

- PRAY
- READ Matthew 3

Theme: “Behold your King is coming to you” (Zech.9:9; Mt.21:4-5)

CHARTING THE COURSE FOR THIS EVENING:

- John the Baptizer: His Influence, The Old Testament Witness to John, John’s Witness
- John’s Baptism Versus Christian Baptism
- Is Christian baptism into the Triune Name of God? If so, then why are there instances of baptism into the “name of the Lord Jesus”? (see Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5)

Who is the greatest prophet in the Old Testament?

JOHN’S INFLUENCE

- A. Influenced Jerusalem and Judea (Mt.3:5-6; Mk.1:5; Lk.20:6)
- B. Influenced Tax Collectors and Harlots (Mt.21:32)
- C. He had his own Disciples (Jn.1:35-40)
- D. John the Baptist had followers even after the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 18:25; 19:1-7).
 1. He is mentioned throughout the book of Acts (Acts 1:5,22; 10:37; 11:16; 13:24-25; 18:25)
 2. His influence extended all the way to Ephesus in Acts 19:2-7 – the last time in the New Testament that John is mentioned.
- E. He never performed a miracle (John 10:41)

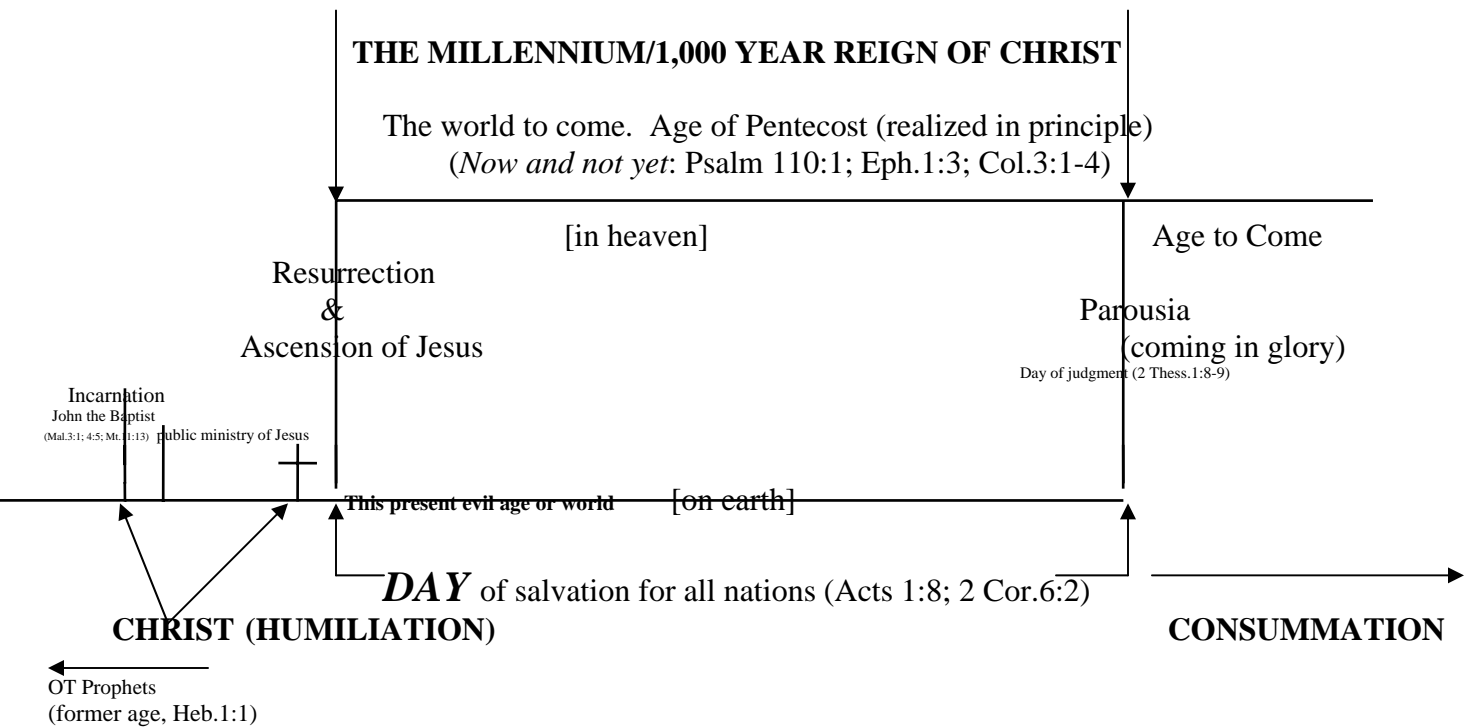
Did you know?

