

Jesus is Baptized by John

Call to Worship: Psalm 99

1st Scripture: John 1:29-34

2nd Scripture: Matthew 3:13-17

Hymn #727- *When the Roll is Called up Yonder*

Hymn Insert- *Open My Eyes that I May See*

Hymn #131- *When Morning Guilds the Skies*

Introduction

Last time, as we considered the general ministry of John the Baptist, we found him in a tense dialog with the religious leaders, who came to interrogate him. And as they called into question his authority to baptize, he told them of the One coming after him, who would baptize with fire and with the Holy Spirit. And John described this coming One, who is the Messiah, as One whose sandal strap, John was not worthy to loosen.

This morning, that glorious coming One arrives, and the irony is, that this One who would baptize with fire and the Holy Spirit, actually seeks John's baptism with water. As we consider the purpose of this baptism, we will also find this to be the critical juncture, whereby, the Lord Jesus Christ, officially begins His earthly ministry.

I. Jesus is Baptized by John

Now, before we consider the meaning of our text, let us briefly review the event as it is described by Matthew. First, note that in the Gospel of John (John 1:29ff), John the Baptist publicly declares that Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. And furthermore, he testifies that Jesus is the Son of God (John 1:34). Now, how did John know these things? What enabled him to make such bold claims about this Jesus from Nazareth? Again, in John's Gospel (John 1:33), John reveals that he had been given a sign (by God) to look for, which would affirm the Messianic office of whomever it was, that God had chosen to be His Messiah. And this was the sign: "Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit."

And so, our text here in Matthew, takes us to the time when John had been given that specific sign, which attested to the fact that Jesus was the Messiah/Christ. Now, that said, John did not expect to be baptizing the Messiah. This is obvious from the text. But, it is at this

baptism that John actually receives the sign. We are told then, that, at some point when John had been baptizing, Jesus had come out from Galilee to John, seeking to be baptized by him. And interestingly enough, John knew at that moment that Jesus was the Messiah. And we know this, because, at first, John tries to prevent Jesus from being baptized, recognizing that Jesus has no sin to confess. In fact, John actually states, “Look, I need to be baptized by you! You’re the Holy One. I’m defiled. It’s like mud baptizing pure water.” Remember, John had just spoken about the fact that he was not worthy to loose the sandal strap of the Messiah, who would have the authority and power to baptize with the Holy Spirit, let alone water!

Nevertheless, Jesus responds, “Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” And within these words, Jesus, both, agrees with John, in that, Jesus has no personal need to be baptized (He is without sin), while also bringing forth a good reason for going through the act anyway. And we will get to this important reason in a few moments. And so, John then baptizes the Lord, and it is then that John receives the glorious sign of affirmation, solidifying the fact that this Jesus was indeed the Messiah. After Jesus came out of the water, while He was praying (Luke 3:21), “the heavens opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him.” And furthermore, immediately following this, the Father Spoke audibly from heaven, saying, “This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” And it is after this heavenly anointing then, that our Lord begins His earthly ministry, at the age of thirty, the perfect age for one who would be the mediator, and representative High Priest of His people.

Now, before we move on to consider the reason for our Lord’s baptism, let me just note an interesting and ironic note of comparison between the earthly “priests and Levites,” whom John had recently rebuked (and called to repent), and Jesus, the true, heavenly “High Priest” of His people. This will lead into our consideration of our Lord’s purpose for getting baptized. Is it not ironic that the priests and Levite’s who came to John, and who needed genuine repentance, had refused to submit to John’s baptism, and yet, the Lord Jesus Christ, the only true High Priest, who needed no repentance, was baptized by John (at first, against John’s will)? The ones who were called to represent the people of God, and who needed the baptism (and more importantly, that which the outward baptism represented inwardly), saw no need to secure the rite. And yet,

the One who would truly represent the people, and who was truly worthy to do so, not only received John's baptism, but had to press John to administer it upon Him. Even in this comparison, we see, both, the utter corruption of the earthly priesthood, and the glorious beauty and purity of the heavenly One! This will become clearer now, as we consider our next point.

