

LESSON SEVEN

THE BAPTISM OF JESUS

TEXT: Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22; John 1:26-34.

A. BEFORE HIS BAPTISM:

We do not know very much about the boyhood and youth of Jesus. Undoubtedly, he attended the local synagogue at Nazareth and attended school like other Jewish boys.

He was only twelve years old when he astonished the doctors in the temple with his wisdom. His reply to his parents tells us a great deal. *"Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business" (Luke 2:49)*. We are told that he was obedient and submissive to his parents (Luke 2:51). As Jesus was growing up, he grew not only physically, but also in wisdom, and in favor with God and man (Luke 2:52).

We know that he worked at the carpenter trade for it was asked concerning him, *"Is not this the carpenter?" (Mark 6:3)*. We can picture him toiling and perspiring over the carpenter's bench. We should be thankful that he experienced hard work and knew what it was to be weary.

Jesus began his ministry and was baptized when he was thirty years of age (Luke 3:23). Sometime during the intervening eighteen years Joseph died for there is no mention of him after Jesus begins his ministry. The first miracle at Cana also hints that Mary looked to Jesus as being the head of the home. He was the eldest and as such he would have the responsibility of the home after Joseph's death.

B. PURPOSE OF THE BAPTISM OF JESUS:

Certainly Jesus was never baptized for the remission of sins for He was sinless.

Usually John would examine the candidates before baptism. The penitents would come with humble confession of their sins and the manifestation of deep contrition. Jesus came with such purity and peace that it caused John to draw back with a feeling of unworthiness and sin.

Undoubtedly John knew Jesus as a kinsman, but he did not know Him as the Messiah (John 1:31). At the same time John tried to prevent Jesus from being baptized. John had called the people to repentance for sin but here was One who was not conscious of sin.

The real reason for Jesus being baptized was expressed by Himself. *"Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*.

Jesus was born under the law, and in His infancy was circumcised and redeemed. He later paid the Temple tax. It was fitting that He should fill out all the ordinances of the Abrahamic covenant to completion. He came not to destroy the Law but to full it out and give it a deeper meaning (Matthew 5:17). Throughout His life He fulfilled the Law that He might save them who were under the Law.

The first words of His ministry were, *"Suffer it to be so now."*

C. JOHN'S RECOGNITION OF THE MESSIAH:

Undoubtedly John knew Jesus as a cousin but he did not know Jesus as being the Messiah. Although he was reluctant to baptize Him, he still did not know His true identity. However, John knew that he was the forerunner of the Messiah and that God had given him a definite sign by which he could recognize 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" (John 1:33).*

When Jesus came up out of the water, there was the visible manifestation of the Spirit descending and abiding upon Him. There was also the audible manifestation of the voice from heaven saying, *"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."*

It would seem that the vision and voice were seen and heard by John and Jesus alone. John saw the Spirit, heard the voice, and bore permanent witness to the Deity of Jesus.

There are two errors that we must avoid here:

1. Some say that here is seen the Trinity, the three persons in the Godhead. This is not true. There was a threefold phenomena in the upper room but this was no proof of the Trinity. Although they could feel the Holy Spirit, see tongues of fire, and hear tongues, yet there was only one Spirit. Likewise the two manifestations at Jordan do not proof the Trinity.
2. Some say that Jesus was only human up to this point and it is now that He becomes Divine. However, Jesus was Divine from the conception in the womb of the virgin. Again Jesus was fulfilling the righteousness of the Old Testament. Every prophet and king had to be anointed as they entered into their ministry. Here Jesus was being anointed prophet, priest and king.

D. THE ORDER OF EVENTS:

We must remember that John did not say, *"Behold, the Lamb of God"* when Jesus was baptized. The first chapter of John's Gospel makes this very plain.

What is the order of events?

1. Jesus is baptized and straightway led into the wilderness.
2. Jesus is tempted for forty days.
3. Jesus returns to Jordan and stands among the crowd (verse 26).
4. The next day John says, *"Behold the Lamb of God"* (verse 29).
5. The next day John also says, *"Behold the Lamb of God"* and two of his disciples followed Jesus (verse 37). These disciples were Andrew and John the beloved disciple. Andrew brings Simon Peter to Jesus.
6. The day following Jesus goes forth in Galilee after calling Philip and Nathanael.

As we study the story carefully we see that John said, *"Behold the Lamb of God"* when Jesus returned from the temptation and of course, John recognized Him.

LESSON SEVEN

SELF HELP TEST

A. Explain the two errors which we must avoid in studying the baptism of Jesus.

B. Give the order of events following the baptism of Jesus:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

C. Explain clearly why Jesus was baptized.