

He Himself Baptises with the Holy Spirit

Isaiah 44:1-5

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Introduction:

The church is in a very pitiful condition today.

- There is dead traditionalism everywhere,
 - and where that is not, there is entertainment instead of reverent worship.
- And there is such ignorance that many do not even know the basic gospel.
 - They are church members, but they are in the darkness.
- And there is blatant immorality so that even ministers are engaging in perversity and there is no discipline.

This can cause you to despair for future generations!

- It can make you ask, “What will become of the church?”
 - What hope can we really have when we baptise our covenant children?
 - The church statisticians tell us that 70% who are active in their youth will abandon the faith when they become young adults.
- Just think what it must have been like for the saints in Isaiah’s day!
 - Isaiah had told them that Jerusalem was going to be destroyed and that the nation would be taken into exile in Babylon.
 - What hope could they have for their children or the next generations?
 - Jerusalem was the city where God had put His name and revealed Himself as the God who dwelt among His people.
 - All the ordinances at the temple showed how He was reconciled to them...
 - but now the temple was going to be destroyed and ordinances ended.
 - How could those few who loved the Lord in Judah during this time of great apostasy and judgement have any confidence that their children would know the LORD?

We have seen that the LORD is very much concerned to encourage His people in such times as these.

- In chapter 40 and onward,
 - the prophecy of Isaiah is aimed at comforting God’s people, not only as they anticipated the coming exile,
 - but these words were also to be for their comfort after the exile began.
 - They were words that they could turn to as an anchor for their faith during those difficult days!

- And of course these words also stand for the church in every other age...
 - whether we are in times of growth, or in times of declension...
 - these words are designed to keep our hope in God's promises alive!

In chapter 40 itself,

- The LORD comforts His people by telling them that He Himself is coming to redeem them.
 - They are to prepare His way, because He Himself is coming to save them!
 - He reminds them of His glory and power and wisdom to give them hope that He will not fail.
 - We now know that He has come in the person of His Son to save us.
 - It is a most remarkable and comforting thing!
- In chapter 41,
 - He shows us that He is sovereign and is the One who has sent their calamities to chasten them.
 - They must not suppose that the idols have “won” when Jerusalem falls.
 - The idols did not foretell these things as the LORD had done.
 - These are His works and He is the One we ought to trust.
- In chapter 42,
 - He introduces us to the one He calls “my servant whom I uphold”
 - He tells us that this servant will be the anointed One who will do His will...
 - He tells us that He will carry out all that He is given to do...
 - And will establish God's kingdom of righteousness (mish-pawt)
 - It is a glorious prophecy of Jesus the Messiah!
- In chapter 43,
 - The LORD sets forth two of the three aspects of the redemption that He Himself will accomplish for us.
 - First, he shows us that He will redeem us from bondage to Babylon—
 - that it, to ungodly powers and authorities that are put over us to test us.
 - Jesus will reign until all His enemies are put under His feet.
 - This is a work that only He can accomplish.
 - Second, He shows us that He will redeem us from the guilt and penalty of sin.
 - He tells us that He Himself is the one who blots out our iniquities...
 - And it is a good thing that He does—for we are not able to do it!
 - When He does it, we have the assurance of complete forgiveness.

TRANS> What excellent encouragement this is for us!

But there remains a great problem!

- A problem that all who know the LORD struggle with.
 - Even though our sin be blotted out and forgiven, we still have it in our lives!
 - We desire to do good, but we find that evil is present with us.
 - As God's people, we hate this!
 - We want to be delivered!
 - You children...
 - You don't like to be all out of sorts—
 - full of complaining and quarrelling,
 - hard to get along with,
 - selfish and demanding,
 - hateful and disobedient to your parents...
 - It's no good, is it?
 - And you parents,
 - You don't like to be impatient with your children,
 - You don't like to be selfish and uncaring,
 - You don't like to be negligent or to set a bad example,
 - and you could wish that you had more wisdom to train up your children
 - And all of you,
 - You don't like to be cold toward the LORD,
 - to consider it a weariness to worship Him as we saw last week...
 - You want to love Him and to have a heart for Him.
 - You don't like to be all dry when you pray,
 - or unmoved when you hear of His majesty,
 - or disinterested when it comes to applying His word in your life
 - You want to rejoice in Christ and all He has done.
 - and you want to bear fruit for Him...
 - Of course this is all so.

