

Behold, The Lamb of God

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“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.” (John 1:29)

I want to look at the ministry of John the Baptist, but I want to do so as it fits into God’s purpose in unfolding Jesus Christ. What we are going to discover in this study is that John the Baptist was the last prophet of the Old Covenant. I don’t know if many of us have realized that -- but he was -- John the Baptist was the very last prophet of the Old Covenant or Old Testament. And because he was, his ministry was actually the full representation of God’s purpose in that Old Covenant. If you take the Old Covenant and gather it altogether, you could say it was all poured into John the Baptist -- into his ministry in paving the way for the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are going to look at that -- we are going to look at that purpose in John’s ministry. But more importantly, we are also going to see how God used John to point to Jesus Christ, Who was the absolute fullness of God’s purpose for all of humanity.

The Purpose of the Ministry of John the Baptist

In the Gospel of John, of course, there are many things said about John the Baptist in the early chapters. But what I want to do, to begin with, in chapter 1, is to read two verses which I think go hand in hand in establishing the purpose which God had in the ministry of John the Baptist.

In verse 23, we have John’s answer to the Pharisees -- who were pressing him for his identity. They really wanted to know whether he was the Messiah. John absolutely and clearly said, “I am not.” Being further pressed for his identity, he quoted the prophecy of Isaiah, and he said in verse 23, “You want to know who I am, I am not the Messiah. But, “I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness; make straight the way of

the Lord.” Again, that is out of Isaiah. So John is saying, “You want to know who I am? I am the one who was prophesied in Isaiah: The voice of one crying in the wilderness, make straight the way of the Lord.”

So John, right there tells us who he is, and what is the purpose of his ministry: He is the voice of one crying in the wilderness of ignorance, the wilderness of sin, the wilderness of this dead creation. In doing so, he is preparing the way of the Lord.

A Representation of the Old Covenant

Now, I said earlier that John was the last prophet of the Old Covenant, and his ministry was really the full representation of that Covenant -- all wrapped up in one ministry. This is simply how important John the Baptist is. When you read John 1:23 you can actually see how this is the case. For even though John is saying that he is that one prophesied in Isaiah, I think it is absolutely correct to likewise say that the Old Covenant -- or the Old Testament -- was also like a voice crying in the wilderness.

During the age of the Old Covenant, man was dead in sin. There was no knowledge of God in the world at all at the time that God called Abraham to Himself -- which is where the Old Covenant began. (Through this Old Covenant, God's voice began to cry out in this wilderness of darkness.)

God began to speak to Abraham and to work His purpose out through him. God began to give what would eventually become His written Word. He began to do what would eventually be formed into the Old Covenant in Israel. Abraham birthed Isaac, Isaac birthed Jacob, and Jacob birthed twelve, and thus began the nation of Israel. So God birthed a nation, to whom He gave His Word, and with whom He established more officially His covenant. Israel was, in itself, as a voice crying in the wilderness.

God intended Israel, for example, to be a light to the nations. God intended for Israel to be an extension of His voice so that the nations of the world would have a witness. They became that for a time -- even though later they failed.

So not only is John a voice crying in the wilderness, making straight the way of the Lord, but so was the Old Testament -- the Old Covenant which God established with Israel -- inclusive of all the ordinances and the Law. And so was what finally became the written Word.

Thus, what we see is that John and his ministry represented the fullness of what God intended to accomplish in that Old Covenant. We are going to get to that purpose which God intended to accomplish was here in just a little bit. But John 1:23 is one statement we find of, "a voice crying in the wilderness." This is a description which tells us the purpose, not only of John, but also the Old Covenant which he represented.

Behold, The Lamb of God

The next statement of John is from where I got the title for today's message -- which is John 1:29. John states there, as he sees Jesus coming toward him; as he was baptizing people in the Jordan:

Behold the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world.

In this one event, not only in the words that John spoke, but in his pointing out Jesus as, "the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world" -- in this one event; in this one verse, we find a summary of the purpose Old Covenant -- and by extension -- the purpose of the ministry John the Baptist in representing the Old Covenant. If you gather up the entirety of the Old Covenant; if you look into it with all the types and

shadows of Jesus Christ; with all of the ordinances and sacrifices, what you see again and again thoroughly expressed all the way through, is a revelation of Jesus Christ. You also see a revelation of Jesus in His redemptive work as the Lamb of God. The Old Covenant was that -- a voice crying in the wilderness to make straight the paths of the Lord -- and having done that, it was presenting, howbeit in type and shadow, that Lord, that LAMB OF GOD.

