

## **The Work of Christ: Week 2 – The Baptism of Jesus**

### **Introduction: Organizational Framework**

- Reformed theology divides Christ's work into:
  - His states: humiliation and exaltation
  - His threefold office: Prophet, Priest, King
- Approach: Chronological and thematic exploration, continuing from last week's focus on incarnation and state of humiliation.

### **Review: Jesus' State of Humiliation**

- Incarnation: The Son of God sets aside glory to take on human flesh (Philippians 2).
- Purpose: Humbling Himself for the salvation of His people and fulfilling the Covenant of Redemption.

### **Historical Context of Baptism**

- John the Baptist emerges after 400 years of prophetic silence, signifying renewal of prophecy.
- John's ascetic lifestyle mirrored Old Testament prophets.
- John's ministry: Preparation for Messiah through baptism and repentance.

### **Understanding John's Baptism**

- Rooted in Old Testament "proselyte baptism" for Gentile converts—ritual of cleansing, not commanded in Scripture but widely practiced.
- John calls Israelites—not Gentiles—to baptism, declaring them "unclean" due to sin.
- Theological purposes of John's baptism:
  - Covenant Preparation: Transitioning Israel for the New Covenant
  - Emphasis on Repentance: Preparation for salvation
  - Christ-Centered Focus: Baptism points to the coming Messiah
  - Redemptive-Historical Bridge: Connects anticipation with fulfillment in Christ.

### **Jesus' Baptism: Theological Significance**

- Jesus chooses baptism by John (Matthew 3:13–15). John is perplexed, recognizing Jesus' sinlessness.
- "To fulfill all righteousness": Jesus acts for His people, fully obeying the law and requirements, even those not directly commanded by God.

- Christ's representative obedience (federal headship): Every act, including baptism, is performed on behalf of His people.
- Redemption requires:
  - Christ's perfect life and active obedience (law keeping)
  - Christ's atoning death (passive obedience—suffering for sin).

### **Distinguishing Christ's Obedience**

- Passive obedience: Suffering for sin (derived from Latin "passio"—active endurance)
- Active obedience: Lifelong perfect adherence to God's law, qualification as "Lamb without blemish"
- Jesus' baptism as active obedience—identification with sinful humanity, submission to the Father's will.
- Double imputation in salvation:
  - Our sin imputed to Him (He bears curse)
  - His righteousness imputed to believers (we receive blessing).

### **Implications for Justification**

- Both forgiveness (passive obedience) and righteousness (active obedience) are needed to be justified before God.
- Without active obedience: only forgiveness, still lacking positive righteousness
- Without passive obedience: condemnation remains.

### **Application to Christian Life**

- Baptism is sanctified by Christ's participation—He submitted for our sake.
- Lessons:
  - Christ's work is comprehensive
  - Obedience matters: His righteousness is our foundation
  - Dependence on Christ: for both forgiveness and righteousness
- Cause for worship: Christ willingly fulfilled all righteousness, securing not just forgiveness but full acceptance before God.