

Transcript

The Jesus Story - The Baptism

When we read the account of the baptism of Jesus by John in the River Jordan, we arrive at a high point in the life of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus, after thirty years in obscurity, a time of unhurried, slow and natural development, now the time had arrived for Jesus to begin his public ministry. This day marks the great turning point in the life of Jesus.

For thirty years he had lived an ordinary life in the simple village of Nazareth in Galilee, but today at his baptism everything is to change.

We need to pause for a moment to take this on board. The baptism of Jesus was the first crucial step Jesus took as he began his public ministry. A public ministry that would only last for about three years, and would eventually lead him to the cross.

It is amazing that something that is as important as the baptism of Jesus has so few verses to illustrate what can only be described as such a significant event.

Matthew has five verses. Mark has only three verses. Luke also has three verses. John just tells us the next day.

What I would like us to do in this session is to look at the baptism of Jesus, because this was the introduction and commencement of the public ministry Jesus. When we look closely at just what was written concerning the baptism of Jesus, what an exciting time this was. Jesus had arrived.

Of course He had been on earth for thirty years but now He was beginning His public ministry, and, there is so much for us to discover here. First of all we need to take a close look at just what really happened.

We have four different accounts by four different witnesses who all explain their point of view. So to get the best from this we need to look at each account and then bring them together to hopefully get the full picture.

Mark is the one who gives to us the shortest and simplest description. This is how Mark describes it in chapter one and verse 9:

9 It came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan.

10 And immediately, coming up from the water, He saw the heavens parting and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove.

11 Then a voice came from heaven, "You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

Here we have a very clear evidence of the Trinity in action:

- Verse 9 We have Jesus coming up out of the water.
- Verse 10 We have the Holy Spirit Descending upon Him.
- Verse 11 We have the Father voicing His approval.

Matthew in his account tells us a little more, he records the conversation that took place, when Jesus arrived. Matthew 3:13-15:

13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him.

14 And John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?"

15 But Jesus answered and said to him, "Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfil all righteousness."

In Luke's account we find something else happened. This is what we read in Luke 3v21-22:

21 When all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also was baptized;

22 and while He prayed, the heaven was opened.

Luke is the only one who tells us that Jesus was praying when the heavens opened.

John, although he does not tell us anything about the actual baptism, he does set the scene very well for us in John 1:29-34.

There is something that we need to understand about John's Gospel. John's gospel was written sometime after the other three gospels. Most commentators believe that John wrote the Gospel, three Epistles and Revelation between AD 60 to AD 90. By this time John would have been one of the last surviving eyewitnesses of the life of Jesus.

There are things found in the gospel of John that we do not find in the other gospels. John filled in mainly the parts that the other gospels had failed to include, we shall be looking at some of these in later sessions.

But in the account of the baptism of Jesus, John does not mention anything about the actual baptism. Perhaps the reason may have been because this had been described in detail by the other three gospel writers.

John records perhaps what could best be described as the set up, or the things that surrounded the baptism. What took place at the actual baptism, this is covered perfectly in the other three gospels.

John in his gospel tells us more about the involvement of John the Baptist. We pick this up in John 1 and verse 21 when the Pharisees were questioning John about who he was. He explained to them that he was not the Messiah, Elijah or the Prophet. He told them:

23 "I am 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Make straight the way of the LORD,"" as the prophet Isaiah said."

Then, in verse 32, John brings to us the positive proof of who Jesus really was:

32 And John bore witness, saying, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him.

33 “I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptises with the Holy Spirit.’

34 “And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God.”

Now here we find something a little puzzling. How was it possible that John did not know Jesus, when in fact they were cousins? They had grown up together.

As a person, John would have known Jesus because they had grown up together. But, what John did not know was that Jesus was the Messiah up to this time, even though the reason John came baptising with water was so that Jesus would be revealed to Israel.

John had been told by God that the One on Whom the Spirit came down and remained, was the One Who would baptise with the Holy Spirit. He was God’s Chosen One.

The actual baptism of Jesus we read about in the other Gospels, all three accounts tie up with what John said when he described the baptism of Jesus.

The Holy Spirit came down in the form of a dove and rested on Jesus after He was baptised, which was the proof to John the Baptist that Jesus was the promised Messiah.

There may only appear to be a small amount written, but, it is amazing just how much information we find there.

I think it may help us to get a clearer picture of the part that John played in the actual baptism of Jesus, just to look at some of the things that we find written about him. As with a lot of John’s writing there is a clear surface picture for all of to see and be blest by, but, if we are prepared to look a little closer, and perhaps dig a little deeper, we often find a bigger picture.