It's great to be forgiven and to know that you are forgiven,

- But we also need to be changed!
 - It's one thing to have your sins blotted out so that you are fully forgiven and no longer under condemnation—it's great!
 - but it's incomplete if you do not have your sin removed from your life—
 - if your heart and your conduct are not changed!

And today, I want to show you that God has also promised this!

- There is hope both for you and for your covenant children!
 - and for your grandchildren and their grandchildren also...
 - because our gracious Lord has not only promised to redeem us from Babylon and from the guilt of sin,
 - He has also promised to redeem us from the power and presence of sin.
- This hope is set forth for us in Isaiah 44:1-5...
 - First of all, see that:

I. There is hope because the LORD has chosen you to be holy.

A. He has chosen you to be His own servant!

1. This is brought out in v. 1 where He calls us to hear Him and addresses us as “O Jacob my servant, and Israel whom I have chosen.”
 - We have seen in this section that “Jacob” and “Israel” are repeatedly used to refer to God’s covenant people.
 - This reminds us of our origins—
 - that we were deceivers (the name Jacob),
 - but that God made us Israel’s who would look to Him alone.
 - And in this verse we are reminded that we, who are Jacob, are God’s servants because He has chosen us.
2. If God Almighty has chosen you to be His servant, it means that you will surely serve Him.
 - You will no longer serve sin, but you will serve Him because He has taken you as His servant.
 - He does not choose someone to be His servant and then fail to have them serve!
 - All whom He chooses will serve Him.
 - His election is powerful.
 - He has called us to be His servants and so we are.

B. If you are His servant today, it is all because of His doing.

1. Verse 2 emphasises that when it says that the LORD made you and formed you from the womb.
 - As we remember with Jacob,
 - the LORD chose him before he was even born...
 - His gracious choice extended to him before he had done anything good or evil... it was all God’s free election.

- Paul emphasises this point in Romans 9.
 - If Jacob was chosen before he was born, God’s choosing of him could not have been based on his works.
2. And you see here when God says that He formed us from the womb—
- This is not talking about creation of our bodies...
 - It means that His work of transformation in us to make us His servants.
 - This work began in us before we were even born!
 - Already, God was working to prepare you for salvation, to prepare you to one day be His servant.
 - Some of you have loved the LORD from your youth,
 - but even if you came to serve Him in later years, you can look back and see that He was at work in you all along to prepare you.
 - You would not have ever served God if it was left up to you...
 - He is the one who has graciously formed life in you over the years.
3. Tell me now, you cannot change your heart, can you?
- You can’t take the heart of stone that we all have by nature and make it a heart of flesh that serves God...
 - You can no more do that than you pick up this church and carry it around with you.
 - God is the one who forms us and makes us to be His people...
 - because He has chosen us,
 - And He is still forming us now...
 - He is forming us because He has predestinated us to be conformed to the image of His Son.

TRANS> And His main point here is that He will keep on working in you...

C. He is telling you not to be afraid because He will keep on helping you!

1. If He has chosen you and has formed you all along,
 - Don’t think that He is going to abandon His work now!
 - It may be an apostate age where many are turning away,
 - but you do not need to be afraid—He will hold you up!
 - He who began a good work in you will continue to work!
 - He is at work in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.
2. He calls you “Jeshurun whom I have chosen.”
 - Jeshurun means “my upright one”

- You look at yourself and you say,
 - “But I am not very upright! How can He call me that?”
 - Look at Israel at this time—How could He call them Jeshurun?
- He can call you Jeshurun because He has chosen you to be Jeshurun, and by His grace you will be Jeshurun!
- This is very much the same encouragement we are given in Ephesians 1:4 where it says that:
 - Eph 1:4: He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love,
 - You *will* be holy and blameless because He has chosen you to be Holy and blameless!
 - His Jeshurun! It is a marvellous thing!
 - His upright one!
 - The LORD has chosen us for this and He will see that it is done!
 - His servants will serve Him
 - They will walk before Him and be blameless by His grace.
 - They will be Holy and without blame before Him in love.

TRANS> And this is no empty promise!

