

A HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS
XVII. God's Introduction Of The Messiah To Israel
(Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-23)

I. Introduction

- A. Israel's last Old Testament prophet was John the Baptist, and God sent him to prepare Israel for the Messiah.
- B. When the Messiah came to John and he baptized Him in Matthew 3:13-17, Mark 1:9-11 and Luke 3:21-23, God the Father and God the Holy Spirit formally, and publicly introduced Jesus to Israel as the Son of God.
- C. We view these passages for our insight and application (as follows):

II. God's Introduction Of The Messiah To Israel, Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-23.

- A. While John was ministering and baptizing repentant Hebrews at the Jordan River, Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee (Mark 1:9) to be baptized by John, Matthew 3:13.
- B. John was filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb (Luke 1:15), so he was informed by the Lord that Jesus was the sinless Messiah, and John consequently tried to resist baptizing Jesus, saying that he himself had need of being baptized by Jesus with the baptism of repentance, Matthew 3:14.
- C. However, Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness, Matthew 3:15a NIV. Christ's answer here has been much debated as to its meaning, for "(t)he Law included no requirements about baptism, so Jesus could not have had in view anything pertaining to Levitical righteousness," Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 25. The solution is found in considering the context of John's ministry of the baptism of repentance for sinners: Messiah was called of God to address the sins of sinners, so "(i)t was . . . the will of God for Him to be baptized by John in order to be identified (the real meaning of the word 'baptized') with sinners," Ibid. This view fits Paul's claim in 2 Corinthians 5:21 that Christ was made to be sin for us, He Who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.
- D. John then submitted to Christ's directive that John baptize Him, so John baptized Him, Matthew 3:15b.
- E. As soon as He was baptized, Jesus went up out of the water (Matthew 3:16a), and was praying (Luke 3:21), and suddenly the heavens opened up, and God the Holy Spirit descended in the form of a dove and landed on Him (Matthew 3:16b). In addition, God the Father spoke from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased," Matthew 3:17 KJV.
- F. This was a highly significant event, for it marked both the formal and the public introduction of Messiah Jesus to Israel by the Holy Spirit and the Father on the level of God's authoritative words to Israel at Mount Sinai:
 - 1. John's ministry had been used of God to attract the nation to come out to him to be baptized by John with the baptism of repentance, Matthew 3:1-7; Luke 3:10-14.
 - 2. In this public setting before the nation Israel, when Jesus was baptized by John in front of the crowds of Israel, identifying with sinners as their Savior, God the Holy Spirit and God the Father publicly, with the Father's vocal assertion from the opened heavens above, announced Jesus to be the Son of God in Whom the Father was well pleased. This divinely authoritative statement of Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God recalls God's clearly, divinely authoritative statements at Mount Sinai to the nation Israel in Moses' day.
 - 3. J. Dwight Pentecost observed, "John had prepared the people for this momentous event. The Father had confirmed the appointment of the Son to the messianic work. Now the Son was officially presented by the designated forerunner to the nation Israel with God's full approval of His person and work." (J. Dwight Pentecost, The Words and Works of Jesus Christ, 1991, p. 95)

Lesson: *With John the Baptist, the forerunner of the Messiah and the last Old Testament prophet ministering the baptism of repentance to the nation Israel in preparation for Messiah's arrival, Jesus came to be baptized by John. Jesus thus publicly and formally identified with Israel's sinners as their Savior, and God the Holy Spirit and God the Father opened the heavens and testified from heaven that Jesus Christ was the Son of God in Whom the Father was well pleased. Israel was thus without excuse as to GOD'S view as to Jesus' Person and work!*

Application: *(1) May we realize that at the start of Jesus' ministry, He was so formally and publicly introduced to the nation Israel by God the Holy Spirit and God the Father as God's Son in Whom God was well pleased, an introduction that equaled the expression of divine authority at Mount Sinai in Moses' day, that both Israel and everyone else worldwide is responsible to believe in Christ for eternal life, John 3:16. (2) May we like Jesus look to God to give us credibility before other believers as to our ministry assignments from Him. (3) May we then trust in Christ and serve Him in full assurance that our labor is not in vain in Him, 1 Corinthians 15:58.*