**The Baptism of Jesus**

1. Luke 3 finds John the Baptist surrounded by a brood of vipers. Thousands of people in need of repentance are coming to him to be baptized.
   1. These were Jews who had, up to that time, thought they were ready for the Messiah – they kept the law, washed regularly, and were Abraham’s children.
      1. Their law keeping, however, did not negate the fact they’d all sinned. John makes it clear that forgiveness was found through his baptism – NOT just through the temple sacrifices.
      2. Their washings were done to clean the impurity of the gentiles off of them. John told them they needed to wash to remove their own sinfulness.
      3. And the fact that they were children of Abraham didn’t matter one bit if they weren’t repentant. God could raise up children of Abraham from rocks.
   2. John called them all a “brood of vipers.” He warned them to flee from the wrath to come. He warned them of how great, and how just the Christ would be.
      1. **Lk. 3:16** – The Christ would be much greater than John. John was not even worthy to untie his sandal, as a slave would.
      2. **Lk. 3:16-17** – The Christ would baptize with the Holy Spirit and with Fire.
         1. John was not in a position to offer the Holy Spirit’s presence with the believers when they were baptized – the Christ would be so great.
         2. Fire represents judgment here – the Christ would have the authority to condemn those who disobeyed Him.
   3. So John’s message was that no one was ready for the kingdom unless they repented, and that the Christ was powerful and great…more so than John.
2. That is why **Mt. 3:13-17** is so surprising. Jesus comes all the way from Galilee to be baptized by John!
   1. John may not yet have been aware that Jesus was the Christ, but we certainly know He was…so here is the perfect Lamb of God being baptized into a baptism, the purpose of which, was repentance and to receive forgiveness of sins!
   2. Why did Jesus need this?
      1. John, great as he was, was inferior to Jesus in every way. Jesus’ authority was greater, and by John’s own admission, Jesus’ baptisms (fire; Holy Spirit) were more powerful.
      2. It was certainly not because Jesus had anything of which to repent, or from which to be forgiven.
      3. Was it to be an example for all future believers? I’m not convinced of this.
         1. We certainly don’t need Jesus to be an example to us in *everything* He asks us to do. (He was never married; rich; a woman; etc.)
         2. What would He have been an example of? A perfect, sin-free person being baptized NOT for the remission of sins? Why do we need that?
            1. When an already baptized believer, who has prayed for forgiveness, comes and asks me for re-baptism, I am generally reluctant to suggest they go through with it, unless there is a REALLY good reason.
            2. That is the closest parallel to Jesus’ baptism – a perfect man, baptized.
         3. It is interesting that Jesus’ baptism is *never* used as a model for Christian baptism in the NT.
            1. His death, burial, and resurrection are – **Rom. 6:3-4; Col. 2:11-12**.
         4. The reality is that Jesus’ baptism was about as different from ours as it could possibly be – the only similarity is immersion, and perhaps the presence of the Holy Spirit – but the purpose is totally different.
      4. Some suggest that the purpose of Jesus’ baptism was to purify the waters of the world for Christian baptism.
         1. The NT says nothing about this.
         2. God cleanses just fine in dirty water! (**2 Kings 5:12-13**)
3. Jesus, however, says that His baptism was necessary to “*fulfill all righteousness*.” Notice the “us” here – He and John *both* would be doing this.
   1. Before we see how Jesus and John fulfilled all righteousness in Jesus’ baptism, we first need to look at some background passages in the OT.
      1. **Jer. 23:5-6** – God promises that when Israel was restored that a “righteous Branch” would rule over God’s people – a descendant of David.
         1. Justice and righteousness would be restored to the land.
         2. And this descendant would be called, “*The Lord our righteousness*.”
         3. God promised that when the Messiah came that righteousness would be restored, justice would be done, and the Messiah Himself would *BE* righteousness.
         4. Many Jews expected this: “But in the mysteries of His understanding, and in His glorious wisdom, God has ordained an end for injustice, and at the time of the visitation He will destroy it for ever. Then truth, which has wallowed in the ways of wickedness during the dominion of injustice until the appointed time of judgment, shall arise in the world for ever. God will then purify every deed of man with His truth; He will refine for Himself the human frame by rooting out all spirit of injustice from the bounds of his flesh. He will cleanse him of all wicked deeds with the spirit of holiness; like purifying waters He will shed upon him the spirit of truth (to cleanse him) of all abomination and injustice. And he shall be plunged into the spirit of purification, that he may instruct the upright in the knowledge of the Most High and teach the wisdom of the sons of heaven to the perfect of way.” [Community Rule, 1QS, IV.20]
      2. **Mal. 4:5-6** – God’s final promise to the people before closing the OT was that a forerunner would come before Christ, preparing the people for Him.
