

Introduction: God is perfectly righteous in that He always does what is right, meaning that when His Son comes to earth fully God and fully Man, both aspects of His person are perfectly righteous. Jesus Christ always did, always does, and will always do what is right. *** In our passage this morning, John the Baptist came with a command and a promise for all Judea. The command was to turn fully to God, that is repent; and, the promise was that the Kingdom of Heaven was near. People showed their repentance in confessing their sins and bringing forth good fruit. *** But John knew this was not enough. As a prophet he foretold of the one who is mightier than him who would baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire to separate the wheat from the chaff. *** Then Jesus comes to be baptized by John. John realizes Jesus has no need of repentance because He is sinless. John knows he needs to be baptized by Jesus. But Jesus says when He is baptized by John this will fulfill all righteousness. We will develop this later, but for now, we can say that: **Baptism confirms inherited righteousness.** *** The other two persons of the Trinity affirm Jesus' baptism: both the Holy Spirit bodily (as a dove) and the Father in word (beloved Son, well-pleased). *** All this affirms the first Messianic Psalm which says Yahweh's Son will inherit all the nations of the earth. *** Let's now look closer at John's prophetic ministry, and how Jesus fulfills all righteousness.

I. John came bringing a baptism of repentance, all were coming to be baptized; he commanded them to make beautiful fruit; one is coming to baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire. (Matthew 3:1-12)

A. In those days, John the Baptist saying, 'Repent, the Kingdom has come near'; he is the one having been spoken through Isaiah, make straight the way of the Lord; he dressed simply and ate insects. (Verses 1-4)

1. In those days John the Baptist is coming near, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, 'Repent, for has come near the Kingdom of Heaven'. (Verses 1-2)

Repent: John is commanding people to turn from a self-centered mindset in order to center their lives on God.

They need to be delivered from the dominion of darkness into the Kingdom of God's beloved Son (*Colossians 1:13*).

Kingdom near: The reason is the long awaited Kingdom of Heaven is near (in the person of the King).

2. For this one is the one having been spoken through Isaiah the prophet, saying, 'Voice is crying in the wilderness, "Make ready the way of The Lord, make straight His pathways".' (Verse 3)

Isaiah: This word is from the opening of the second (Messianic) section of his prophecy (*Isaiah 40:3*).

Wilderness: The wilderness of Judea is rocky and dry. There was no vegetation because the annual rainfall is less than ten inches.

Straight paths: The way of The Lord is straight, or upright. Those who take it, trust in The Lord wholeheartedly, realize their limited understanding, and know Him in all they do (*Proverbs 3:5-6*).

3. John himself was having a garment of camel's hairs and a leather belt around his waist and the food he was eating was locusts and wild honey. (Verses 4)

Clothes: Elijah dressed the same way (*2 Kings 1:8*, RSV). This makes him the fulfillment of Malachi's prophecy (*4:5*), which was later confirmed by Jesus (*Matthew 11:11-14*).

Food: Locusts are kosher (*Leviticus 11:22*). In Joel, locusts symbolize judgment (*2:12-27*); but then God pours out His Spirit for salvation (*2:28-32*). So his diet represents both judgment and salvation.

B. All were going to him, confessing sins and being baptized in the Jordan River; when he saw religious rulers, he commanded them to bring forth fruit worthy of repentance or be cut down. (Verses 5-10)

1. Then Jerusalem was going out to him, and all Judea, and all the region of the Jordan; and, they were being baptized in the Jordan River by him, confessing their sins. (Verses 5-6)

All: Here all means as a whole, not necessarily each and every one.

Confessing sins: Notice that, in addition to turning from themselves to God, those being baptized were confessing their sins.

2. Having seen many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for his baptism, he said to them, 'You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Bring forth fruit worthy of repentance'. (Verses 7-8)

Coming wrath: The coming wrath is the judgment of God on those who refuse to repent, confess their sins and receive God's salvation by grace through faith in Him.

Repentance fruit: Jesus talked much about bearing fruit (especially *John 15*), and the fruit of the Spirit is love (*Galatians 5*). So the worthy fruit is sharing of God's steadfast, merciful and faithful love.

3. Do not think to say in yourselves, 'We are having a father: Abraham', because I am telling you that God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. (Verse 9)

Abraham father: Abraham is the father of all the Israelites (*1 Chronicles 1:34*) and the father of all the faithful (*Romans 4:1-16*).

God's ability: God is able to work in the stoniest heart to bring about saving faith in Jesus The Savior.

4. But now, the axe is being laid to the root of the trees; every tree not bringing forth good and beautiful fruit is being cut down and is being thrown into fire. (Verse 10)

Fire: Here, fire is being used as a metaphor for judgment on those who do not produce good fruit.

C. I baptize in water for repentance; the one after me is mightier and will baptize in the Holy Spirit and fire, and will gather wheat to the barn and will burn the chaff. (Verses 11-12)

1. I indeed am baptizing you all in water to repentance; but, the one who is coming after me is mightier than me and I am not fit to carry his sandals; he will baptize you all in Holy Spirit and fire. (Verse 11)

Water: The water cleanses those who have turned from their ways to God's ways in repentance.

