

28. What is the relationship between the "forgiveness or remission of sins," enjoyed by those who accepted John's baptism, and that secured by Jesus' death on the cross? (Cf. Mk. 1:4; Lk. 3:3 with Heb. 9:22, 14, 15; Eph. 1:7) How could John's baptism be "for remission of sins"?
29. Were those who became disciples of John, thus preparing themselves for the commencement of the Kingdom, exempt from the sacrifices and service connected with the old Mosaic system?

Section 6

JESUS IS BAPTIZED BY JOHN

(Parallels: Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21, 22; cf. John 1:29-34)

TEXT: 3:13-17

13. Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to the Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.
14. But John would have hindered him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?
15. But Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer *it* now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he suffered him.
16. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway from the water: and lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming upon him;
17. and lo, a voice out of the heavens, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

- a. Do you think Jesus really needed to be immersed by John? If so, why? If not, why not?
- b. Why did John consider himself in need of immersion by Jesus, instead of Jesus having need of John's baptism?
- c. What do these phrases mean:
 - (1) "it becometh us"?
 - (2) "to fulfill all righteousness"?
 - (3) "he suffered him"?
- d. Why did God speak from heaven in this manner and on this particular occasion?
- e. What does Matthew mean by "the heavens were opened unto him"?

- f. How do you think Jesus reacted psychologically to that voice of His Father speaking to Him on this occasion?
- g. For what acts or attitudes of Jesus do you think God was expressing His pleasure in Jesus?
- h. Did anyone else hear the voice of God on this occasion as He identified Jesus as His Son? What of the multitudes who were constantly coming and going?

PARAPHRASE AND HARMONY

In those days that marked the height of John's revival of the nation, which was about the thirtieth year of Jesus' life, Jesus walked from Nazareth of Galilee to the Jordan to John to be immersed by him. But John tried to dissuade Him, saying, "I need you to baptize ME, and YOU come to me?" But Jesus replied, "Let it be so for the present, for we do well to conform in this way with all that God requires. This is the fitting way for both of us to do our full duty to God." Then John yielded and consented to immerse Jesus.

Now when the greater part of the people had been immersed, Jesus also was baptized. He immediately went up out of the water and was praying when, suddenly, the heavens opened. They, that is at least John and Jesus, saw the Spirit of God in a bodily form descending, as does a dove, upon Him and remaining. Then there came a voice from heaven which said, "You are my dearly loved Son: I am pleased and proud of you!"

NOTES

I. A PREPARED PERSON

3:13 **Jesus came from Galilee.** Mark specifies Nazareth as the beginning point of this 60-70 mile trip on foot to that stretch of the Jordan which flows through the wilderness of Judea about 5 miles north of the Dead Sea. Nazareth, for Jesus, meant home, the quiet life, rewarding toil and memories. All this is left behind for the stormy turbulence that shall be His short, busy career. However, He who leaves home to enter the service of God is no stripling of twelve years but a mature man who has learned the joys of honest labor, the worries of a household, and the fluctuations of business with all its headaches. Yes, here is a man who chooses not to remain hidden in a small Galilean hamlet, but rather to seize eagerly His responsibility as God's Son. As He turns His back upon the relatively

easy life and sets His face to go to the inevitable cross, in effect, He is praying, "Father, it was not with sacrifices, as offerings for sin, that you were pleased. But you have prepared for me a body, and in this body I have come to do your will." (Cf. Heb. 10:5-10)

II. A PERPLEXED PROTEST

3:14 If John did not know Jesus as the Messiah (Jn. 1:31, 33), then why did he object to Jesus' request for immersion? His baptism was "for repentance" (3:11) and "for remission of sins" (Mk. 1:4; Lk. 3:3) and yet he obviously felt that Jesus did not need his baptism. Four reasons are suggested why he might have thus demurred:

