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The Baptism of Jesus Christ

Harold Willmington

Liberty University, hwillmington@liberty.edu

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THE BAPTISM OF JESUS CHRIST

- **THE OUTLINE**

The scriptures involved: All four Gospel writers record this event.

- A. Matthew (3:13-17)
- B. Mark (1:9-11)
- C. Luke (3:21, 22)
- D. John (1:31-34)

The summary involved

- A. The appeal by the Son (Jesus asks a reluctant John to baptize Him)
- B. The anointing by the Spirit (the Holy Spirit, like a dove, comes upon Him)
- C. The approval by the Father (*“And lo, a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”*)

The significance involved

- A. This is the clearest illustration of the doctrine of the Trinity in the entire Bible.

The Father speaks from heaven.

The Son stands in the water.

The Holy Spirit descends.

- B. This marks the first of three occasions on which the Father orally expressed His approval of the Son:

Here at the baptism

On the Mount of Transfiguration (Mt. 17:5)

In Jerusalem (Jn. 12:28)

- C. The event records the first reference to Jesus' prayer life (Lk. 3:21).

- D. There are at least four reasons why Jesus was baptized:

- 1. He was baptized in order to identify with the message of John the Baptist.

Actually, there were two aspects to John's message:

“God's kingdom is at hand! The Messiah is here!”

“Repent therefore of your sin and be baptized to demonstrate this repentance.”

Thus Christ was baptized to identify with the first part of John's message, while the converts fulfilled the second aspect.

- 2. He was baptized so that John would know that Jesus was the true Messiah (Jn. 1:33).

- 3. He was baptized to signal the beginning of His work as the Messiah. This was similar to the Old Testament minister who began his ministry at age thirty after a special ordination service.

4. He was baptized to identify Himself with the office of the prophet, priest, and king. In the Old Testament, all three were anointed in connection with their office.

- **THE ANALYSIS**

"Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? 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. 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: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Mt. 3:13-17).

The Three Persons Involved

This is the clearest illustration of the doctrine of the Trinity in the entire Bible.

- A. The Father speaks from heaven.
- B. The Son stands in the water.
- C. The Holy Spirit descends.

This marks the first of three occasions on which the Father orally expressed His approval of the Son.

- A. Here at the baptism
- B. On the Mount of Transfiguration (Mt. 17:5)
- C. In Jerusalem (Jn. 12:28)

This first approval is especially significant because of when it occurred. At this time our Lord had yet to perform one miracle or preach one sermon. Yet his life had already won the favor of the Father. We are prone to reverse this, assuming God awaits spectacular works before he can officially approve us. But to the contrary, divine sanction rests upon present day attitudes and not upon future achievements. In fact, the first is the root from which the second becomes the fruit.

An example of this principle can be seen in the life of Timothy, whom Paul praised in the most glowing manner: *"I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I received news about you. I have no one else like him, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare. For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel."* (Phil. 2:19-22, NW)

This, then, described the fruit of Timothy's ministry. But what of the root? The apostle speaks of this during his final epistle: *"But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."* (2 Tim. 3:14-15)

Apparently the divine approval from heaven was given to reassure both John and Jesus as seen by the three gospel accounts. Thus:

- A. Matthew records the Father as saying, *"This is my beloved Son."* (Mt. 3:17)
- B. Mark and Luke record the Father as saying, *"You are my beloved son."* (Mk. 1:11; Lk. 3:21)
- C. Finally, the event gives us the first reference to Jesus' prayer life: *"Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened."* (Lk. 3:21)

The Five Reasons Involved

Why was Christ baptized? Here it may be stated that His baptism totally refutes that false doctrine of baptismal regeneration, that is, the claim that one must be baptized to be saved. The Savior of all people did not need to be saved Himself. But why, then, was He baptized?

- A. He was baptized in order to identify with the message of John the Baptist. Actually, there were two aspects to John's message:
"God's kingdom is at hand! The Messiah is here!"
"Repent therefore of your sin and be baptized to demonstrate this repentance." Thus Christ was baptized to identify with the first part of John's message, while the converts fulfilled the second aspect.
- B. He was baptized so that John would know that Jesus was the true Messiah. *"And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost."* (Jn. 1:33)
- C. He was baptized to signal the beginning of his work as the Messiah. This was similar to the Old Testament minister who began his ministry at age thirty after a special ordination service.
- D. He was baptized to identify himself with the office of the prophet, priest, and king. In the Old Testament, all three were anointed in connection with their office. In Lev. 8 is described the threefold anointing of a priest. He was first washed with water, then anointed with oil, then finally with blood. Christ submitted to the first two of these (water baptism and the oil of the Spirit), but not to the third.
- E. He was baptized to show that he had the total approval and support of both other members of the Trinity, the Father and Holy Spirit.

The Six Examples Involved

This is the first of various baptisms mentioned in the Gospel accounts. The word baptism means *"to identify with."*

- A. The baptism of John the Baptist--This was national baptism (see Mk. 1:4)

B. The baptism of Jesus

With water by John (Mt. 3:15)

With the Holy Spirit by the Father (Mt. 3:16)

C. The baptism of sin upon Christ at Calvary (Lk. 12:50; Mt. 20:22)

D. The baptism of the Holy Spirit upon believers at Pentecost (Mt. 3:11b)

E. The baptism of God's wrath upon sinners during the Tribulation (Mt. 3:11b; 3:12; 13:30)

F. The baptism of believers (Mt. 28:19)