II. Jesus Fulfills All Righteousness

If John's baptism was a baptism of repentance, provided for sinners who were seeking to "get right with God," why then was the sinless Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, baptized by John? The answer is found in our Lord's response to John, when John attempts to prevent Him from being baptized. In verse 15, He states, "Permit it to be so now, *for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.*" Now, this response of our Lord's, leads us then, to consider two important questions, which will lead us to get to the bottom of our Lord's baptism. First, why was it necessary for our Lord to fulfill all righteousness? Second, how does our Lord being baptized help Him to fulfill all righteousness? Let us then answer these two questions before moving into our conclusion, for this morning:

1) Why was it necessary for our Lord to fulfill all righteousness? Simply put, it was necessary for our Lord to fulfill all righteousness, so that, *we* could be declared and made righteous in the sight of God. In other words, Jesus subjected Himself *entirely* to the full gamut of all of God's Laws, statutes and commandments, so that, every aspect and facet of God's Law for both Jew and Gentile, would be fulfilled in Him. And by this means, He would provide a flawless righteousness (indeed, the righteousness of God) on behalf of all of His people. And by faith, that righteousness is freely imputed to all of us who believe, irrespective of race, nationality, gender, language, color...etc.

Now consider this for a few moments, brethren. We were created to glorify God, as His image bearers, reflecting His righteousness throughout the whole earth. And in Adam, we failed. And we failed badly. And it is not the case that Christ has only paid the price for our failure. That is indeed extremely important. The righteous wrath of God needed to be appeased on our behalf. And when Christ went to the cross, He became the object of God's wrath for us. But

brethren, God didn't create us and God isn't glorified by us, simply for the purpose of us not failing. He also created us to actively reflect His righteousness.

And so, Jesus not only took the penalty for our sins on Himself, He also procured a full and complete, flawless, positive righteousness on our behalf. He passively obeyed God on the cross, but He also actively obeyed God in all of His righteous living, and by manifesting the glory of God in His righteous living. And so, Jesus fulfilled all righteousness so as to provide us with that very righteousness (while bearing our sins) so that we would be made the righteousness of God in Him. Take note of that glorious and wondrous, profound doctrine of double imputation, and fall down before your Savior in the light of its reality. Our sin imputed to Him (reckoned to His account) and His righteousness imputed to us (reckoned to our account)!

2) How does our Lord being baptized, help Him to fulfill all righteousness? There are a few ways, in which, we would answer this.

a- First, from the standpoint of the general population, this was a new, positive command, given by God, through John the Baptist, which everyone desiring to turn to the Lord, was to do. Again, modern Judaism, run and led by the Pharisees had set a corrupt religious foundation in place, which actually turned the hearts of the Jews away from their God. That foundation needed to be abandoned unto a new one; a foundation which got down to the heart; a foundation that laid aside any hope of personal justification and self-righteousness, and rather, turned to God for a new heart altogether. And so, Jesus Himself, kept this command, honoring His God and Father and further authenticating the ministry and baptism of John.

b- Second, it was always required of the high priest, to wash and to change his garments before offering sacrifices to the Lord. While this was necessary for the Levitical priests, to deal with their own sinful and unclean condition, again, Jesus was fulfilling all righteousness. As a worthy High Priest and Mediator on behalf of sinners, He followed through with every required act of obedience that was necessary, so that He could identify with us, and stand in our place. And furthermore, while He would have no need to wash for His own sins, He would become our sin bearer, for us. And so, I believe that there is a high priestly element to this baptism, as well.

And so, all in all, our Lord's baptism served as an additional means of Him fulfilling all righteousness. And this was especially a suitable start for the beginning of His earthly ministry,

where He would set the stage to be our worthy High Priest. And it is no wonder then, that He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit, Himself, received the anointing and initiating power of the Holy Spirit, at His own baptism.