         1. God, and His Christ, would not smite the land when the Messiah came because of this forerunner – this “Elijah” would prepare the people to be righteous.
         2. John the Baptist did exactly that – he began the process of bringing righteousness back to the land, demanding that all repent.
         3. BUT, “righteousness” itself had not yet arrived – “*The LORD our righteousness*” had not yet come, and so “all righteousness was not yet there – there were still prophecies yet to be fulfilled.
      3. But when Jesus arrived on the scene, the OT scriptures began to be fulfilled one-by-one – righteousness was taught, and it was fulfilled…it had arrived.
      4. And ALL OF THIS began the day Jesus was baptized – it was that event that began the fulfillment process of all of these things.
   2. I want us to see how John baptizing Jesus accomplished this:
      1. John’s baptism always carried with it three things: a rebuke, an admonition, and a warning.
         1. The rebuke: **Lk. 3:7** – “*You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come*.”
         2. The admonition: **Lk. 3:8** – “*Bear fruits in keeping with repentance*.”
         3. The warning: **Lk. 3:8** – “*…do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham for our father,’ for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham.*”
         4. EVERYONE who was baptized by John was well aware of their wickedness before they were baptized. They knew coming out of baptism they needed to maintain faithfulness. They knew family connections were inadequate to do them any spiritual good.
      2. But John had been made aware that there was One coming whom he would baptize who would not need any of this. (**John 1:29-34**)
         1. When Jesus came, John did not recognize Him (in the sense that he did not know He was the Messiah yet – he did know his own Cousin personally).
         2. He did recognize Jesus as a spiritual superior, however.
            1. John had no delusions of being some sort of perfect teacher, teaching a bunch of imperfect people – he was simply imparting God’s message.
            2. But Jesus was spiritually greater than he was – in John’s mind, even if Jesus is not the Messiah, He was more worthy to be in John’s position than John was!
            3. Because of this, John does not give Jesus the rebuke, the admonition, or the warning.
         3. As John humbly acquiesces to Jesus, and pleads for Jesus to baptize him, Jesus responds, “*Permit it to be so at this time; for in this way it is fitting for* ***us*** *to fulfill all righteousness*.”
            1. At this point, I have to wonder if John is thinking, “How do WE fulfill all righteousness by doing this??? Wait a minute…is this the One?”
            2. As he puts him under the water, and takes him up, John sees the sign God promised – the dove descending, and the voice of God.
            3. John, and all present, knew then that Jesus was the Christ.
      3. Think about the sheer contrast of Jesus’ baptism with all the other baptisms John had performed:
         1. Everyone else received a rebuke – that they were wicked and needed repentance…*Jesus received no rebuke*.
            1. Can you imagine a disciple of John, who had seen him baptize 1000s of people, and repeat the same rebuke numerous times, seeing John balk when Jesus came, and praise Him instead of rebuke Him?!
            2. Especially imagine this contrast with the Pharisees and Sadducees, whom most thought to be the definition of righteousness. They got the rebuke, and Jesus did not!
         2. Everyone else came out of the waters to an admonition – “*bear fruits in keeping with repentance*.” Jesus received no such admonition.
            1. The tax collectors and the soldiers were told not to abuse their power, and yet here Jesus was, who had ALL POWER, and He needed no admonition.
            2. Those with possessions were told to share. Often, those with the most possessions love their stuff too much to share. Yet here is Jesus, who had the MOST possessions, and He doesn’t need to be told to share!
         3. Everyone else was given a warning to have no confidence in their father Abraham – but Jesus *could* have confidence in His father!
            1. God Himself pronounced Jesus “well pleasing” in His sight – proof that Jesus did NOT need baptism for forgiveness of sins.
            2. He did not need to “*bear fruits in keeping with repentance*…” He needed no repentance.
            3. He was pronounced the Son of God. This had messianic implications, as the kings of Israel were called sons of God (**2 Sam. 7:14**).
      4. Jesus needed to be baptized, not as our example, nor for the forgiveness of sins, nor to fulfill some OT prophecy that He would be baptized, but in order to be identified as the Lord of righteousness, contrasted from all others.
4. **Mt. 28:18-20** – It is into the name of this Jesus into which we are baptized! **Acts 4:12**: “*there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved*.” Jesus is worthy to be our Savior. His baptism is proof.