

CHAPTER 3

The Baptism of Christ

Why did the Lord Jesus come to the Jordan River unto John (Matthew 3:13)?
 _____ John's baptism was a "baptism of
 _____" (Acts 13:24; compare Matthew 3:2,8,11). Did Jesus need to
 repent? _____ Why not? _____

When a Jew was baptized by John, what did he do according to Matthew 3:6?
 _____ Was it possible for Jesus to do this? _____ A
 person cannot confess his sins if he does not have any! The Bible declares that the Lord Jesus
 was absolutely SINLESS. Please match:

_____ He did no sin.	A. Luke 23:4,14.
_____ He knew no sin.	B. Luke 23:41.
_____ He did nothing amiss or wrong.	C. 2 Cor 5:21.
_____ He was without sin.	D. Hebrews 4: 15.
_____ He was faultless.	E. Hebrews 7: 26.
_____ He was God's sinless and spotless Lamb.	F. 1 Peter 1:19.
_____ He was holy, undefiled and separate from sinners.	G. 1 Peter 2:22.

Will the believer ever reach a point in this life where he does not have any sin and therefore does
 not need confession (1 John 1:8-10)? _____

If the Lord Jesus Christ did not need to repent and had no sins to confess, then why did He come
 forward to be baptized by John? Apparently John asked the same question, because when Jesus
 came to him he tried to **prevent** (forbid, hinder, restrain) Him from being baptized, saying, "I
 have _____ to be _____ by Thee, and comest Thou to me?" (Matthew
 3:14). In other words, John was saying, "**I'm the one who needs this, not You! You should be
 the Baptizer, not me. Why should the sinner baptize the Saviour?**" Thus, John made every
 effort to hinder Jesus from being baptized.

Today, what hinders a person from being baptized (see Acts 8:35-39)?

Notice how the Lord answered John: "**Suffer it** (allow it, permit it, let it be, don't forbid it) to be so now: for thus **it becometh** (it is fitting, proper, right) **us** (Jesus and John) to _____ all _____" (Matthew 3:15). Even though Jesus was sinless and had no need of repentance, being baptized by John was the RIGHT thing to do, and John " _____ (allowed, permitted) Him" (Matthew 3:15).

Why was it right for the sinless Saviour to submit to a baptism that was intended and purposed for sinners? What was Christ's purpose for coming into the world (Matthew 1:21; Luke 5:30-32; 19:10; John 3:17; 1 Timothy 1:15)?

Therefore, it was proper and right for the Saviour at the beginning of His public ministry to **IDENTIFY WITH THOSE HE CAME TO SAVE**. He humbled Himself and was willing to *associate* and *identify* with sinners, though He Himself knew no sin. He was willing to stand in the place of sinners and to put Himself alongside of all the sinful ones for whom John's baptism was designed.

The prophet Isaiah predicted that the Messiah would be "N _____ with the T _____" (Isaiah 53:12). The New Testament teaches that "in all things it behooved Him to be made _____" (Hebrews 2:17). Though sinless, He was able to sympathize with His brethren in their struggle with sin: He was "in all points _____ like as we are, yet _____" (Hebrews 4:15). God sent His own Son "in the _____ of _____, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the _____ of the law might be _____ in us" (Romans 8:3-4).

Not only at His baptism, but throughout His public ministry, the compassionate Lord Jesus identified and associated with those He had come to redeem. The self-righteous Pharisees strongly criticized the righteous Christ because of such associations. Consider these passages:

1. Luke 5:27-32.

What was the reaction of the scribes and Pharisees?

2. Luke 7:36-50.

What was the reaction of Simon the Pharisee?

3. Luke 15:1-2.

What was the reaction of the Pharisees and scribes? Does this help you understand why Christ told them the parable of the lost sheep, lost coin and lost son?

4. Luke 19:1-10.
 What was the reaction of the people (v.7)?

5. **LUKE 7:29-35.**
 What did the Pharisees and lawyers think of John's baptism?
 Were they baptized by John? _____ Would it have been
 RIGHT for Jesus to refuse John's baptism, just like the self-
 righteous Pharisees? _____

The Pharisees said (compare Luke 7:30), "Don't permit us to be baptized, for we are righteous!" [They were SELF-RIGHTEOUS.]

The tax collectors and sinners said (compare Luke 7:29), "Permit us to be baptized, for God is righteous and we are sinful."

Jesus said (compare Matthew 3:15), "Permit Me to be baptized, for it is proper for us to fulfill all righteousness."

When John pointed out Christ to the people, he said, "Behold, the _____ which taketh away the _____" (John 1:29). Thus, John understood two important facts about Christ: 1) He was sinless (God's spotless Lamb—compare 1 Peter 1:19); 2) He would identify with "the sins of the world."

