border. Students are doing very well. United Nations of course from time to time takes recognition of the fact that what they thought was simply not the way to do things at least not the way the United Nations had done it has turned out to be the one successful program in Thailand while the refugees are there in their original camps. I could just take a moment to say that not only have we had public statements by those in the United Nations writing to different organizations and groups but they have wanted to learn something of how we have done it. We have now extended ourselves to the second camp we have sent one French speaking individual also speaks English from Canada as well as a young man from New Zealand to the second camp which is a little further away. Now they'll be living not with the other students except it on the Sabbaths they can get together but they're in a position where they're living a little more like people do over there with no running water. You have to carry it. Mr. Halford has told you the story of course of the people who wanted to know what you call this yoke that you have on your shoulders one bucket on one end and one on the other and the response from our students was well we don't have it in the United States so we don't have it in New Zealand or Australia or Canada but then the question was well then how do you carry the water? Which gives you an idea that they simply have much to learn and one of the things we do try to do is to teach individuals their aspects not only of west of the language difficulties that they will be facing but the matter of cultural differences that can come as a shock. Americans find on occasion it's a shock to live somewhere else and these people would find it very similar. Even Mr. Khrushchev taking a look at Los Angeles at 4.30 to 5.30 in the evening thought we were mad and at that point I think he was sane because something clearly is not normal when we have the kind of society and patterns that we do but we tend to take these things for granted just like other people take their lacks for granted. Anyway it is nice to know that the students have accomplished as much as they have and this particular group is in excellent health they're entering into the hot wet season shortly they've moved from the cool dry to the warm dry and then you finally come to the hot wet. There are three seasons in that part of the world. The next group of students will go over and enjoy the pleasures of just the hot wet season but that's all a part of life too. A question came to me a few days ago regarding the baptism of John and the baptism of Jesus and having heard the query I thought it would seem appropriate to talk to you today about a subject that I haven't heard discussed for some time and since we're dealing with the preparation for the spring festival about to come in a month's time it would seem appropriate that we have an understanding of a basic subject that maybe we all think we understand and maybe there are aspects of it that we have not. It certainly has been years since I have heard this subject dealt with and I would like you to take a look at the question of baptism in the Bible both in the sense of its implication for today and perhaps a little more in just looking at what is the illustration in the Bible here and there in the life of John teaching of Jesus and the disciples and examples in the Old Testament. There are many things in Scripture that give you an idea that somehow they pop up all of a sudden without any previous indication. The questions are often asked well how come John knew he was to baptize? Was John the first one to baptize? Why did Jesus authorize the disciples to be baptized? Why wasn't David baptized? Why weren't the prophets? Why was not baptism required in the Old Testament? Why were those who had John's baptism

expected to be re-baptized in order to receive the Holy Spirit? In a sense our question is not about a right or a ritual it is a question in part of government in the church and the examples in the law and what would be required under different sets of circumstances as we shall now note. We're dealing in looking at our story with a nation that descended from a particular person. This man from whom the nation descended is ultimately Abraham. Of course the lineage proceeded through Isaac not Ishmael and through Jacob not Esau but in any case we're dealing with a nation that descended from a man and what was required of this nation is that on the eighth day the boy children should be circumcised. The people then who descended from Abraham the males who were circumcised all were a part of the nation that received the oracles of God or the revelation of God to man who received the law. The Gentiles did not receive the law were not in possession of the oracles of God. Certain things were a part of this revelation. There was of course the first revelation that is the week which determines the Sabbath. Then there was the calendar which determines the holy days. The first is revealed in Genesis 2 the next one of course essentially in the account in Exodus 12 and then we have the giving of the law itself which has to do with Exodus 20 and the form in which that law and all other revelation is preserved is given to us in the Bible. So the Jews have preserved the week and a calendar and a book and these represent what no other nation preserved not even the others who were not Jews who descended from Abraham. The children of Israel did not want to retain the law did not want to retain instruction in this book or the calendar and so God let them go the way of other nations but we had one group of people who were left out of the 12 tribes there were essentially two tribes and Levites among them who preserved this material. When John came on the scene John was not the first to have baptized but in a sense John was the first to have baptized because what John did was unusual. Now let us take note that when we have illustrations in the Bible we often find that those illustrations give us information as to what we should do that we don't have an answer to every question but we have illustrations for every problem. Now Moses initially didn't have illustrations for every problem and from time to time he had to have a special statement made by God who addressed him out of the tabernacle and revealed that part of the law which seemed to be necessary and on which no other decision could be based. When it came to the question of Gentiles being brought into the common wealth of Israel the law does not say how. The law does say clearly that there shall be one administration of the law for you who are Israelite born and for a Gentile who wishes to sojourn among you and to take upon himself your religion.

