

Weaving the Word

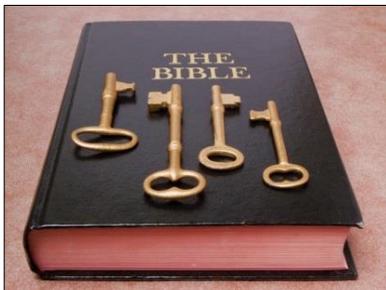
The Baptism of Jesus

Part 3 – November 10, 2013

Isn't it cool to see the verses you know, come to life? That's why the enemy works overtime to keep us out of God's Word. **The enemy doesn't want us to see the reality of Jesus.**



And we usually comply. What was Jesus really like? Did He prefer crowds-and-parties or quiet-places? Social events or solitude? Decide what you think? Now, does it match your *own* preferences? **We tend to see Jesus in our own image, and on our own terms.** Introverts picture an introvert; extroverts an extrovert. But, **when Jesus becomes an extension of me, there's a problem: an unrealistic Jesus can't contradict me, won't challenge me, and is completely powerless to transform me.**



That's why God gave us **four gospels**: each portrays Jesus from a **different perspective**, to a **different audience**, for a **different purpose**, and thus, **safeguards reality from our perception.**

Unless we don't read 'em. Then **you can end up with your faith in an idol with the right name, wrong face, and no power.** So, what's ultimate reality look like ... if it doesn't look like me? Well, let's start with the day it was baptized ...

Luke 3:21a Now when all the people were baptized, Jesus was also baptized,

Mark 1:9a In those days Jesus came **from Nazareth in Galilee**

Mat 3:13-15 Then Jesus arrived from Galilee **at the Jordan** coming to John, to be baptized by him. But John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I have need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?" But Jesus answering said to him, "Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he permitted Him.

Jesus' ministry begins with a misperception so strongly held by the man God sent to prepare the way that he gets *in the way!* But, why would John interfere? Well ...



[John came] preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. – Mark 1:4b NIV

But, wasn't Jesus sinless? So, is He *just pretending* He needs to repent? That'd be a lie. Is He being baptized for the forgiveness of the sin of pretending He needs to be baptized for sin? No. **Jesus came to die on behalf of all mankind to atone for sin. And so, He begins His journey by *repenting on behalf of all mankind.***

When Jesus stepped into the Jordan, He stepped into our shoes. Why do you suppose only Matthew documents this cousinly quarrel? He wrote to the Jews. So, do you suppose it's particularly relevant to the Jews? If so, you suppose correctly!

Why did Jesus say, "in this way it is fitting for us **[instead of "Me"]** to fulfill all righteousness." What's being fulfilled; and why's it require *both*? The Jews were well aware of Malachi's prophesy:

"See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes." – Malachi 4:5 NIV

Who was it dreadful for? The Lord! But, nobody understood ... except *Hewho!* Jesus later said ...

"For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come. He who has ears, let him hear." – Matthew 11:13-15 NIV (also Mat 17:12-13)

But, when the Jews sent priests and Levites to John ...

They asked him, "Then who are you? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." – John 1:21a NIV

Hmm, he's not Elijah *reincarnated*, but a *type* of Elijah. What's the connection? What did Elijah do that serves as a foreshadow, and finds its fulfillment in Jesus *and* John at His baptism?



Mount Carmel (i.e. God's vineyard)

The angel, Gabriel, provides a great clue to John's father ...

"And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of ... the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous ..." – Luke 1:17 NIV

Did Elijah turn the hearts of the disobedient to righteousness? Yes! He did! When? How? Go to Mount Carmel, where He challenged 850 false prophets (1 Kings 18:19) to an *Offering Off* ...

... he built an altar in the name of the Lord, and he dug a trench around it ... Then he said to them, "Fill four large jars with water and pour it on the offering and on the wood. **[That's once]** Do it again," he said, and they did it again. **[That's twice]** "Do it a third time," he ordered, and they did it the third time. The water ran down around the altar ... "Answer me, O Lord, answer me, so these people will know that you, O Lord, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again." Then the fire of the Lord fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil, and also licked up the water in the trench. When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, "The Lord—he is God!" – 1 Kings 18:32-39a NIV

And John, as a *type* of Elijah, came declaring ...

