

Matthew 3:11-17 – Jesus' Baptism

In chapter 3, John the Baptist was introduced. In fulfillment of Isaiah 40:3, he was the voice of one crying in the wilderness, "prepare the way of the Lord." His garment of camel's hair and the leather belt around his waist invoked thoughts that he was Elijah who would come before the Messiah in fulfillment of Malachi 3:1 and 4:5. I side with R. C. Sproul that John's baptism was a preparatory baptism and was not the sacrament of Christian baptism as John Calvin and others have believed.

Read Matthew 3:11-12.

In verse 11, how did John describe his ministry of baptism? ESV, NKJV and NASB have "he who is coming after me". NIV has "after me comes one". Some have taken "after" as that of a follower. They believe that Jesus was initially a disciple of John. For some reason they don't recognize the legitimate meaning of "after" in the sense of time and not position. BDAG says that the word "after" in this context means "of time *after*". BDAG gives 1 Kings 1:6 and 24 in the LXX as examples. The meaning is clearly a reference to time and not rank. How did John describe the one coming after him? (3:11)

In verse 11, what does it mean that "he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit"? See Acts 1:4-5 where Jesus told the disciples before his ascension that they would "be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." What happened "not many days" after Jesus' ascension? Is being baptized with the Holy Spirit restricted to just the 11 disciples of Jesus? Peter understood being "baptized with the Holy Spirit" in a broader sense. See Acts 10:1-11:18. Note especially 11:16 where Peter realized that Cornelius and his household received the Spirit according to the Lord's words "John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." (3:11)

Is being baptized with the Holy Spirit different from believers being permanently indwelt by the Holy Spirit? Are we baptized with the Holy Spirit and if so, when does the baptism occur? The Westminster Confession teaches that OT believers were indwelt with the Holy Spirit just as NT believers are. In Chapter 13 (Of Sanctification) the WCF says that, in part, sanctification of believers is "by his Word and Spirit dwelling in them". Did Peter, John and Thomas believe in Jesus for salvation for the first time at Pentecost? If not, what does it mean for Peter, with the Spirit dwelling in him, to be baptized with the Holy Spirit? The Assemblies of God and other denominations and churches believe that "baptism in the Holy Spirit" comes after the new birth and is accompanied by speaking in tongues. How do you respond to that belief? (3:11)

What is a winnowing fork used for? When did, or does, Jesus separate the wheat from the chaff? Who is the wheat and who is the chaff? What are the different destinations for the wheat and the chaff? Some see a reference in this verse back to verse 11 and baptizing with fire. (3:12)

Read Matthew 3:13-17.

In verse 13, where did Jesus come from? Where did Jesus go to? Why did Jesus go to John the Baptist? (3:13)

In verse 14, how did John react to Jesus' desire to be baptized? (3:14)

In verse 15, what reason did Jesus give to John to persuade him that it was fitting for John to baptize Jesus? In 1 Samuel 16:1-13, the prophet Samuel anointed king David. What happened, in verse 13, when David was anointed? Was that a foreshadowing of John and Jesus or are the similarities just a coincidence? What did Jesus mean when he said "it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness"? D. A. Carson said of this phrase that the "interpretations are legion". (1:15)

In verse 16, what happened after Jesus was baptized and came up out of the water? What are some other times when the heavens were opened? See Genesis 7:11, Psalm 78:23-24, Ezekiel 1:1, and Malachi 3:10. (3:16)

Who saw the Spirit of God descend as a dove and rest on Jesus? Was Jesus the only one who saw the Spirit descend as a dove? See John 1:32-34. (3:16)

In verse 17, there was a voice from heaven. What did the voice say? Whose voice was it? When are some other times when God's voice was heard from heaven? See Deuteronomy 4:36, Daniel 4:31, John 12:28, and 2 Peter 1:18. Was Jesus the only one who heard the voice? In John 1:34, there is a hint that John the Baptist heard the voice. (3:17)

How would people have understood the statement that Jesus was God's beloved son? The phrase "Beloved Son" was used at Jesus' baptism and at the transfiguration. It was also used in the parable of the vineyard lent to tenants. There the phrase was also a reference to Jesus. Paul used the phrase, in Colossians 1:13, of us being transferred to the kingdom of his beloved Son. (3:17)