Now with this in mind how would a Gentile in the Old Testament under the Old Covenant have been brought into this relationship? Well first we could perceive readily that every male would have to be circumcised no matter what his age as Abraham and Ishmael initially were and so it is true that every Gentile first of all a male had to be circumcised but the question would arise is that sufficient? We note of course that in the law every Israelite had to offer an offering and so every Gentile woman and every Gentile man was required to offer an offering because that was characteristic of the Israelite they had to be willing to do that. Now men and women could do that only men were required first to be circumcised but before they could offer an offering there was some other function that had to be fulfilled a right if you please and that right was baptism. Now our word baptism today comes from the Greek and so we perhaps should use another term we should use a term like washing in modern English to convey the sense of it. What the Jews discovered and what the Israelites before they were separated and went into captivity discovered that every time there were certain uncleannesses within the children of Israel the children of Israel were expected to bathe. Now we might turn to some significant chapters just briefly Leviticus chapter 15 verse 5 of anyone who touches a person's bed who himself had been defiled he shall wash his clothes and bathe himself in water and be unclean until the evening so he bathed himself he did not merely sprinkle he didn't pour just from a pitcher but he bathed in the sense that he immersed his body in water sufficiently that he was clean

all over. Verse 8 he shall wash his clothes and bathe himself in water. Verse 13 verse 16 you can just go on and on verse 21 verse 22 verse 27 we have many indications that not only you see were individuals to take upon themselves the law or the yoke of the law to do the commandments the men had to be circumcised because Israelite men were circumcised and furthermore they had to offer the offering but also because Israelites had regularly to bathe themselves they were that in that sense among the cleanest of the people of antiquity and to this day of course their nearest relatives the Arabs in the Middle East are also among the cleanest people in the world today far cleaner in fact that many Israelites who have lost the knowledge of the law but it was understood that if an Israelite had to bathe himself because he potentially could be unclean in the flesh then also the Gentile who had lived that way for years or decades was expected to wash himself so first they had to express a willingness to take upon themselves the law then the men had to be circumcised after that either a man or a woman had to be immersed but this was a little different than John's baptism because here each one bathed himself or herself that is under the law the custom was that the individual had to immerse himself or herself in water until you were clean all over and so a Gentile who wanted to accept Israel it was decided on the basis of example that that individual also should immerse himself in water and herself in water there was not a man who performed it for others but the individual did it himself like the Israelite as an individual did if he were unclean this way the Gentiles became aware of the importance of regularly having to clean their outside and I want to emphasize that they were a nation that was to be clean in the flesh they were a nation that that was to offer a certain sacrifice and we won't go into that reason today and so in this sense washing or immersion in water was not something unusual or unexpected every convert every proselyte who was of Gentile background whether man or woman in order to become a citizen of Israel to have the promises that were given under the old covenant or the covenant at Sinai they didn't call it the old covenant to have the benefit of the oracles of God the Bible the Sabbath the calendar everything baptism or washing in water was simply a practice based on the example of the law it was a decision arbitrary because there is no direct law it is a decision of the government in Israel that that was required just as much as circumcision there came a time when the Messiah was to appear that a messenger was to proceed precede the Messiah that messenger is John who happens to have been a cousin he is called John the baptizer or John the dipper to use a very unusual English form that has the same meaning we call him the Baptist because he did something that had never been done before it wasn't baptizing because each man or woman had done this to himself or herself it was the fact that John did this to others for a reason not just himself no one else had ever been sent before to regularly baptize other people regularly every individual in Israel who had become unclean externally for a reason had to baptize or wash himself and that was now lifted to the level where John saw a very special need and God revealed it to him now let us look at the implication if you were a Jew born so if you were a Gentile made so you were now a part of the Commonwealth of Israel in John's day but John said even though you were circumcised even though you might have been immersed if you were a convert a proselyte there is now something that you have to realize that all of this just made you a part of a physical nation in this world whose constitution was established at Sinai a church which is that same nation that church which is the recipient of these oracles of God but it would not give you any promise other than living this natural life out let us look very carefully at what the problem was in the account that we have you can find it in Matthew and Mark and Luke and John for that matter but we will take note since Matthew was first in order we will take note of what he is saying here in those days came John the Baptist chapter 3 verse 1 preaching in the wilderness of Judea he says repent now did you know that you could be a circumcised baby eight days old a part of the children of Israel a Jew you were an heir to the promises that God made to Abraham because you were Abraham's descendant but just because you were circumcised when you were eight days old and you descended from Abraham didn't mean that you repented no circumcised male ever had