And right from the outset, the Father blares forth His approval, verbally expressing His delight and pleasure in His Son, who was embracing this ministry (a ministry that would ultimately lead to a terrible and agonizing death), by proclaiming aloud, “This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased!” What a glorious moment in time, planned before the foundation of the world, and now set in motion; the beginning of the ministry of God’s Son, who would redeem all of the Father’s chosen vessels of grace. [Ill: Years ago, a bright light in the sky, signaling the grand opening of some business; here the Father and the Spirit provide a glorious “Grand Opening” for the Son, in whom He was well pleased] [Emph. Full humanity]

III. Concluding Thoughts and Applications

1) Recognize here, one of those critical texts, which affirm the glorious doctrine of the Trinity, brethren. We believe that our God is of One essence, the fullness of which, is eternally contained in three Persons; the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. One God, in three distinct Persons. And here, in such a glorious scene to behold, we find all three Persons present at the baptism of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Father declares His delight in the Son. The Son is baptized and prays to the Father. And the Holy Spirit descends upon the Son, in the form of a dove...a glorious mystery, and yet, a reality nonetheless. And brethren, the doctrine of the Triune nature of our God is indeed, a hill to die on!

There are some who, embracing the ancient “Arian heresy” (like the JW’s of our day) would state that the Son is “a god,” but less than the Father in some sense, making the worship of the Son, and the true faith that is necessary to embrace the Son, idolatry. And furthermore, they would degrade the Holy Spirit, as it were, by claiming that He is but an impersonal force. What heresy! What insult! What a damning belief!

And then, there are others who embrace the ancient “modalist” heresy (like the Oneness Pentecostals of our day), stating that God is only one *person*, who merely wears different hats. And so, there really is no distinction between Father, Son and Holy Spirit, but rather they are all

the same person, acting in different roles. Such heresy creates a schizophrenic Jesus, who interacts with and prays to Himself, ultimately making a text, such as the one that we have been considering this morning, a divine act of smoke and mirrors, as it were.

And so, let us worship, adore and glory in our Triune God, as One God, and as Three Persons. We love and adore the Father who has chosen us, in Christ, before the foundation of the world! We love and adore our Lord Jesus Christ, who stepped into time and a body, to redeem us from our sins! And we love and adore the Holy Spirit, who regenerated us unto new life; who gave us a new heart, and eyes to see our beloved Savior, and who sanctifies us until we are suited to enter glory!

2) Brethren, let us ever, ever, be grateful to our God, for sending His Son to fulfill all righteousness for us! There's not a lick of anything that you or I can do, brethren, which determines God's favor toward us, ever! God looks at us, only and forever, as resting beneath the precious robes of Christ's righteousness! We can't improve upon, or corrupt, the state which we are in, in Christ! There is no fraction of a hair of any good that could ever be done by us, which could make us one iota more loved or better in the sight of God. He loves us with a perfect, unbending, unchanging, never vacillating, love, because He loves us, in Christ! And furthermore, His love for us is greatly magnified by the fact that His love for us, is what compelled Him to send His Son in the first place! And so, brethren, there's a very real sense in which those precious Words from heaven, where God expressed His full approval of, and delight in His Son, are spoken to *us*, because we are in the Son! And that, brethren, ought to be the greatest motivation for our obedience and reciprocating love to God! Jesus fulfilled all righteousness for us! Let that drive you to give your life over to serving Him in every respect! [Note: Hymnology night...no sign ups?, no commitment to serve in the church...etc?]

3) Finally, if you are not a Christian here, this morning, understand, beyond the shadow of any doubt, that you will never, ever, under any circumstance, ever, be right with God, unless you are united to His Son, by faith! There is No other way! The Gospel!!!

Amen!!!

Benediction: Jude 1:24-25