Mightier one: The mightier one he is referring to is Jesus The Savior, who will soon come to him.

Holy Spirit: The Holy Spirit is a blessing to those who repent as Abraham's children (*verse 9*), but the fire is judgment on those not repenting and producing good and beautiful fruit (*verse 10*).

2. His winnowing fork is in his hand and he will clean out his threshing floor; and will gather the wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire. (*Verse 12*)

Threshing floor: A threshing floor is elevated ground that catches wind. Chaff is lighter than wheat.

The farmer tossed both in the air: the chaff blew away and the wheat fell back to the ground.

Chaff: Here, the chaff will be collected and burned in a fire that will never go out.

II. Jesus is baptized by John telling him, it is fitting to fulfill righteousness; as He came up the Spirit descends and Father expresses delight in Him, His Son who will possess the earth. (*Matthew 3:13-17; Psalm 2:7-8*)

- A. Then Jesus comes to be baptized by John, who objects; but, Jesus says, it is fitting to fulfill all righteousness. (*Verses 13-15*)

1. Then Jesus is coming near from Galilee to the Jordan to John to be baptized by him. (*Verse 13*)

Purpose: Jesus came on a three day journey to be baptized in the Jordan by John.

2. But John was trying to prevent Him saying, 'I am having need to be baptized by You and You are coming to me?' But, He answered and said to him, 'Permit it now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness'; then, he permitted Him. (*Verses 14-15*)

Exchange: John fully understands who Jesus is and realizes Jesus should baptize him. But Jesus says it is right for both of them if John baptizes Him. And, John relents.

Fulfill righteousness: John's baptism was two-fold: to confirm repentance and to look forward to the end-of-time Kingdom of Heaven (*verse 2*). Jesus knows He is The King of that Kingdom and by obeying His Father He will establish His Kingdom. So, His baptism is an affirmation that He is determined to complete His task to bring in this Kingdom. He is willing to be the Suffering Servant who will justify many by His death and resurrection (*Isaiah 53:11*). And, people can have His righteousness if they die to their sins with Him (*1 Peter 2:24-25*). This confirms Jesus is the 'Righteous Branch (*netzer*)' spoken of by Jeremiah (*23:5; 33:15; Matthew 2:23*).

The death of God's Son qualifies Him to inherit as The Son of Man.

Us: When we turn to God in Jesus, confessing our sins and asking forgiveness because of what Jesus did for us, we inherit His righteousness based on His death for us.

Baptism confirms inherited righteousness

- B. As Jesus comes out of the water, the heavens open and the Spirit descends on Him as a dove, and a voice from heaven says: 'My beloved well-pleasing Son'. (*Verses 16-17*)

1. After being baptized, Jesus immediately went up from the water and He saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and coming upon Him. (*Verse 16*)

Immediately: God in heaven immediately reacts to Jesus' baptism to fulfill all righteousness.

Spirit of God: God's Spirit descends upon Him in the form of a dove, confirming that God's Son has inherited His righteousness.

Baptism confirms inherited righteousness

2. Behold! A voice out of the heavens saying, 'This is My beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased'. (*Verse 17*)

Beloved Son: So the Trinity is present. God's Son Jesus goes under the water of baptism. The Spirit of God immediately descends upon Him visibly as a dove. And Father God speaks from heaven.

Well-Pleased: Father God takes great pleasure in His chosen Son.

Us: We please Father God as we follow his Son and bear beautiful fruit in Him by grace through faith.

- C. Yahweh said to Me, 'Thou are My son, ask and I will give the nations as Thine inheritance'. (*Psalm 2:7-8*)

Background: The beginning of this first Messianic Psalm describes what is happening on earth and then gives God's perspective. First the rulers of the nations are in rebellion against Yahweh and His Anointed (Messiah). Adonai in heaven mockingly laughs and holds them in derision; He will speak to them in His wrath and terrify them in His hot anger as He anoints His King on His holy mountain.

1. I will declare the decree of Yahweh who said to Me: 'Thou are My Son, today I have begotten Thee'. (*Verse 7*)

My Son: In the sermon Paul preached with Barnabas in Antioch in the center of present day Turkey, he said Jesus' resurrection fulfilled this part of *Psalm 2* (*Acts 13:33, in context of verses 16-41*).

2. Ask of Me and I will give the nations Thy inheritance, and Thy possession: the ends of the earth. (*Verse 8*)

Inheritance: So, the Son of Yahweh (Jesus Christ) will inherit the nations to the ends of the earth.

The Son inherits the world from The Father

Conclusion: John the Baptist fulfills Isaiah's prophecy as the one getting the way of the Lord ready by baptizing all Judea in the Jordan River as they repent and confess their sins. He says the one after him, who is mightier, will baptize in the Holy Spirit and fire to separate the wheat from the chaff. Finally, over his objections, John baptizes Jesus to fulfill all righteousness, the Spirit of God descends on Him as a dove and God calls Him His beloved, well-pleasing Son. And, this righteous one will inherit the nations of the world.

Baptism confirms inherited righteousness