

# Following Jesus in Baptism

Matt 3:11-17 I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and *with* fire:  
<sup>12</sup>Whose fan *is* in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

<sup>13</sup>Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.

<sup>14</sup>But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?

<sup>15</sup>And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer *it to be so* now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him.

<sup>16</sup>And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:

<sup>17</sup>And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

## 1. The enigma of the baptism of Jesus -

I think that one of more paradoxical statements in the Gospels is this one about baptism in v. 15. John balked at baptizing Jesus and Jesus' response to him was, "Suffer *it to be so* now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness."

Imagine what John must have been thinking about Jesus coming to him for baptism. He was used to a very different sort of clientele (actually, *anyone* would be different compared to Jesus).

He was used to preaching a message of repentance.

Matt  
in the  
<sup>2</sup>And  
hand

He was used to preaching to a crooked culture.

<sup>3</sup>For saying ye the same girdle honey

He was used to sinners coming to confess their sins.

<sup>5</sup>Then the re  
<sup>6</sup>And

He was used to the worst hypocrites.

<sup>7</sup>But come viper come  
<sup>8</sup>Brin  
<sup>9</sup>And to ou stone  
<sup>10</sup>And there hewn

Keep in mind that Jesus was John's cousin. Did you ever have cousins who thought they were better than you and your family? Maybe you *were* the cousins who thought you were better! In Jesus' case, He actually *was* better than anyone in the family. I wonder how much resentment there may have been toward Jesus as He was growing up. They definitely had some criticism toward Him later on. John, on the other hand, was one relative who certainly *did* appreciate Him. After preaching so much repentance, I think John must have been really perplexed about Jesus coming to him for baptism. Again, Jesus' response was, "Suffer *it to be so* now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." How puzzling is that? What could Jesus have been referring to?

## 2. What baptism is not.

- Baptism does not cleanse from sin.

Jesus did not need to be cleansed.

Heb 4:14-15 Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the

Son of God, let us hold fast *our* profession.

15For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as *we are*, yet without sin.

Certainly fulfilling all righteousness does not refer to Jesus being cleansed from sin.

- Baptism is not some ritual *tradition* for salvation.

Some churches think that baptism makes someone a Christian and so it provides salvation. Such baptism was created by men.

Matt 15:8-9 This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with *their* lips; but their heart is far from me.

<sup>9</sup>But in vain they do worship me, teaching *for* doctrines the commandments of men.

Since Jesus never sinned and was born sinless as God, the Son, He did not need to be saved. Baptism is not efficacious to salvation.

- The example of the Ethiopian treasurer

In Acts 8, we are presented with the treasurer of Ethiopia under Queen Candace on his way back home, reading the Scriptures. He had just left Jerusalem where he could have easily observed the baptism of thousands. As he was reading prophecies about Christ from the book of Isaiah, deacon Philip was led by God to join him in his chariot. He asked the Ethiopian if he understood what he was reading. This prompted the Ethiopian to ask for help about who Isaiah was writing about. Philip explained that the Scripture, Isaiah 53, and preached convincingly about Jesus to him, so he wanted to know if he could now be baptized.

Acts 8:36-39 And as they went on *their* way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, *here is* water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?

37And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

38And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.

39And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.

The big qualification for baptism is that you first be a believer.

Eph 2:8-9 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God:

9Not of works, lest any man should boast.

### 3. Baptism was a declaration.

How is it that some people say that Baptism is irrelevant?

Someone might suggest that since baptism is not essential for salvation, then it should not be required. There are a lot of things that aren't essential to salvation. Just because they are not essential for salvation, it would be foolish to just ignore them: prayer, soul winning, studying God's Word, working hard, tithing, church attendance. In the case of baptism, even though it is not essential to salvation it is not just something wise to do, it actually *is* required in order to be an *obedient* Christian.

Matt 28:18-20 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

<sup>19</sup>Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name

of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

<sup>20</sup>Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen.

As people worry about not being offensive when they are witnessing, there is a tendency to give them the impression that no change will ever be required of them. They can get saved and then go on their way and we won't bother them ever again. We could make the mistake that if they join the church they don't ever have to change the way they look no matter how worldly or even immodest they are, they won't be made to feel guilty about their sin, and we're going to make them feel comfortable with exactly where they are at in their spiritual immaturity and Biblical ignorance. We might as well say, "Just keep moving on folks, there's nothing here to see, don't block the sidewalk or the aisle, keep moving." A change in life is necessary and it starts with baptism.

Baptism is required because Jesus commanded it, but it also makes sense.

Jesus marked the beginning of His ministry with baptism. He was declaring Himself. Jesus did not get baptized earlier in life, but that was because it was not available earlier. His baptism *was* at the advent of this new revival movement in Israel that initiated the presentation of the king.

To fulfill all righteousness means that He was about to perfectly fulfill all that was prophesied about Him.

Matt 5:17-18 Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.

<sup>18</sup>For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

When He said "it becometh us" He meant that this was a fitting way to begin fulfilling the Father's plan for His life.

*Becometh* is also translated elsewhere as *comely*. It would be the same as if I said, "That suit is very *becoming* to you." It makes you look good, it suits you well. If I wore a tuxedo to a Sunday service, that would be excessive and you would say that the suit is not very becoming, it is out of place. If I wore it to a wedding you would say that it *was* becoming, that it was appropriate. Jesus was saying that baptism was a very fitting thing for Him to do to begin His mission that John had been preaching about.

For others who were being baptized, it marked a changed life in repentance. Jesus didn't need to repent, but His baptism did mark a change in the direction of His life. He was no longer waiting to get to the point where He would be presented and proved to Israel.