If you look into the Old Covenant; the Old Testament; the teaching of the law, Jesus Christ is there everywhere -- most especially in His redemptive work as the Lamb of God. Jesus Christ certainly is the Passover Lamb. There is a revelation of Christ in the original Passover lamb which was slain to deliver Israel out of Egypt. There is also a revelation of Christ in the very festival of Passover -- in all of the ordinances and laws God gave as to how to keep the Passover each year. It is all about Jesus and His redemptive work as the Lamb of God.

But this revelation does not stop there. Christ is revealed in every one of the Holy Days of God: Unleavened Bread, which is at one with Passover, and Pentecost, and then the Fall Festivals of Atonement, Trumpets, the Feast of Tabernacles. It is all about Jesus. The entirety of the Tabernacle was a type and shadow of Jesus Christ. All of the animal sacrifices spoke of Christ in His atoning work. The high priest is Christ - in that office for us. Indeed the very law of God, the Ten Commandments, if you want to narrow it down to those, is a written representation in stone of the living righteous One, and His righteous life, Jesus Christ.

And so, the Old Testament carries a revelation of Jesus Christ in His redemptive work. Therefore, if you gather up that Old Covenant you will be brought to a summary. The Old Covenant is declaring to you and me: "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." The Old Covenant is pointing us to that One -- just as John pointed to Him on that day.

John the Baptist, as the last prophet of the Old Testament, is pointing out the purpose for which He came. In one sentence (John 1:29), he fulfilled; he summarized the purpose for which he came: "I have come to pave the way of the Lord -- here IS the Lord: "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." And so in one sentence, we see what the Old Covenant does -- it points us to Christ. And we see John representing that Old Covenant, saying the very words, and actually pointing to Jesus Christ.

The Purpose of the Law

There is another passage of scripture which states the purpose for which God gave the Old Covenant. It is found in Romans 3:19, which I want to read. Paul says there:

Now we know that whatever the law says, [the law in Paul's epistles is often used to refer to the Old Covenant -- and so it is here], it says to them who are under the law."

Read on -- and note the purpose for which Paul states that the law was given to fulfill:

Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to them who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped and all the world may (be exposed as) guilty before God.

What does that mean? He is saying that if there was one message that the law conveyed, here is that message: You are guilty. You are lost. You are a sinner. You have no hope in yourself. This is what the law says. And if you and I hear this and believe it, the law will absolutely shut our mouths pertaining to our own righteousness.

Note that: The law was given so that, "Every mouth may be stopped." If we hear the law, we will never again talk about your own righteousness. Now, why is that? Because the law,

or the Old Covenant, absolutely exposes you and I as dead sinners without any possibility of life or Truth -- if left to ourselves.

Sure. Paul said the law was given so that, "The whole world might become guilty before God." Of course he means that the whole world might become exposed AS guilty before God. Paul explains by saying a number of times in Romans 3 that, "through the law comes the knowledge of sin." In other words, God gave the law, to not only define what sin is, but in doing so to point it out in us -- and expose us as guilty.

So Paul is clearly stating the purpose for which God gave His law: "Whatever the law says, it says to them who are under the law" -- and whatever it does say shuts my mouth so that I never open it again with regard to my own righteousness. The law absolutely exposes me as hopeless -- and absolutely guilty before God.

Not Based on ANY Works

Now, I think many of us believe this in regard to our sin -- we know we are sinners -- but I don't know that we quite believe it as strongly about our so-called, "good works." I think we easily agree that God is not going to look at our sin if we walk with Him -- but only at Christ's atonement. But then, I think we abandon that Truth when we begin talking about our own, "good works." We think the God does pay attention to those, and base His grace upon those.

No. The fact of the matter is that the Christian life is a walk with God which is SOLELY on the basis of Jesus Christ. It is not, in any way, on the basis of ME -- neither on the basis of my sin nor my good works. If you want God to walk with you, and fellowship with you, it must be upon the basis of Jesus Christ -- it is going to be all or nothing. Everything about you, in that case, must be dismissed. You are not going to be able to maintain your relationship with God on the basis of your

good works, anymore than your bad works are going to hurt that. Your works are not in the picture at all. You are IN CHRIST and your life is on the basis of Christ.

We have to get to the place where we put ourselves out of the picture so that we can abide by faith in Christ. It is so simple - - and IS the basic Gospel message -- but it seems to take years, if not decades, for us to grasp this one Truth in a way that sets us free, and enables us to walk in it.

A Sacrifice for Sin

And so, "Whatever the law says, it says to them that are under the law", and the result is, "that every mouth might be stopped," regarding the righteousness of man, and that "the whole world might be exposed as guilty before God."

Now, if that was all that the law did, and God never intended to take us further, we would be doomed. This is one of the bottom lines of Paul's teaching. The whole world IS guilty before God -- and if that is as far as it goes in God's plan, then you and I are left in guilt and we have no salvation. But despite the purpose of bringing us to the place of Truth about ourselves -- to the place of utter hopelessness in ourselves -- the Old Covenant had a further revelation. That revelation was, "Behold, the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world."

