

018: The Man Who Needs No Baptism
(based on Sermon #011 in the Life of Christ Series)

Have you ever argued with the Lord?

- He convicts you about something in the Word of God and you argue with Him, attempting to rationalize why you should *not* have to do what He is telling you to do.
- Who wins those arguments?
- Well, God always wins in the sense that He is always right.
- But you may not always yield to what He wants you to do.
- John the Baptist was not like that.
- Yes, he argues with Jesus, but he eventually yields to the Lord Jesus.
- What is this argument about?
- John tries to convince Jesus that He should not submit to the baptism of repentance.

Matt. 3:13-17:

- 13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him.
- 14 And John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?"
- 15 But Jesus answered and said to him, "Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he allowed Him.
- 16 When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him.
- 17 And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

The word *prevent* in v. 14 literally means "to hinder altogether or utterly prohibit, to forbid."

- What this means is that John is rather adamant about the matter, as if to say:
- "No, Jesus, I forbid it. I will not baptize you.
- "In fact, I need to be baptized by *you*. You certainly don't need to be baptized by me."
- Why does John resist baptizing Jesus?
- Keep in mind that John's baptism is about renouncing sinfulness — a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins
- Yet John knows that Jesus is without sin!
- Naturally, baptizing Jesus make no sense to John.
- He's surely thinking: "How can I possibly baptize the Son of God, who does not need to repent and, therefore, needs no baptism?"

That raises an important question:

- Why does Jesus — the man who needs no baptism — submit to the baptism of repentance?
- Isn't doing so inconsistent with the sinlessness of Christ?
- Notice what the apostles said of Jesus:
- 2 Cor. 5:21 For He (God the Father) made Him (Jesus the Son) who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.
- 1 Peter 2:22 He committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth.
- Heb. 4:15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.
- Jesus certainly does not need to be baptized, for He has no need to repent, seeing that He has never sinned.
- Why, then, does He insist on being baptized?

Jesus tells John in v. 15, “Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.”

- *To fulfill* is “to perform fully; to discharge.”
- Seeing that He has chosen to lay aside His divine prerogatives and live as a man on Earth, Jesus desires to demonstrate His complete conformity to God’s will in all matters.
- He is the perfect example to all mankind of the righteous life God wants us to live.
- Regarding the word *righteousness*, commentator Thomas Constable says:
- “Matthew used this word to describe conformity to God’s will, ethical righteousness. Ethical righteousness is the display of conduct in one’s actions that is right in God’s eyes. It does not deal with getting saved but responding to God’s grace. In Matthew, a righteous person is one who lives in harmony with the will of God (cf. 1:19).”

To fulfill all righteousness means to complete everything that forms part of a relationship of obedience to God.

- Putting it in everyday terms, *to fulfill all righteousness* is to do everything that is right in God’s eyes.
- There are four ways in which Jesus accomplishes this.
- first, by submitting to the Father’s will.
- That is what drives Christ’s every decision and word and action.
- John 4:34 Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work.”
- John 6:38 For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.
- John the Baptist says it is God who has sent Him to baptize (John 1:33).
- Knowing this is God’s will, Jesus determines to obey.

- Thus, Jesus fulfills all righteousness by submitting to the will of God.

We come to a second way in which Jesus fulfills all righteousness.

- By identifying with those who desire to live righteously.
- Ironically, the religious leaders, whom we know to be hypocritical, are not the ones lining up to repent and be baptized.
- Luke 7:30 But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the will of God for themselves, not having been baptized by John.
- The “sinners” in Israel, those who are guilty of outward sins, the type of sins that are more publicly known, are the ones being baptized.
- Their hearts are humble, for they desire to have restored fellowship with God, unlike the proud Pharisees.
- By submitting to baptism, Jesus shows His solidarity with these humble-hearted Israelites.
- The religious leaders don’t like this and accuse Him of being a friend of sinners.

Matt. 11:19 The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, “Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!”

- Jesus is, indeed, a friend of sinners, in the sense that He calls them to repentance and stands ready to deliver them from a life of disobedience and ungodliness.
- Matt. 9:13 “For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.”
- Keep in mind that this verse is not about unbelievers getting saved, for no one is saved by repenting, but rather by believing.
- Jesus, who was without sin, spent a great deal of His time with those who were sinning Israelites — not to condone

their behavior — but to call them back to fellowship with God the Father.