1. The *family* reason. If the intimacy of John's and Jesus' families was maintained over the years, John would have known the pure life of Jesus, his kinsman (Lk. 1:36-56, 80), through contacts at least at the great feasts in Jerusalem. However, unless Jesus were known by John to be absolutely sinless, He would have needed John's baptism, at least, in John's opinion.
2. The *inspired* reason. God's prophet that he was, John must have been able to recognize the sinlessness of Jesus by prophetic insight, just as Elisha recognized the greed and falseness of Gehazi, or the treachery and cruelty of Hazeal (II Kgs. 5:26; 8:7-15; see also Lk. 7:39). However, until the Spirit descended upon Him, John had not that divine assurance that Jesus was the Messiah nor could he say with absolute certainty, "This is the Christ," however sure he himself may have felt that He was. Of this one thing John was sure: here before him stood the cleanest, purest, godliest man his eyes had ever looked upon!
3. The *ethical* reason. He stood in the presence of Him "the latchet of whose shoes he was not worthy to unloose." As John had faced the Pharisees and Sadducees, he had accorded them the very opposite treatment (3:7-10), refusing to immerse them because of their sinful impenitence. He hesitates to baptize Jesus because of His known purity.
 - a. John, by confessing his need of Jesus' baptism, thus confessed his own sin. Or was he thinking of Jesus' administration of the baptism in the Holy Spirit?

- b. By acknowledging Jesus' right to baptize even him whom God had appointed as a divinely-sent prophet, John was placing Jesus far above himself. Perhaps he suspected Him also to be the Messiah.
4. The *personal* reason. In his perplexity, John shows his personal ignorance of God's will for Jesus and of what really constitutes God's idea of a Messiah. Although John knew he was unworthy to baptize Him and thus shows his deep, reverent humility, he was on the verge of forgetting his own commission to introduce the Christ, of neglecting the express command of God, and of overlooking that very sign which had been given him by which to recognize the Messiah (Jn. 1:33). Although John was wrong in his understanding, yet his actions ring true psychologically, and, as a matter of fact, had not the narrative included his hesitation, the baptism of Jesus, recorded without any other comment, would seem to compromise His sinlessness.

Maybe all or parts of these reasons caused John to take the position he did. Yet, this misunderstanding and suggestion both provide one more temptation to Jesus, a test similar to the sorrow of His parents when He should have been expected to about His Father's affairs. Even as then, He refused to be turned aside from His divine calling and position, overcoming by relying upon perfect obedience to God.

III. A PARAMOUNT AND PERVADING PRINCIPLE

3:15 **Thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness.**

1. The problem: The question has puzzled the Church for centuries, just as it raised problems for John the Baptist that day: why did Jesus come to be baptized? Jesus did not intimate that John was correct in suggesting that He did not need to be baptized, but why? Several answers have been suggested:

- a. That Jesus, by His baptism, identifying Himself with the search of men for God, in order that He might reveal God to them in this their hour of new sin-consciousness? Certainly, one reason He began His ministry at this time was the timeliness of the hour in which the Jews were facing the reality of their sins as never before in immediately preceding centuries. But, could not Jesus have identified with them in other ways, or have begun His ministry without being baptized?

- b. Or, is Jesus, in this act of identification with those who truly need forgiveness and repentance, signifying that He is now ready to take upon Himself the responsibility of being their redeemer? Is He indicating that, though He be pure and yet steps into the same position shared by such sinners, He is therefore God's Lamb?
- c. Others suggest that Jesus came for His formal, solemn setting apart to His office as the Messiah and Redeemer of Israel. It is true that one of the main purposes of John's appointment was to introduce the Messiah to the world (Jn. 1:31). Further, it was proper that Jesus should have been set apart by His own forerunner, and that definite connection be shown with his ministry, as fulfilling its predictions and carrying forward its initiatives.
- d. *Permit it now* indicates that, in the case of Jesus' baptism, there was to be another purpose. While Jesus did not need the results obtained in the case of the others, i.e. transformation of life and forgiveness of sins, yet He needed another result: the perfect fulfillment of all the Father's will. Could He have gone on in His sinlessness as heretofore and have remained sinless to the end if at this point He did not do everything God had commanded? No, perfect holiness involves doing all God says to do, without rationalizing. Had Jesus refused or neglected to obey this precept of God, He would have failed, coming short of perfect righteousness.

2. His personal Purpose: "It becomes us to fulfill all righteousness." Jesus had to be immersed! There could be no doubt or hesitation for Him, once the all-important question as to the origin of John's baptism was answered: "The baptism of John, whence is it? from heaven or men?" (Mt. 21:25) Jesus submitted, not with any ulterior motive, but because John's baptism was from God. He refused to expect of others what He Himself had not undergone. Had He not so completely done God's will, His condemnation of the religious leaders (Mt. 21:25) would have had a hollow ring to it. This is why the Pharisees and Sadducees are so guilty: even if they were too self-deceived to see their need of repentance and forgiveness, at least they should have humbly submitted to be baptized by John "to fulfill all righteousness!" But, as it was, they doubly "rejected the counsel of God against themselves" (Lk. 7:30).