So, here in Romans 3:19, along with what we have read in John 1, we see that the law was intended by God to bring us to our knees in hopelessness -- because we are exposed as sinners. But then, once we get to that place, and confess this Truth, then the law also says, "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world."

Isn't this Truth, in a nutshell, what we find when we read the Old Testament and examine what is contained in the Old Covenant? There was always the need to confess sin. And

there was always the need for a substitutionary death for the sinner. When you brought an animal sacrifice before the Lord, you were confessing by your actions that you were a dead sinner and that you needed a substitutionary death to pay for that sin.

Of course, the animals could not purge sin, and could not make anyone perfect, as it says in Hebrews. The animal sacrifices didn't even change God's attitude toward man. No. Instead, the Bible is very clear in saying that the animal sacrifices were a, "reminder of sin." (Heb. 10:3) But who needs to be reminded of sin? God? No, WE do.

So what I am saying is this: If you were a worshipper and you brought an animal sacrifice before the Lord -- with the intention of sacrificing it -- you were saying, "I know I am a sinner and I have no hope. Bring this sacrifice reminds me that I am. I sacrifice this animal, not because I think it is going to do me any good as far as setting me free from sin -- but in sacrificing it I put my faith in the One of whom the animal sacrifices are a type and shadow: The Messiah, who will be Jesus Christ."

And so, all through that Old Covenant, you have a revelation of the sinful lost condition of man. But then, you have the solution in a substitutionary sacrifice. And if you were under that Old Covenant, and you began to truly understand what was being revealed there, you would keep all of those ordinances. But in doing so you would be putting your faith, NOT in the ordinances, but you would be putting your faith in the One who would come and be the literal and true Lamb of God -- Who takes away the sin of the world.

We do not know, really, what a lot of the Old Testament Israelites -- the common man -- believed about what they were doing when they kept a lot of these ordinances. I do think that if any of them had a heart for God that they would eventually come to see what was being represented there --

and would come to the place of putting their faith in a coming Messiah -- who was not yet there. God honored that faith under the Old Testament -- and you would be able to believe God if you had a heart for God -- as you kept all those ordinances. Some of them did have a heart for God -- and we see that they did in the Old Testament stories. But whether you did, or whether you did not, God's intention in the Old Covenant was to shut the mouth of man and expose him as guilty -- but then to point to the Lamb of God as the only solution.

The Contrast Between the Covenants

Now, with all of this being said so far, we are able to give a definition of both the Old and the New Covenants -- and to show the contrast between them. Note the word I just used there: CONTRAST. I did not say that there was a CONTRADICTION between them. There is absolutely no contradiction whatsoever between the Old and New Covenants. There is a difference, however, and a contrast.

Let me give the definitions of each of the Covenants, and then let me explain what I mean by, "contrast," rather than, "contradiction." The Old Covenant, in a nutshell, was a type and a shadow of Jesus Christ -- in His redemptive work. The New Covenant is Jesus Christ, Himself -- and by extension, Jesus Christ IN US, the hope of glory. And so you have the Old Covenant as a type and shadow of Christ -- and the New Covenant, being Christ Himself.

Now I do recognize that this is just a summary -- and we would need a lot of further information and explanation. But, in a nutshell, these are the two Covenants.

In order to explain the difference between the two Covenants -
- and how the differences do not constitute a contradiction --
we can simply use the example of a person and his shadow.
Walk outside on a bright and sunny day and you look down --

you will see that you have cast a shadow on the pavement. That shadow, as far as it goes, is an absolutely true and correct representation of you, isn't it? Sure it is -- YOU are the one casting the shadow. The light is helping you cast it -- but the shadow is your silhouette. It is not someone else. And so, that shadow is a true and accurate representation of a person. Note that the shadow does not CONTRADICT the person. No. The shadow absolutely represents the person. And yet the shadow is not the person. The shadow is not a living person. It is simply a representation of that person.

And this is the difference or contrast between the Old and New Covenant. The Old Covenant had revelations -- in type and shadow -- of the Person of Jesus Christ. The New Covenant is Christ Himself -- especially as He dwells in His people. The Old Covenant -- because it was type and shadow -- could not result in anyone being born from above. But the New Covenant -- because it is CHRIST IN US -- includes the new birth. You will never find a single word in the Old Testament that anyone was born from above, or to the effect that anyone had Jesus Christ dwelling in them by the Holy Spirit. It never says so -- but what it does say is that the Spirit of God -- or if you prefer God, by His spirit -- was WITH people and came UPON people. This is exactly what Jesus said in John 14:17, "The Spirit of God has been WITH you, but WILL be IN you." It was only after Jesus ascended that the Spirit of God would then be IN them and IN us.