"I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire." – Matthew 3:11 NIV

Now, Luke had said, “When all the people were baptized, Jesus was also baptized.” [That’s once]

Mark 1:9b and was baptized by John in the Jordan. [That’s twice]

Mat 3:16a After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; [Third time!]

Mark 1:10a Immediately coming up out of the water,

Luke 3:21b and *while He was praying*, heaven was opened,

Mark 1:10b *He saw the heavens opening*, and

Mat 3:16b and behold, the heavens *were opened*, and *he saw the Spirit of God*

Luke 3:22a and [instead of a raging blaze of wrath fired down from heaven lighting even the rock] the Holy Spirit *descended upon Him*

Mark 1:10c the Spirit *like a dove* descending upon Him; and

Mat 3:16c descending as a dove *and lighting on Him*,

Luke 3:22b *in bodily form like a dove*, [not a vision, an actual bird in bodily form, fluttering down to gently rest on Jesus, the Rock, the Sacrifice, destined to be consumed by His own righteous wrath on our behalf] and a voice came out of heaven,

Mark 1:11a a voice came out of *the heavens*:

Mat 3:17 and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, “*This* is My beloved Son, in *whom* I am well-pleased.”

Mark 1:11b “*You* are My beloved Son, in *You* I am well-pleased.”

Luke 3:22c “*You* are My beloved Son, in *You* I am well-pleased.”

Know why Matthew says, “This is my son” instead of “You are”? It’s a Jewish teaching style. Like hearing a dad tell his son, “**I love you,**” and someone asks what he said, and you say, “**He said he loves him.**” Minor variations like this are claimed to be contradictions by critics of Christ. Yet, un-identical doesn’t mean contradictory.



The enemy would keep us fretting over trivial inconsistencies, and missing the beautiful reality of the garden for the trees. I’d much rather tackle the meaty questions, like: Where’d that dove come from? Oh, *Hewho!* In Genesis, when the Spirit hovers, the Hebrew verb means to flutter like a bird. The rabbis, in the Targums,¹ paraphrase the passage like this ...



... darkness was on the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God fluttered above the face of the waters like a dove, and God spoke: “Let there be light.” – Genesis 1:2b-3

At creation, there’s Creator, Spirit, and Word. Now, when the Word is baptized, heaven opens, the waters part, the Spirit lands, and God speaks; **it’s a bittersweet reunion in a dark and dying world.**

¹ An Aramaic translation (and elaboration) of Hebrew Scripture, written later, but well known in Mark’s time

The Son coming up, the dove touching down, and a loving Father bestowing affection; and each, in that moment, as in all moments, in all eternity, joyfully glorifies the other. *That's* reality. And it's a Trinity: one God in three persons.

[Before His arrest, Jesus prayed] "I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began." – John 17:4-5 NIV

This isn't poetry; **it's a glimpse at the interior of the Trinity, the heart, the essence, and the meaning of reality.** C.S. Lewis depicts it as *a dance*,² each orbiting, exalting, and adoring the other with unreserved, unspoiled, unconditional love.



When someone captures our imagination and overwhelms our senses, we're joyfully compelled to adore them, desiring nothing more than to serve them. But **then, because of sin, our eyes turn in.** And, **we begin to serve them for the benefits ... which isn't actually serving *or* adoring *or* glorifying.**

It's serving myself *through* someone else, manipulating them into orbiting *me*. That's the day-to-day reality for so many.

But hey, **if there's no God, just natural selection, then life is just a chemical reaction.** That's *that* reality. And, **if God *isn't* a Trinity, and has to get love outside of Himself, then life is about serving *His* needs.** That's *that* reality.

But, **the reality of a loving Trinity is to give love in ever greater measure.** And, ***ultimate reality*, and our deepest need, is the exponential joy of dancing more and more like Him and with Him.**

And, right from His baptism, Jesus was bringing us in.

² C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan, 1977), p. 151