normally to go through a rite of bathing to become a member now regularly he went through the rite of washing if he was temporarily unclean but not to have membership nor did he ever have to repent to have membership all you had to do if you were the male was to be circumcised and therefore to keep the law and when you infringed on the law in ignorance you could offer a sacrifice but you never had to repent you merely had to offer the offering the law says very clearly you can turn to it Leviticus again while we're back there near the beginning of the book it says if a man sin unwittingly let's just take chapter 4 verse 2 in any of the things which the Lord has commanded not to be done and if it is the anointed priest who sins could be anyone thus bringing guilt on the people then let him offer for his sin which he has committed a certain thing he was not asked first to repent he was not asked first to repent he was merely asked to offer an offering which acknowledged in the shedding of blood that it the sin that was committed would not be forgiven without the shedding of blood the question of his repentance was simply a matter there not addressed if he was repentant it was forgiven now John says to Israelites who had been keeping the law in the letter who had bathed from time to time if they were unclean who washed regularly who sacrificed regularly as an acknowledgement that sin in the long run was going to be paid for by the shedding of blood the first thing John asks them is to repent for a reason not the kingdom of Israel but the kingdom of heaven is at hand now there are other ways of translating that at hand in the sense is fast approaching the kingdom of heaven is at hand this is another realm most people don't understand what it means in the first place when the children of Israel were made God's nation at Mount Sinai by an agreement which had the form of a Constitution since it was a nation they became the nation Israel and it inherited the land of promise from the border of Egypt to the Euphrates it was a nation that had title to a particular territory it had a law and it had people who normally lived around 70 years of age and then were buried and have since remained dead for thousands of years now Jesus came to the descendants of that nation and also preceding him John the Baptist came and John says we now have to have more than sacrifice there has to be more than what we have done before the kingdom of God is being made available it is at hand what is required is a new state of mind and that is a repentant state of mind this is not the way Luther viewed the word or the way tradition generally has seen it through the Middle Ages that you do penance repent is not doing penance repent means to acknowledge you were wrong and to turn around from the wrong way you were going and go in the right direction and ask forgiveness for having gone in the wrong direction it does not involve giving up or doing certain things as compensation for having gone in the wrong direction when Martin Luther translated into German to booze he had the sense of and many Protestants still kept it for centuries of doing some kind of penance because that had come out of the Roman and Greek world in fact you might say it was a reflection on the law that whenever you sinned you had to do something John was not telling the people that they had to sacrifice he was telling them they had to repent and the reason is that a government quite different not the nation Israel was going to be made available to the descendants of Abraham it is called the kingdom or the government of heaven or God Matthew uses heaven in the sense of are using Washington DC that is the place or London or Jerusalem or Moscow whatever it might be it is the kingdom of God as Mark Luke and John use the term to define who is in charge and the nature of all those who shall constitute it it is in other words a divine government of heaven and not of earth in its origin and to the level of God ultimately and not men Israel was an earthly nation of men it was a kingdom of earth and a kingdom of men whereas what we have here is a level of government and a level of power and authority and being dependent on spirit and not matter now such a thing is unusual God never told at Sinai the descendants of Abraham that they could inherit the kingdom of heaven but John says that the kingdom of God is now going to be made available shortly it's at hand for this is he who was spoken of in the prophets the voice of one crying in the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord make his path straight here we have a very important illustration I'm reading from their vice-standard version

on this occasion John is identifying himself as one who is preparing the way and when you prepare a path for someone you tend to you know take the rocks out and make it smooth and you make it straight that's just the normal thing one would have done in that age instead of following a cow path or a goat trail John was this one he said he was who was preparing the way he wore a garment of camels hair and a leather girdle around his waist and he ate locusts not what we in America call locusts but would be the equivalent of grasshoppers and wild honey he was not one who ate beef and drank wine he had another lifestyle he had a lifestyle that was to set an example of what repentance meant for the nation then went out to him Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region beyond the Jordan that's east of Jordan and they were baptized by him it is not a matter that they each baptized or washed themselves but now they are baptized by him in the River Jordan and they were found to be confessing or acknowledging their sins this is a very important view to see John was asked of God as a revelation since he was a prophet to do certain things prophets have messages sent to them that are not conveyed to others and in this case John was told that as the custom had always been when you were unclean to wash so now a very special washing must take place that we translate into Greek baptism and