And so, the Old Covenant doesn't contradict the New -- it actually leads us into the New. Indeed, this is exactly the purpose of John's ministry -- as the full representation of the Old Covenant. John was used to transition mankind from the type and shadow of the Old Covenant into the reality of the new birth through Christ Himself -- the New Covenant.

I think that example of a living person, versus his shadow, serves us well. In fact, God Himself uses it. He says that the, "law is a shadow of eternal things," in Colossians 2:17. "But

the substance -- i.e., the reality -- is Christ. That is the contrast between the Old and New Covenants. Again, if you look at the Old Covenant -- and all of things which God established and commanded within it -- they are all types and shadows of Jesus Christ and His redemptive work. They were all intended to pave the way, as was John, for the living Person of Jesus Christ. John represents and carries out this purpose of the Old Covenant. He was the voice crying in the wilderness -- and as that, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world."

The Covenants Represented in the Baptisms

If you read this account in John 1, and in some of the other Gospels, you see that almost immediately after John announced Jesus as, "the Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world" -- that exactly what John said needed to happen, began to actually happen. John the Baptist needed to decrease and Jesus Christ began to increase. The disciples of John also began to leave him and to follow Jesus, and shortly thereafter, John was arrested. We are seeing in all of those events, even though they are historically correct, a living representation of what was happening in the plan and purpose of God. The Old Covenant, as embodied in John the Baptist, and in his ministry, was being phased out. The New Covenant in Jesus Christ was beginning to come to pass. Sure, Jesus had to finish out His ministry -- He had to die, be raised from the dead, and ascend to heaven -- and then Christ, by the Spirit of God, had to be poured out on the Day of Pentecost -- in order for the actual New Covenant to be real and living in God's people. But, having said that, what we see here is a living representation -- through these events which actually occurred: John had to decrease, that Jesus Christ might increase -- this corresponded exactly to what was actually happening with regard to the Old Covenant in paving the way for the New.

This contrast between the Covenants, and the difference therein, is also represented in John's BAPTISM -- versus the baptism which John said that Jesus would bring -- that being by the Holy Spirit and with fire. Remember how John said, which I think is at the end of Matthew 3, "I baptize you in water for the remission of sin, but there is one coming after me who is mightier than I, whose sandal I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire."? And so, there is a contrast there -- a similar difference given between these two baptisms -- just as the New Testament supersedes the Old, John is saying that this baptism of Jesus is going to supersede his baptism.

And so we have all these sets of contrasts which are really the SAME contrast. We have the contrast between the Old and New Covenants -- between type and shadow and living person -- between the ministry of John and the ministry of Jesus -- and between the baptism of John and Jesus' baptism with the Holy Spirit and fire.

Let's look at the meaning of these baptisms just a little bit more for a moment. John clearly stated, and I believe it is stated several times in the New Testament, that he, "baptized in water for the remission of sins." I believe one time he said that, "he baptized in water unto repentance of sin." In this we see that John's baptism was the climax of everything God wanted to work out through the Old Covenant.

How many understand that at that point no-one received an indwelling of Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit? No-one did. That is never stated anywhere in all of the descriptions and all of the passages regarding John's baptism. It never says that people came up from the water and they were filled with the Spirit of God. In fact, in the Book of Acts we read that some of the disciples encountered people who were believers of Christ, but who said they had ONLY received John's baptism. And what do we see was then necessary? Well, they had to

receive the baptism which John said Jesus would bring of the Holy Spirit and the fire.

So clearly, those who had received John's baptism, in the Book of Acts, still had to be baptized by the baptism of Jesus of the Holy Spirit and fire. That means that John's baptism did not minister what Jesus' baptism ministered -- it fell short of that. But if John's baptism did not minister an indwelling of Christ AFTER the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the Book of Acts, it certainly did not minister that here BEFORE Jesus even died. This proves that the baptism of John for the remission of sins did not minister new life; did not minister a birth from above; did not minister an indwelling of Jesus by the Spirit. No. It could not. It represented, indeed, was the climax of the Old Covenant that could not minister the life of Christ in them. Rather, it ministered what Jesus said it did in John 14:17: The Holy Spirit had been WITH them. But later, after the ascension, when they received the baptism of Jesus in Acts 2, Holy Spirit would be IN them -- that is, Jesus would be in them through the Holy Spirit.

So again: What did the baptism of John minister? What did John mean, "I baptize you in water for the remission of sins?" Did it mean that in the baptism of John that all of your sins were wiped away? No, because that would require a new birth. Furthermore, while John was baptizing in the Jordan he pointed to Jesus and said, "Look, look over there and see who is coming! It is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" The implication is that John's baptism was NOT doing that -- but was meant to point to the One who would do that -- just as John himself physically pointed to Jesus while he was baptizing in water.

