

LEARNING FROM THE LIFE OF JESUS:

THE BAPTISM OF JESUS Matthew 3.1-17; Luke 3.21-22

You'll probably never forget the day you were baptized into Christ! I know I won't. It was on a Sunday in May of 1967. I was twelve years old, and as fate would have it, my future father-in-law, Paul Fields, was preaching that day. What I clearly remember was the realization that I had committed sin and that only baptism into Christ would put me in contact with the cleansing blood of Jesus. I felt so deeply convicted by sin that "wild horses" could not have prevented me from responding to the gospel, and so my father, Dow Willey, baptized me that very hour!

Baptism is a great mystery. In it, God and man are acting. Man is deciding, trusting and submitting. God is freeing us from Satan's grasp, forgiving our sins, canceling our debt, filling us with His Spirit, and adding us to His church.

The baptism of Jesus, recorded in all four gospels, is a pivotal event in Jesus' life and in the faith of the church. At His baptism He first manifested Himself to Israel. After His baptism came temptation, ministry, death and resurrection. The baptismal experience of Jesus is a pattern for every child of God.

Jesus made a decision about His life as He came to His baptism. He intended to do God's will and fulfill all righteousness. He submitted to God's command in faith. When He had been baptized, the Spirit descended upon Him and God said, "*You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased*" (Luke 3.22 - NKJV). Each of us must make a decision to do God's will, submit in faith to immersion, and receive the promised indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Then God says to each of us, "You are My son or daughter! In you I am well pleased." As it did with Jesus, temptation will come to us after baptism, but we must hold God's hand and enter our ministry until death and victorious resurrection.

Baptism is the beginning for every child of God, the process of being "*born again*" (John 3.3-7). It is the point at which we receive the "*remission of sins*" (Acts 2.38) and "*call upon the name of the Lord*" (Acts 22.16). It is the moment we are united with the redemptive work of Christ as we emulate His death, burial and resurrection (Rom. 6.3-7). It is the door to the church, Christ's "*one body*" (1 Cor. 12.13). Praise God for the mystery of baptism!

[BTW]