



BIBLE STUDY

Advent, 2016

John the Baptist The Baptism of Jesus

OVERVIEW

John the Baptist is the great character of Advent. He came before Jesus to prepare the way. He preached repentance, baptized in the Jordan River, and was arrested and murdered for his faithful work. According to Jesus, John was the greatest of the prophets (see Matthew 11:11), but John says, "He [Jesus] must increase, and I must decrease," (John 3:30).

In fact, the church has most often painted and pictured John in the Jordan River pointing to Jesus. Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29).

In this study we consider the **promise of John** in the Old Testament, and the **birth of John**.

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Introduction: Jesus came to His cousin John to be baptized. This is astonishing, and John knows it. "I should be baptized by you," he says to Jesus. But Jesus must be anointed for His work of being the Savior and Messiah. So John baptizes Jesus, and we hear the preaching of God the Father from the heavenly pulpit, "This is my beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased." This study considers the wonderful and mysterious event of Jesus' baptism.

Opening Psalm: 86:1-10

⁸Let me hear what God the | LORD will speak,*

for he will speak peace to his people, to His saints;

but let them not turn back to | folly.

⁹**Surely his salvation is near to those who | fear him,***

that glory may dwell | in our land.

¹⁰Steadfast love and faith- | fulness meet;* righteousness and peace kiss each | other.

¹¹**Faithfulness springs up | from the ground,***

and righteousness looks down | from the sky.

¹²Yes, the LORD will give | what is good,* and our land will yield its | increase.

¹³**Righteousness will go be- | fore him* and make his foot- | steps a way.**

Glorify to the Father and | to the Son* and to the Holy | Spirit;

as it was in the be- | ginning,*

is now, and will be forever. | Amen.

Read Matthew 3:11-12

What does John say about Jesus and baptism? Especially notice that John tells the people that Jesus will *baptize*, not *be baptized*.

The Baptism of Jesus

Read Matthew 3:13-17. Before we look closely at the text, what are your first impressions? What sticks out to you?

In 3:13-14, John acknowledges that Jesus

doesn't need to be baptized. How does this teach us about the sinlessness of Jesus?

What is John confessing about Jesus when he says, "I need to be baptized by you"?

In 3:15 Jesus answers John. This verse is a bit mysterious. Here is how I try to teach it:

Imagine a flock of sheep on the bank of a river. They are filthy, smelly, covered in muck. One at a time John takes the sheep, dips them in the water, and all the filth is washed off, and he puts them on the other side of the river, washed and clean. Now imagine, in the middle of the filthy flock is a lamb pure and white, gleaming. There is not a spot on him. He walks up to the edge of the river and John says, "You don't need this," but the lamb replies, "Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." John, then, takes this pure and holy lamb, and as he dips him in the river all the filth from all the other lambs is absorbed into his white wool. He, now, looks and smells disgusting. John points to this Lamb and preaches, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

With this picture we see how Jesus, in His baptism, is put into the office of Messiah. He begins the work that would end on the cross. He bears our sins and suffers God's wrath in our place.

How does this picture help you understand

Jesus phrase, "fulfill all righteousness"?

In 3:16-17 several things happen. How does the Holy Spirit appear? What does He do?

What does God the Father do?

Baptism and the Trinity

Two of the best Bible passages regarding the Trinity are bound up to baptism. The passage we are studying is one of them. How do we have all three persons of the Trinity spoken of in this text?

Read Matthew 28:18-20. This text also teaches the church to baptize. In what name is the church to baptize? How does this teach us about the Holy Trinity? What does it teach us about baptism? See especially Galatians 3:26-27 where Paul connects baptism to being adopted into the Lord's family.

"This is My Beloved Son." We hear the voice of God the Father three times in the Gospels. This is the first.

Read Matthew 17:5. How does the voice of the Father at the Transfiguration echo what the Father said at Jesus' baptism?

Read Deuteronomy 18:15-18. How does the command to listen to Jesus fulfill this promise?

Consider what God the Father says in both of these events. Consider how astonishing it is for the Father to direct our ears and our attention to the Son! What do we make of it?

Read **John 12:23-33**. This is the third and final time we hear the voice of God the Father in the Gospels, and, again, He points us to His Son. How will Jesus glorify the name of God (consider especially 12:32-33)?

We give thanks to God that in baptism we receive the benefits of Jesus death on the cross. Consider the following texts of Scripture. According to the texts, what benefits does

BIBLE STUDY

John the Baptist The Baptism of Jesus

baptism give?
Mark 16:16

Acts 2:38

Acts 22:16

Titus 3:5

Romans 6:4

1 Peter 3:21



We rejoice that the Father speaks kindly to us in baptism. He is "well pleased" with us because, in Christ, all our sins are forgiven.

Closing Hymn:
**Comfort, Comfort
Ye My People** (TLH
61)

by Johann Olearius,
1635-1711, tr.
Catherine
Winkworth, 1829-
1878

3. Hark, the Herald's voice is crying
In the desert far and near,
Bidding all men to repentance
Since the Kingdom now is here.
Oh, that warning cry obey!
Now prepare for God a way;
Let the valleys rise to meet Him
And the hills bow down to greet Him.

Image: <https://www.wikiart.org/en/pietro-perugino/baptism-of-christ-1483>

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