

# Baptized By John

Read Matthew 3:1-17, Luke 3:1-22

There had not been a prophet in Israel for 400 years. Yochanan, the Immerser, was the last of the Old Testament prophets. The camel-hair-clad, rough-and-tumble preacher created an uproar with his declaration two thousand years ago. ***The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!***

John was not an unknown. As the son of Zacharias, a one-time Temple priest, his birth was miraculous. Beyond child-bearing years, the Lord opened the womb of an unlikely mother, Elizabeth. Upon hearing the news of the gift of a son, Zacharias was struck mute for unbelief.

## Talking Points

- John the Baptist was like an Old Testament prophet. John preached a message of repentance and preparation for the imminent arrival of Israel's promised Messiah.
- With Jesus' baptism by John, He entered the public ministry when He was about 30 years old.
- Jesus' baptism aimed to identify Him as human, a Jew, and as the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."
- Jesus' heavenly Father and the Holy Spirit affirmed Him as the "Son of God."
- Those following John the Baptist vowed to follow Jesus when He appeared.

## Background

Thousands of Judeans knew about John's birth and his public rebuke of Sadducees, Scribes, Pharisees, and Rabbinic Judaism. John had many followers who submitted to his baptism at the Jordan River. His disciples repented of personal sin and, with their baptism, committed to following the Messiah when John identified Him.

## God With Us

Suddenly, Jesus appeared, asking John to baptize Him. But why? Jesus had done nothing worthy of repentance.

Jesus' baptism accomplished several important objectives. The first was Jesus' identification with and to Israel. Yeshua was to be a Jew. His lineage from both Mary and Joseph ran from Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, and King David. To anyone looking, there was no mistaking the Jewish credentials of the "*Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.*"

Second, through Abraham, the "seed of the woman" (Genesis 3:15) would crush Satan's dominance over the whole world. Jesus came to the Jewish people 2,000 years ago, but He came for the Gentile sinners as well.

### **Bat Kol & Merachephet**

At Jesus' baptism, He was affirmed by both His Father and the Holy Spirit. Those present at Jesus' baptism experienced the Trinity firsthand.

As Yeshua rose from the muddy waters of the Jordan River, a voice thundered out of heaven. *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* Imagine standing in a rock canyon and shouting your name only to hear it echo back. ARLIE, ARlie, Arlie, arlie... "Bat Kol" means "daughter of a voice." From heaven, the Father repeatedly affirmed Jesus' identity and authority.

Another powerful message was sent with Jesus' baptism. Look at Genesis 1:2. Over the formless and void chaos of God's de-created world, the Spirit of God brooded, fluttered, and moved. Following the second de-creation of the flood, a dove searched the surface until it found life, the sprig of an olive tree. The Hebrew word used to identify a mother bird brooding over her eggs is "*merachaphet*." But why a dove? From the time of Jesus to our day, a dove has been the symbol of the Holy Spirit's presence.

### **Who's Your Rabbi?**

Rabbinic students of the 1st Century were readily identified as the disciples of well-known rabbis by their theological interpretations of the Torah. Their words immediately associated them with this rabbi or that rabbi. Ordination as a rabbi occurred after eighteen years of study in one theologic school of rabbinic thought. Two rabbis from that school would place their hands on the new rabbi and give him their "*smecha*," authority to teach what they taught.

At Yeshua's baptism, the three persons of the Trinity were present. If you are a disciple of Jesus, be proud! You serve the only rabbi ordained by the Father and the Holy Spirit! As His disciple, you have been given their authority, too. What more do you need? Just make sure your words are His!

### **Bible Conversations**

- As a disciple of Jesus, you follow the only teacher who received His authority through the public ordination of the Father and the Holy Spirit. What does this say about the lack of doctrinal unity that is so lacking in the Church today?
- If you identify as a follower of Jesus, how are you doing with how your words and actions identify you as the One you serve?