into English so every Israelite if he is going to inherit the kingdom of God is looked upon as much an outsider as the proselyte Gentile was with respect to Israel now this is a very remarkable step probably the most remarkable change revealed anywhere in the prophets none of the other prophets were told this as clearly for the first time it is clearly said here you look at it that if you are born of the family of Abraham it does you know good because all you do is inherit the promises pertaining to the nation Israel and earthly nation and when you die you're dead John says that all Israelites let's say since most of these were Jews all who were Jews if they were to receive the opportunity of inheriting the kingdom of God must first prepare themselves this preparation required baptism it is like stating that they were all outside a spiritual nation that spiritual nation is the kingdom of God now they were all inside the nation that descended from Abraham because they were born of him but when it comes to inheriting the kingdom of God they're looked upon as no different than Gentiles because they had to be washed or baptized as every man or woman did who became a Jew who was not born a Jew they were baptized by him they were not asked to do it themselves John perceived that what was necessary here is that he should be responsible for making the decision he was the prophet he was responsible for making a decision as to whether they were fit to be baptized they first must repent that's an acknowledgment of the law then they must be baptized and he made the decision so he did the baptizing that's why he's called the Baptist there was no other one previous to his time whoever did that regularly it was not a function of the priest the priest merely said well look if you're unclean you've offered this sacrifice then you bathe John said no such thing he took the example and now required everyone to be immersed in water as a symbol of the fact that they are outsiders to the kingdom of God see the reason for all this is that the kingdom of God is at hand and so what Matthew emphasizes what is not normally understood and what the Pharisees did not understand as we shall now see was that you were as much outside of the kingdom of God as a Jew as you were outside of the kingdom of God if you were Chinese now when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism he said to them you brood of vipers who warned you to flee from the wrath to come John wasn't sent to them but if you want to flee he says bear fruit that befits repentance now he didn't tell the others to bear fruit that befits repentance because most of the common people knew they were guilty and just the act of repentance was sufficient they were not hypocrites when they repented they meant it but these people gave the appearance of righteousness and were something else the common people were something else and they knew it and they didn't give the appearance of righteousness so of these John says you have to do something further than just claim to repent and confess your sin you must bear fruit and give some evidence over time now don't presume to say to yourselves what I have just been discussing to you we have Abraham as our father why we're born of Abraham we're

the natural heirs of the kingdom of heaven John is saying you're not John is saying you are heirs of Abraham Isaac and Jacob all right by birth and if you are heirs by birth you had whatever benefits came from the covenant at Sinai which guaranteed you the land of Canaan as long as you lived but guaranteed you nothing else except the benefits of that now it is not enough to be born of Abraham it is not enough to be circumcised God is able after all of stones to raise up children to Abraham therefore merely being of Abraham is not sufficient but now the ax has laid to the root of the various trees that represented the Israelites every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire so the time was coming when the nation was asked to repent and of course we know what happened the nation as a whole did not repent a very significant minority did on which the New Testament church grew but the nation as a whole did not and that forest was cut down in the Romans tossed it into the fire and not until 1948 was it ever replanted now John continues I baptize you with water for repentance I'm doing the baptizing I am immersing you I am burying you in this water you're getting rid of your past and you are to acknowledge your sins you are to repent that's its purpose to teach you repentance to teach you an attitude or a state of mind that puts you in preparation to hear the one who is to come I baptize you with water for repentance the water was to symbolize washing away of the sin because whenever in the Levitical ritual they washed they were cleansed it was a washing a cleansing now in this very important situation we should see that John chose an ancient ritual water but he did it himself because he was sent to do it it was not left to the people's decision and they were to prepare themselves to hear the message of the Messiah by having a repentance state of mind and the sinful things that they were to repent of had to be washed away symbolized by the act of baptism but one is coming after me that was Jesus who was mightier than I whose sandals I am not worthy to carry and I baptize you of course as he said with water but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit I am not promising you I was not asked to institute a ritual that would promise if you were to do it the Holy Spirit but he not only will give you the Holy Spirit he will also baptize those who do not repent and believe with fire just as the axe cuts down the tree that doesn't bear fruit his winnowing fork if he is like a farmer is in his hand and he's going to clear his threshing floor the wheat will be gathered in one heap into the granary and the chaff the tree that's cut down is going to be burnt with unquenchable fire that's the baptism of fire the Pentecostals confuse that quite often and assume that the baptism of fire is some kind of supernatural sign when they're given the Holy Spirit but that's a separate subject not our concern today Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan River to John to be baptized by John John logically said that you should not I need to be baptized by you and do you come to me but Jesus answered him let it be so now for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness that doesn't tell everything but it meant that Jesus and John mutually were to fulfill an important fact or act when Jesus was born of Mary he according to Philippians had emptied himself of deity or divinity in the sense that he was now dependent on the circulation of blood and oxygen just as we are he was reduced from immortal life to physical life now there was no sin that he had to repent of John of course saw no need for that and therefore he wondered why he should but Jesus was setting an example for his disciples he was setting an example that he should be baptized in this very special sense that John perhaps did not fully see that when we are baptized we are buried and we come up with a new life and Jesus was baptized because he was to put off ultimately the flesh and to come up with a new life that is to live eternally as spirit so Jesus was symbolizing something even more than John fully understood and that baptism is more than the washing away of dirt symbolic of sin but in fact a burial a laying aside of the flesh and the hope of rising in a new life as one is buried in water and comes up again out of the water hence baptism is understood in nothing other than immersion so John consented and when Jesus was baptized he went up immediately from the water and the heavens were opened and God declared him my beloved son in whom I am well pleased the spirit of God descended on him not because he did not already have the spirit but he was given the spirit of God here in a form to be

seen and John saw it and bore witness and he was prepared for his ministry as distinct from merely being a Jew and a carpenter without sin now we will skip over to another section let's look at Mark's account just briefly the beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ it involves a message from John the Baptist and in verse 4 John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness preaching a baptism of repentance it wasn't the only baptism because Jesus was also teaching baptism but he was requiring those who were born of Abraham something that had never been done before they were only required to be circumcised as was Abraham but now they had to be dealt with as Gentiles and they were all asked whether they had been before baptized as proselytes or now never before baptized in need of baptism they all had to be baptized and it was for repentance preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins now John Mark adds something here that wasn't clearly stated in Matthew it is a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sin repentance is your function the forgiveness of sin is God's when you repent God forgives it was however still limited to your state of mind and what God in turn would do because of your state of mind he would forgive sin now there went out to him all the country of Judea and all the people of Jerusalem they were baptized by John in the Jordan River confessing their sins for the purpose of being forgiven in a way that animal sacrifices did not do because they were only reminders you were not required to repent before you made the sacrifice now if you did you were forgiven this is very clear here that John is not asking them to offer any sacrifice he is asking them now to bypass two things he is not telling them to be in a sense re circumcised he is not telling them to offer a sacrifice the law and the prophets were announced every Sabbath until John came and John announces something very significant that what is required as of his job was to repent so that you could be forgiven he did not say that they had to be circumcised now that's very important when you link this up with the book of Acts chapter 15 I don't think the church has ever clearly done that I really think we have overlooked the implication to be in a state of mind ready to listen to the Messiah John did not require circumcision John only required repentance that's all that I was asked to do but the one who is coming will baptize you with the Holy Spirit I was not asked by the baptism that I was asked to do to promise you the Holy Spirit so now we learn something very important Jesus is going to baptize you with the Holy Spirit John only baptize with water with no promise of the Holy Spirit but that they should look to one who is to come who would do that in those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John and the Jordan and when he came up out of the water the spirit of God came on him as you again read so we'll skip this for the moment then John was finally arrested in verse 14 and Jesus carried on I will not go through that because that's not the purpose here let's look at Luke and Luke's account very important account should be read by all the leaders of this nation should be understood by every economist in fact in going through this subject I discovered the Bible answer to all the world's financial problems and you will see it right here in the of course it's a matter of repenting of the things we've done wrong in the 15th year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar the word of God came to John the end of verse 2 the son of Zachariah in the wilderness he went up into the region around about Jordan preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins they were asked here not to focus in on just what they were to do but to acknowledge that they wanted to get rid of the past and have it all washed away now when he was approached by the Pharisees and Sadducees he says to them the presence of the multitudes you brood of vipers verse 7 who warned you to flee from the wrath to come verse 8 bear fruits that be fit repentance and don't assume that just because you have Abraham as your father that you can inherit the kingdom of God because you as Jesus later would say you're just flesh and you have to be born again the multitudes asked him verse 10 what then shall we do and he says to them now here is your economic solution to today's problems what shall we do to straighten out our own lives what shall we do to straighten out the state of the nation he said he who has two coats let him share with him who has none today he who has two coats loans both of them out for interest he who has food let him do likewise today we start

