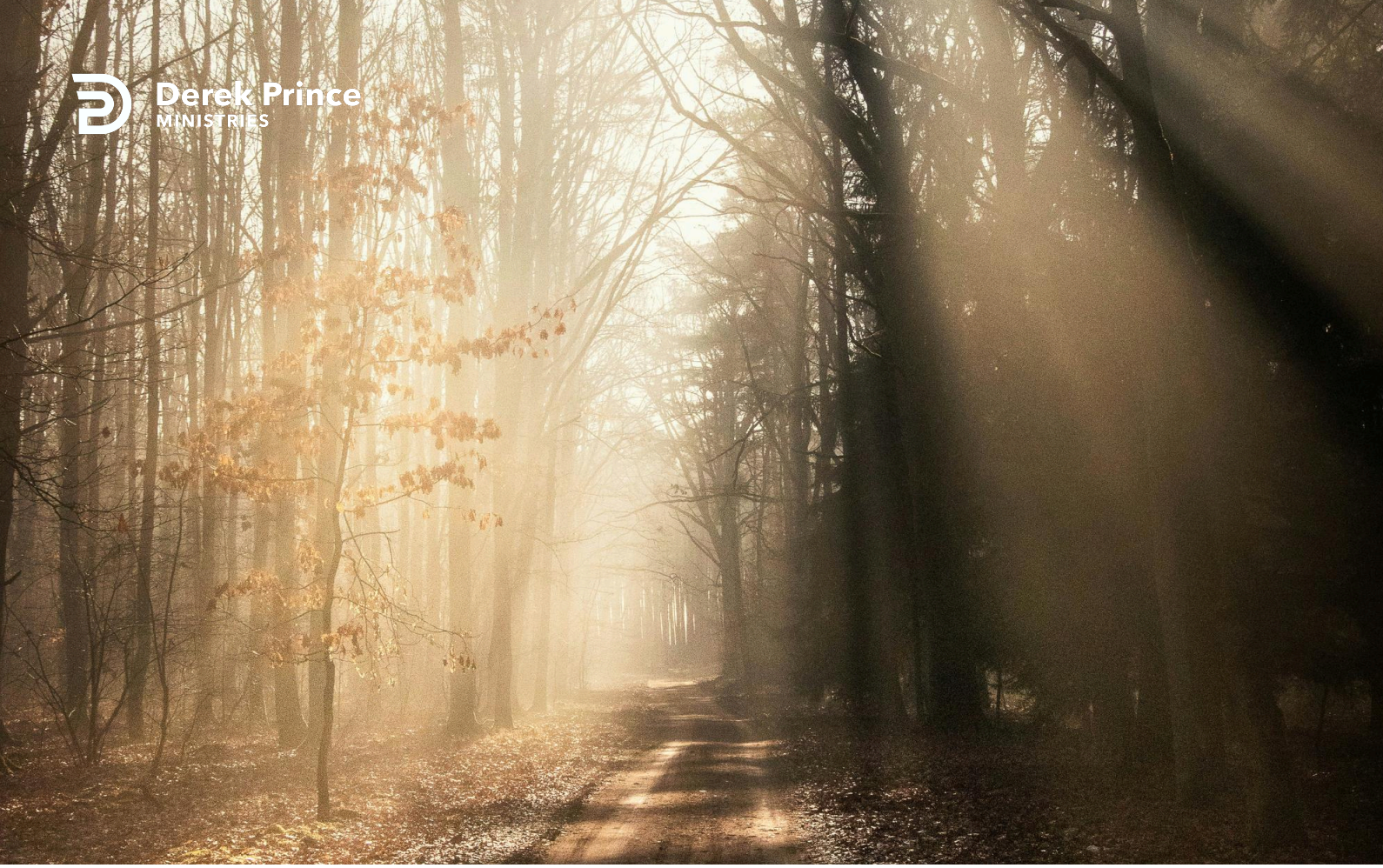


Christian Baptism – Fulfilling All Righteousness



Foundations (Day 120)
by Derek Prince

With this in mind, let us turn back to the reason which Jesus Himself gave for being baptised and examine His words in greater detail: "thus it is fitting for us to fulfil all righteousness" (Matt. 3:15).