Most people, when they think of John the Baptist, have a picture of some wild unkept looking figure, wearing a rough blanket held together with a leather belt, who survived by eating insects and wild honey. Well, that is only partly true; his dress and diet were very basic.

In Matthew 11v8, we have Jesus talking to the crowd about John, Mt 11v8

8 “But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed, those who wear soft clothing are in kings’ houses.

9 “But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet.

10 “For this is he of whom it is written: ‘Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, who will prepare Your way before You.’

There are two statements made by Jesus here that are well worth a closer look.

‘A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet’ and “‘For this is he of whom it is written: ‘Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, who will prepare Your way before You.’

Whenever the Old Testament prophets talked about the coming Messiah, they also described a person who would appear on the scene, as a forerunner, to introduce or prepare the way for the Messiah.

Just what were the qualifications of John the Baptist? The mission given to John was the greatest mission given to any man. John came as the voice of one crying in the wilderness.

“Prepare You the way of the Lord. Make His path straight.”

The reason for John’s life was simply to prepare men and point to Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Now just think for one moment of the qualifications of John, a man sent from God, filled with the Holy Ghost from birth.

John, was a prophet of priestly descent. John was brought up in the home of a priest, in fact, both his parents were of priestly decent. John the Baptist was a part of that priestly line, a prophet who in fact was a priest.

John as the son of Zacharias, the priest, he would know all about the temple offerings. John was very familiar with Old Testament Scriptures. He quoted Isaiah when he described his own mission.

23 “I am ‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness: “Make straight the way of the Lord,”” as the prophet Isaiah said.”

John fully understood the implications when he latter talks about Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. He knew very well what Isaiah had said about the lamb: “He was led as a lamb to the slaughter,” (Is. 53: 7).

John seems to be affirming here at the very beginning the consecration of Jesus as the sacrificial Lamb, who will be offered for the sin of His people. He is the Lamb that God provides, and in His sacrifice, He takes away the sin of the world.

This is the clear and unmistakable message from John the Lamb is our substitute. He takes upon Himself our infirmities. It is not simply our individual sins He bears but the “sin of the world.”

The entire guilt of humanity was collected into one and placed upon Jesus. The sacrifice of this Lamb of God has all the capacity to forgive every sin and cleanse every sinner. It is big enough for the whole world.

What we need to do now is to try to unravel verse 15:

15 But Jesus answered and said to him, “Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfil all righteousness.”

We need to think this one through. “Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfil all righteousness.”

There are two important words in this sentence that we should look at a little closer. The first is the word that Jesus uses, the word “us”, “it is fitting for us”. This was not simply something Jesus was going to do, but John and Jesus had to do something together to fulfil all righteousness. Jesus was not acting in isolation; he was acting with John, the Sinless one with the sinner, to fulfil God’s plan.

Jesus, the one who had no sin to repent of, takes his place among those who had sin to repent of, and this act of baptism would be part of John fulfilling his mission as well, because the forerunner was to introduce the Messiah to the world.

John referred to the prophecy of Isaiah when describing his own his own mission, and, he uses several quotes from Isaiah when describing the mission of Jesus. Isaiah had prophesied of Jesus the Suffering Saviour, Isa 53:6:

6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

You are to play a part in this John. You were sent by God, “To prepare the way”. I am the Suffering Saviour. You are the voice in the wilderness sent to announce this. Jesus was saying that this baptism was the beginning of all that. It was here that He began to fulfil the righteous will of God.

This was where He became the Suffering Servant who would take on Himself the sins of the world. This baptism was the inauguration of that ministry. So, this water “baptism” of Jesus had a different connotation. It began His mission in life as the Suffering Servant. He committed Himself here to God’s will.

The Father prepared a body for Him at the incarnation, not simply the natural body that others have. This is how the writer to the Hebrews describes it, 10v4

4 For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.

5 Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: “Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You have prepared for Me.

6 In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure.

7 Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come. In the volume of the book it is written of Me To do Your will, O God.’”

The baptism of Jesus has been difficult to interpret. Why did the Son of God need to be baptized? John’s baptism was a call to repentance; it was an introduction to the new kingdom. The baptism of Jesus was totally unique. It did not signify what John’s baptism of repentance did, because Jesus had no sin of which to repent.

Jesus’ explanation was that it might “fulfil all righteousness” (Mt 3:15).

When Jesus came to the Jordan and asked John to baptize Him, John tried to discourage Him. Jesus responded that it should be done “to fulfil all righteousness.”

For thirty years Jesus had lived in Nazareth, waiting for the time when His Father would tell Him now the time had come for Him to begin His public ministry. This act of being baptized by John was Jesus Identifying Himself with the kingdom that John was announcing.

