

Jesus' Baptism: An Example To Follow



Foundations (Day 119)
by Derek Prince

Let us now turn from the transitional to the permanent – from the baptism of John to full Christian baptism ordained by Christ Himself as an integral part of the complete gospel message. The best introduction to Christian baptism is the baptism of Jesus Himself.

> "Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptised by him. And John tried to prevent Him, saying, 'I have need to be baptised by You, and are You coming to me?' But Jesus answered and said to him, 'Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfil all righteousness.' Then he allowed Him. Then Jesus, when He had been baptised, 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. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased'." (Matt. 3:13-17)

Although Jesus was baptised by John the Baptist, the form of baptism through which He passed was not at all on the same level as that of all the other people whom John baptised. As we have already pointed out, John's baptism made two main demands upon the people: repentance and confession of sins.

However, Jesus had never committed any sins which He needed to confess or repent of. Hence, He did not need to be baptised by John in the same way as all the other people who came to John for baptism.

John himself clearly recognised this fact, for he says:

> "I have need to be baptised by You, and are You coming to me?" (Matt. 3:14)

However, Jesus answers in the next verse:

> "Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfil all righteousness." (Matt. 3:15)

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In Jesus' answer we find both the reason why Jesus Himself was baptised and also the true significance of full Christian baptism, as distinct from the temporary form of baptism administered by John. Jesus was not baptised by John as the outward evidence that He had repented of His sins because He had no sins to repent of. On the contrary, as Jesus Himself explained, He was baptised in order that He might fulfil (or complete) all righteousness.

In this – as in many other aspects of His life and ministry – Jesus was deliberately and consciously establishing a standard of behaviour. By being baptised by John, He was setting an example and pattern of the baptism in which He desired Christian believers to follow Him.

This is in full accord with Peter's description of Christ's actions.

> "For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: 'Who committed no sin, nor was guile found in His mouth'." (1 Pet. 2:21-22)

This confirms what we have already said: Jesus was not baptised by John because He had repented of His sins. On the contrary, as Peter states, Jesus "committed no sin, nor was guile found in His mouth." But in being thus baptised, He left an example for all Christians, that they should follow His steps.

Devotional

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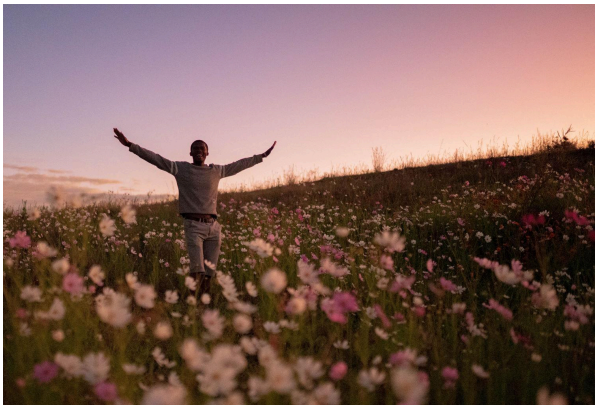

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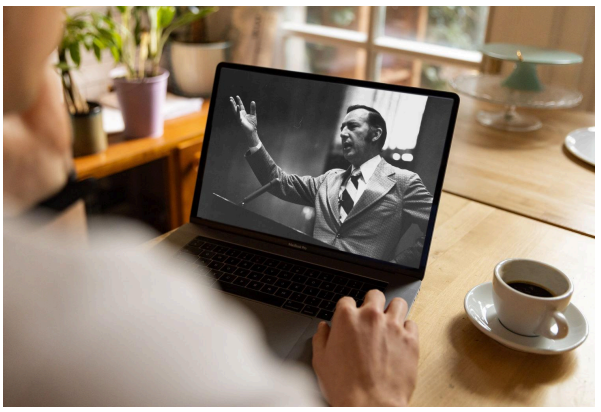

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