

John's Baptism

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John's Baptism and the Baptism of Jesus on earth can be viewed as "Kingdom baptism" as opposed to "Christian Baptism". Kingdom baptism is what disconnected the faithful Jews from the guilt of apostate Israel, while Christian baptism bring us into the Christian testimony. The Jewish remnant testimony was waiting for the King to come, and the Kingdom to be established on the earth. The Christian testimony is looking for the Kingdom as well, but first and foremost for the rapture!

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["John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins."](#) Mark 1:4

["Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus."](#) Acts 19:4

For the Remission of Sins. John's ministry consisted primarily of baptizing and pointing to the coming Christ. His baptism was ["of repentance for the remission of sins."](#) The Spirit of God was doing a work in Israel, preparing a remnant who would receive the Lord when He came. John was raised up to bear witness to Christ, and ["to turn the hearts of the people to the Lord again."](#) In this case the ordinance of Baptism was an outward sign of protestation against the moral state of Israel, the desire to turn from sins, and wait with the faithful remnant for the coming King. John's baptism brought the faithful Jews formally into the Faithful Remnant, as Christian baptism brings us into the House of God. The remission of sins referred to is a [governmental forgiveness](#) of sins, rather than an [eternal forgiveness](#). Only the blood of Christ could secure eternal forgiveness for Israel (or the Christian); but if the nation of Israel had outwardly repented from their sins by kingdom baptism, *they could have avoided the impending governmental judgment of God*, which fell in 70 A.D. The physical event of submersion could never give eternal remission of sins, but *the act of faith associated with it did*. The same is true in Christian baptism.

Separation from Something. The faithful remnant were baptized of John to separate them

from apostate Judaism, which was about to come under judgment, and put them in a place of looking forward to the coming Christ. They were not saved when they came to John. They said, "We have Abraham to our father" but John called them "a generation of vipers". John explains "the axe is laid to the root of the tree." What they needed to be saved was to have that old connection severed. By being baptized, they separated themselves from that old position, and took a new one.

Incorporation into a New Thing. Jesus came to John at Jordan to be baptized because He would take His place with the faithful remnant. It was NOT because He needed remission of sins. In fact, God the Father made that point very clear, when the Holy Ghost descended in the form of a dove upon Him, and Jesus was "justified in the Spirit" by the Father whose voice was heard from Heaven, "this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." But Jesus would willingly take a place among the faithful Jews that had already been gathered by John's ministry.

Baptism is in View of Something Ahead. John baptized *unto* the remission of sins; that is, in view of *something ahead*. Observe Luke 3:10-14. There are three groups, (1) the people, (2) the publicans, and (3) the soldiers. All three groups ask John what behavior was becoming of them NOW that they were baptized. "And the crowds asked him saying, What should we do then?" (Luke 3:10). John replies, telling them what to do going forward:

1. To the people: "He that has two body-coats, let him give to him that has none; and he that has food, let him do likewise" (v.11).
2. To the tax-gatherers: "Take no more money than what is appointed to you" (vv.12-13).
3. To the soldiers: "Oppress no one, nor accuse falsely, and be satisfied with your pay" (v.14).

It was not that John was saying "You're a candidate for baptism because you have *already* turned your life around". Instead he was saying, "Now that you have separated yourselves from this evil world, *henceforth* this is how you are going to live your life differently".

Why is this important? Whether it is John's baptism or Christian baptism, it is always looking forward to new ground, not looking backwards on conversion. Some teach that it is wrong to be baptized until you have turned your life around. Instead, a person should be baptized the moment they see this wicked world for what it is, and want to separate themselves from it, to Christ.

See also Matthew 3:6-16, Matthew 21:25, Mark 1:4-9, Mark 11:30, Luke 3:3-12, 21, Luke 7:29-30, Luke 20:4, John 1:25-33, John 3:23, Acts 10:37, Acts 13:24, Acts 18:25, Acts 19:3-4.

Jesus as a Baptizer on Earth

“After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized.” John 3:22

“And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him.” John 3:26

“When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, (Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,)...” John 4:1-2

It is evident that the Lord baptized with water while on earth, although He did it through the instrumentality of His disciples. At some point the Lord's ministry bypassed John's, and this John knew would happen, because of the relative greatness of the Lord's Person. “**He must increase but I must decrease.**” This baptism was of a similar character to John's - "unto repentance" - because Christian baptism is "unto His death".

Jesus refrained from baptizing personally while on earth (John 4:2).

There are a number of possible reasons why the Lord did not baptise personally. First, by refraining from baptizing Himself, the Lord headed off any occasion for the Pharisees to stir up rivalry between His disciples and John's. Secondly, the disciples viewed the Lord (and baptized to Him) as the *Messiah* of Israel; but Jesus knew from the beginning that He must suffer and die as the *Son of man* (broader title). True Christian baptism would be after the ascension, and "unto" His death and resurrection (Rom. 6:3-4; Col. 2:12). This could be another reason why the Lord refrained from baptizing personally. Thirdly, and admittedly less likely, it could be that Jesus wanted to avoid a hierarchy of those who were baptized. It would be natural for those who were baptized by Jesus personally to think more highly of themselves than those baptized by Peter, for example. Baptism is about the person we are baptized to, not about the actual baptizer.

Christian Ground vs. Jewish Remnant Ground

A different ground. Those who were baptized with John's baptism later had to be re-baptized with Christian baptism. This is because John's baptism disconnected them with the apostate nation, but did not associate them with Christ. Apollos is an example of one who had not been brought onto Christian ground. He needed to be taught the way of the Lord more fully.

"And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, [and] mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus. 25 This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John." Acts 18:24-25

A different testimony. John's baptism formed a testimony of those who decried the condition of Israel, and took their place waiting for the King. The Lord came to Israel as their Messiah, and did not alter that basic message until He was rejected. After the cross He told His apostles to go forth into all the earth with Christian baptism (Matt. 28). Ten days later, the Holy Ghost was sent down and the Assembly of God was formed. It is this public testimony into which Christian Baptism places us.

References:

Matt. 3:6-16, Matt. 21:25, Mark 1:4-9, Mark 11:30, Luke 3:3-12, 21, Luke 7:29-30, Luke 20:4, John 1:25-33, John 3:23, Acts 10:37, Acts 13:24, Acts 18:25, Acts 19:3-4.