

A CHARACTER STUDY OF
JOHN THE BAPTIST

Lesson 3

THE BAPTISM OF JESUS

John 1:19-34

Matthew 3:13-17

Luke 3:21-22

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THE BAPTISM OF JESUS

“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.”

Matthew 3-16-17

John grew up in the wilderness apart from the eyes of the worldly and the ungodly influences of the city. For almost 28 years he waited to begin the ministry of calling his people, the Jews, to repentance from their sinful life styles and to a life of faithfulness to the God of their fathers. His ministry was remarkable. It had been foretold by the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 40:3). His purpose was to prepare the heart of the of Israel for the soon appearing of the Messiah. *“In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”* (Matthew 3:1-2) Judging by his description in Matthew’s account he must have reminded

the people of Elijah, another powerful prophet from the past. Elijah had been promised to the people of God as the one who would *“turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers.”* (Malachi 4:5-6) The people of the region of Judaea heard of his strange appearance and of the power of his message and came to see what he was doing. When they heard his words, they followed his leading and were baptized in the river Jordan. This was a sign of their promise to follow God’s word and to live according to the its teachings. Even the spiritual leaders from the Temple came to him. He was especially sharp with them because their failure to obey God’s Word had caused the people to stray from the path of righteousness. He said to them, *“O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance.”* (Matthew 3:7-8) He then spoke of judgement that would come upon them and described the one who would judge them. He lifted him up as one that *“cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not*

worthy to bear: he shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit" (Vs. 11). Interestingly, in the crowd that day by the river, was his cousin from Nazareth. John had known this cousin his entire life because there was only six-month difference in their ages and their families had been close. In John the Apostle's Gospel we read that, when John the Baptist was describing the coming Messenger of God he said, "*but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not; He it is who cometh after me.*" (John 1:26-27) Jesus was "undistinguished among the multitude. The Messiah had already come, and was about to be manifested to the people. It was not until the next day (John 1:29) that Jesus was manifested; but it is not improbable that he was among the people that were assembled near the Jordan, and mingled with them, though He was undistinguished." (Barnes notes on John 1:26) As John baptized people and the crowd dwindled down, John saw Jesus and pointed him out by saying, "*Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.*" (John 1:29) Jesus sought to be baptized by John. John protested as being unworthy to

baptize the Holy Son of God. Jesus told him that the reason He wanted to be baptized was *“to fulfill all righteousness.”* (Matthew 3:15) There has been much speculation about just what He meant by this statement. Perhaps the simplest explanation is the best. He wanted to follow John’s example and take His stand for righteousness. *“The Lord Jesus was deliberately putting Himself in the place of the obedient believer, submitting to the preached Word of God and seeking to honor His Father above all.”* (Custer. P.40) It is interesting to note how John knew that his cousin, Jesus, was this *“Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”* (John 1:29) Being a student of the Old Testament Scriptures he knew that *“The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him.”* (Isaiah 11:2 also see Isaiah 21:1 and 61:1) John said, *“He that sent me to baptize with water, [God] 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 1:33)

John had a remarkable ministry to the Son of God. Jesus came to him and asked to

be baptized. When John baptized him, he beheld a remarkable sight. God, Himself, authenticated the fact that Jesus was the Son of God. When Jesus came up out of the water John saw, *“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.”* (Matthew 3:17) John was witness to the first New Testament appearance of the Trinity. In the same place, at the same time, there was the Son of God in the person of Jesus. The Holy spirit of God came down in the form of a dove and the voice of God the Father spoke validating the truth that Jesus was His very Son and that He was pleased with Him. “The opening of the heaven, the descent of the Holy Ghost in a visible shape, and the voice from Heaven, were to Jesus the final assurance from God that He was indeed His Son and the anointed Messiah, and that God wholly approved of His assumption of the work of redemption. To John, again, it was the unambiguous proclamation that Jesus was truly the

promised Redeemer, the 'Mightier One'.”
(Geldenhuys. P. 147)

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Notes