- Imagine the scene along the banks of the Jordan River.
- Numerous “sinners” are there — tax collectors, harlots, and others considered “down-and-out” spiritually.

Jesus gets in line with them to be baptized.

- But He has never sinned, and John knows this. Nevertheless, He identifies with these sinners for He — along with John — will call them to turn from their sin in repentance, followed by baptism, symbolizing the forgiveness of sins.
- To reiterate, this is not the way to be saved (i.e., regenerated), but it is how first century Israelites announced they were getting right with Jehovah God.
- Christians in the twenty-first century who have wandered away from the Lord are also restored to fellowship with Him by repenting, turning from sin and to the Lord. He is ready and willing to receive you back into fellowship.
- Jesus fulfills all righteousness by identifying with those who desire to live righteously.

We come to a third way in which Jesus fulfills all righteousness.

- By completing an Old Testament type.
- Moses led the Israelites through the Red Sea.
- The apostle Paul said in 1 Cor. 10 that the nation was baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and then they were led into the wilderness to be tested.
- The rest of the story is well-documented in the Scriptures.
- Israel failed miserably, having tested God ten times, climaxing in unbelief at Kadesh-Barnea.

- As a result, God did not allow them entrance into the Promised Land at that time.
- Instead, they had to wander for forty years in the wilderness.

Crossing Jordan and going into the Promised Land are not pictures of dying and going to heaven.

- Rather, they picture entering the realm of victory and blessing, both now in this present life (i.e., by living the abundant life of Christ), and they also picture entering the rest of millennial reward.
- Israel failed and rejected all of that at Kadesh-Barnea. Heb. 3-4 make that clear.
- However, Jesus arrives on the scene in the first century as the new Moses.
- It is appropriate to refer to Him as the new Moses, on the basis of Isa. 63:10-14:

10 But they rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit; so He turned Himself against them as an enemy, and He fought against them.

- 11 Then he remembered the days of old, Moses and his people, saying: “Where is He who brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of His flock? Where is He who put His Holy Spirit within them,
- 12 Who led them by the right hand of Moses, with His glorious arm, dividing the water before them to make for Himself an everlasting name,
- 13 Who led them through the deep, as a horse in the wilder-ness, that they might not stumble?”
- 14 As a beast goes down into the valley, and the Spirit of the LORD causes him to rest, so You lead Your people, to make Yourself a glorious name.

These verses are prophetic of Messiah. In other words, Jesus the Messiah is the new Moses, leading Israel into paths of righteousness.

- Just as Israel was baptized in the Red Sea and went out into the wilderness to be tested but failed, so Jesus was baptized in the Jordan and went out into the wilderness to be tested, but resisted and was victorious!
- Following Him in discipleship results in rest and reward.
- We come to a fourth, final way in which Jesus fulfills all righteousness.
- By picturing His future baptism on the cross.
- Baptism is by immersion.
- In fact, the word *baptizo* means to immerse, submerge.
- It was the word used of dying cloth by submerging in dye — *baptizo*.
- It was the word used to describe the hot steel forged by a blacksmith, being plunged into a bucket of cold water for hardening — *baptizo*.
- It was also the word used of ships that sank at sea — *baptizo*, completely immersed.
- (By the way, I always assure those I am baptizing that I will not leave them submerged!).

By being baptized in water, Jesus pictures His future baptism in death on the cross.

- In fact, He later uses the sign of Jonah to picture His death and resurrection.
- Jonah was baptized, so to speak, in death, in the belly of the whale, and then raised up when vomited out on dry ground.
- Christ's baptism in the Jordan pictures His coming baptism in death and subsequent resurrection from the grave.
- Anticipating the cross, He tells the disciples:

- Luke 12:50 I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am till it is accomplished!
- Commentator John Phillips said:
- "Just as He was immersed in the waters of the Jordan, so He would be overwhelmed by His suffering and plunged into death. And just as a person being baptized is brought back up out of the water, so He would rise from the dead."
- Jesus submits to the baptism of repentance in the Jordan to fulfill all righteousness.
- But His baptism serves a second purpose.
- Matt. 3:13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him.