This Baptism symbolized the turning from the old to the new. Jesus’ baptism was His own symbolic act of identification with the new kingdom of God.

Jesus’ use of the word “righteousness” is significant, for righteousness is the word which denotes right relationship. Jesus’ act of being baptized was a witness to

the rightness of His relationship in the kingdom and to His right relationship with God, the sovereign of this kingdom.

The Baptism of Jesus was the next step for Jesus in fulfilling the will of His Father. He was now demonstrating His willingness to associate Himself with sinful mankind and to take upon Himself the Sin of the world.

In Matthew's account of the baptism Jesus tells the prophet "it is fitting for us to fulfil all righteousness", but we have to probe a little deeper to find out what this identification with sinners was all about.

The key has to be the meaning of the term "righteousness." Certainly righteousness means right living, good deeds, virtuous acts, and things like that, but here, what is fundamentally "right" has to be in harmony with the will of God.

As a result then, the idea of fulfilling all righteousness it simply means here, that Jesus is committing Himself to do God's will to conform to the standard which is the will of God. Jesus, fully aware of what the will of God would entail, God's will for Him was laid out in the Old Testament Centuries before.

The Messiah, the Servant of the Lord in Isaiah, would identify with sinners, take their sins on Himself, and justify them through the suffering He would endure.

Jesus was saying that this baptism was the beginning of all that. It was here that He began to fulfil the righteous will of God, that He become the Suffering Servant who would take on Himself the sins of the world.

This baptism was the inauguration of that ministry. It began His mission in life as the Suffering Servant. He committed Himself here to God's will. The bible described the will of God for Him not just rules on how to live, but predictions about His Messianic work. We find some very clear illustrations of this in Isaiah.

Someone once told me, that to meditate, is simply to talk to yourself. I am going to read Isaiah 53. Isaiah Chapter 53 is a chapter that we all need to meditate on, and we all need to talk to ourselves about it:

1 Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

2 For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness; and when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him.

3 He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

4 Surely He has borne our grief's And carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted.

5 But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.

6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own

way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

7 He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth.

8 He was taken from prison and from judgment, and who will declare His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgressions of My people He was stricken.

9 And they made His grave with the wicked but with the rich at His death, because He had done no violence, nor was any deceit in His mouth.

10 Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand.

11 He shall see the labour of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities.

12 Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, And He shall divide the spoil with the strong, because He poured out His soul unto death, and He was numbered with the transgressors, and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

Because he stood in the place of sinners the Lord Jesus Christ having undertaken the great work of our redemption, had the iniquities of the whole world laid upon him; and therefore, as the representative of sinners,

At the close of his ministry, He would have to pay the price in full, suffering all that we deserved to suffer at the hands of a righteous and offended God. He did not have to do this on His own account. Paul tells us very clearly in 2 Corinthians 5:21:

21 For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

When he was found in the place of sinners, those sufferings could not be avoided. Every part of his humiliation, from the first to the last, was necessary, to achieve all that the Father had ordained in His great plan of salvation.

The baptism, was an essential part of that humiliation. It was necessary, in order to fulfil the righteousness which he had undertaken to fulfil. For thirty years God had examined the flawless Life of Jesus as He grew in Nazareth. Now at his baptism which was to fulfil all righteousness. Jesus had undertaken to take the sin of the world upon Himself. This was the response of His Father from heaven:

“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

After the Baptism we read in John 1:29:

29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!

John seems to be affirming here at the very beginning, the consecration of Jesus as the sacrificial lamb, who will be offered for the sin of His people. He is the Lamb that

God provides, and in this sacrifice, He takes away the sin of the world.

This is where we need to finish today. Jesus, after thirty years growing up in Nazareth, after presenting Himself to be baptised, He receives the Anointing of the Holy Spirit, the Approval of His Father in heaven.

What a marvellous picture the gospel reveals to us here. Jesus, prepared; presented; anointed; and the Divine Commendation from Heaven: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

What a way for Jesus to begin his public ministry - prepared; presented; anointed; the confirmation of his father in heaven, surrounded by the multitudes, that came to hear John preaching.

What an impact any word spoken by the Son of God would have had on that crowd, but Jesus did not preach. This is how Mark in his gospel describes just what happened next: Mark 1:

11 Then a voice came from heaven, "You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

12 Immediately the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness.

13 And He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan, and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered to Him.

The next step in fulfilling the will of God was for Jesus to be tempted by Satan, and this is what we shall be looking at, God Willing, in the next session - The Temptation of Jesus in the Wilderness.