

Why did Jesus need to be baptized?

Question: Since baptism represents repenting from your sins, and since Jesus never sinned, why did He need to be baptized?

Answer: Since Jesus was sinless, His baptism wasn't for the purpose of repentance. Jesus told John the Baptist, "For in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matt. 3:15). What did He mean by "to fulfill all righteousness"?

The Law had no requirements about baptism, so Jesus did not mean anything having to do with moral or ceremonial righteousness in the Law. His baptism served three purposes:

1) To identify Himself with sinners.

Since the Messiah was to provide righteousness to sinners, His baptism was for the purpose of identifying with the people He came to save.

2) As a picture of His future death, burial, and resurrection.

Baptism represents dying to our old self, being buried, and rising from the dead to walk in a new way of life (see Romans 6:4-5). His baptism was a type or picture of His future death, burial, and resurrection which would "fulfill all righteousness."

3) To mark the beginning of His ministry.

John's purpose was to prepare the way for the way for the Messiah. He told people, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 3:2) His baptism marked the end of His preparation time (going under the water) and the beginning of His ministry (coming out of the water). Immediately after Jesus came out of the water, God spoke from heaven "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased" and the Holy Spirit descended on Him like a dove. This confirmed that He was the Messiah and the Holy Spirit empowered Him to perform miracles.

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