- Our text goes on to tell us that:

II. There is hope because the LORD gives us what we need to be His Jeshurun!

A. In verse 3, He says that He is going to pour water on the thirsty and floods on the dry ground!

1. Look, we are dry as a desert, barren and unfruitful, dead in our sins...
 - Everything dries up and dies without water, and so do you...
 - You can feel death in you when sin takes a hold of you...
 - You know that dry barren unfruitful heart that is yours until it is watered by the LORD.
 - That heart that finds it to be a weariness to worship God.
 - But here is water promised!
 - And not just a little water—a lot of water!
 - Do you see?
 - He will not let you dry up—even in exile!
 - You are His servant and He gives you the living water.

2. All through the Bible, God promises water—spiritual water to give life to His people’s souls...
 - a. This is the water that Jesus promised to the woman at the well when He said to her,
 - John 4:10: "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, ‘Give Me a drink,’ you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water."
 - At first, she thought He was talking about water like the water that she was drawing for Him from the well,
 - but Jesus explained that He was talking about spiritual water:
 - He said:
 - John 4:13-14: "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life."
 - Do you see?
 - This water gives eternal life to God’s people!
- b. The scripture is full of talk about this life giving water from the LORD.
 - In Eph 5:26, we are told that Christ
 - “sanctifies and cleanses His church with the washing of water by the word.”
 - And in Titus 3:5, we are told of the washing of regeneration,
 - And in Hebrews 10:22 we are told that our bodies have been “washed with pure water.”
 - I could go on with more examples of how water is used to represent cleansing...

TRANS> But what is it about water that causes it to have so great an effect?

- It is not the water, but what water symbolises!

B. This water symbolises the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to give us life.

1. You can see how Isaiah associates the water with the Spirit in verse 3:
 - No sooner does he say:
 - Isa 43:3: For I will pour water on him who is thirsty, And floods on the dry ground;
 - than He says:
 - I will pour My Spirit on your descendants, And My blessing on your offspring.

- This points us to the idea that the life-giving water God pours on us is symbolic of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit upon us.

TRANS> This is verified elsewhere in scripture.

2. All through Scripture, the Spirit is associated with life-giving water.

a. This connection is expressly stated by John in John 7.

- First, John tells us that at the feast, Jesus spoke about the water that He gives to the thirsty. In John 7:37-38, he says:

- John 7:37-38: On the last day, that great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."

- But then in the next verse, John tells us plainly that when Jesus spoke of water, He was speaking of the Holy Spirit.

- In John 7:39, he explains:

- John 7:39: But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet *given*, because Jesus was not yet glorified."

- This makes it very clear that the pouring forth of water is used to represent the pouring forth of the Holy Spirit and His work.

b. And so it should not be surprising to us to learn that the outpouring of water in baptism is symbolic of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

1) In all four gospels, John the Baptist shows this link.

- Earlier, we read in Luke 3:16 where He said,

- Lu 3:16: John answered, saying to all, "I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

- Water is used in baptism because it represents cleansing and purification that comes through the Holy Spirit.

- In Hebrews 9:10, we are told of various "washings (βαπτισμοις)" that were done for purification under the ceremonial law.

- So baptisms were not unknown in the Old Testament.

- They were common.

- But as the special promise of the outpouring of the Spirit pertained to the coming of Christ,

- Jesus was the one who would baptize with the Holy Spirit,

- So God appointed water baptism as the distinctive sign of the New Covenant.

2) This same connection between water and the Spirit is also seen in Acts 10 when Cornelius, the first Gentile to receive the gospel, has the Spirit poured out on him and his household.

- We are told that while Peter was preaching to them, the Spirit fell upon them and they began to speak with tongues...
 - Then in Acts 10:47, Peter said:
 - Acts 10:47-48: “Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord.
 - They had the outpouring of the Spirit which is symbolised by the outpouring of water in baptism...
 - So when they received the thing signified, Peter insisted that ought to be given the symbol as well.

c. The connection between washing with water and the renewing of the Spirit is foretold in Ezekiel 36.

- Please turn there so you can see it for yourself.
 - Here, the LORD is promising to restore His people from exile in Babylon, and in promising this, He declares that He is going to purify them...
 - And He says that He will do that by water and by the Holy Spirit.
 - Look at Ezekiel 36:25:
 - Ezekiel 36:25-28: "Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. 26 "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.
 - Baptism with water is the symbol of purification given by the Lord, and baptism with the Spirit is what changes us so that we will walk in God's ways.
 - The water baptism, which is visible, is a symbol of the baptism of the Holy Spirit which is invisible...
 - so that by baptism, God shows us what He promises to do by His Spirit—to cleanse us.

