

The Gospel of Matthew

THE BAPTISM OF JESUS (3:13 - 3:17)

There is no doubt this event marks the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. Matthew tells us that Jesus came for baptism, "from Galilee". Mark is even more specific, stating that Jesus came from "Nazareth of Galilee" to be baptized by John (Mark 1:9). Nazareth was the place chosen by Joseph and Mary to raise Jesus to adulthood (Matthew 2:23). John the Baptist also made it clear that his ministry merely preceded a greater one to come. In a sense, this event was the pinnacle of John's ministry. All of his preaching led up to this moment when the Spirit revealed the Lamb of God who came to take away the sin of the world. When he saw Jesus, John realized, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30).

Fulfilling all Righteousness (3:13-15)

Jesus' initial appearance to John the Baptist seems to be described in John 1:26-37. This passage picks up where we left off in Matthew 3:11-12. John is preaching about One who would come after him. The very next day, He sees Jesus and boldly proclaims Him to be the Lamb of God, the One of whom John had been prophesying. This was clearly a revelation of the Spirit of God, working on both sides of the equation. Jesus was led to come and be baptized. John's eyes were opened to recognize His appearing.

Why was it necessary for John to recognize the identity of Jesus before baptizing Him? Compare Matthew 3:7-8 with verse 14.

The idea of baptizing Jesus was initially offensive to John. Who was he to baptize the Son of God? In fact, John felt he needed to be baptized by Jesus. Do we have evidence that John was ever baptized?

Why was Jesus baptized? John the Baptist knew that this was the sinless Son of God in the flesh coming to him. He initially resisted administering the baptism because to John, baptism was only for repentant sinners. He did not yet realize the fullness of this act. Jesus instructed John to do so in order to fulfill all righteousness. This means that it was a necessary part of the Father's plan for Jesus to enable Him to be the sinless Lamb of God and to realize all that the Father had for Him. The purpose of God was not revealed to John at this time but his obedience was required anyway. We must learn to act with such faith! Let's look at a few reasons that may explain the reason for Jesus' baptism.

- His ministry was "bookended" by first submitting Himself to the hands of man in the _____ of His death, burial, and resurrection, and then by the _____ . (Read Acts 2:22-24)
- An act of _____ to His Father. (Read Hebrews 5:8-9)

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- To provide an example of _____. (Read Matthew 17:24-27)
- Receives the Spirit in _____ for the ministry ahead of Him (Read John 3:34 & Ephesians 4:7)
- He fully participated in the _____ of His church
- An act of commitment (engagement) to His _____ (Read John 3:28-30)

The Heavens Opened (3:16-17)

The Gospels of Luke and John provide us with a few details about the actual baptism of Christ that were not included in Matthew's account. Read Luke 3:21-22 and John 1:29-34.

- Jesus' baptism appears to have taken place _____ John baptized others who came forward.
- Jesus was _____ during His baptism.
- John had received prophecy from God that He would see the Spirit _____ upon the One who would baptize with the Holy Spirit.

Did anyone witness the heavens opened and the descent of the Spirit except for Jesus and John? Compare this event with the transfiguration that is recorded in Matthew 17:1-6.

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The Spirit of God descended upon Christ in the form of a dove. Why did the Spirit descend in this form? Compare this to the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost. Read Leviticus 5:5-7; Song of Solomon 5:2, 6:9; Isaiah 42:1-4; Matthew 10:16, 11:29; Luke 4:18-19; and Acts 2:1-4.

What is the significance of the voice from heaven, the Son's baptism, and the descent of the dove?

God the Father provided a Divine affirmation to Jesus' baptism when His voice was heard saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." What is the significance of this statement?