What then, did John's baptism accomplish? Well, as the culmination of the Old Covenant experience, it afforded you a legal salvation. It justified you legally in the eyes of God. But it didn't do that just because you were baptized or just because you went through a ritual. No. The baptism of John

-- just as keeping the Old Covenant would have done -- made a man legally righteous by pointing you to Christ and by pointing you to the necessity of faith IN HIM. The only way the baptism of John was of any value is the same way that the Old Covenant was of any value to a believer: It led you to faith in the One who would come.

If John baptizes me and I go down into water, it doesn't mean anything has happened, anymore than it means anything happens today. There are lots of people getting baptized in water today in churches but they have not repented. They're not even saved in some cases. Baptism does not save them. And it was the same then.

If you were a believer under the Old Covenant, and were led by that Covenant to faith in the true Passover Lamb -- the One who was foretold -- and had allowed the Old Covenant to lead you to that place -- which is the place where God intended it to lead you -- then you would be baptized in water for the remission of sins. You would have that done by John during this time that we are reading about in this gospel. And if you did that, you would have come to the full limit, if I can put it that way, of what was intended by God in the Old Covenant. You would be baptized in water for the remission of sins -- and legally speaking -- you would be forgiven and you would be justified before the Lord. But you would NOT have Christ in you. You would NOT be born from above. Legal justification, by putting your faith in the sacrifices, and your faith in the future coming Messiah, was all that was possible under the Old Covenant. That was not a bad thing; it was a good thing. Having the Holy Spirit WITH you but not IN you was not a bad thing -- but a great thing. But that is as far as the Old Covenant could take you.

Now, notice what I am saying here. I am not saying that if you were saved under the Old Covenant and John's baptism, that you are not really saved. I am saying that you WERE saved. You were as saved as you could be under the Old Covenant.

But it was not a new birth for THIS AGE. It was merely a legal salvation. Eternally, of course, you were as saved as saved can be, but for THIS life you do not have Christ in you. The experience for THIS LIFE would be different. As it says in Hebrews 8, "I gave you my laws -- but now I am making a new covenant, a different one. I am going to write those laws in your heart." Again, the difference here is between shadow and reality in Christ -- for this life's experience.

Now, for those who may disagree with this -- and that would be an astounding disagreement, given scripture's clear words on the matter -- but for those who would suggest that the Old Covenant could birth you anew; that John's baptism could save you in a way which was only possible after Jesus ascended -- for those who would say that the Old Covenant was capable of doing all of that, my question would be this: "Why then did Jesus bother to come and die if the new birth was already possible under the Old Covenant?" In fact, if that were case, why aren't the Jews keeping the Old Covenant today born from above? Why can't they be born from above by believing in a COMING Messiah?

I want to quote Hebrews 8:7, where it says, "For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second." The clear implication here is that the first covenant was faulty. Faulty in the sense that it could not make anyone perfect, and could not bring a person into the new birth. Again, it was SHADOW rather than the Person under the Old Covenant.

Christ In Us

Now, just a bit of a digression here. This comparison between shadow and reality in Christ has application for us today. I believe that many professing Christians, if not all of us, at least to start with, try to walk in a relationship with the SHADOW of Christ -- instead of the Person Himself. I think a lot of us are practicing religion that speaks of Christ, and has

ritualistic trappings of all shapes and sizes, rather than walk by faith with the Person who dwells in us.

You see this stuff all over Christian television today. We are even being exhorted today to keep the Hebrew Holy Days of the Old Testament, and to bring our offering before the Lord -- which means to write a check to that TV ministry -- in order to keep God's blessings current. It is almost as if they are suggesting that the Old Testament Holy Days -- the three Holy Day seasons each year -- are sort of like a booster shot of life in Christ that we need in order to participate in Christ and keep walking with God. Of course, the Catholics have all kinds of rituals that they have to walk through in order to keep right with God and carry on a relationship with Him. But the Protestants do as well. We do things like tithing, which is not for New Testament Christians. We follow laws and principles thinking that they will keep us in God's blessing. In the final analysis, not only is all of that unbelief, but because it is a desire to maintain your own righteousness, it is sin. It is nothing more complicated than you and I trying to carry on our relationship with the SHADOW of Christ, rather than with Christ Himself.

It is an absolute fact that once the light comes and we see Jesus Himself, the shadow will dissipate. Isn't this what really happens in the physical world? You shine light on a shadow and you will see the shadow for what it is.

Christianity is Christ in us, the hope of glory. This is what the New Covenant is in Jesus Christ. If Christ is in you, you are in the New Covenant. Period. And if this is the case, you are no longer going to try to carry on with God by walking with a shadow.

