

**The Baptism of Our Lord
January 10, 2016**

"Jesus Steps in to Be Baptized"

LUKE 3:15-17, 21-22

The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Christ. ¹⁶ John answered them all, "I baptize you with water. But one more powerful than I will come, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. ¹⁷ His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." ²¹ When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened ²² and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

There is something very exciting about watching Jesus step into the waters of the Jordan River to be baptized by John the Baptist. As he steps into the waters for baptism he demonstrates to the whole world and to us personally that he is the Christ, the one anointed by God, to get the job done of saving us from our sin and to do it well.

Have you ever run into problems with someone not doing a good job for you? Maybe it was your roof that was repaired and now in the last series of storms it started leaking again. Maybe it was that financial expert that promised you a good return on your money. It didn't happen. Maybe it was repair job done on your body but somehow things have not been the same.

If there is one area in our lives where we desperately need help it is in his all important area of finding someone to take care of our problem of sin. First, if you have any honesty in yourself whatsoever, you have to come to the conclusion you aren't as great as you sometimes think you are. The hymn writer had it right. "Foul and full of sin I am, I am all unrighteousness." The consequences of this sin make our situation extremely perilous. We are destined for eternal death and punishment.

You can call a plumber to fix the leaking pipe but that plumber can't do a thing to help you with the problem of sin. And you certainly don't have the resources within yourself to do enough good to even eradicate one small bad thought you had this past week or even this morning as you prepared for worship. The best life coaches in the world only make you more aware of how weak you are. Your only hope for getting rid of this problem of sin and being judged acceptable to a holy and perfect God is Jesus. Come with us today and see Jesus step into the waters of the Jordan River. See him step in with full confidence to get the job done and do it well.

We need Jesus to step in to be baptized

There is no greater need in your life and mine right now than having Jesus step in to save us and rescue us. The crowds of people who came out to hear John the Baptist had this

longing and yearning and hope that the Messiah, the Christ, would come to save them and rescue them. "The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Christ." It says that they were "waiting expectantly" and "wondering in their hearts."

The Greek word for "wondering in their hearts" is dialogizo from which we get our word "dialogue." When you find yourself facing a major problem in your life you try to get as much information as possible to solve that problem. You think about it and eventually you come up with a solution to the problem. These people were wondering in their hearts if their much need solution to their problem of sin was right in front of them in the person of John the Baptist. They thought he might be the Christ.

It wasn't just a smattering or small handful of people who came out to hear John the Baptist preach. No it says that the crowds were large. They came to hear him preach because his preaching and teaching had exposed the problem of sin in their lives. They felt a sense of urgency about finding a solution to this problem. Remember it was John the Baptist who called these people a brood of vipers because of the venom they were injecting into themselves and into others. They foolishly thought they could do all the right things to save themselves. John told them the truth. He said that the axe was already being laid to the root of the tree and the fruitless branches would be thrown into the fire. He warned about the Messiah who was coming with a winnowing fork in his hand to separate the wheat from the chaff and burn the chaff with unquenchable fire.

People were afraid of what was going to happen to them. John the Baptist's words struck fear into their hearts, but John then Baptist's words also gave them hope that someone was coming would take of this problem of sin. So they made the long trek from Jerusalem to the Jordan Valley. They had to hear more. They had to find hope, just as we have to find hope for the problem of sin that manifests itself everywhere in our lives.

As I was working through this I thought of how afraid I was as a child growing up in the 1950's. I was afraid that the Russians might unleash a nuclear bomb on our country and we would be burned up in a ball of fire. I was also afraid of getting polio. There were so many reports in the news of children getting polio and being paralyzed for the rest of our lives. It did not help that the neighbor girl who babysat us was stricken with polio at the age of sixteen and confined to a wheel chair the rest of her life. But then the news came that a vaccine had been discovered that could prevent polio by Dr. Jonas Salk of San Diego. We lined up as children in the schools to receive shots from special doctors and nurses. My parents did not hesitate for one minute to have us vaccinated. They had seen what had happened to Gloria, the beautiful red haired girl next door who was our babysitter.

