

The Baptism of Jesus

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Matt. 3:13-17

Matt. 3:13-17, *“Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”*

The baptism of Jesus by John served a significant role in both of their ministries...

It came at the height of John’s ministry, after which his began to decline.

It served as the beginning of Jesus’ ministry, which soon overtook the ministry of John.

The baptism of Jesus naturally raises some questions...

Why was He baptized?

Does it suggest an explanation of the purpose for Christian baptism?

In this study we shall endeavor to answer these questions, first by reviewing the historical record concerning Jesus’ baptism.

The baptism of Jesus

Jesus comes to John

From Galilee to the Jordan River.

Matt. 3:13, *“Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.”*

Jesus had been living in Nazareth, a city of Galilee.

Matt. 2:23, *“And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.”*

John had been baptizing in the Jordan River, where there was much water.

- Matt. 3:5-6, “Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan, And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.”
- John 3:23, “And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized.”

Jesus comes to John to be baptized by Him.

Matt. 3:13, “Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.”

John seeks to prevent Jesus.

John tried to prevent Jesus from being baptized.

Matt. 3:14, “But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?”

John explains why: “I need to be baptized by You, and You are coming to me?”

There is a sense of shock in John’s words. John knew that Jesus was a man of God, perhaps by His speech and knowledge, but he didn’t know Jesus was the Messiah until he had baptized Him. Undoubtedly, when he was approached by Jesus he was a little perplexed about Him.

The event in the following verse occurred the day after he baptized Jesus.

John 1:29-33, “The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me. And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.”

Jesus persuades John.

Jesus convinces John to permit His baptism.

Matt. 3:15, “And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him.”

Jesus explains why: “...it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness...” (A little more on this later).

And so Jesus is baptized by John.

The Spirit and the Father add their testimony:

Matt. 3:16, “*And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him.*”

The heavens opened, and the Spirit of God descended like a dove (in bodily form, Luke 3:22) and lights upon Jesus.

Luke 3:22, “*And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.*”

A voice from heaven proclaims:

“*This is my beloved Son.*”

“*In whom I am well pleased.*”

This is the first time God audibly acknowledged Jesus as His Son. We become sons of God when we are baptized.

Without question, the baptism of Jesus was a significant event! It naturally raises several questions which I will try to answer...

Questions related to the baptism of Jesus:

Why was Jesus baptized?

Clearly, not for the same reason other people were being baptized by John. Theirs was a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

Mark 1:4, “*John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.*”

They were confessing their sins.

Mark 1:5, “*And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.*”

Matt. 3:6, “*And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.*”

But, Jesus was without sin.

Heb. 4:15, “*For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.*”

Then, why was Jesus baptized? Jesus said it was “to fulfill all righteousness” (Matt. 3:15).

It was God’s counsel that people be baptized of John.

Luke 7:29-30, *“And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him.”*

Jesus could have said, “Why should I be baptized? I have no sin!”

Jesus was willing to set the right example by doing the Father’s will, something He delighted to do.

- Psa. 40:7-8, *“Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.”*
- John 4:34, *“Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.”*
- John 8:29, *“And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him.”*

Jesus was baptized because it was something His Father wanted Him to do.

It also served to introduce Jesus to John and Israel.

John had been proclaiming that the Messiah was coming.

Matt. 3:11, *“I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire.”*

John had been told that the Spirit coming upon a man would be a sign that He was the Messiah, the Son of God.

John 1:29-34, *“The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me. And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.”*

Does Jesus' baptism explain the purpose of Christian baptism?

Many refer to Jesus' baptism to falsely explain the purpose of Christian baptism.

That our baptism has nothing to do with the remission of sins.

That our baptism is but a public expression of one's faith.

That our baptism is to publicly identify our relation to Christ, just as His baptism publicly introduced Him to Israel.

However, there is no Biblical connection made between Jesus' baptism and our own.

Christian baptism is for the remission of sins.

Acts 2:38, *"Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."*

Ananias told Saul (Paul), Acts 22:16, *"And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord."*

Christian baptism is a union with Christ in His death.

Rom. 6:3-7, *"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin."*

No Biblical writer ever suggested that we are baptized for the same reason Jesus was!

What is the significance of the Spirit descending and the Father's voice?

They certainly bear testimony as to who Jesus is.

As the Spirit would do later, via the works Jesus did.

Matt. 12:28, *"But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you."*

As the Father would do later, on another occasion.

Matt. 17:5, *"While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him."*

God said this after Peter thought he had a good idea to build three tabernacles; one for Moses, one for Elias, and one for Jesus.

They also bear testimony to the nature of the relationship and authority of God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit.

Conclusion

With the baptism of Jesus...

He was formally introduced to John, and by him to Israel.

John 1:29-34, *“The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me. And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.”*

The Father and the Spirit audibly and visibly confirmed Him as the Son.

Jesus demonstrated His desire to “fulfill all righteousness”.

The baptism of Jesus is certainly significant to Christians.

Not that we were baptized for the same reason as He was.

But certainly in confirming that He was the Messiah.

And displaying the attitude that should be true of all His disciples: *“I have come to do my Father’s will.”*

Jesus did not “need” baptism, because He was without sin; but was baptized anyway because it was the Father’s will for all men.

Should we who are sinners dare hesitate to do the Father’s will regarding baptism today?

- Matt. 28:18-20, *“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”*

- Mark 16:15-16, “And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”
- Acts 2:38, “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”