If there is one thing that the Epistle to the Hebrews exhorts us to do and warns us that we must do, it is this, we must come out of the shadow. The law could make nothing perfect. We must come OUT of that. And the only way to come out is by

responding, by faith, to the light God gives in Jesus Christ. In other words, if you want to come out of the shadow, don't swish around any longer in the Jordan, in the baptism of John. You want to come out of the shadow? Don't settle for a legal relationship with God, if it were even possible to do that. No, follow John's exhortation from right here in the Gospel of John. Hear what God is saying through John, "Behold the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world." Allow Jesus to baptize YOU with the Holy Spirit and with fire, for salvation in Christ and the new birth, and everything else will be included in that. If we do this, we will begin to understand what it means to have a relationship with the very Person of Christ who dwells in us -- rather than trying to walk with His shadow.

True Baptism INTO Christ

With all of this as background, we are able to see a contrast between the baptism of John and the baptism of Jesus by the Holy Spirit and fire, mentioned there in Matthew 3. It is really the SAME contrast that we saw between the covenants. Of course -- because each one of these baptisms represents its respective covenant. John's baptism represents the Old Covenant, and Jesus' baptism via the Holy Spirit and fire, represents the New Covenant. John's baptism could not minister eternal life but could only make you legally righteous. But Jesus' baptism was a baptism into Christ, who would then BE your life.

This is important to see. I don't know that this Truth about being baptized INTO Christ -- which IS the baptism with the Holy Spirit -- which IS the baptism mentioned in Matthew 3 -- and IS the baptism mentioned continuously in the gospels and the Book of Acts -- I don't know that the Truth about this baptism into Christ is taught in very many places today. I do know that the charismatic / Pentecostal movement teaches error on the baptism with the Holy Spirit. They wrongly teach that it is an experience subsequent to salvation. No. Baptism

into Christ is salvation. And that baptism is the only baptism there is – it is the ONE baptism.

The baptism with the Holy Spirit and with fire IS the baptism INTO Jesus Christ -- whereby we become immersed in Him. We become joined to Him and one spirit with Him, as it states in 1 Corinthians 6:17. “By one spirit,” Paul says in Corinthians, “we are baptized into one body.” What body? His body. In other words, by one spirit we are baptized into CHRIST. Then there is the entire Romans 6 passage, where Paul makes it clear that baptism -- THE baptism; the ONLY baptism; is a baptism into the death and life of Jesus -- whereby we become one spirit with Him. That is THE baptism with the Holy Spirit and fire -- and it is the only baptism there is.

Remember how Paul said in Ephesians 4, “One Lord, one faith, ONE baptism...”? Even today when churches practice water baptism, it is not an additional baptism to that of being baptized into Christ. No. It is really just a type and a shadow of that ONE baptism. So again, it is not a contradiction. There are not two baptisms -- there is one -- and the baptism by water is simply an outward testimony of the real baptism into Christ by the spirit of God. It is illustrating the fact that our salvation is in Christ -- and we are baptized into Him via the Holy Spirit.

Baptism into Christ is the only baptism we need -- it is the only baptism there is. The charismatics and the Pentecostals -- and I am just going to mention this in passing as I don't want to spend time on it now -- teach that at salvation we receive an indwelling of Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit, but then, they say we need to go on to receive ANOTHER experience which they call, “the baptism with the Holy Spirit.” Through this SECOND experience, they say that we receive all of the wonderful gifts of the Spirit of God. We receive everything we did NOT get when we were saved and indwelt by Christ. But in teaching this, what is really being said is that if you are in

Jesus Christ and saved -- if He is dwelling in you -- you nevertheless continue to LACK. You did NOT receive everything in Christ. You are not complete in Him. You have to go on to get what God really wants for you in a second experience.

Now, that is what is actually being taught when we say we need a second experience. We are saying that Christ is not enough. People can develop a 'song and dance' routine to skirt around that bottom line all they want to, but either Christ is enough – either He is the Alpha and the Omega; the beginning and the end -- or He isn't. Either we are complete in Him or we are not. Either God has given us all things freely IN Christ (Rom. 8:32), or He hasn't. No. There is ONE baptism into Jesus Christ -- and when we are baptized into HIM we are joined to the Lord and Jesus Christ becomes our LIFE. What could be lacking? That's the ONE baptism and is what the BIBLE calls, "the baptism with the Holy Spirit." This is the ONE AND ONLY experience. There is no second one necessary.

I am going to end this discussion about baptism with just one more comment. If the baptism with the Holy Spirit, which John promised that Jesus would bring in Matthew 3, is a SECOND experience, then when were the people who had that supposed second experience in the book of Acts saved? All they had available to them was John's baptism – indeed four times in the Book of Acts people state that they had only received John's baptism, but had not received the baptism Jesus promised of the Holy Spirit and fire. But we have seen that John's baptism could not minister life. So if what they received in Acts was a second experience in addition to Christ, then when were they saved and indwelt by Christ?

