

ISAIAH 66:1 The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners... [You'll remember is the passage Jesus chose to read from in the synagogue in Nazareth where he shocked the listeners by proclaiming, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing (Luke 4:20)"]

What do these passages reveal about the role of the Holy Spirit in the life and ministry of Jesus?

7. A Biblically informed reader might detect an echo of God's demand of Abraham in the phrase "This is my Son who I love."

GENESIS 22:2 Take your son, your only son, whom you love—Isaac—and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering...

How does Jesus fulfill the portrait of the kind of sacrifice Abraham was called to, but ultimately did not have to make?

© 2024 Paul Kemp and Christ Church, all rights reserved. Feel free to make copies for distribution in personal and/or small group Bible Study.

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the Holy Bible, New International Version®. NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan.

SUNDAY, JUNE 9, 2024



TO FULFILL ALL RIGHTEOUSNESS | MATTHEW 3:1-17

When we are baptized we make a powerful statement. We openly identify with Christ in his life, death and resurrection.

Paul tells us, "We were buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life (Romans 6:4-5)." There is a little phrase in Paul's declaration that delivers a huge punch—"with him." Whenever Paul uses the words "with him" or "in him" we need to listen.

You'll remember Paul's bold claim in Ephesians, "God who is rich in mercy made us alive with Christ... raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms (Ephesians 2:5). Or in 2 Corinthians Paul tells us, "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

Our baptism is a vivid reminder of our union with Christ. It is a picture not only of his life, death and resurrection. It is a picture of how deeply his life, death and resurrection impacts us and changes our reality.

He lived the life we could never live, and through faith in him his righteousness becomes our righteousness. He died the death we should have died and through faith in him, his death becomes our death, bearing in his body the full and final penalty for our sin. He was raised to life and through faith in him his life becomes our life.

As we prepare for our baptism celebration at the end of this month, we are going to take some time to consider the deeper realities baptism portrays. We will be consider three passages on baptism—one from the life of Christ, another from the life of the early church, and another from Paul's letter to the Romans.

This week we turn to a scene from the life of Jesus—his own baptism.

JOHN'S HESITANCY TO BAPTIZE THE PHARISEES AND SADDUCEES (vv. 1-12)

¹ In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea ² and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." ³ This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah: "A voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'"

⁴ John's clothes were made of camel's hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. ⁵ People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. ⁶ Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

⁷ But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? ⁸ Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. ⁹ And do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. ¹⁰ The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

¹¹ "I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹² His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

1. How does Matthew describe John's roll in God's redemptive plan (vv. 1-3)?
2. How does John describe his baptism (v. 11a)?
3. How did people prepare for John's baptism (v. 6)?
4. How does John describe the baptism of the one who would come after him?
5. How would you describe the difference between John's baptism and Jesus' baptism?
6. How would you describe the connection between John's baptism and Jesus' baptism?
7. Why was John hesitant to baptize the Pharisees and the Sadducees?
8. What does this passage, on the whole, teach us about the necessity and the nature of true repentance?

JOHN'S HESITANCY TO BAPTIZE JESUS (vv. 13-17)

¹³ Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. ¹⁴ But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" ¹⁵ Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented.

¹⁶ As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. ¹⁷ And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

1. Why do you think John hesitated to baptize Jesus?
2. What could Jesus offer John that John could never offer Jesus?
3. Why did John finally consent?
4. The idea "fulfillment" is an important concept in Matthew's gospel. To "fulfill" means to bring something to "its fullest and final expression". Matthew builds his gospel around a presentation of Jesus as the one brings the promises and images of Hebrew Scripture to their "fullest and final expression."

How did Jesus' identification with "a people who desperately needed to repent" bring the biblical idea of "righteousness" to its "fullest and final expression?"
5. The emphasis in Matthew's gospel is not nearly so much on the baptism of Jesus as it is on God's testimony about Jesus at his baptism.
 - a. How does God visibly and verbally demonstrate his approval of Jesus?
 - b. Why do you think God chose this particular occasion to affirm his Son in such a meaningful way?
6. The Spirit of God descending on Jesus is reminiscent of several key passages in Isaiah

ISAIAH 11:1-3 A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. ² The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him— the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord— ³ and he will delight in the fear of the Lord.

ISAIAH 42:1 "Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will bring justice to the nations.