First of all, the word 'thus'. By His example Jesus established a pattern for the method of baptism. Jesus was not baptised as an infant. We read in Matthew 3:16:

> "Then Jesus, when He had been baptised, came up immediately from the water."

In being baptised, Jesus first went down into, and then came up out of, the water. Taken in conjunction with the literal meaning of the verb phrase "to baptise" (which we have already discussed), this leaves no reasonable room to doubt that Jesus permitted Himself to be wholly immersed beneath the waters of the Jordan.

Secondly, the phrase "it is fitting". This phrase suggests that, for those who would follow Christ, being baptised is something ordained by God. It is not exactly a legal commandment, such as those imposed upon Israel by the Law of Moses, but it is for Christians a natural expression of sincere and wholehearted discipleship. By using the plural form "us" – "it is fitting for us" – Jesus by anticipation identified Himself with all those who would subsequently follow Him through this appointed act of faith and obedience.

Finally we come to the concluding section: "to fulfil [or complete] all righteousness." As we have already pointed out, Jesus was not baptised as evidence that He had confessed and repented of His sins. He had never committed any sins; He was always perfectly righteous. This righteousness was, in the first instance, an inward condition of heart which Jesus had always possessed.

However, in allowing Himself to be baptised, Jesus fulfilled –or completed – this inward righteousness by an outward act of obedience to the will of His heavenly Father. It was through this outward act of obedience and dedication to God that He

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actually entered into the active life of ministry by which He fulfilled the plan of God the Father.

In Rom. 5:1 we read :

> "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus ChristTrue Christians have not merely confessed and repented of their sins. They have done this and more. By faith in the atoning death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, they have been justified; God has imputed to them the righteousness of Christ Himself on the basis of their faith."

This is why they are baptised – not simply as evidence that they have confessed and repented of their sins, but "to fulfil [or complete] all righteousness." By this outward act of obedience they complete the inward righteousness which they have already received in their hearts by faith. This explanation shows us how totally different Christian baptism is from the baptism which John preached. We can now understand why Paul would not accept John's baptism for those who desired to be true Christians. Instead, he first instructed them in the full truth of the gospel centring in Christ's death and resurrection and then insisted on their being baptised once again with full Christian baptism.

In conclusion, Christian baptism is an outward act of obedience by which the believer fulfils, or completes, the inward righteousness he already enjoys in his heart through faith in Christ's atoning death and resurrection.

Devotional

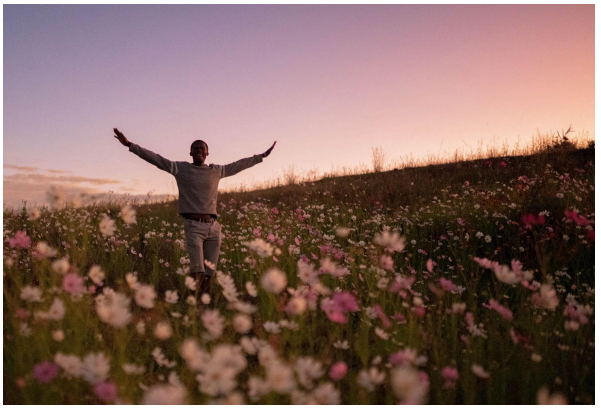
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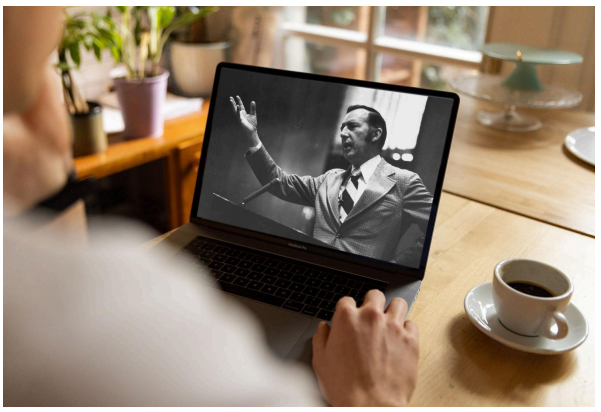
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