So the people came to John the Baptist in large numbers realizing they had a problem much greater than any disease like polio. They lined up to be baptized for the forgiveness of their sin. John told them, "I baptize you with water. But one more powerful than I will come, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire." It was John the Baptist who pointed to Jesus and said, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."

If I have problem with my teeth, then I go to the dentist. If I have a problem with my

car I go to a mechanic. If I have a problem with my roof leaking I will probably call up Sherman's good friend Paul. If I have a problem with sin, and I do and so do you, then there is only one place to go for help. John the Baptist points us to Jesus who is God's Son from all eternity. He points to Jesus as the one who was willing to be God's Lamb and sacrifice himself to pay for the sin of the world.

Now we see Jesus step in to be baptized and demonstrate to us beyond any doubt that he is going to do this job for and do it well. You see, Jesus is the Christ. Jesus is not his first name and Christ his last name as my first name is Steven and my last name is Degner. The name Christ is like a hundred thousand arrows all pointing us to the Jesus so we are not led to think I have to do something to solve this problem. As we sang in our opening hymn so confidently and with such hope, "In Christ alone my hope is found."

We see Jesus step into be baptized

Listen now as the Gospel of Luke describes how Jesus was baptized. "When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: 'You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.'"

The people are lining up for baptism in the Jordan River. Among those lined up for baptism is Jesus. He looks like just another person in the crowd. John recognized him. This was his second cousin. You remember what John said to Jesus, don't you? John tried to deter Jesus from being baptized. He said, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" Then Jesus said these important words to John, "Let it be so now, it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness."

Jesus wanted to be baptized. He did not need baptism because he was sinless and perfect. He wanted baptism to fulfill all righteousness, to do everything right. He wants us to know with 100% certainty that he did the job he was asked to do and he did it right, so we can be sure of our forgiveness and peace with our God.

Jesus was praying as he entered into the water to be baptized. Jesus constantly prayed to his heavenly Father for help to carry out the work that had been given him to do. Way back in the Psalms we hear Jesus the Christ speak to his heavenly Father about his eagerness to carry out what his heavenly Father wanted him to do. "Then I said, 'Here I am, I have come- it is written about me in the scroll. I desire to do your will, O my God.'"

There is no doubt Jesus is the one to do the job that we could not do. The Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. Great leaders of the Old Testament such as King David were anointed with oil. Jesus is anointed by the Holy Spirit. Later John the Baptist would tell people he knew Jesus was the Son of God because he saw the Holy Spirit descend on him in the form a dove. How many times this past year has the Holy Spirit directed your eyes to Jesus and the work he completed for you to give you a peace this world cannot give? How many times will this wonderful Comforter who teaches you everything also bring everything to your memory.

If there is even the least bit of doubt in your mind that Jesus has done everything perfect

for you in place of all the times you have failed, then listen carefully to what the heavenly Father says of his Son. "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased." Here is Jesus stepping into the waters of the Jordan River ready to live the perfect life Steve Degner and every other human being could never live. The Father in heaven is certainly not pleased with the life I lived as a child, as a teenager, as an adult, as a husband, as a father, as a pastor. There is so much that displeases our God. Here is Jesus living for me and living for you the perfect life we could not live. He gives this to us as a free gift. And when he shed his blood on the cross for the sin of the world, the Father showed he was pleased with the sacrifice Jesus by raising him to life again.

Sometimes it happens that people do a job for you and you are really pleased with results. I sneezed once and broke off a piece of my tooth. That repair has lasted for years. Jesus stepped into the waters of the Jordan River to be baptized so that you and I can stand in awe at how faithful he was at repairing our problem of sin. Now the Father who was pleased with his Son can say to you, "You are my child in whom I am well pleased." To think that God is pleased with me forever and ever." Amen.