

Wil Owens

Looking at the Baptism of Jesus; Matt 3:13-17

GPBC

6.24.18

Introduction – John’s baptism of Jesus is the launching, if you will, of Jesus’ public ministry. At first glance it may seem somewhat unusual to us. We probably have the same question in mind as did John. Why is Jesus being baptized? This just doesn’t seem fitting, and yet, Jesus tells John it is indeed fitting. John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance of sin. Jesus had no sin. Why is Jesus being baptized?

In the church today sometimes there is confusion over the nature of Christian baptism. Sometimes people request baptism who truly do not need baptism. Some baptismal candidates may say, “Well I just want to make sure I’m saved” or “I just want to rededicate my life.” In truth, baptism doesn’t do anything to make sure one is saved. The Bible is clear we are saved by faith alone, not by any works, which would include baptism. Baptism doesn’t work rededication into an individual’s heart, that’s the work of confession and repentance. As believers, we practice ongoing faith and ongoing repentance as we grow in the Lord and as the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin and draws us to closer fellowship with the Lord.

So we know on occasion some people come for baptism who really and truly do not need baptism, they simply need further understanding of faith and the Christian life. We also know that Jesus wasn’t mistaken in coming for baptism. What then is happening here if Jesus has no need of repentance and yet finds it fitting to be baptized by John? As we study Jesus’ baptism from John’s perspective, God’s perspective, and our perspective, we will discover the glory of how fitting it is that Jesus was baptized by John.

- I. From John’s Perspective
 - a. John and Jesus were cousins. Remember when Mary was pregnant with Jesus and went to visit Elizabeth for 3 months. Elizabeth was pregnant with John at the time, and Elizabeth knew her pregnancy was a miracle from the Lord for she was advanced in years we are told in Luke’s gospel. Elizabeth knew immediately the nature of Mary’s pregnancy when Mary arrived. She greeted her as “the mother of my Lord.” Surely Elizabeth would have shared this story with John many times as he grew up.

- b. We know John was well aware that Jesus was indeed the Son of God, for John's gospel tells us that when Jesus arrived to be baptized by John, John declared, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."
 - c. John knew Jesus was the sinless Savior, and that's why our text says, "John would have prevented him, saying, 'I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?'"
 - d. In other words when John says back in v11 that "he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire," John knew Jesus was the one of whom he spoke.
 - e. John knew he was a sinner and needed the baptism that Jesus brought, and he also knew Jesus was not a sinner, so he couldn't understand why Jesus would come to his baptism.
 - f. And so Jesus answers, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Jesus said, "us", it is fitting for "us" to fulfill all righteousness. In other words, John baptizing Jesus is fitting in some way for John and his ministry.
 - g. Now remember what John's ministry is. John's ministry, as spoken by the prophet Isaiah, was to prepare the way of the Lord. John's ministry was to set the stage for the arrival of the Messiah, and then John's ministry would fade away as Jesus' ministry takes center stage.
 - h. And that is precisely what happens. By being baptized by John, Jesus' ministry takes up where John's ministry concludes. John had called the people to repent and be ready for the kingdom of God. Now that the King had arrived, the people who are repenting are now to believe in Christ.
 - i. John's baptism of Jesus was a sort of passing the baton of redemptive history to the Redeemer. John prepared the way of the Lord. The Lord took up His ministry right where John prepared the way.
- II. From God's Perspective
- a. Jesus said, "It is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness," so there is something happening here with Jesus as well. If He's not a sinner,

then how is He fulfilling all righteousness by partaking of a baptism of repentance of sins?

- b. The answer lies in what Jesus had come to accomplish. Jesus came to save sinners, and in order to do that, He would necessarily identify in all ways with sinners.
- c. John MacArthur writes, “to identify with men is to identify with sin. He could not purchase righteousness for mankind if He did not identify with mankind’s sin.”
 - i. Isaiah 53:12 says “He was numbered with the transgressors.”
 - ii. Rom 8:3, “in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh.”
 - iii. 2 Cor 5:21, “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”
- d. MacArthur continues, “In this act the Savior of the world took His place among the sinners of the world.”
- e. But His baptism not only identified Jesus with sinners, it also pointed forward to His death where the righteousness He had earned through His perfect obedience to the Father would be credited to all those who would believe in Him.
 - i. When Jesus speaks of His baptism in Luke 12 and Mark 10, He’s clearly referring to the cross – the place where He would ultimately identify with sinners by taking our sins upon Himself and paying for every ounce of holy justice against us, thereby cleansing us from all sin and rendering our record before God spotless and clean.
- f. But it’s not just Jesus, the Son, we see at His baptism. We see the whole Triune Godhead at the baptism of Jesus.
 - i. God the Holy Spirit descends in the form of dove. What’s that about? The rich meaning of the Spirit’s descent here is that the Spirit of God is anointing and strengthening the humanity of Jesus for the ministry that lies ahead.
 - 1. In His deity, He needs no strength and assistance; He is God. But in His humanity, He will need the ongoing ministry of the Spirit.

2. Isaiah 61:1 – The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor...
- ii. And then the voice of God the Father is heard from heaven, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”
 1. The Son is deeply, eternally loved by the Father. In fact, it is because we as believers are in Christ, that God is our heavenly Father and that God’s deep, abiding love for His Son flows over to deep, abiding love for all His children.
 - a. John 17:26 – I made known to them Your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which You have loved me may be in them, and I in them.”
 2. The Father is completely satisfied and pleased by the Son. The Son’s perfect obedience and willing, perfect sacrifice to save the people of God is entirely sufficient and fully pleasing to the Father.
 - a. In other words, if you have Jesus, you have everything you need to be right with God, loved by God, and pleasing to God.
 - b. In Christ, we have the righteousness of Christ, the indwelling and strength of the Spirit, and we await the voice of the Father, “Well done, good and faithful servant.”
- g. From God’s perspective, the baptism of Jesus signals the next phase of redemptive history where God will make good on all His promises to His people through the life, death, and resurrection of His Son.

III. From Our Perspective

- a. First, He is our example. If He was baptized to identify with us, then surely we who believe in Him would be baptized to identify with Him.
- b. Second, He is our righteousness. What is this righteousness that Jesus is fulfilling? In His deity, He is perfectly righteous. In His humanity though, He will walk in perfect obedience to the Father’s will and thereby earn a righteousness that will be passed on to us through faith. He takes our sin and gives us His righteousness, thus in

Christ we stand before God as if we had never sinned and as if we had fully pleased the Father.

c. Hallelujah! What a Savior!

Conclusion – His baptism is fitting because it shows how He will make us fitting before the Father!