

Question: "If the New Testament teaches that baptism is for the remission of sins, then why was Jesus, the sinless Son of God (1Pet 2:22), baptized?"

Of all the events in Jesus' life, one stands out as the finest example of His humble obedience to His Father in Heaven. Perhaps you are thinking about the crucifixion as the preeminent act of obedience, but without His first being baptized, His crucifixion would be of no effect.

Matthew gives the fullest account of the baptism of Jesus: "Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. And John tried to prevent Him, saying, 'I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?' But Jesus answered and said to him, 'Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.' Then he allowed Him. Then Jesus, when He had been baptized, came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased'" (Mt 3:13-17).

At the age of thirty, Jesus left His home in Nazareth and traveled 60 to 70 miles to be baptized of John (Mk 1:9-11; Lk 3:21-23). This may be considered as the first leg of His journey to the cross. The writer of Hebrews reveals to us the thoughts upon His mind at that time. "Then I said, 'Behold, I have come – in the volume of the book it is written of Me – to do Your will, O God'" (He 10:5-7; Psa 40:6-8). To begin with, all that Jesus did was by the will of God, and thus **it was God's will that Jesus be baptized.**

Also, Jesus had another reason for His baptism. Notice that when Jesus arrived at the Jordan River, He explained to John His desire to be immersed. John was bewildered by the request and tried to prevent Jesus by saying, "I have need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me" (Mt 3:14)? Why did John react to Jesus' request in this way?

1. John's baptism was a baptism of repentance commanded "from heaven" to men (Mt 21:23-27), and Jesus came "from heaven" (Jn 3:31; 6:38). Therefore, Jesus should not have been subject to the command.
2. John's baptism presented the "counsel of God" (Lk 7:29-30), and Jesus is the Word of God (Jn 1:1). Therefore, Jesus, being the giver and not the receiver of counsel, should not have been subject to the command.
3. John's baptism was "unto repentance...for the remission of sins" (Mt 3:1-11; Mk 1:4; Lk 3:3), and Jesus was the sinless "Lamb of God" (Jn 1:29). Therefore, He needed no repentance and should not have been subject to the command.

For these reasons, John could not understand the request of Jesus for baptism. However, Jesus explained His reason in this way, "Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us **to fulfill all righteousness**" (Mt 3:15).

The baptism of Jesus simply illustrated His resolve to obey His Father in All things. He did not request baptism because He had sinned, but because He wanted to remain sinless before His Father. "I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me...And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him" (Jn 5:30; 8:29).

All responsible human beings, with the exception of Jesus, have sinned against God and stand in need of His forgiveness. For us, baptism is not only God's righteous will, but when we truly repent and die to this world, baptism is the point at which we are "set free from sin" (Ro 6:17-18).

God thundered His approval of His Son's action when He declared, "This is My beloved Son, IN WHOM I AM WELL PLEASED!" God will also be "well pleased" with you, when you follow in the footsteps of His Son. Study your Bible and search the Truth. Write or call us today for a free Bible correspondence course by mail. Thanks for reading!