

Lesson # 3 -- The Greatness of the Baptism of the Lord Jesus.

Introduction

- A. The Lord Jesus is described in the Bible as the "Only Begotten Son" John 3:16. The term does not refer to birth but to relationship (the word is not derived from gennao - "to beget," but from genos - "kind or class.") Therefore the term means that Jesus Christ has a unique relationship with the Father -- the only one of its kind.
- B. When the Lord Jesus came into the world He lost nothing of that relationship.
  - 1. While remaining fully divine and in possession of all His attributes, He chose to lay aside the manifestation of His glory, and the independent use of His attributes.
  - 2. In the Incarnation, therefore, the Lord Jesus chose to utilize only those resources available to believers. He had to pray. He learned obedience through suffering. And when it was the will of His Father for Him to perform a miracle, He was enabled to do so by the Holy Spirit.
  - 3. Because He possessed our nature, the Lord Jesus knew our manner of thinking, our emotions, and our bodily desires. As the Son of Man He lived in the will of God and was triumphant under temptation. He is therefore able and willing to bring to His people the sympathetic help we need. Heb. 2:14-18; 4:14-16
- C. Little is known of the years from His birth to His baptism. Luke records the incident when the Lord Jesus came to Jerusalem and was caught up in talking with the religious leaders. His reply to Mary, " ... Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business" indicated a deep awareness of His relationship with God and the character of His future. He returned to Nazareth and worked in the carpenter shop. When Joseph died it was the Lord Jesus, as the firstborn, Who supported the family.
- D. In all those years God was at work. The Lord Jesus was growing in wisdom, stature, and in favor with God and man. Luke 2:52 And, behind the scenes, the forerunner of the Lord Jesus was being prepared -- John the Baptist.

I. The Prophetic Announcement Regarding the Baptism of the Lord Jesus.

A. The message of Isaiah 40:1-11.

- 1. The exhortation -- "Prepare ye the way of the LORD." Vs 3,4
- 2. The promise -- "The glory of the LORD shall be revealed." V 5

3. The contrast -- "All flesh is grass but the Word of God is eternal." Vs 6-8
4. The prediction -- "The Lord God will come." Vs 9,10
5. The reminder -- "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd." V11

B. The message of Malachi 3:1 and 4:1-6.

1. The prediction -- "My messenger shall come as Elijah and prepare the way."
2. The promise -- "The Lord shall come with healing and judgment."

II. The Preparatory Ministry of John Regarding the Baptism of the Lord Jesus.

A. The person of John the Baptist.

1. His birth was announced by an angel. Luke 1:5-20
2. His ministry was to serve in "the spirit and power of Elijah ... to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." Luke 1:17
3. He was to be a "witness" to the Lord Jesus. John 1:7; 5:32-37
4. He was commended by the Lord Jesus as a prophet and more than a prophet. Through his ministry people were led to a decision for or against God. Luke 7:24-30
5. He died as a martyr in testimony to the faithfulness of his ministry. Mark 6:17-29. When the Lord Jesus learned of his death He went into seclusion. Matt. 14:13

B. The message of John the Baptist.

1. Regarding his baptism. Matthew 3:1-17

- a. It was a baptism of repentance, Vs 2,8.
- b. It was a baptism of faith, Vs 9-12; Luke 7:29,30.
  - 1). God is to be trusted for salvation -- not good works or family heritage.
  - 2). The coming Messiah will baptize with the Holy Spirit (grace) and with fire (judgment).

2. Regarding the Lord Jesus. Matt. 3:1-17

a. The greatness of the Lord Jesus.

- "He is mightier than I." Matt. 3:11  
"He is preferred before me." John 1:30  
"He was before me." John 1:30  
"His shoes I am not worthy to unloose." John 1:27

b. The description of the Lord Jesus. John 1:29

The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith,  
Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the  
world.

Comment: The Lord Jesus is here described as the fulfillment of  
the teaching, prophecies, types, and symbols of redemption  
in the Old Testament.

- 1). Reminder of God's provision -- the sacrificial lamb.
- 2). Reminder of the basis of salvation -- the lamb slain.
- 3). Reminder of the need of salvation -- sin and death.
- 4). Reminder of the promise of God -- the Messiah.

c. The description of the work of the Lord Jesus.

- 1). Redemption -- He will take away the sin of the world. John 1:29  
(II Cor. 15:19-21)
- 2). Salvation -- He will baptize with the Holy Spirit. Luke 3:16  
(Rom. 8:9; I Cor. 12:13)
- 3). Judgment -- He will baptize with fire. Luke 3:16,17  
(Matt. 13:30)

III. The Biblical Explanation of the Baptism of the Lord Jesus.

A. His baptism was a symbolic identification with the human race.

1. Baptism is first of all a confession of sin -- "I am a sinner."

In His baptism the Lord Jesus, Who was sinless, emphasizes that He  
had come to be man's Representative before God. By this act the Savior  
legally entered into a vicarious relationship with His people. In this  
symbol He testifies to accepting, before God, the sin-debt of the world.

2. Baptism is also a confession of faith -- "I believe in the Redeemer."

By this act the Lord Jesus declares that He will do for the race that  
which baptism is all about -- death, burial, and resurrection. When He  
had John baptize Him He was indicating to His Father, and all mankind,  
that He would perform the work of redemption.

B. His statement of interpretation: "Thus it cometh us to fulfill all  
righteousness." Matt. 3:15

1. In creation we were able to obey God and glorify Him. Is. 43:7,21
2. In the Fall we failed to obey God and became unrighteous and guilty.  
Rom. 3:10,23

3. In the Incarnation the Lord Jesus came to obey the Law of God for us.  
Matt. 5:17; Rom. 5:19; Gal. 3:13

4. In His baptism the Lord Jesus declared that He would provide redemption by obedience in His life and death. Rom. 10:4; Phil. 2:8

C. The opened heaven: "And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened." Mark 1:10

1. This tremendous act was the Father approval of the Lord Jesus and the acceptance of the meaning of His baptism.

2. It was a visible manifestation of what the Lord Jesus had come to accomplish -- to open the way into Heaven for all who would believe.

D. The descent of the dove: "And he saw The Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting upon him." Matt. 3:16

1. This was the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me . . . . Isaiah 61:1-3

2. In this act the Lord Jesus received the enablement of the Holy Spirit for His ministry.

"For God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him." John 3:34

"The Son can do nothing of himself." John 5:19,30

"The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself." Jn.14:10

"God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power." Acts 10:37,38

E. The voice from Heaven: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Matt. 3:17

1. The Father here gave His approval of the Lord Jesus -- approval of His person, of the silent years in Nazareth, and of His act of dedication in baptism.

2. It is significant that the Father spoke two more times in approval of the Savior: at His transfiguration and then just before the Crucifixion. Matt. 17:5; John 12:27-33

Conclusion: The baptism of the Lord Jesus is a clear demonstration of His greatness. Our response must be a least threefold: worship, thanksgiving, and obedience.