About three and a half years after His baptism, Christ would experience yet another baptism (see Matthew 20:22-23; Luke 12:50) where He would even more fully identify with sinners:

The Baptism Of Jesus At The Jordan	The Baptism Of Jesus At The Cross
1) Christ should not have been baptized (Matthew 3:14). He was sinless and perfectly righteous.	1) Christ should not have gone to the cross (1 Peter 3:18). He was the Just and Righteous One. He was not guilty.
2) He was not a sinner.	2) He was not a sinner (1 Peter 2:22-24).
3) He did not deserve this baptism.	3) He did not deserve this death (Luke 23:40-41).
4) He submitted to the baptism and stood in the sinner's place.	4) He submitted to the death of a cross and stood in the sinner's place (Phil. 2:5-8; 2 Cor. 5:21).
5) In this baptism, Jesus symbolically identified with sinners.	5) In this baptism, Jesus actually identified with sinners, and became sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21).

When did Jesus **actually** take upon Himself the sin and guilt of the human race, at John's baptism or at the cross (1 Peter 2:24; 3:18)? _____

We know that the Lord Jesus was with sinners, ate with sinners and was touched by sinners (Luke 7:37-38), but the Bible says that He was " _____ from _____ " (Hebrews 7:26). How can a believer be with sinners and at the same time be separate from sinners? When is it **wrong** to associate with sinners (Proverbs 1:10-19; 2:10-22; 4:14-19; 2 Corinthians 6:14-17; Ephesians 5:11-13)?

Circle what your responsibility should be toward the sinner (your unsaved friends, neighbors, etc.):

- a. Love them and have compassion on them (Matthew 5:44-48; Romans 10:1).
- b. Follow their advice (Psalm 1:1).
- c. Follow their example (3 John 11).
- d. Follow their ways (Proverbs 4:14).
- e. Seek their salvation (1 Corinthians 10:33).
- f. Show a friendliness and a genuine interest and concern (1 Corinthians 9:19-22).
- g. Become their close associate and companion (Psalm 119:63).
- h. Isolate yourself from them (John 17:15; 1 Cor. 5:10).
- i. Separate yourself from them (Heb. 7:26; 2 Cor. 6:17).

What is the difference between ISOLATION and SEPARATION?

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The baptism of Jesus illustrated our Lord's desire to identify Himself with those He came to save, but it was important for these additional reasons as well (adapted from J. Oswald Sanders, *The Incomparable Christ*):

1. THE BAPTISM OF JESUS MARKED THE BEGINNING OF OUR LORD'S PUBLIC MINISTRY.

About how old was Jesus at this time (Luke 3:22-23)? _____ Jesus came from _____ of _____ (Mark 1:9) to be baptized, thus leaving His home town, His family, His occupation and His privacy.

2. THE BAPTISM OF JESUS MARKED GOD'S APPROVAL AND APPROBATION UPON THE 30 SILENT YEARS.

The Bible tells us very little about the first 30 years of Jesus' life. The gospel accounts concentrate on the last three and a half years (the years of public ministry) and especially

on the final week of our Lord's earthly life. Yet God the Father summed up those many years in one sentence: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am _____" (Matthew 3:17). The first 30 years of His life entailed the same daily routines that so often face us. Yet He handled those ordinary assignments so gladly, so beautifully, and with such consecration that His heavenly Father could exclaim with joy, "I AM WELL PLEASED!"

3. THE BAPTISM OF JESUS MARKED AND IDENTIFIED HIM AS GOD'S CHOSEN MESSIAH.

The descent of the Spirit upon Christ at His baptism was God's sign to John that this was indeed the Messiah: "He that sent me to baptize with water, the Same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the _____, and remaining on Him, the same is He which baptizeth with the Holy Spirit" (John 1:33-34).

4. THE BAPTISM OF JESUS MARKED HIS ANOINTING BY THE SPIRIT FOR SERVICE.

Christ's dependence upon the Spirit of God characterized His entire ministry. We learn from Acts 10:38 that "God _____ Jesus of Nazareth with the _____ and with _____ who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with Him" (see verse 37). Did the Old Testament predict that Messiah would be anointed by the Spirit (Isaiah 42:1; 61:1-2; compare Isaiah 11:1-2)? _____

5. THE BAPTISM OF JESUS MARKED THE CO-OPERATION OF THE TRIUNE GODHEAD IN THE MISSION AND WORK OF CHRIST.

Please complete the following sentences correctly, using the appropriate Person of the Trinity:

The Father	The Incarnate Son	The Spirit
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"_____ stands in the waters of Jordan, identifying Himself with sinful humanity. _____ opens heaven to voice His approval of His Son whom He had selected for this task. _____ descends from heaven to empower the Son to fulfill the purpose of the Father"--J. Oswald Sanders, *The Incomparable Christ*, p.55.



