

"9 In those days Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 10 Immediately coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opening, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him; 11 and a voice came out of the heavens: "You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased." 12 Immediately the Spirit impelled Him to go out into the wilderness." Mark 1:9-12, NAS95.

The baptism of Jesus is not a particularly easy passage to understand although I believe we can come to a biblical conclusion as to what it means.

There are numerous interpretations of the intent of Jesus' baptism which go beyond what Scripture explicitly reveals. We need to see what Scripture says and go no further.

The baptism of Jesus at the hands of John the Baptist is recounted in some detail in Matthew (3:13-17), told more briefly in our text Mark (1:9-11), only mentioned in Luke (3:21-22), and unrecorded though probably presumed in John (1:29-34). In all four accounts the anointing of Jesus with the Spirit and the declaration of his sonship are directly linked to the baptism. This is the key to understanding why Jesus was baptized by John.

Let's fill in the account from Matthew's viewpoint:

"13 Then Jesus arrived from Galilee at the Jordan coming to John, to be baptized by him. 14 But John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I have need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?" 15 But Jesus answering said to him, "Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he *permitted Him. 16 After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him, 17 and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased." Matthew 3:13-17, NAS95.

The accounts say Jesus came to John to be baptized and was baptized.

Matthew records that John attempted to prevent Jesus from being baptized by him.

Jesus responded by saying it was necessary to fulfill all righteousness. And here is the rub. What does Jesus mean by this word righteousness?

First we must see that the context here is all framed in an Old Covenant understanding that is pointing to fulfillment. Jesus is being presented as the one who was promised by Scripture through the declarations of the forerunner John. Righteousness in the Old

Gospel of Mark 1:9 -12- New Covenant Baptist Fellowship Elder Joseph Krygier October 7, 2007
Covenant context of Israel's relationship with God is at its simplest, obedience to the Covenant in other words conformity to God's will.

2

Men are required to be obedient to the Covenant because God himself is righteous.

Everything that God does that defines him and his moral character is righteous even the law of the Covenant that he places on the elect nation of Israel. As a righteous judge God acts on behalf of his people and also holds them accountable to the terms of his righteousness, his covenant. The people depend on this for their deliverance or salvation in the physical sense. Remember, we are looking at the Old Covenant relationship of the term. God's deliverance or salvation is normally used to describe something physical in the Old Testament use of the word although in eschatological passages it obviously sees fulfillment salvifically/spiritually in the New Covenant era.

So if God is a righteous God and a Savior and has proven himself to be such, then he will be according to passages that speak futuristically/eschatologically, whether they understand these things even only physically. They are looking for the day when Israel will be ultimately saved, delivered - redeemed by the Messiah.

So, in this account we see a connection to Old Testament Scripture that is very important for understanding what is taking place around Jesus' statement.

Once the baptism act is completed we see acknowledgement that Jesus is the Son of God as OT scripture has portrayed him:

"10 Immediately coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opening, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him; 11 and a voice came out of the heavens: "You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased."" Mark 1:10, 11, NAS95.

In light of this revelation, we see OT scripture fulfilled:

"1 "Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one in whom My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations." Isaiah 42:1, NAS95.
"1 The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, Because the LORD has anointed me To bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to captives And freedom to prisoners;" Isaiah 61:1, NAS95.

In relation to him bringing forth justice to the nations, only one who is righteous in the way that God is righteous could fulfill this office.

The Jews were expecting a Messianic King in the tradition of David, their greatest general and inspirational hero. They imagined that he'd be the one who'd rally the nation and throw out the Romans and restore the glory of Israel that the prophets had written about. Throughout his ministry Jesus is confronted with that mistaken view of his Messiahship, so that there are times when he tells people not to disclose that he is the Messiah because to the ignorant it will raise false expectations. Jesus even silences demons when they say that they know he is the Christ.

This again helps us to see that the normative way that Israelites thought of a Messiah, Deliverer, Savior was in a physical sense.

But we have Scriptures that have more meaning attached to them than a mere physical deliverance even though when given they may have only been understood in a physical sense.

"21 "Declare and set forth your case; Indeed, let them consult together. Who has announced this from of old? Who has long since declared it? Is it not I, the LORD? And there is no other God besides Me, A righteous God and a Savior; There is none except Me." Isaiah 45:21, NAS95.

"11 As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, As He will bear their iniquities." Isaiah 53:11, NAS95.