Jesus deliberately travels from the region of Galilee in the north, down to Judea in the South, for the purpose of being baptized by John in the Jordan River.

- This is an intentional action on Christ's part for the purpose of launching His public ministry.
- How does baptism launch His ministry?
- first, by providing Holy Spirit anointing.
- Matt. 3:16b Behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him.
- The parallel text in Mark 1:10 says, He saw the heavens *parting*.
- The word *parting* is translated from the Greek word *schizo*, which means "to split open."
- This same word is used of the veil of the temple being torn in two from the top to the bottom.

Here the heavens are ripped open.

- The use of this specific word is not happenstance.

- The Holy Spirit seems to be calling our attention to Messiah's coming, in Isa. 64:1, "Oh, that you would rend the heavens! That you would come down!"
- The Old Testament passage, probably an ultimate reference to Messiah's *second* coming, could also have reference to the Holy Spirit, and His alighting upon Christ in His *first* coming, at His baptism.
- I personally think this terminology implies that a portal was opened into a higher dimension where God dwells, and through that portal came the Holy Spirit, wafting downward like a dove and landing on Jesus.
- Why is the simile of a dove used?
- Think of the characteristics of a dove — soft, white, gentle, a symbol of peace, graceful in flight — in contradistinction to a hawk — aggressive, plunging kamikaze-like toward Earth to catch its prey.

A dove represents the Holy Spirit's gentle, peaceable essence and manner.

- The Holy Spirit comes upon Jesus at His baptism to provide anointing and empowering for ministry.
- Acts 10:36-38 The word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ—He is Lord of all—that word you know, which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.
- Holy Spirit empowering was necessary for Jesus, because when He came to Earth, He laid aside His divine prerogatives and chose to live as *man* on Earth, not as *God*.

Though He never ceased to be God, He required the enabling power of the Holy Spirit in all things, just as we do.

- By depending on the Holy Spirit, Jesus provided an example or model for all believers.
- Let me insert a parenthesis that may be of help to some readers.
- Though good men may differ on the details, I believe there are three levels of Holy Spirit power accessible to believers.
- First, is the *indwelling* presence of the Spirit, which all believers receive unconditionally at the point of initial salvation (i.e., regeneration) — see Rom. 8:9-11; 1 Cor. 6:19-20; 2 Tim. 1:14.
- He literally takes up residence in your being, and He will never leave you or forsake you (Heb. 13:5).

Jesus was conceived of the Holy Spirit and did not need salvation, because He was not a sinner.

- So I believe He had the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit from the time of His conception.
- All others receive the indwelling Spirit when they are regenerated.
- The second level of Holy Spirit power is *filling*.
- This level of the Spirit's power, and the one to follow, are not unconditional.
- Filling occurs when believers submit to the Holy Spirit and let Him take control of their lives so that the life of Jesus is manifest through them.
- When that happens, believers manifest the fruit of the Spirit — see Eph. 5:18; Gal. 5:22.
- As believers, we need continual filling, but when we sin, we grieve the Holy Spirit and quench His filling in our lives.

Jesus was always submitted to the Holy Spirit and, therefore, always under His leadership and control, always displaying the fruit of the Spirit.

- The third level of Holy Spirit power is *endowment* for ministry.
- Jesus spoke of being “endued with power from on high” (Luke 24:49).
- The word *endued* literally means “to be clothed with.”
- Based on a parable Jesus shared in Luke 11:1-13 (to be explained in a later study), being endued with power is the idea of God giving you whatever is needed (e.g., bread for hungry souls) for ministering to others.
- *Endowment* is also conditional, obtained by asking in faith, solely for the purpose of ministering.
- Luke 11:13 If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!

God gives Holy Spirit enablement to those who need it (and we all need it) when we ask Him.

- I ask for this enabling power every time I step into the pulpit and every time I witness to the lost.
- God always gives it, because I ask in faith.
- I personally view this as above and beyond the *filling* of the Spirit, which is related to matters of obedience and surrender to the Spirit’s control.
- This level is specifically for ministry — not merely for those who are in career ministry, but anyone who is needing bread for hungry souls.
- Jesus needed the Holy Spirit’s *endowment* of power for calling Israel to repentance.
- He needed it for healing the sick and casting out demons and delivering people from sin.