Today there is a sect that believes that John the Baptist was a prophet but it rejects Jesus Christ and Moses! The Mandaean are a Gnostic sect that have about 15,000 members in Southern Iraq; its present centers are Baghdad and Basra.

THE WITNESS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT TO JOHN (Isaiah 40:3; 49:5; 52:7; Malachi 3:1; 4:5-6).

THE WITNESS OF JOHN

- A. John's Role
 1. Voice Calling Out (Matthew 3:3//Isa.40:3; 57:14; 62:10-12; Lk.1:76-77; John 1:23)
 2. Baptize (Matthew 3:6; Ex.19:7-17; Isa.40:9; Jn.2:1,11)
 3. Friend of the Bridegroom (Jn.3:29-30)
 4. Witness to the Light (John 1:7-8)
 5. The “Second Coming of Elijah” (**Malachi 4:5//Matthew 11:14; 17:10-13**)
 6. John stood on the threshold of *the Day*.



What was unique about John the Baptist?

B. Negative Testimony Concerning Himself (John 1:19-28; Acts 13:25)

1. I am not the Christ (Lk.3:15-17; Jn.1:20; 3:28-29)
2. Not Elijah (Mt.17:10-13; Mk.9:13; John 1:21)
3. Not the Prophet (John 1:21 with Dt.18:15,18)
4. Unworthy (Mt.3:11; Mk.1:7; John 1:27; Acts 13:25)

C. Positive Testimony Concerning Jesus (vv.27,29-34)

1. Glory of Jesus (John 1:27)
2. Lamb of God (v.29; 19:36; Acts 8:32; Ex.12; Isa.53; 1Pt.1:18-19)
3. Pre-existence (vv.15,30)
4. Descent of the Spirit (John 1:32-33)
5. *Who does John the baptizer call "the baptizer"?* (Matthew 3:11)

If John's baptism was for repentance of sin and Jesus was sinless, then why was Jesus baptized? (Matthew 3:15)

Was baptism something that John the Baptist made up?

Where was John the Baptist baptizing? (Matthew 3:6)

What other events in the Old Testament happened in the Jordan? (Deuteronomy 3:27; **Joshua 1:1-2; 3:11-17; 4:22; 2 Kings 2:6-8; Psalm 114**)

Where else did people have to wash in the Old Testament?

JOHN'S BAPTISM VERSUS "CHRISTIAN" BAPTISM

- A. At the time of the Protestant Reformation there was a debate about whether John's baptism was equivalent with Christian baptism.
1. The Council of Trent decided, "If any one should say that the baptism of John had the same effect with the baptism of Christ; let him be anathema."
 - a. The Council of Trent which was a Roman Catholic Council called by Pope Paul III in 1545.
 - b. Trent marked the birth of the modern Catholic Church and its agenda was set for the next 400 years as opposing Protestantism (this era is called post-Trentine).
 - c. With Vatican II, many things in Romanism have changed. Catholicism is no longer "anti-Protestant" in its mission. It has a different agenda now – a more inclusive program which explains why many Protestant denominations are making amends with Rome.
 2. Evangelicals and Catholics Together (ECT).
 - a. The goal of ECT appeared laudatory – the desire for a common alliance between Roman Catholics and Protestants against abortion, pornography, and the general decline in moral values.
 - b. The problem with ECT and Roman Catholicism is that it contains another Gospel. The issue boils down to this: "How can a sinner be just before God" OR "What must I do to become a Christian." Roman Catholics always add works. Protestants have always used the Latin phrase "sola".
 - c. The Council of Trent declared, "If anyone says that the sinner is justified by faith alone ... let him be anathema.... If anyone says that the good works of the one justified are in such manner the gifts of God that they are not also the good merits of him justified ... let him be anathema."
 - d. John Calvin was the first to write against the decisions of the Council of Trent. Calvin said that "The proclamation of the Council is entitled to no more weight than the cry of an auctioneer" (quoted in Schaff, History of the Christian Church p.601).