Jesus was making a grand declaration. Why wouldn't someone want to do the same for Him?

Rom 6:4-5 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

<sup>5</sup>For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also *in the likeness* of his resurrection:

Dr. M.R. DeHaan put it this way: In the early days of the church. . . , baptism was a declaration that the believer was definitely identifying himself with that group of people who were called Christians and were despised and hated. To be a Christian meant something. To identify yourself with those who were called Christians meant persecution, maybe death; it meant being ostracized from your family, shunned by friends. And the one act which was the final declaration of this identification was BAPTISM. As long as a man gathered with Christians, he was tolerated, but when once he

submitted to baptism, he declared to all the world, I BELONG TO THIS DESPISED GROUP, and immediately he was persecuted, hated, and despised. In baptism, therefore, the believer entered into the fellowship of the sufferings of Christ. A person might be a believer and keep it strictly a secret and thus avoid unpleasantness and suffering, but once he submitted to public baptism he had burned his bridges behind him. . . ." (Pamphlet, Water Baptism, p. 27).

### The Unbaptized Arm

Ivan the Great was the tsar of all of Russia during the Fifteenth Century. He brought together the warring tribes into one vast empire--the Soviet Union. As a fighting man he was courageous. As a general he was brilliant. He drove out the Tartars and established peace across the nation.

However, Ivan was so busy waging his campaigns that he did not have a family. His friends and advisers were quite concerned. They reminded him that there was no heir to the throne, and should anything happen to him the union would shatter into chaos. "You must take a wife who can bear you a son." The busy soldier statesman said to them that he did not have the time to search for a bride, but if they would find a suitable one, he would marry her.

The counselors and advisers searched the capitals of Europe to find an appropriate wife for the great tsar. And find her, they did. They reported to Ivan of the beautiful dark eyed daughter of the King of Greece. She was young, brilliant, and charming. He agreed to marry her sight unseen.

The King of Greece was delighted. It would align Greece in a favorable way with the emerging giant of the north. But there had to be one condition, "He cannot marry my daughter unless he becomes a

member of the Greek Orthodox Church." Ivan's response, "I will do it!"

So, a priest was dispatched to Moscow to instruct Ivan in Orthodox doctrine. Ivan was a quick student and learned the catechism in record time. Arrangements were concluded, and the tsar made his way to Athens accompanied by 500 of his best troops—his personal palace guard.

He was to be baptized into the Orthodox church by immersion, as was the custom of the Eastern Church. His soldiers, ever loyal, asked to be baptized also. The Patriarch of the Church assigned 500 priests to give the soldiers a one-on-one catechism crash course. The soldiers, all 500 of them, were to be immersed in one mass baptism. Crowds gathered from all over Greece.

What a sight that must have been, 500 priests and 500 soldiers, a thousand people, walking into the blue Mediterranean. The priests were dressed in black robes and tall black hats, the official dress of the Orthodox Church. The soldiers wore their battle uniforms with all their regalia--ribbons of valor, medals of courage. and their weapons of battle.

But, there was a problem. The Church prohibited professional soldiers from being members; they would have to give up their commitment to bloodshed. They could not be killers and church members too.

After a hasty round of diplomacy, the problem was solved quite simply. As the words were spoken and the priests began to baptize them, each soldier reached to his side and withdrew his sword. Lifting it high overhead, every soldier was totally immersed--everything baptized except his fighting arm and sword.

That is a true historical fact. The unbaptized arm. What a



powerful picture of Christianity today. How many unbaptized arms are here this morning? How many unbaptized wills are here? How many unbaptized talents? Unbaptized check books? Unbaptized social activities? How many are there here this morning?  
— Dr. Wayne Dehone

There is one tiny word that must not be overlooked. Jesus said, "Thus it becometh us to fulfil **all** righteousness." *Us*. Not just Him. He spoke those words to John the Baptist. He included John as part of His earthly mission. We are also included in that mission today as we are a party to His baptism by being baptized ourselves. *All* parts of us.

Baptism is the first step of obedience that should follow salvation. At Pentecost, the first thing they were glad to do after they were saved was to be baptized.

Acts 2:41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added *unto them* about three thousand souls.

We want people to know that all they have to do to be saved is to call upon Christ, but we should not be fearful that pointing out that obedience to Him should follow might turn someone off. If someone is not willing to obey Christ, then their whole understanding of salvation is suspect. You either want God *as* God or not. If you are unwilling to obey Him in such a small but powerful statement of repentance, then are you actually repentant? Your baptism *follows* your salvation. We don't just offer it in case someone might get saved later on.

If you were baptized, were you completely immersed, or did you hold out on God? Was there some area of your life you held in reserve to be used for self or, worse, for the devil? In baptism, our ears are baptized, our eyes are baptized, our mouths are baptized, our hands are baptized, our feet are baptized...we are completely immersed. What we listen to,

what we watch, how we talk and the kinds of words we use, what work we do, where our feet take us, are all baptized in the service of God. Serving God should not be something that we even consider obedience. When I was told to kiss the bride, I assure you I did not balk and say, "Don't you tell *me* what to do!" If your heart is given over to God, the commands of God will be nothing more than a reflection of our desires *for* God.

Matt 3:11-17

1. The enigma of the baptism of Jesus - Matt 3:1-10
2. What baptism is not - Heb 4:14-15, Matt 15:8-9, Acts 8:36-39, Eph 2:8-9
3. Baptism was a declaration - Acts 2:4