- He also needed Spirit *endowment* for teaching His disciples. If Jesus needed the Spirit’s power for ministry, *how much more do we?*

The Old Testament predicted Messiah’s Spirit-enablement:

- Isa. 11:1-2 There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots. The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him.
- Isa. 42:1 Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One in whom My soul delights! I have put My Spirit upon Him.
- John the Baptist said:
- John 3:34 For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God does not give the Spirit by measure.
- Jesus had the fullness of the Holy Spirit upon His life. Thus, Christ’s baptism launches His ministry by providing Holy Spirit anointing.

We find a second way that baptism launches Christ’s public ministry.

- By giving divine approval.
- Matt. 3:17 And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”
- Christ’s baptism event presents a clear portrayal of the divine trinity.
- Jesus, the Son of God, is baptized in the Jordan River.
- The Holy Spirit descends upon Him visibly.
- God the Father speaks from heaven.
- All three members of the trinity are here, together, on this occasion.
- There is divine approval in that alone.
- But added to this is voice of commendation from God the Father: “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well

pleased.” This clarifies the deity of Christ. He is the Son of God!

- Not only does God the Father approve of His Son’s life on Earth thus far, He ordains Jesus at the start of His public ministry.
- The Father is well pleased with Jesus, because He is completely submitted to the Father’s will.

Despite Christ’s ordination by God the Father, the Jewish leadership questioned His authority

- listen to Matt. 21:23-27
- 23 Now when He came into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people confronted Him as He was teaching, and said, “By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority?”
- 24 But Jesus answered and said to them, “I also will ask you one thing, which if you tell Me, I likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things:
- 25 The baptism of John—where was it from? From heaven or from men?” And they reasoned among themselves, saying, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ He will say to us, ‘Why then did you not believe him?’
- 26 But if we say, ‘From men,’ we fear the multitude, for all count John as a prophet.”
- 27 So they answered Jesus and said, “We do not know.” And He said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.

At some point, much later in Christ’s ministry, He is walking in the temple and is confronted by the religious leaders.

- They ask Him, “By what authority are you doing these things?”

- They are undoubtedly referring to His ministry of preaching and teaching and healing and casting out demons, etc.
- It’s as if these religious leaders are saying, “You didn’t go to our seminary. You don’t have any formal training. So who gave you authority to conduct your ministry?”
- Jesus answers their question with a question.
- He essentially says, “I will answer your question, if you first answer mine:
- “Was John’s baptism of repentance from heaven (i.e., of God), or was it something he did of himself?”

Everyone knew about John’s baptism; it was well-known in and around Jerusalem.

- Presumably, everyone also knew that Jesus had been baptized by John.
- Maybe they knew of the Holy Spirit descending upon Christ and heard the approving voice of God.
- Do you see where Jesus is going with this line of questioning?
- His authority comes from God the Father in Heaven, and that had been clearly corroborated at His baptism.
- So If John’s baptism of repentance was really of God — and it was; we know that from John 1:33 — then why didn’t the religious leaders repent and get baptized?

Here is what Jesus is implying:

- “If John’s baptism was of God, then my authority is from God, for I was affirmed by God at my baptism.
- “If you argue with that, then you will always argue with my authority.
- “But if you accept John’s baptism as of God, then you must accept my authority.”
- That is what Jesus is essentially saying.

- Of course, the religious leaders refuse to answer, because either way, they will implicate themselves.
- If they say John's baptism was of men, then they have a public relations problem with the people, many of whom had been baptized by John.
- If they say John's baptism was of God, then they are compelled to accept the authority of Jesus as from God, for it was at the baptism where His authority was affirmed.
- Not to mention, if they say John's baptism was of God, then they indict themselves, for they did not repent and submit to baptism

Jesus has them over a barrel, so they refuse to respond.

- Thus, Jesus says, "Then I'm not going to bother telling you where I get my authority for ministry, because it's already obvious."
- At the baptism, God said He was well pleased with Jesus, because He was completely submitted to the Father's will.
- Can that be said of you?
- Are you completely submitted to God's will?
- Are you obedient and fully surrendered?
- Do you regularly seek the divine empowering of the Holy Spirit for ministering to those who are hungry and in need of the bread of Heaven?
- I challenge you to THINK ON THESE THINGS