It must be remembered that the main element in repentance is the POSITIVE turning of the individual towards God with new determination to conform to His will, and not only the NEGATIVE turning away from sin as enmity toward God. While forsaking sin and seeking forgiveness therefrom may be the first step in repentance toward God, a step not needed by the sinless Jesus, yet positive conformity to God's righteousness was most certainly required of Jesus. Thus, it becomes most intelligible and quite proper that Jesus should feel personally impelled to submit to John's immersion. He publicly declared thereby His resolve to surrender His will to the will of God, and His renunciation of all sin. He did this, not in spite of His Sonship, but on account of it! He knew that He was the pure Son of God, but this was good reason for obeying God: as a pure Son. This purpose, personally felt by Jesus, will empower Him to face each assault of Satan, to remain humble before the applause of the multitudes, to remain calm before the confusion and misunderstandings of the disciples, to continue to love those most unlovely, and to lay down His scourged, hurting body upon the cross for our sins.

3. Our perpetual pattern. Out of that perfect union of Jesus' personal purpose with the paramount principle comes a perpetual pattern for us. Jesus was not baptized to give us an example that we should also be baptized. Rather, Jesus was baptized to give us an example of doing whatever God has commanded just because God had said to do it. If God commands US to be baptized, then we do that because He commanded and not because Jesus was baptized. In this case, we pour ourselves into Jesus' mold of perfect obedience to the Father in whatever He commands by doing just what God has specifically commanded us.

Nobody will ever formulate a better ethic than "doing all that God tells us to do." There is no better. Without God's revelation, men have such trashy ideals, and yet the whole human race descended from people who knew God (Ro. 1:18-32). Thus, all the wickedness of the world is due to departure from the knowledge of the will of God and willing obedience to it. Man cannot throw away or ignore what he knew of God's will and then expect to find a sure foundation for an ethic to take its place. In the case before us, John had preached God's will but many religious people rejected that message. Jesus could not. To please God, according to Jesus, is not to set aside anything God has commanded. In making no exception of Himself,

Jesus is saying that no excuse is good enough for not doing everything God requires. This is the true measure of *all righteousness*. (See Mt. 5:17)

John could not know of the authority of God possessed by Jesus, at least at that moment when he refused to baptize Him, so clearly as we can see from our vantage point. Thus he is not so culpable for this refusal. But, having been assured of Jesus' right to command, we must see that to argue with Jesus about the propriety of ANYTHING He requests, is sin!

4. The permission: *Then he permitted him*. Here John proves himself to be a true prophet by recognizing and obeying his true Master when that Master corrects his understanding. Jesus of Nazareth is not only far holier than John; He is also far wiser in the application of God's will. This is what John confesses in permitting Jesus to be baptized.

IV. THE PROMISED POWER

3:16 **When Jesus was baptized, he went up from the water.** Mark had specified that Jesus came to be baptized into (*eis*) the Jordan; hence, it is quite natural to assume that the phrase, *from the water*, is the logical movement of a person who had been in it. Though Matthew says "from" (*apo*), again it is Mark who is more specific: "out of" (*ek*). The prepositions by themselves are not sufficient to establish the conclusion that Jesus was immersed, but when they accord perfectly with the meaning of *baptizein*, "immerse," they become important circumstantial evidence to support that conclusion.

The heavens were opened to him. We are not told what was visible when the heavens were suddenly opened, nor even what constitutes such an opening in the heavens. From the physical nature of the heavens, as we know them, it may be said that the heavens are already open as far as the eyes of one standing at the Jordan River could see, and probably always have been. Therefore, perhaps what Matthew means is that to the physical, fleshly eyes of John and Jesus, at least, the normally invisible but thoroughly real spirit-world was made visible in a manner similar to the visions of that world seen by Ezekiel (Ezek. 1:1), Stephen (Ac. 7:56), Peter (Ac. 10:11), or John (Rev. 4:1). Note also Jesus' cryptic statement (Jn. 1:51). Matthew focuses all attention upon Jesus and the coming of the Holy Spirit, leaving the heavenly vision undescribed.