The NT word *loutron* is translated "washing." It is the same as the LXX [Septuagint] word for "lavers" and is used metaphorically in relation to baptism (Titus 3:5; Eph 5:26) (Carol Meyers, "Laver" in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*).

Q.33 (cf. Q.70 of the L.C.)
What is justification?
Justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein he pardoneth all our sins, (Rom. 3:24–25, Rom. 4:6–8) and accepteth us as righteous in his sight, (2 Cor. 5:19,21) only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, (Rom. 5:17–19) and received by faith alone. (Gal. 2:16, Phil. 3:9)

WCF 11:2
Faith, thus receiving and resting on Christ and His righteousness, is the alone instrument of justification: (John 1:12, Rom. 3:28, Rom. 5:1) yet is it not alone in the person justified, but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is no dead faith, but worketh by love. (James 2:17,22,26, Gal. 5:6)

Martin Luther said, "We can not pin our hope on anything that we are, think, say or do ... nor can our satisfaction be uncertain, for it consists not of the dubious sinful works which we do, but of the sufferings and blood of the innocent Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." Elsewhere he wrote that justification by faith alone (*sola fide*) is "the article of the standing or falling church."

- B. Several Protestant Reformers, like John Calvin and Ulrich Zwingli, took the opposite view of Trent on the meaning of John's baptism.

SIMILARITIES BETWEEN JOHN'S AND CHRISTIAN BAPTISM (see Calvin's Institutes Book IV:15,vii):

- ✓ Both baptized for repentance from sins indicating a radical change of life (Mt.3:7,8; Mk.1:4; Lk.3:3; Lk.1:1-17; Jn.1:20-30).
- ✓ Both baptized for forgiveness of sins.
- ✓ Both into the name of Christ (this is derived from John 1:29).
- ✓ Both were instituted by God Himself (Mt.21:25; Jn.1:33).
- ✓ Both employed the use of water.
- ✓ There is no record of the 11 disciples being baptized again.
- ✓ "But if anyone should seek a difference between them from God's Word he will find no other difference than that John baptized in him who was to come; but the apostles, in him who had already revealed himself [Luke 3:16; Acts 19:4]" (Calvin's Institutes Book IV:15,vii).

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN JOHN AND CHRISTIAN BAPTISM (Hodge, Geerhardus Vos, Robert Dabney, Kuyper, Berkouwer, Morton Smith)

- ✓ John belonged to the Old and not to the NT dispensation (Mt.11:11). He came in the spirit and power of Elijah (Lk.1:17).
- ✓ His baptism was for repentance but not to the faith and obedience of Christ.
- ✓ His baptism was done in the Jordan, evoking images of the Old Covenant entry into the Promised Land. Christian baptism does not need to be done in the Jordan.
- ✓ His baptism did not signify ingrafting into Christ, for the old dispensation still subsisted, and those who received the rite were already in the church of that dispensation, whereas Christ's was not yet opened, and therefore could not receive formal adherents (Dabney; Topical Lectures on Scripture).
- ✓ It was not administered in the name of the Trinity. Those who were baptized by John were most likely baptized by Paul (**Acts 18:24-19:7**).
- ✓ It is not clear that John baptized people *into* the name of Christ or into the Triune Name (Matthew 28:18-20).
- ✗ That there were similarities is not to be denied. Gerhardus Vos wrote, "we shall have to say that John's baptism, together with all the OT rites, had real grace connected with it, but only the OT measure and quality of grace. What it had not was the Spirit in the specific Christian conception; for the bestowal of that, and its connection with baptism, are dependent on the Pentecostal outpouring of the Spirit" (*Biblical Theology* p.317).

Is Christian baptism into the triune Name of God; and if so, why are there instances of baptism into the "name of the Lord Jesus"? (see Acts 2:38 [Trinity in vv.38-39]; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5)

FOR NEXT WEEK: READ MATTHEW 3

What was John's opinion about the Pharisees and Sadducees? (v.7)

Do you find it puzzling that many of them (Mt.3:7) went to the Jordan River to be baptized?

What other famous person in the NT was a Pharisee?