In these verses we begin to see the progression of the Righteous One being specifically identified as a servant and as the one who can be responsible for men to be justified because he will bear their sins for them. God never did this under the Old Covenant terms.

So, how literal is Jesus' baptism?

It is literal, in the sense he was baptized by John in the river Jordan. It was a real event. This event had real meaning and at the same time it pictured other things.

At Jesus' baptism it is revealed that he is the one who fulfills the Scripture we looked at earlier. That is part of the event. The Lamb of God, the Messiah Christ, the King has come

but he is only beginning the steps that lead to the fullness of his titles.

The significance of the event and the meanings of the event are to do one thing only – point to Jesus as the Savior of the world.

In his baptism we can see at least two things clearly and one of them is spoken of by Christ at a later time:

"50 "But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is accomplished!" Luke 12:50, NAS95.

Jesus, at Jordan, has already undergone one baptism and will have another. They are related. .

Both identify Jesus as a servant and both identify Jesus as the one who can bear the sins of men. In the Luke passage he is obviously talking about the cross.

At Jordan, Jesus is identifying himself as the servant and particularly the suffering servant, allowing him to have identification with us so he can suffer for our sins. Without that identification, sin can never be completely taken away. Goats, bulls, doves and lambs never took away the peoples sin under the Old Covenant, they were reminders that they were sinners and only brought temporary pardon.

Jesus enters into the water of baptism, not to repent, but as the righteous one to identify with those who need to repent and to signify his first official step before beginning his public ministry. The next part of this step is the dove descending upon him and his next step would be his temptation in the wilderness, again identifying with us and being triumphant where we ultimately fail unless we are in Christ. Then his public ministry begins.

Now that we have established some foundation truth about this event, lets look for a moment at some of the unbiblical ideas around this passage.

“The account of Jesus’ Baptism (Mark 1:9-11) is legend, certain though it is that the legend started from the historical fact of Jesus’ baptism by John. It was told in the interest not of biography, but of faith and it reports Jesus’ consecration as Messiah.”

Rudolf Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, Vol. 1

Major, Manson & Wright, in *The Mission and Message of Jesus* faced with the account of Jesus submitting himself to a baptism of repentance, put the event down to Jesus' consciousness of his own sin. Mark, the earliest Gospel writer (according to them), simply did not realize that the event as he recorded it implied that Jesus was a sinner. Matthew, inheriting the Markan tradition, added vs.14-15 (in Matt. 3) in his Gospel as an editorial comment for his readers.

Rudolph Bultmann also states that "according to Mark's Gospel "Jesus becomes the Son of God by the Spirit conferred upon him at the baptism." Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, Vol. 1 In other words Jesus is adopted by God as his son at this point.

Eduard Schweizer in his *The Good News According to Mark*, suggests that Jesus saw his baptism in terms of a priestly washing suited to his calling as both a Kingly and Priestly Messiah. The Testament of Levi, (an unbiblical account written about 200A.D.) certainly contains a passage that links the Messiah with the High Priest of the end time, the anti-type "of Isaac who offers himself. But this alleged support does not match with Scripture where Christ is never even mentioned in his priestly role until the Book of Hebrews written late in the writing of the canon of Scripture.

So let's return to a biblical understanding.

Jesus submits to a baptism of repentance, not to repent but by obedience to identify with those who need to repent for he will represent them before God as he takes their sin upon himself. He takes on the servant role as we have already noted with Scripture.

All through Scripture there is an inseparable element between the Messiah and His people. So, Jesus' ministry begins by establishing this truth.

The next part of this baptism event is the descending of the Spirit from heaven and resting upon Jesus.

The descent of the Spirit links him with the Old Testament hope integral to the age of salvation, the New covenant era proclaims him to be both Messiah (Psalm 2:7)

"7 "I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to Me, 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.'" Psalms 2:7, NAS95.

Gospel of Mark 1:9 -12- New Covenant Baptist Fellowship Elder Joseph Krygier October 7, 2007
and the Suffering Servant (Isa. 42:1) - a tension that continues throughout Mark's narrative where OT Scriptures are quoted (Isa. 11:2; 42:1; 61:1, cf. 63:10 - 64:1).

6

Why we would say a tension? Israel as a whole was not looking for a suffering servant. They were looking for a warrior king.