The Baptism of John, by C.H. Mackintosh

In the spirit, then of teachable children—willing, yea, anxious to be taught, and to obey, anything our Father has revealed, let us examine His word.

The first mention of baptism in the new Testament is when John began to preach the baptism of repentance. "John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins." (Mark i. 4.) "Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judæa, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins." (Matt. iii. 5, 6.)

One can scarcely but be struck with the way in which the baptism of John is introduced. There is no explanation given as to what baptism implied, but it is spoken of as though it were a thing with which the Jews were familiar.

Some Jewish writers, it is true, tell us that after the return from captivity it was usual for them to baptize proselytes as well as circumcise them—indeed, that baptism was essential before they could be received. But this has been much questioned, as it does not appear that we have any such statement by Jewish writers earlier than the second or third century;* and some of them call it a novel invention, and ask what authority John had

for introducing it. How they arrived at the practice even in the second century is not clear, seeing it is not probable that they adopted it from the Christians, whom they hated. However, we find no such use of baptism in the Old Testament.

In the Jewish ritual there were certain ceremonial washings and the bathing of the whole of the body; and in case of neglecting it, the offender had to bear his iniquity. For instance, "Every soul that eateth that which died of itself, or that which was torn with beasts . . . he shall both wash his clothes and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even; then shall he be clean. But if he wash them not, nor bathe his flesh [or, his body], then he shall bear his iniquity." (Lev. xvii. 15, 16.) Of course the Jews were familiar with these washings and bathings—and it was to the Jews that John preached. (Acts xiii. 24.)

And seeing that these baptisms (as they are called in Hebrews vi. 2), were connected with cleansing from defilement the Jews would easily learn what John's baptism signified, seeing he linked it with "repentance for the remission of sins."

Now, it is designated a baptism of repentance (Mark i. 4), and those who professed to take this ground were baptized by John, confessing their sins. (Matt. iii. 6; Mark i. 5.) But simple as this was, he had to rebuke some and demand of them that they should bring forth fruit meet for repent-

ance. (Matt. iii. 7, 8; Luke iii. 7, 8.) This also proves an important point, namely, that John's baptism was not an indiscriminate baptism, but was for those only who repented. Not a word is said of children in John's baptism. He demanded fruit meet for repentance.

In looking further at John's baptism, we find that though a baptism of repentance, this was only a means to an end. It was, in reality to make known and introduce Christ. John clearly states "that he (Christ) should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water." (John i. 31.) So that when Christ had been made manifest, John's work was so far complete; he said, "He must increase, but I must decrease."

It is important to notice that Christ partook of John's baptism, as to which He said, "Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness" (a subject which is not within our present inquiry). But here a most interesting question arises, namely, Did the baptism of John continue during the ministry of Christ, and until the commission was given by Him in Matthew xxviii.? Now, there seems to be no passage that with certainty decides this. In Luke vii. 29, we read, "and all the people that heard [him], and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John." At first sight this might appear to be, that as they heard Christ they glorified God, and were then baptized with the baptism of John; but on closer inspection this will be seen to be incorrect. It seems to be rather a record of what had previously taken place. Thus it is—having heard ['him,' John, or 'it,' John's message] they justified God;

having been baptized with the baptism of John. The verses 29 and 30 have also been, by some, placed in a parenthesis.

Again, John iv. 1, says that the Pharisees heard that Jesus (by His disciples) had baptized more disciples than John; but this throws no light on the character of the baptism.

But we have no record of any other baptism being introduced during Christ's ministry, and perhaps the case of Apollos favours the thought that disciples, during the ministry of Christ, were baptized with the baptism of John. He was a Jew, but had been born in Egypt; he was "instructed in the way of the Lord, and being fervent in the Spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord:" yet he knew only the baptism of John. (Acts xviii. 24, 25.) Take the case also of the disciples at Ephesus (Acts xix. 1) who had been baptized with John's baptism. And this was perhaps as late as A.D. 54. Would it not, in both these passages, be difficult to account for their knowing only the baptism of John if another baptism had been introduced? Still there seems to be nothing revealed that with certainty decides the question.

However, it is clear from other passages that John's baptism was not intended to be perpetual. Thus, we read of this same Apollos—he who knew only the baptism of John—that "he began to speak boldly in the synagogue; whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God *more perfectly.*"