The answer is that the baptism of John was not a baptism into Christ. Thus, when they were baptized with the Holy Spirit it WAS their baptism into Christ. It was NOT a second experience, but the ONE and ONLY experience.

There are no additional steps or add-ons to Christ. John's baptism could not minister life and saved no one by giving them an indwelling. Jesus said so in John 14:17 -- where He said that the Holy Spirit had been WITH them, but after He ascended, the Holy Spirit then and only then, would be IN THEM. How many realize that John had almost certainly baptized every one of the disciples to whom He spoke this? So, no one had an indwelling through John's baptism. Therefore, the baptism that John promised that Jesus would bring is not a second experience. It IS that ONE baptism resulting in the ONE indwelling of Christ in the individual.

The baptism with the Holy Spirit and with fire IS how you enter into the new Covenant. It is how Christ enters into you. You are immersed into Christ via His Spirit -- and at that point Christ is in you. He is your hope of glory and you are a Christian. You are in the New Covenant. So, it is one experience and one alone.

Since I was in the Charismatic movement for over a decade, and went through all of that personally, I am not unfamiliar with the so-called proof texts used to support these errors. But I wanted to mention it in passing without spending too much time on it for today.

So, the baptism with the Holy Spirit and with fire is the ONE and only baptism into Jesus -- wherein we receive Christ -- and receive everything that God has given in Him. Like I always say, God has put everything He has to give man into Jesus Christ by His grace -- and has given Him to us. There is nothing that God has to give which He has not given. It is all in His Son because Jesus Christ is all.

These are the two expressions of the ONE baptism. John's baptism is a type and shadow -- the legal counterpart -- of the spiritual baptism into Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit. These stand next to each other in contrast exactly the way that the

two covenants that each baptism represents stand in contrast to each other -- and yet not in contradiction.

The Baptism of Jesus

Now I think that all of this business about the Covenants -- the contrast between the two Covenants -- and the contrast between the two baptisms -- as well as the contrast between the ministry of John, and what John represented, versus what Jesus represented -- I think that this is all wonderfully illustrated in another event in the gospels. It is also found in Matthew 3. What I am talking about is the baptism of Jesus by John in the Jordan. This is found in Matthew 3:13. I want to read that short passage. It says:

Then comes Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John to be baptized of him. But John forbade Him, saying, "I have need to be baptized by you and you come to me?" And Jesus answering said unto him, "Let it be so now for it becomes us to fill up all righteousness. And so, then he allowed Him. Jesus, when He was baptized, went straight up out of the water, and lo the heavens were opened unto Him and he saw the spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting upon Him. And, lo, a voice from heaven saying, 'This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.'"

Now, what is happening here? A lot of people have limited the baptism of Jesus to merely Jesus walking through a ritual as an example for us. Some have said that the baptism of Jesus was just another way that he kept the Old Covenant. I think there is a whole lot more here going on that is much deeper and more profound -- and it actually speaks directly to what I have been talking about today. What we see here, in these words of Jesus, where He says that being baptized would, "fill up all righteousness" -- we see that when Jesus Christ was baptized with the baptism of John that everything in that Old Covenant -- the entirety of the righteousness of God which was in it -- and all of the requirements of it -- were

being fulfilled in Jesus Christ at that moment. The entirety of the Old Covenant – represented by this very baptism of John that Jesus was experiencing – was being gathered up and placed in Jesus Christ.

Now, notice what I am saying here. I am not saying that Jesus, walking through the ritual of baptism, somehow by performing the ritual fulfilled the righteousness of God. No. For this baptism was merely outward -- again, it is a type and a shadow. But I am saying that Jesus' baptism was a way of outwardly expressing, for all to see, that the Old Covenant was completely being filled to the full in this Person who was being baptized, Jesus Christ.

So, we need to get our eyes off of the event of the baptism as being the central issue. Even though we do not bypass the event, the central core of Truth is found in the One being baptized, Jesus Christ. This was Jesus, being announced by God as being the fulfillment -- as being the One about whom the entire Old Covenant spoke. This was what was taking place at the baptism of Jesus Christ.

We can see illustrated in the subsequent events here. When Jesus came up out of the water, God announced, "This is my Beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased." Right there it is. It is an announcement by the Father Himself that what pleases God was no longer the Old Covenant, but rather, what pleases the Father is His Beloved Son. God was announcing, if I can put it this way, a TRANSFER. Shadow had given way to the PERSON. It is a very similar thing to what we saw happening when John said, "Behold the Lamb of God." God was saying that His Son had taken upon Himself everything pictured in the Old Covenant -- all of it's meaning and the righteousness therein. God, the Father, was saying that He was finished with the Old. That Old Covenant was over. Now it is, "This is My Beloved Son."

