

FULFILLING ALL RIGHTEOUSNESS

Reading: Mark 1:1-11; John 1:15-34

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. (Matthew 3:13-15).

1. WHY DID JESUS DESIRE BAPTISM BY JOHN?

Jesus came to fulfill all His Father's plans. Not only the law of Moses but every avenue of obedience to God.

A. Jesus needed to be washed and anointed for ministry.

Dr. Adam Clarke (1762 - 1832) British Methodist theologian, and commentator says:

There was a kind of baptism among the Jews, that of the priests at their consecration (Lev. 8:6). Now, as Christ had submitted to circumcision (as a child), the initiating ordinance of the Mosaic dispensation, it was necessary He should submit to the initiating ordinance of the Christian dispensation, instituted by the same authority (the Lord God). But it was necessary on another account. Our Lord represented the High Priest, and was to be the High Priest over the house of God; now, as the High Priest was initiated into his office by washing and anointing, so must Christ be; hence, He was baptized and anointed by the Holy Ghost. Thus He fulfilled the righteous ordinance of His initiation into the office of the High Priest, and was prepared to make an atonement for the sins of the whole of mankind.

B. Jesus needed to be made eligible to become the perfect Lamb offering.

Dr. Donald Grey Barnhouse (1895 - 1960), American theologian, and pastor of the Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia comments:

The Lord Jesus allowed Himself to be baptized in fulfillment of the type of the ceremonial law, as we see in the first chapter of Leviticus. The pieces of the body of the lamb were washed with pure water before they were placed on the altar to be consumed as the burnt offering.

And when John identified the Lord Jesus as being spotless without, the voice came from Heaven saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17). Thus did God pronounce His Son to be spotless within. By permitting Himself to be baptized, the Lord Jesus announced to earth and heaven that He was the spotless Son of God, and eligible to die.

C. Jesus had to become identified with His people in all things.

Frédéric Louis Godet (1812-1900) Swiss Protestant theologian makes this observation:

The term Lamb of God is so original that, if it is historical, it must have its ground in some particular impression which the Baptist had received at the time of his previous meeting with Jesus. And indeed, we must remember that when an Israelite came to have himself baptized by John, he began by making confession of his sins (Matt. 3:6; Mark 1:5). Jesus could not have dispensed with this preparatory act without arrogating to himself from the first an exceptional position, and nothing was farther from his thought than this: He wished to "fulfill all righteousness" (Matt 3:15). What, then, could His confession be? Undoubtedly a collective

confession, analogous to that of Daniel (Dan. 9), or that of Nehemiah (Neh. 1), a representation of the sin of Israel and of the world, as it could be traced by the pure being, who was in communion with the perfect holy God, and at the same time the tenderly loving being, who, instead of judging His brethren, consecrated Himself to the work of saving them.

2. WHICH OF THESE ABOVE THEOLOGIANS ARE NEAREST TO THE TRUTH?

All three are helpful.

- (1) Jesus fulfilled all righteousness under the Old Covenant and gave His own body and blood to institute the New Covenant.

I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; (Isaiah 42:6)

- (2) Jesus needed both washing and anointing, and in that order.

...be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord. (Isaiah 52:11)

- (3) Jesus had to be prepared, scrutinized, and accepted as the perfect lamb.

- (4) Jesus voluntarily identified Himself with the people He came to save.

At His baptism Jesus declared His place as one of the human beings he came to redeem. Made of a woman under the law and baptized in water unto humanity He was able to take our place and die in our stead.

Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; (Hebrews 2:14).

3. HOW DID GOD DEMONSTRATE HIS ACCEPTANCE OF THE BAPTISM OF JESUS?

The Father demonstrated His acceptance of Jesus' offering of Himself both as a living sacrifice at the onset of His earthly ministry and as the sacrificial Lamb through death. The Holy Spirit remained upon Him as the abiding fire of acceptance.

A. The Holy Spirit remained upon Him.

The Holy Spirit had never become a permanent resident in a human life before the baptism of Jesus. Here again, Jesus is initiating the New Covenant.

And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. 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. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God. (John 1:31-34).

B. His voice spoke a clear commendation.

The Spirit and Word always agree. Jesus received a word of verification. We have one other instance in which God spoke the same thing regarding Jesus: His transfiguration. At His

baptism Jesus presented Himself as the offering for sin, the Lamb. At His transfiguration, He was accepted by the Father after being found sinless and pure.

And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased. (Luke 3:22)

Water baptism is endorsed by the tri-unity of the Godhead. Jesus went through it, the Holy Spirit descended upon Him and the Father spoke from Heaven.

4. WAS THE WITNESS OF THE WATER AND THE SPIRIT NECESSARY FOR JESUS?

Yes. Jesus came by water, Spirit, and blood to provide our eternal salvation. We can now watch the accounts of His life to see what the Lord God will do through a man who is filled with the Spirit “without measure.”

And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one. If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. (1 John 5:8-9)

Study Application:

Give three reasons why Jesus needed to be baptized by John. Keep it simple.

How did God show His approval of Jesus’ decision to be baptized by John?

What was different about the way the Holy Spirit came to Jesus?