C. But I want you to notice that the LORD does not promise to pour out water or the Spirit upon the people Isaiah is ministering to.

1. He says that He will do this to their descendents and their offspring.

- There is good reason for this as we have just seen.
 - The outpouring of the Spirit was something that was left for the Messiah to do when He came in the future.
 - That is why it is a promise of what God will do to the descendents of the people in Isaiah's day.
 - This is a blessing that is reserved for the people in the New Testament.
2. So what good was this to the people Isaiah was ministering to?
- Was there anything for them in this promise?
 - Yes there was!
 - a. The promise meant that even though they were going into exile, God was still going to preserve them as His people.
 - It was on *their* descendents that the Spirit would be poured out.
 - This meant that God would work in them so that they would not depart from Him throughout the exile.
 - He would not pour out His Spirit in as great abundance as He would do when Jesus came,
 - but He would at least keep them by His Spirit so that they would continue in His grace as His people.
 - This was a great blessing to them, to know that God would keep them.
 - b. And that's not the only thing that was in this promise to Isaiah's disciples...
 - God's work of redemption is a gradual work that occurs over the whole course of history...
 - That means that what God did when He sent Jesus and atoned for our sins and then poured out His Spirit was not just for the people who lived from that day on,
 - It was also for Abraham and David and Isaiah and all those who had gone before.
 - They were waiting for the day of Christ.
 - And when He came, He secured forgiveness for them and also obtained the promise of the Spirit.
 - That means that when Abraham and Isaiah and all of Isaiah's disciples are raised up,
 - they too will be partakers of the fullness of the Spirit that was poured out on their offspring many years later.
 - c. Do you see how this applies to us?

- 1) We may live in a time when the LORD is chastening the church and we do not see the fullness of the Spirit's work.
 - but that does not mean the Spirit is not working at all!
 - and it does not mean that we will never enjoy that fullness.
 - If we are His people, we will!
 - Even if we don't have rivers of living water, we will!
 - And so will our children if they continue in God's covenant!
 - God's promise remains.

- 2) So you do not need to despair, even in dry and barren times.
 - Be sure that God has much greater blessings in reserve for us and give thanks that He is keeping you for that day...
 - Yes, seek Him earnestly for what He has promised,
 - plead with Him for an outpouring
 - but do not despair or think that the end has come in these times of declension.
 - God will bring us through and there will be greater blessings in the days to come—
 - if not while we are alive, for our descendents after us.
 - No one will be left out, for God has chosen us to be His people, His Jeshurun, a people holy and blameless before Him.

TRANS> And so my brothers and sisters, every time we have a baptism, it is time for you to renew your hope in God's promise.

- In baptism, He promises that He will pour out His Spirit upon us to give us life.

III. Here are two things we are to seek from God's Spirit from our baptism...

- By "from our baptism," I mean that these are two things that are promised to us at baptism.
 - They are promises that we are to yearn to see fulfilled throughout all our days.
 - We are to seek them both for ourselves and for our children.

A. First, we are to seek the fullness of new life that the Spirit produces...

1. This is what is spoken of in verse 4.
 - It tells us that when the water and Spirit are poured out on God's people,

- Isa 44:4: “They will spring up among the grass like willows by the watercourses.”
 - The picture here is one that you see in a barren land that is dry...
 - I saw this when I was driving through Washington State recently.
 - There were places where all the land was dry and parched...
 - there were no trees until there was a place where there was a little stream, and beside it, there were trees growing.
 - These trees could not grow without the water, just as we cannot grow without the Spirit.
 - And in baptism, the life-giving Spirit is represented by the application of water.
2. And so whenever we pour out the waters of baptism,
- We are to earnestly look for life from God’s Spirit...
 - That means that you parents are to speak to your children when you see them living according to the sinful flesh...
 - Call them aside and ask them...
 - Is this the way you want to live?
 - full of bitterness and complaining?
 - full of envy and greed?
 - full of pride and rebellion?
 - Of course not!
 - Children, you want to love your brothers and sisters and your mother and father, don’t you?
 - And you want to serve God rather than falling into a life of selfishness and emptiness—don’t you?
 - Well then look to what God has promised you!
 - The Holy Spirit is given to you so that you might live!
 - You don’t have to go on at this poor dying rate.
 - Ask Him to transform you...
 - to give you that new heart that delights in the law of God... and that new life that walks in His beautiful ways...
 - a life where you lay down your live for others as Jesus laid down His life for you!