Jesus baptism has these two elements, the actual baptism and the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

The fundamental feature of all the narratives is that on the occasion of his baptism Jesus is anointed with the Spirit (Matt. 3:16; Mark 1:10; Luke 3:22; John 1:32). It is this anointing with the Spirit that inaugurates the ministry of Jesus which is characterized in three gospels by the power of the Spirit of the new age (Matt. 12:18, 28; Luke 4:18; 11:20; cf. Acts 10:38).

The anointing by the Spirit is the initial act of fulfillment (Luke 4:18, citing Isa. 61:1-2) which characterizes the whole story of Jesus and the subsequent story of the early church. This fulfillment motif is seen at two points. First, in all three of the Synoptic Gospels the temptation experience in the desert immediately follows the anointing of the Spirit; indeed Jesus is led by the Spirit (Mark: driven by the Spirit; Luke: led in the Spirit) into the desert. In the framework of these gospel narratives, the Spirit of the new age is confronted by the spirit who dominates the present.

Jesus' conquest in the desert as we will study next week, becomes the pattern for the rest of the Gospels as they report the power of Jesus to heal the sick and cast out demons. The presence of the Spirit of the new age raises the specter of the "unpardonable sin" against the Spirit, namely the sin of ascribing to the power of this age the healing work of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 12:31; Mark 3:28; Luke 12:10).

The link between Jesus' anointing with the Spirit and the fulfillment motif is to be noted also in the fact that Jesus inaugurates his ministry immediately after his baptism and the temptation. "Time is fulfilled: the kingdom of God is before you; repent and believe the good news" (Mark 1:15; cf. Matt. 4:17). Jesus declares the demise of the old and the initial thrust of the new. The promise of prophets is offered and people are invited to

Gospel of Mark 1:9 -12- New Covenant Baptist Fellowship Elder Joseph Krygier October 7, 2007
enter. From this point on, the burden of the word and work of Jesus is to invite, to initiate newness, to portray the freedom created by the Spirit, as well as to speak judgment upon the old system ruled by law, whose only fruit is oppression and death.

7

This significance of Jesus' anointing by the Spirit at his baptism is further noted in the words by which Jesus confirmed John the Baptist. No one is greater than John, yet anyone in the kingdom is greater. He is the final figure who concludes the old and introduces the new. He is the forerunner (Matt. 11:11-14). The anointing of Jesus at his baptism is the specific midpoint, not in numbers of years of human history but in redemptive history; it is the beginning of final fulfillment.

Let's not forget that the coming of the Spirit upon Jesus is not the promised baptism in the Spirit, for Jesus himself is the one who shall baptize. The experience of the Spirit at the baptism of Jesus is a bestowal that establishes the messianic character of his ministry. This is noted in the voice from heaven, "You are my Son, my beloved" (or "chosen").

The Triune Godhead is the river Jordan: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. A whole new way of relating to God is about to be ushered in based on Jesus' identifying with those who will be His.

Special significance is to be seen in the fact that Jesus submitted to the baptism of John, which was a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. John has called a sinful and self-righteous people to turn quickly before an impending judgment descends. "Already the ax is laid to the root of the tree." Matthew's narrative focuses on the issue, for in it the Baptist attempts to protest the inappropriateness of Jesus coming to be baptized. The baptism of Jesus marks his solidarity as the messianic servant with his people. He takes upon himself by this religious act their condition and their predicament. He becomes their representative. Coming to them and speaking to them he takes his place with them. Incarnation is not only coming to earth but also assuming the burden of life in the flesh. He not only speaks to them but will also speak for them in prayer. The significance of the baptism of Jesus is set forth in stark terms by Paul: "He who knew no

sin became sin for us in order that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (II Cor. 5:21).

It is with reference to this act of solidarity and identification that we see again the significance of the temptations in the desert, for there he experiences in an intense way the predicament of the human condition. He resists the fundamental temptation to use his power, a temptation thrown at him even in his last hour (Matt. 27:40, 42.) in the Garden of Gethsemane.

In his baptism he prepares himself for death, the ultimate expression of non-power for mankind, for the people with whom he identifies, and makes the identification complete.

Jesus baptism has an ultimate purpose. It is to direct our attention to him as the God-man, the servant, the righteous one who came to save his people from their sin, whenever they may live and wherever they may live, in the world. It is one of two preparatory steps for Christ to begin his three year ministry in a sense as marked man.

It will be the beginning of praise and punishment, hallelujahs and hatred, sympathy and scorn, love and hate, healing and misery, death and life, judgment and glory.

Praise God for such a Savior.