in the basement and buy guns to protect it that's the way we're going today it's not the way John said would solve the problem tax collectors also came to be baptized and said to him teacher what shall we do and he said to them collect no more than has appointed you he didn't say that we have to cut taxes I want you to notice that today we're neglecting the first two we want to get the benefits of the third if you would solve the first two and not over tax don't go beyond what has appointed we would solve most of our problems soldiers also asked now these are not Jews and that's what I wanted to say John did not address the question of circumcision one way or another to Jews but when there were Gentiles who came to him these soldiers could have been Germans Gauls Britons they could have been Iberians Latins Greeks whatever soldiers also asked and we what shall we do and he said to them this is the revised standard version translation Rob no one by violence or by false accusation they would take advantage of their position and be content with your wages you wouldn't have to strike you see you wouldn't have to demand higher wages you could almost curtail inflation in a week's time apart from OPEC if we didn't raise wages if we began to pay off our debts by paying our tax and if we shared to those who did not have the abundance of what we do have we would cut down all the extra expenditures of welfare and you would be surprised what major changes could take place but we simply fail to look at the simple solutions this all reflects repentance that is to do what you should have done in a different way they were asked to repent to be immersed to show they wanted to wash away their past they were not asked to be circumcised that's important therefore in that sense spiritually to enter the kingdom of God no one is required to be circumcised and that is a decision that was made in the book of Acts chapter 15 was understood of course before by the disciples and Peter and really could have been perceived by John's own message but I doubt that we have really looked at it clearly as the people were in expectation and all men queried in their hearts John said I baptize you with water but he who is mightier than I is coming mightier than I is coming the thong of whose sandals I'm not worthy to untie he'll baptize you with the Holy Spirit and of course for the unrepentant of fire and you have that already given before so with many other exhortations he preached good news to the people and then finally Herod put him in prison now verse 21 when all the people were baptized and when Jesus had also been baptizing so we discover that Jesus had been baptizing now in what manner we must turn to John and we'll move now to John's account chapter 1 the word was made flesh verse 14 dwelt among us and John the writer of the gospel said the John the Baptist bore witness to him this one who became flesh when he said this is he of whom I said he who comes after me ranks before me for he was or lived before me verse 19 this is the testimony of John the Baptist when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem they wanted to know first who are you why do you baptize he said I'm not the Christ he said I'm not Elijah he said I'm not the prophet spoken of in Deuteronomy then they said who are you let us have some kind of answer we can send to those who asked us what do you say of 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 now they had been sent from the Pharisees and they asked him then why are you baptizing that's the issue who gave you this authority member Jesus later said I'll tell you by what authority I do these things if you can tell me the answer to one question only John's baptism was it of God or of men if it was of God why didn't they repent and receive it why weren't they baptized if it was men the people would disagree with that conclusion see so they said we can't tell and you remember Jesus said well if you can't tell me I won't tell you how I got my authority that's a little again part of the story but they wanted to know they were more interested in the authority that John had then in repenting you see if you're not the Christ or Elijah or the prophet who was foretold in Deuteronomy who gave you this authority so John answers them I baptize with water but among you stands one whom you do not know even he who comes after me the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie he was pointing the way to someone else the next day he saw Jesus coming toward him and said behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world that was quite a message to announce

that there was in the flesh an individual who is the lamb that would be sacrificed to remove the sin of the whole world now John said something more here John the Baptist he didn't say who takes away the sin of Israel you see John's message was not just an Old Testament message we have said this before but I doubt that many of us have understood it John's message was not simply to restate the requirements in the Old Testament his message is that it is possible for Gentiles to be born into the kingdom of God because God sent Christ to die for the sins of the whole world not of one nation only in it and what is required is repentance and John set the example of baptism so we set the example of baptism of repentance no requirement of circumcision and an acknowledgement that the Lamb of God would take away the sins of both Jew and Gentile and all that is a New Testament message but John was not asked to baptize with the promise of the Holy Spirit that was left to Jesus Christ this was only the preparation this is he of whom I said after me comes a man who ranks before me for he was before me I myself did not know him John the Baptist is still being quoted but for this I came baptizing with water that he might be revealed to Israel John didn't know as he was growing up as Jesus cousin who this person was he was just his