3. And of course, as you seek those blessings for your children,

- You are also to seek them for yourself!
 - Gal 5:22-23: The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.
 - You have been baptised—look for the fruit that comes from the baptism of the Holy Spirit.
 - God has promised that if we ask Him for the Holy Spirit, He will give Him to us.
- B. Second, we are to seek the sweet communion with our heavenly Father that the Spirit produces... for us and for our children.
- In short, the Holy Spirit works in us to give us a keen sense that we truly belong to the LORD ...and of what that means!
 - the simple covenant promise that He is our God and that we are His people!
 - This is everything—and the Spirit helps us to understand that!
 - to see what it really means to belong to Him—to be His people! His servant! His very child!!
 - This sweet communion is spoken of in verse 5.
1. First, it says that we say, “I am the LORD’s”
- That is everything!
 - He has taken you as His very own—to belong to Him, to be with Him and to have communion with Him forever!
 - He delights to reveal Himself to you and delights to shape you and mould you into His glorious image!
 - When you have the Spirit, you realise that it is your great privilege and honour to do just like Jesus did and give up yourself to Him alone!
 - To let go of all your own ways and become His servant, here for Him, to do His will and nothing else.
 - That you are here for His purposes and glory and that you find your life in losing it for Him.
 - You realise that your LORD has purchased you at a great price...
 - even that He has shed His blood to make you His own.
 - That is what He did that He might have you, and now, by the Spirit, you are delighted to be His.
2. Secondly, when the Spirit is poured out, you call yourself “by the name of Jacob.”

- You associate yourself with the people of God—you identify yourself with them.
 - You recognise that in Christ, you are one with them.
 - That even as He has purchased you, so He has purchased them.
 - You recognise that you cannot love your LORD whom you have not seen if you do not love your brother whom you have seen.
 - You recognise that laying down your life for the LORD means laying down your life for your spouse, for your children, for your brothers and sisters in the LORD.
 - If you see your covenant children pulling away from God’s people, you need to remind them that they have not only been baptised into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
 - but also into the body of Christ, the church.
 - If you are not keen on being with God’s people, you cannot pretend that things are right with God...
 - You need to seek the blessing of God’s Spirit to restore your identity with them and your love and concern for them.
3. Thirdly, when the Spirit is poured out, you will “write with your hand, the LORD’s”
- This means that you are very deliberate and solemn in claiming the Lord as your own...
 - You enter into a covenant with Him, not in an uncertain way, but in a way that can be recorded.
 - You find your identification with Him as a woman takes her husband’s name when she marries Him.
 - The LORD calls us to confess with our mouth that He is LORD.
 - Those who belong to Him will say so.
 - They will not enter into covenant with Him in His church and not stand aloof as drifters or outsiders.
 - Church membership has become a very casual and informal thing in our day because people don’t like the accountability that goes with it.
 - But whenever the Spirit was poured out, the people came forth and openly confessed Him, and entered into the community of His people.
 - All in all, this verse is saying that we happily own the LORD...
 - That we are delighted to be His and to have Him for our God.

- No longer is there that cold, dead relationship with Him that we saw described in chapter 43:22-24 where the people were weary of Him and were reluctant to offer Him anything...
 - No!
 - When the Holy Spirit comes, there is a great joy and delight in belonging to Him and in serving Him and His people!
 - Do you have that?
 - Do you want that?
 - Then ask Him to give you the Holy Spirit.

Conclusion:

And so consider what a fullness you have in your Lord—a fullness that we have seen in the last three weeks...

- First, that He Himself redeems you from Babylon and Satan so that you are free to serve Him.
 - He will reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet and established mish-pawt in the earth.
- Second, that He Himself redeems you from the guilt and penalty of sin...
 - He blots out your transgressions by the offering of Himself for your sins.
- And now third, that He Himself redeems you from the presence and power of sin...
 - He changes you and conforms you to His own image by the working of His Spirit, and He will continue this work until it is complete.

What a full redemption we have in our LORD!

- Let us give thanks to Him and let us look to Him for all that He has promised—to us and to our children.