unto him . . . he saw. The "unto him" may or may not have been written by Matthew, as it has good manuscript authority both for and against it. (See SQE, p. 26) This phrase and the expression, "he saw," do not necessarily preclude all others from having seen the Spirit descend upon Jesus, and they must not be construed to exclude John. No doubt the Spirit was visible and the voice of God audible to all present. Some have understood Luke (3:21) to suggest that only Jesus and John now stood on the Jordan's bank, as the others would have left immediately after their baptism. However, that passage must be only a general statement concerning the major part of the crowds, since John also baptized others later (Jn. 3:23). Nor would it necessarily follow that they would have immediately departed after being baptized; rather, it is to be supposed that many remained to become regular "disciples of John." Thus, there were probably others still present.

descending as a dove. It may not be too important a problem to ask whether there really was a bird in the air that day. All four Gospels unite (cf. Jn. 1:32) in using this expression "as a dove" (*hos*, or *hosei peristeran*) with a common verb for descent (*katabaino*). Is it necessary to picture a real dove in this scene, any more than real fire on Pentecost (Ac. 2:3: "as fire," *hosei puros*)? Granted, there was a bodily form of some sort, but was it "dove-form," or did it merely "descend as a dove descends and lights upon" something? The fact that Luke places "in a bodily form" between "Holy Spirit" and "as a dove," does not settle the question, since, grammatically, it could stand anywhere in the sentence. The other Gospels make the phrase, "as a dove," modify either "descend" (Matthew and John) or "Holy Spirit" (Mark). Other commentaries seek for the meaning behind the symbol of the dove. If there were no bird, why bother? Mark (1:10) clarifies: "The Spirit as a dove came down into (*eis*) Him." How could a bird "enter" Jesus? But the Spirit of God in a bodily form could descend upon Jesus, even as swiftly and gracefully as a dove descends and lights, and enter into Jesus. Were there a real bird, the problem of "disposal of the body" arises just as this scene closes. Did the "bird" die right there? Disappear? Fly away? This is stretching a non-existent detail to its logical extreme. The all-important point is the descent of the Spirit upon Jesus.

The Spirit of God descending. Here is Jesus' promised power (Isa. 11:1ff) Jesus emerged from His baptism as the Messiah, designated, qualified and proclaimed so by God Himself. In this capacity He received the fullness of the Spirit for His work. (Cf. Ps. 45:7 with Heb. 1:9; Isa. 61:1 with Lk. 4:18) In His human nature which He had assumed in order to bring about our redemption, He received the Spirit (Jn. 3:34). As God, He needed nothing. It was only as the God-Man, or God in human flesh, that He needed such a gift of power as the Holy Spirit, and particularly so now, as He was ready to begin that great work for which He had come. This anointing by the Spirit does not mean that Jesus was not pure and holy before, or that He was not aware of His divine mission previously, or that He was not possessed of divine wisdom before this, for He was all this before His baptism. The coming of the Spirit performed these all-important functions:

1. The divine authentication of His identity: HE, and no other, is God's Son and Messiah;
2. His public anointing as God's Messiah (Ac. 10:38);
3. The reinforcement of the human nature of Jesus for the great work and suffering which He must shortly commence.

From this point on, we see Jesus led and empowered by the Holy Spirit as never before (Mt. 4:1; Mk. 1:12; Lk. 4:1, 14, 21; Mt. 12:18f; Lk. 10:21; Heb. 9:14; Ro. 1:4; 8:11).

V. PATERNAL PLEASURE

3:17 This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. The silence of God is broken! No word from God had been heard since He spoke from heaven to Israel at Sinai. How significant that He should choose this moment to communicate directly with earth! And He shall speak again at Jesus' moment of glory (Mt. 17; Mk. 9:7; Lk. 9:35), and shortly before His hour of suffering (Jn. 12:28-30). Here is the word of Him who cannot lie, which proclaims who Jesus really is: "*my Son!*" On this point, what other witness in the universe would be so well-qualified to testify as the Father Himself? What other fact so worthy the honor of His personal sanction as this?

God's solemn declaration of Jesus as His Son meant the fulfillment of the great Davidic promise (Ps. 2:7; cf. Heb. 1:5; 5:5). God did not need to say, "This is my chosen Messiah," for every Jew

should have known that to declare Jesus as His Son was to declare Him the Messiah.

On this point, compare Mt. 26:63-66; Mk. 14:61-64; Lk. 22:66-71; note also Jn. 10:29-33 and the line of reasoning used by the Jews in their attacks upon Jesus. Compare Psa. 2 with the standard rabbinical interpretations of it, as noted by Edersheim, *Life*, II, 716: See also Heb. 1:5; II Sam. 7:14; Psa. 89:26, 27.