In other words, in living color here, again through the events, we see illustrated that the Old Covenant was now giving way to the Son of God. The Old Covenant was doing exactly what it was intended to do by God: It was to point to the One who would come.

Again, we saw earlier that this was illustrated when John said, “Behold the Lamb of God.” This is what the Old Covenant does – it points to: “The Lamb of God.” It says, “Behold HIM.” This is the purpose of the ministry that is crying out as the voice in the wilderness: “There He is — Behold the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world.”

It is the same concept here in the baptism of Jesus. When Jesus was baptized in the Jordan by John, He was saying, “I am the fulfillment of everything the Old Covenant was teaching. I am the fulfillment, therefore, of what this baptism of John points you toward”. He comes up from the water and God affirms that, “This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” It is now about HIM. It is no longer about a covenant that consists of laws and ordinances. It is no longer about outward ritual. It is no longer about a legal righteousness. Rather, “This is My Beloved SON in Whom I am well pleased,” and, “Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world.”

So the baptism of Jesus by John in the Jordan leads us to see -- even though it needed another three and one half years of time to work out -- that this was the end of the Old Covenant and of John’s ministry. It was the beginning of the New Covenant wherein all would be fulfilled and experienced in the Person of Jesus Christ. And that is why God gave His benediction.

An Astounding Statement

Now, I want to turn to one other place for today where it speaks of John the Baptist. This is a really fantastic passage

because again, it will give us a contrast between John's baptism and the baptism of Jesus -- between the Old Covenant and the New. It is found in Matthew 11.

In that chapter, the people were asking Jesus about John. In verse 10, Jesus verifies that John was that messenger -- the Voice crying in the wilderness to prepare the way of the Lord. Then, in verses 11 and 12, Jesus makes this astounding statement, which will verify everything I was saying earlier -- to the effect that the baptism of John and the Old Covenant could not birth anyone anew. Only the baptism and Person of Jesus Christ could do that. Matthew 11:11 says:

Verily, I say unto you, among them that are born of woman, there has not risen a greater than John the Baptist. Notwithstanding, he that is least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than John the Baptist.

Notice what this astounding statement of Jesus Christ is revealing to us to be the Truth. He is saying that if you could gather together every single person who has been born into this world via natural birth -- and of course that is everyone; the entirety of natural humanity -- and if they could be ranked from the greatest to the least, at the top of the list of all who are born of women would be this person, John the Baptist. He is the greatest of all who are born of women into this world. This is an incredible statement which Jesus made about John the Baptist. But notice what He next: He said, "OK, you have that list, and you have that ranking. And John is at the top of the list. But if you constructed a similar list of all of those who are born from above into the Kingdom, the one on the bottom of THAT list, the least in that Kingdom, would be greater than John. Of all of those born naturally of women into this world, John the Baptist is the greatest. He is, nevertheless below the least in the Kingdom of God.

Now, what does that tell us, practically speaking, about the Old Covenant, and about the ministry and the baptism of

John? It proves that the baptism of John and the Old Covenant could birth no one anew into the Kingdom. For the person who is the greatest representative of the Old Covenant – John the Baptist -- is less than the least in the Kingdom.

Can we see what we are being told here? Jesus is saying it this way to make sure we understand that the Old Covenant could not minister eternal life in Christ. It could only point to Him. All of those who would be born again in Christ, including the least in the kingdom, would be ranked above the greatest under the Old Covenant, which, at that point was John. These are the words of Jesus and they prove what I have been saying in this message: The Old Covenant, and the baptism of John into that Old Covenant, could birth no one anew.

Behold, the Lamb of God

Now, let's read on here because there are a couple of other really wonderful points. In verse 13, there is a vital point to see:

"For all of the prophets and the law prophesied until John."

In another gospel it adds, "since then the Kingdom of God is preached." But can we see again a dividing line? Can we see that the Old Covenant went right up into John -- but only right up to John -- and that John embodied it with his message and baptism? But it was all intended to point people toward Christ: "Behold the Lamb of God...go follow HIM." "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased." So, in this we see is the purpose of the law and the Old Covenant. We see that it was intended to point to Christ as our life.

If there is one word that we need to take from out of all of this, it is this: We need to stop trying to walk with God by law; by our own conduct. We need to stop trying to walk with God on the basis of anything about ourselves -- whether it be good or

bad. We need to take ourselves and put ourselves aside -- better yet -- we need to take ourselves and lose ourselves into the hands of Jesus Christ. This means ALL of ourselves -- not just the bad stuff and our sin -- but the self-righteousness that we place and develop out of our so-called, "good works." Instead, we are to follow these admonitions: "Behold the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world." "This is my Beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased." This is God's word for us.