younger cousin John was six months older but God revealed to him later that he is indeed the Messiah John bore witness further and said I saw the Spirit descended as a dove from heaven and it remained on him I myself did not know him in earlier times but he who sent me to baptize with water said he on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit that is when you see John that was the message from the Father in heaven when you see a man baptized or who comes to you for baptism and when you see the Spirit of God descending on him you can announce without any fear of doubt that he is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit that means to immerse us into the family of God the Spirit of God who will put his Spirit in us in the sense immerse the Spirit that is in man in Holy Spirit so that we will not just be composed of matter any longer and ultimately be born of that Spirit at the resurrection the next day came John and two of his disciples and John says to them behold the Lamb of God when he saw Jesus walking the two disciples heard him say this now you see John couldn't tell by looking at Jesus Jesus didn't walk around with a halo he didn't have a little sign which said lamb he was just simply a cousin and a carpenter admittedly he was without sin John knew that he was unusual that way for when he first came to him he said well look there's no reason you should be baptized what have you to repent of but that that meant he was the Lamb of God was yet another matter that is the Messiah so when they heard that these two men asked Jesus they said Rabbi which means teacher where are you staying you see Jesus now was a teacher he had that authority at this time he was 30 years of age and they addressed him as a rabbi where are you staying and he said to come and see and they stayed with him and one of those men was Andrew who was Simon's brother and then Andrew takes time out to find Simon and said we have found the Messiah chapter 3 verse 22 now after Jesus and the disciples went into the land of Judea there he remained with them and baptized John also was baptizing at Anon near Salim because there was much water there and the people came in were baptized now let's notice what is implied here we aren't told how Jesus baptized we'll come to that in a moment but John was baptizing as well as Jesus the purpose of John was to prepare people to prepare people with a state of mind a repentant state of mind so that they would be willing to listen to Jesus to whom John pointed John was not yet put in prison and this was after the first Passover referred to in chapter 2 verse 13 of John so this was six seven eight months you know in that period of time after the beginning of John's ministry in the baptism of Jesus John really didn't begin to baptize until he was about 30 and a half years of age at the beginning of the 15th year of Tiberius Caesar in the autumn just after the Feast of Tabernacles of AD 27 so John continued to baptize or to prepare people that was his purpose but Jesus also now was calling disciples out of these who were prepared and was training them and teaching them about baptism too now a discussion arose between John's disciples and a Jew over purifying they said to John rabbi John was also a rabbi he who was with you beyond Jordan to whom you bore witness why he's

baptizing also and all are going to him and John said well no one can receive anything except it's given to him from heaven that is obviously if they're going to him then something has been revealed to them otherwise there would be no reason for the people to follow Jesus and you yourselves bear me witness that I said I'm not the Christ but I have been sent before him he who has the bride is the bridegroom the friend of the bridegroom who is John who stands and hears him rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice therefore this joy of mine he is the friend of the bridegroom is now full he must increase but I must decrease he who comes from above is above all he who is of the earth belongs to the earth and of the earth he speaks and here of course we have John defining the relationship that Jesus message comes from above and the message to John the Baptist came from above now chapter 4 the very beginning now when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing even more disciples than John which thing would have upset them he left Judea and departed again to Galilee so I wanted to finish that thought he went now to Galilee and then John is put in prison and then Jesus began to speak however there is a note that you should see in parentheses although Jesus himself did not baptize but only his disciples none of the others made that plane that is Jesus did it and if really he didn't do it and yet he did it then they must have done it in his name and that's why the church today baptizes in the name of her by the authority of Jesus Christ if they did not do it in his name then Jesus wouldn't have been the one baptizing because when we do it in his name it's the same as saying that Jesus is the one who actually does the baptizing and we only use his name because we're here on earth and water is here and Jesus is in heaven and it is merely by the authority he has conferred that we do it Jesus was training disciples so that they would discern what was required and of course the promise of the Holy Spirit was not yet going to be fulfilled until Acts chapter 2 but I want to momentarily turn to the book of Acts in a very important section chapter 19 now Apollos was in Corinth and Paul passes through the upper country and comes to Ephesus where Apollos had been and there he found some disciples and he said to them he obviously perceived something that they didn't understand did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed and they said no we have never even heard that there is a Holy Spirit and he said now they had been baptized he said well then into what then were you baptized they were baptized as it says here unto John's baptism John the Baptist and because they had listened to John they were ready to hear the message of Jesus Christ so they in that sense were looked upon as disciples of Christ because they were willing to listen to his