The verbal difference between the reporting of the voice of God, as quoted by Matthew and the quotation by Mark and Luke should be noted. Different attempts have been made to harmonize or explain the difference. One ancient suggestion, that made by the "Ebionite Gospel" (SQE, 27), represents God as speaking twice: once to Jesus, the other to John. There is no necessary contradiction between the differing Gospel accounts. God probably spoke only once, His words being recorded loosely by Matthew as they might have been quoted by John the Baptist, while Mark and Luke cite the words directly. In either case, the message is unchanged.

But it is not just to the world in general that God addresses Himself, but to Jesus: "You are my dearly beloved Son: I am pleased and proud of you!" How gratefully comforted the human heart of Jesus must have been to hear how perfectly "on course" He was sailing through that sea which is the human life. How much joy it must have brought Him to hear God recognize Him as His unique Son, and express His paternal pleasure for His public declaration of filial obedience to the Father's will.

Though the words of God seem to be a direct quotation of Ps. 2:7a, and quite possibly His words would call to the minds of any Jew present that particular Psalm, yet it is not necessary to assume that God was either merely quoting Scripture (as if the Gospel writers had put the words in God's mouth) or that God had in mind the second half of that verse: "This day have I begotten thee." The "Ebionite Gospel" cites these latter words at this point, as if they were actually pronounced upon this occasion, in the attempt to establish the Ebionite doctrine that God adopted the human Jesus on the day of His baptism. It has been the temptation of not a few heretic sects to assume that the nature of God came upon and entered to take control of the human nature of Jesus that day. But to prove this "adoptionist doctrine," they must ignore all of the relevant facts

related to Mary by the angel (Lk. 1:26-38), or those explanations given to Joseph (Mt. 1:18-23) regarding the true nature of the yet-unborn Baby, as well as the self-awareness of Jesus at age twelve (Lk. 2:49). "This day" (Ps. 2:7) is to be understood as referring to Jesus' resurrection also, not merely to His baptism, if at all (Ac. 13:33; cf. Ro. 1:4). Further, the words of God, in the second phrase, "*my Beloved, in whom I am well pleased,*" more closely parallel Isa. 42:1 with the slight change from "servant" to "Son." To feel the force of this prophecy, it should be read in the Greek of Mt. 12:18. The point is this: by what He says, God is not making or constituting Jesus as His Son; rather, He is declaring publicly what was already true from the moment of Jesus' conception in the virgin mother. An identity card and a special anointing do not change the nature of the Person, although they verify or guarantee the nature of the relationship thus declared. By His anointing with the Holy Spirit and by the Father's proclaiming His Sonship, Jesus is thus revealed to the nation and the world as fully equipped and duly authorized to accomplish that for which He had come to earth.

Here at the baptism of Jesus, we have one of the clearest and most complete revelations of the three Persons who make up the Deity: the Son of God standing incarnate upon earth, the Spirit descending out of heaven, and the Father speaking from heaven. Again, our obedience to the divine will brings together those mighty names in connection with our baptism (Mt. 28:19).

FACT QUESTIONS

1. Where did Jesus' baptism occur?
2. About how far did Jesus have to walk to get there?
3. When did it occur? That is, at what time in Jesus' life, and then, in relation to His ministry, when did it occur?
4. Why was Jesus baptized? List at least three reasons given in the Scriptures.
5. Why did John hesitate to baptize Jesus?
6. Cite any evidence that indicates whether Jesus was immersed, or had water sprinkled or poured upon Him. Is it possible to arrive at a secure conclusion which mode was used?
7. Did Jesus have to be baptized? If so, why? If not, why not?
8. How did Jesus' baptism differ from others, if it did?
9. What took place immediately following Jesus' baptism?

10. Who said, "It becometh us to fulfill all righteousness"? What did he mean?
11. Cite any evidence that would indicate whether any others than John and Jesus heard and saw the accompanying signs from heaven.
12. What was Jesus doing just as He was baptized?
13. Was there a real dove which descended and alighted upon Jesus? What are your grounds for deciding this? Does it make any difference either way?
14. Whose word are we taking for the extraordinary sights and sounds that occurred that day? Does it make any difference about whether we believe that it actually occurred or not?
15. What did the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus mean to John?
16. What did it mean to Jesus? Did Jesus really need any strengthening, help, encouragement or power, such as the Holy Spirit provides?
17. Is Jesus' baptism an example for us? If not, why not? If so, to what extent or in what way is it so?
18. What did God say about Jesus? What did He mean by that?

