

Doctrine of Christ

The Baptism of Jesus

1. The radical ministry of John the Baptist preceded the public baptism and ministry of Christ.
2. For four hundred years, God did not give His people any special revelation, not since the days of Malachi.
3. Suddenly, out of the desert, came a man from the traditional meeting place of God, wearing the garb associated with a prophet, and speaking with unique authority.
4. The voice of John was the restoration of the voice of prophecy. Even more significant was what he did. He called people to the Jordan River to be baptized.
5. The baptism of John was distinct from the baptism of Christ, and the New Testament church.
6. Under the Old Testament economy, the Jews had a baptismal ritual that was a proselyte baptism. It was restricted to defiled, and unclean Gentiles, who were going to embrace Judaism.
7. John uses this religious ritual, and applies it to the people of Israel in general, and calls the nation to repentance. John was calling Jews to be baptized.
8. John's call to this ritual offended the Pharisees and the scribes. Why should they submit to this cleansing ritual?
9. The answer is found in the prophecy of Isaiah. The prediction was that before the Messiah was to come, a messenger would prepare the way for Him.
 - *Isaiah 40:3 The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.*
10. John is that messenger, crying in the wilderness.
 - *Matthew 3:3 For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.*
11. The message of John was simple: "Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand."
12. The kingdom of God which the Jews looked for was in the nebulous, distant future. But here was radical news. That anticipated kingdom was "at hand!"
13. The urgency of the moment was illustrated by John, who said, "*the axe is laid unto the root of the trees.*" As an axman, John was getting to the root of the tree, not just going through the bark and outer portion of the tree. One more stroke, and the tree falls.

- *Matthew 3:10 And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.*

14. Another illustration John used is of the winnowing harvest. Because the chaff is lighter than the wheat, the chaff was carried away by the wind. John said that repentance is urgent, because the Messiah was ready to separate the spiritual wheat from the chaff. Be ready. Be cleansed.

- *Matthew 3:12 Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.*

15. The message of John is that the Jews, like the Gentiles, must be made clean.

- *John 1:19 And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou? 20 And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ. 21 And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No. 22 Then said they unto him, Who art thou? That we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself? 23 He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias. 24 And they which were sent were of the Pharisees. 25 And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet? 26 John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not; 27 He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose. 28 These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing.*

The Next Day

29 The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. 30 This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me. 31 And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. 32 And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. 33 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. 34 And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.

16. The baptism of Christ was His ordination. He was anointed to fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah. The human Jesus was anointed by the Holy Spirit to fulfill the ministry of the Messiah.

- *Isaiah 61:1 The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;*

17. Initially, John tried to prevent Jesus being baptized him for John understood his baptism to be for sinners. Christ was pure, just, and holy. He did not need to be baptized. But Jesus insisted on baptism for another reason, in order to “*fulfill all righteousness.*”

- *Matthew 3:13 Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. 14 But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? 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.*

18. Jesus needed to be baptized. He told John to permit it now, for the sake of expediency, and because it was necessary for Christ to fulfill all righteousness.

19. Matthew 3:15 is a critical verse in the New Testament, for it teaches that Jesus was sent to fulfill all righteousness.

Special Note.

Jesus was not acting only for Himself, but for all of His people. If the Law demanded the keeping of the Ten Commandments, He would keep the Ten Commandments. If the Law demanded a ceremonial cleansing, Jesus would be ceremonially cleansed in their behalf. The redemption brought by Christ was not restricted to the Cross. Jesus not only had to die for our sins, He had to live for our righteousness.

20. Sins may be forgiven, but the active obedience of Jesus, as distinguished from His passive obedience, is also necessary.

- *John 1:29 The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.*

21. There is a double imputation at the Cross. The sin of the sinner is placed upon Christ. But then, His righteousness is imputed to the sinner. This righteousness Christ would not have to give if He had not lived a life of perfect obedience during the days of His humiliation.

- *1 Corinthians 1:30 But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:*

22. After His baptism, Jesus was driven into the wilderness to be tested by Satan.