teaching and they had been baptized but they had been baptized to John's baptism which merely meant that they were willing to acknowledge repentance and that there should be an open-mindedness and listening to the one who should come afterward Paul said John baptized with a baptism of repentance telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him that is Jesus on hearing this then they were baptized says Luke in the name of Jesus Christ or the Lord Jesus and when Paul laid his hands upon them the Holy Spirit came on them and in this area also they were given the gift supernaturally of tons and a revelation of prophetic matters there were 12 of them in all John's baptism was a preliminary it was not sufficient in this sense that those who were baptized were not promised the Holy Spirit John said that they were insufficient as a nation the Jews they needed to realize that being born of Abraham was not enough but John was not asked to tell them that they should receive the Holy Spirit through his baptism he told his disciples who had been baptized to wash away their sins he said you should now look to the one who is to come who will give his spirit and so Jesus came and what he did was to baptize and that is through the disciples and promise the Holy Spirit including the need also of laying on of hands which we do after baptism it isn't a question of baptizing because the first one was wrong or inadequate it was adequate for its purpose but Jesus asks us not only to be baptized in the sense of washing away our sins acknowledging that we are like Gentiles who have to wash away the past John's baptism was the same there there was no difference it was immersion and they both had to wash away the past and they both had to repent but that was all the John required Jesus said I

want you to see this baptism by my authority not John's authority but by mine as requiring that you bury your past and that you will leave it not merely as washed away but you will leave it underwater and that you come up in a new life John began to see this but just was clearly Jesus focus and if you're willing to believe in me now the difference is that John said if you repent then I want you to listen to that man and you make the decision Jesus baptism requires not only repentance but that you already believe before you are baptized John required repentance before they believed is that clear because they were told that when they had repented of their sins they could have it washed away and now they were to go listen to the Lamb of God they were in a state of mind they were prepared but Jesus then in baptizing required the washing away of their sins which happened from time to time after John's baptism they all continued to sin and they needed to repent of course now it is more than merely washing it away it is a recognition that you're to come up with a new life because the Holy Spirit is promised so that we have the beginning of eternal life because otherwise we're just born of mortal flesh our parents the Holy Spirit imparts eternal life it has not yet made us immortal it is immortal life dwelling in us in our minds so that the kind of life we lead in the decisions we make today are motivated by the Spirit of God or should be if we are in contact regularly with God as we must be so Jesus promised not only in baptism that you would lay aside your old way of life for the born of Abraham or not but that you could come up in a new kind of life and receive the Holy Spirit and this was again made plain in Paul's account to the Romans you should be familiar with the story there in Romans chapter 6 we'll stop here and not go into that Romans chapter 6 has regularly been read and I wanted to give this background so you would understand that John was clearly a transition and was no longer preaching the customs of the law that he was preaching the preparation for the message that is the New Testament and not only in Roman 6 which you should read in preparation for the Passover but you ought to read 1st Peter 3 I think I will end with that right here is very simple and short verse 20 and 21 baptism which corresponds to this now saves you not as a removal of dirt from the body which was the original washing that the Hebrews were all familiar with but as an appeal to God for a clean conscience or a clear conscience that is baptism is in a sense symbolic of our appeal to God that we can have a clear conscience and not be guilty of sin in our minds all of this is made possible through the resurrection of Jesus Christ not merely his death death paid the penalty but to administer that to us required as resurrection because of Christ had remained dead he would not be an advocate in heaven and there would be no one to represent us in heaven there would only be the devil and people who say that all it was needed was the blood of Jesus overlooked the resurrection they are both needed the resurrection of Christ who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God with angels to assist him and other authorities and powers all subject to him and because he is in that position he is able to administer for us so that we can be forgiven when we stumble and fall and the church can be led properly out of this world and be prepared to meet Christ when he comes the story of John the Baptist is of course commonly talked of among denomination in that denomination which has his name they've taken it to themselves that we seldom discuss it but I think it important at this time of the year that we should give some serious thought to the remarkable role of this man in so far as Mr. Armstrong has drawn analogies between John the Baptist and this work and particularly his part in it that we are preparing the world we are preparing many hundreds of thousands or millions of people to think about what is going to happen who are not yet called at this time and when it begins to happen then they will believe but right now they're just thinking about it just as John's disciples listen to Jesus and thought about it and you were like the disciples whom Jesus baptized that is those who have already come to that place where you have believed and taken action now let us not fail to carry through this initial resolve