EXPOSITORY SERMON CHAPTER THREE

"THE MINISTRY OF A MAN"

- I. THE MAN'S MISSION: "The voice of one crying in the wilderness" (3:1-3)
 - A. The sudden appearance of John, who came thundering the message of God, broke the silence that Heaven had kept for over 400 years. John was the last of the greatest prophets (Mt. 11:11, 13). He was a likely candidate for the Messiahship (Lk. 3:15), or at least most commoners were convinced he was a prophet (Lk. 20:6). He performed no miracles (Jn. 10:40, 41) and claimed not to be the Christ (Ac. 13:24, 25), but expected that his message should be received as the very voice of God.
 - B. John's responsibility is clearly that of preparing the hearts of an unprepared people, unprepared for their Messiah's soon arrival. This is the first clue to the true nature of Christ's kingdom: it must not be a matter of external, regal trappings, but of internal, real repenting.

C. John was a "voice" crying in the wilderness, not an echo of the popular slogans of his times. He was not a product of his age, but brought a message from God to his age.

II. THE MAN'S MANNER (3:4): Ascetic food and raiment akin to the austere life of Elijah, significant as they might have been, are nothing compared to the man himself:

A. His personal self-dénial (Lk. 7:33).

B. His refusal to be great in the eyes of the world, even in the sight of his own intimate disciples (Jn. 3:25-30).

C. His fearlessness to denounce evil wherever he found it.

1. Herod trembled before this courageous man who did not hesitate to point the finger of divine judgment at Herod's evil and unlawful marriage and say, "It is not lawful for you to have her!" (Mt. 14:4; Mk. 6:18-20), even if this meant imprisonment and death (Mt. 4:12; 11:2-4; 14:2-10; Mk. 6:14-25).

2. The Sadducees and Pharisees, the leaders of orthodox religion, sunk in ritualistic formalism and infidelity, recoiled under the hammer-blows of this fearless, peerless preaching.

3. The ordinary working people, whose lives were lived unaware of God's plainest commands, were brought to fruitful repentance! (Lk. 3:10-15)

III. THE MAN'S MESSAGE-OF MORALITY (3:5-10)

A. His message and baptism possessed the full authority of God (Mt. 21:25, 26, 32; Mk. 11:30-32; Lk. 3:2; 7:29, 30; Jn. 1:6)

B. His message concerned the most basic need of his hearers: repentance, not merely surface and immediate sorrow for sin, but a thorough-going and continuing repentance that changed the heart and all the life which flowed from the source.

C. In an age of rottenly luxuriant self-indulgence, John challenged men to a rigorous self-denial and a real communion with God, whether this meant fasting (Mt. 9:14; 11:18; Mk. 2:18; Lk. 7:33), or learning how really to pray (Lk. 11:1).

D. His preaching of repentance was intended to produce an open, immediate response:

1. Faith in the Christ who would immediately follow John (Jn. 1:7; Ac. 19:4)
2. But in preparation for His advent, the people must repent, confessing their sins, exhibiting a readiness to effect a radical change of life in conformity with the holiness of the coming Messiah Himself (Mt. 3:5, 6; Lk. 3:5-9)
3. "Baptism for the remission of sins" (Mk. 1:4; Lk. 3:3)

E. He aimed at the conscience.

- IV. THE MAN'S MASTER, THE MESSIAH (3:11, 12). For all of John's personal greatness derived from immediate communion with God, for all of the nation-shaking results he was achieving through his preaching, for all of the personal popularity in the select company of his disciples, he never lost sight of the one purpose he came to accomplish: to bear witness to the Light. John could not but focus men's attention on the majestic Messiah whose way he had come to prepare. John never forgot his place as the servant, unworthy even to unloose the Master's shoes. John ever obliterated himself in his message, and, with the coming of the promised Messiah, he was content to decrease in popularity, influence and religious leadership in favor of his Lord whose way he had so effectively prepared. (Jn. 3:30)

APPLICATION: Laboring within the terms of our commission (Mt. 28:19, 20), dare we give as much to our service to Jesus as did John? Do we seek only the glory of Christ? Are we as unhesitating in our rebuke of the sin of our age?