

From the **PASTOR'S DESK**

Baptizing Jesus

Why does John the Baptist baptize Jesus?

John had done a great job preparing the people for the coming of Jesus. At that time, Jerusalem, all Judea, and the whole region around the Jordan were making their way to him and were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, as they acknowledged their sins. In the harsh desert, John had made the people ready for what would be a life-changing encounter with Jesus.

John was so successful that he had to deflect celebrity status away from himself. The one who is coming after me is mightier than I. I am not worthy to carry his sandals. John never suspected that Jesus would join the crowd and ask to be baptized by him. John protested I need to be baptized by you, and yet you are coming to me. In His reply, Jesus indicates that it would be wrong for Him to stand as a distant observer to what was obviously a God-inspired event.

John went ahead in baptizing Jesus. During this dramatic occurrence, the Baptist was given a glimpse of what it meant for the Son of God to become the Son of Mary – a member of the human family, a child of Adam. As a result of this Baptism, ordinary people would recognize that whatever Jesus had done for them or others, whatever He had said to them in His teachings or simple conversations, He was one of them.

Jesus made it clear to His disciples that the Son of Man came to serve not to be served. When insisting that John should baptize Him, Jesus melted Himself into the crowd. Being with them in their own world, He would raise them up; meet them in their despair; accompany them in their pain; accept them in their shame and bring them forgiveness.

Jesus insisted that John should treat Him in the same way he was treating repentant sinners. John's privilege was to set the style and tone Jesus would bring to His mission and ministry. He would find those who were lost and cure those who were sick.

In submitting to Baptism, Jesus fulfilled the roles identified centuries before by the prophet, Isaiah. He would become a man of sorrows, familiar with suffering. He would bear our sorrows, be wounded for our rebellions, be crushed by our guilt. And we would be healed by his bruises.

In baptizing Jesus, John publicly enacts the mystery of the Incarnation.

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