

Title: The Meaning of Epiphany

References :

Text : "Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth."
(I Samuel 3:9)

Notes for Servants :

Objectives

General: We should obey God=s ordinances and perform His will even when we do not understand its wisdom.

Specific:

The Lesson should aim the following :

- A. The purpose of Christ=s baptism by John.
- B. The purpose of our baptism by the Holy Spirit.

Instruction :

1. Review last week's lesson.
2. Give a brief description about the church occasion(s) for the coming week.
3. Why did not John want to baptize Christ?
4. Why did John want to be baptized of Christ?
5. What are the differences between the two baptisms?

Bible Verse

A.. *it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness.*@ (Matthew 3:15)

Lesson :

Please, see attached sheets.

The Meaning of Epiphany

Introduction

Christ came to be baptized of John in the Jordan, but John at first forbade Him. Jesus insisted accepting John=s sincere feelings. The heavens were open and the Spirit of God came upon Him as a dove and the voice of the Father came from heaven saying: *AThis is my beloved Son, I whom I am well pleased.*@ (Matthew 3:17)

At Christ's baptism there was a manifestation of the three Persons in the sacred Trinity. The Father confirming the Son to be Mediator; the Son solemnly starting the work of salvation; the Holy Spirit descending on Him, to be through His mediation communicated to His people. This is why it is also called *ATheophany*@.

Why Did Not John Want to Baptize Christ

AI have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?@ (Matthew 3:14)

John saw Jesus coming to be baptized of him and could not understand how Christ, the Son of God who is separated from sin would come to be baptized by a sinner, as a sinner and among sinners.

John at first refused to baptize Christ in the same manner as Peter refused to let Jesus wash his feet. Out of a deep knowledge of their shortcomings they thought it was incredible that the Lord Jesus would humble Himself below them.

John=s modesty thought that it was too great of an honor that Christ would come to be baptized of him, just as his mother, Elizabeth had done to Saint Mary when she visited her. *AAnd whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?*@ (Luke 1:43)

Christ great humility is so surprising as to appear at first incredible even to the strongest believers. It is so deep and mysterious that we cannot explain it except by faith and submission.

Why Did John Want to Be Baptized of Christ

John=s mission was to prepare the way of Christ by calling people=s hearts to repentance. Therefore, he baptized them by water for cleansing.

He knew very well and proclaimed that Christ would baptize the people by the Holy Spirit and fire. *Alndeed I baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that comest after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you*

with the Holy Ghost, and with fire (Matthew 3:11)

John the Baptist understood that he needed to be baptized with the baptism of Jesus in order to be saved even though he was filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb. The pure who have the Spirit of God are more sensible to their infirmities and feel that they always need more of God's Spirit. Even the holiest people need to submit to God to be saved.

Some Jews thought that John the Baptist was the Messiah, but before the multitudes he publicly acknowledged that Christ is the true Messiah the Lamb of God.

What Is The Difference Between The Two Baptisms

The baptism of John was a message from God to His people. It was a divine institution through a prophet and a messenger from God. Therefore, Christ showed His readiness to comply with all of God's righteous ordinances and precepts. By His baptism, Jesus also justified God and approved His wisdom in sending John to prepare His way.

Jesus submitted Himself to the baptism of John because it was from God, unlike to the washing imposed by the Pharisees which was a human invention. Jesus justified His disciples in refusing to comply with it.

The baptism of Jesus is by the Holy Spirit Who descended on the Apostles on the day of Pentecost. It is a purifying and cleansing power. It alone can restore the purity of our original state before the fall. It is a burial of the fallen nature with Christ in the tomb and putting on a renewed nature.

By the baptism of the Holy Spirit, we start our mission in testifying to God in the same way as Christ started his mission of salvation by being baptized.

In baptism we become members of Christ's body, the Church. In the Old Testament, circumcision was the sign in the flesh of being of God's chosen people. Without baptism we can not be saved

Conclusion

- + Christ's humility is so surprising, that even the strongest believers at first can hardly believe it.
- + Those who have the Spirit of God continually feel that they need more.
- + It is important to fulfill all righteousness, to obey every Divine institution, and to be ready to comply with all God's righteous precepts.
- + In and through Christ, the heavens are opened to the children of men.

A.. it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness.@ (Matthew 3:15)