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# BIBLE TALK

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This week the question is: **"Was John's baptism from heaven or of men?"**

In Matthew 21 Jesus cleansed the temple. He had driven out of the temple everyone who was buying and selling and making the temple a market place. Some people began to question His right to do this. Listen to the story as Matthew relates it:

## **Matthew 21:23-27**

<sup>23</sup> Now when He came into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people confronted Him as He was teaching, and said, "By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority?"

<sup>24</sup> But Jesus answered and said to them, "I also will ask you one thing, which if you tell Me, I likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things:

<sup>25</sup> "The baptism of John; where was it from? From heaven or from men?" And they reasoned among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' He will say to us, 'Why then did you not believe him?'

<sup>26</sup> "But if we say, 'From men,' we fear the multitude, for all count John as a prophet."

<sup>27</sup> So they answered Jesus and said, "We do not know." And He said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things."

These chief priests and elders were usually the ones trying to entrap Jesus, but here they found themselves in a dilemma. If they admitted that John's baptism was from heaven, Jesus would respond by asking why they did not accept John's testimony which he gave of Jesus. John had testified that Jesus was the "Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world" (Jn. 1:29). They did not want to accept this testimony, but on the other hand they did not want to say John's baptism was from men. Most of the common people standing nearby believed that John was truly a prophet of God and for these chief priests and elders to reject John would mean certain political disaster to say the least and perhaps even a riot and a mob beating at worst.

Rather than answering Jesus' question, these chief priests took the coward's way out and said they could not tell from whence John's baptism came.

## **APPLICATION**

My friend, think about this for just a moment. If John's baptism was from men, if it had originated by men, and had been invented by men, then his baptism would not have been required. It would not be essential to obey for no man has the right to make up his own religious laws and then bind them on others.

On the other hand, if John's baptism was from heaven, men should have been obeying it. If it was from heaven, if it had originated in the mind of God, and if God had commanded it, then it was essential for men to receive John's baptism.

### **Luke 7:29-30**

<sup>29</sup> And when all the people heard Him, even the tax collectors justified God, having been baptized with the baptism of John.

<sup>30</sup> But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the will of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him.

Listen to this again. To reject the baptism of John was to reject the "will of God" because John's baptism did not originate with men, but came from heaven!

As great as John was and as great as His baptism was, do you realize that there was one greater than John? In speaking about Christ, John said:

### **Mark 1:7**

<sup>7</sup> ... "There comes One after me who is mightier than I, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and loose.

Since Jesus was greater than John, that means the baptism Jesus commanded is greater than John's. If men rejected the will of God by refusing John's baptism, would they not also be rejecting God's will by rejecting Jesus' baptism? Yes indeed.

Jesus, after His resurrection, commanded His apostles to go into all the world and preach to everyone who would listen. Here is what Jesus said about baptism:

### **Mark 16:16**

<sup>16</sup> "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.

Notice that baptism by itself is no good. One must believe first. On the other hand, belief by itself is no good. One must also be baptized in order to be saved. So Jesus taught that men must believe and be baptized in order to be saved.

In Acts chapter 8 a Eunuch asked:

### **Acts 8:36-37**

<sup>36</sup> Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, "See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?"

<sup>37</sup> Then Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."

Notice, the thing that kept the Eunuch from being baptized was belief. If he believed he could be baptized. The reason for this is because Jesus commanded, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved." Upon hearing this the Eunuch confessed that he believed Jesus to be the Son of God.

### **Acts 8:38**

<sup>38</sup> So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him.

From this we learn that the baptism commanded by the Lord is immersion - a going down into the water. Sprinkling and pouring water came from men, but baptism by immersion came from heaven.

So, the baptism of John was important, but the baptism of Jesus supersedes it. Jesus' baptism is far more important because Jesus is far greater. When one is baptized with the baptism of Jesus his sins are washed away:

### **Acts 22:16**

<sup>16</sup> 'And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.'

The baptism of Jesus is for the remission of sins:

**Acts 2:38**

<sup>38</sup> Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The baptism of Jesus is the beginning of a new life in Christ:

**Romans 6:3-4**

<sup>3</sup> Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?

<sup>4</sup> Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

The baptism of Jesus puts one into Christ:

**Galatians 3:27**

<sup>27</sup> For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

The baptism of Jesus puts the sinner into fellowship with all three members of the Godhead:

**Matthew 28:19**

<sup>19</sup> "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

If you have never been immersed into Christ in the right way, or for the right reason, we would encourage you to do so, because the baptism of Jesus is truly from heaven.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

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