

## The Mind of Christ Class 14

### May 1, 2019

We talked last week about the different aspects of the message of John the Baptist. His baptism was merely with water, and when Jesus would come, He would baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

1. So the first thing we learned was that John's baptism was with water.
2. The second thing was that Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit.
3. The third thing John had to say about Jesus is found in **Matt. 3:11-12; Mark 1:7-8 and Luke 3:15-18**, and is that John the Baptist knows his place. The One coming, he says, is mightier than I. Throughout the gospels, there seems to be a large concern for **greatness** ... of the pecking order. That's kind of natural in life but in some ways, for me, it's a little unexpected that the followers of Jesus would have to deal with a subject like "who is the greatest". I mean, that's a very worldly concept, but I guess it just shows how normal they were as people. So it came up in the preaching of John the Baptist. He was proactive, while the Apostles had to be instructed. John was **proactive** in the matter and he made sure that no one thought he was greater than he was.

But if you put this in the context of them looking for the Messiah, and perhaps being confused that John might **be** the Messiah, when he came preaching and everybody was coming out to him not knowing any better, maybe they thought that "he" was the Messiah, he needs to make it very clear that that is not who he is. So he says that Someone greater is coming. It is interesting that John pronounces Jesus is great, and Jesus pronounces that John the Baptist is the greatest man that has ever been born! Matthew 11:11, "[Truly I tell you, among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist...](#)"

So, just as John is saying how great Jesus is, Jesus is saying how great John is. This is kind of interesting because of the whole idea [that if you humble yourself you will be exalted ...the last shall be first and the first shall be last](#) (Matthew 23:12), but Jesus adds "[yet even those in the kingdom of heaven is greater than John.](#) (Matthew 11:11)." So, in one way, He's not simply saying that John is great – He's saying that everyone in the Kingdom is great. Just because we recognize that we're not greater than Jesus doesn't mean that we are not great! It just means that we are great, but putting it in perspective.

So Jesus also got in the mix with the Apostles when their talk turned to who was greatest in Luke 9:46. ([An argument started among the disciples as to which of them would be the greatest.](#)) Jesus was concerned about the reality of authority and identity. So, throughout the ministry of Jesus, we see Him at various times addressing this idea of authority: who has the power, who has the authority and what is the identity of the person. You'll see this come up in subtle ways in all through the ministry of Jesus, like when the coin was presented to Him and they said, "Shall we pay taxes to Caesar or not?" Matt. 22:17. Jesus answer is that you give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and to God what belongs to God" (v. 21). Jesus recognized the authority of Caesar . He didn't say

that Caesar has no authority. He just basically said that when Caesar stays in his lane, he has authority.

So, the Apostles were **given** authority. Even when Jesus sent them out, they were given authority to do what Jesus commanded them to do – but it was a delegated authority. So, I guess the “take-away” is that in relationship to Christ, ***we have to understand the delegated authority we have, and we have to understand our identity as it relates to the identity of Christ.*** Now, if we can keep those two things straight, we’ll probably be pretty good. It’s when we begin to think that we have more authority than we really do, **OR** when we think we’re somebody we’re not, that we get ourselves into trouble. So, ***who a person is and the task that they have been given is important to know.***

We see that again on the Mount of Transfiguration – because who shows up on the mountain with Jesus? Moses and Elijah are there. But when the voice comes out of heaven, even though Moses had his place as the Law Giver, and Elijah had his place as Prophet, when the voice came out of heaven, it said, **“This is my Son. Listen to Him.”** He wasn’t saying that Moses didn’t have a place or he didn’t have authority. In fact, if you go back and read the story of Moses, one of the biggest things that is going on is the authority of Moses. The people were bucking that authority and trying to challenge the authority of Moses.

Elijah was also looked at, particularly by Ahab and Jezebel, as a prophet who was trying to demean ***their*** authority, and so they struck back at him and try to make it look like he had no authority ... he wasn’t a real prophet. So we have this idea of identity: who are you? But Jesus, of course, has the greater authority. But this is not determined by men. It is God who tells us who we are and what authority we have. Jesus knew who He was, and that He had all authority. So, that is one of the issues that John brings up.

In Luke 3:17, he explains the work of Jesus in a figure ... He wields a winnowing fork. The purpose of a winnowing fork is to separate the wheat from the chaff. It is a large fork used to grab the wheat and throw it up into the air. As it goes up in the air, (and in Matthew, he uses the term “fan” – 3:12 KJV). Usually the terms are used in conjunction with each other. Someone would throw the wheat up in the air and someone else would have a fan to be blowing on it. After throwing it up long enough and blowing on it long enough, the chaff which was lighter would be blown away, and the heavier wheat would fall back to the threshing floor. The chaff would separate from the wheat and what would be left would be the wheat on the floor. Sometimes they would take that wheat and put it under the stones and the animals would come and tread it out to make it into flour.

So, the winnowing fork used to divide the wheat from the chaff ... **But I want you to get this picture really in your head. These things don’t happen by accident. This is a deliberate tossing up of the chaff and doing it over and over again into the air. In other words, you have to **disturb the wheat to get the chaff out of it.** That’s the picture of it. In fact, it **has to be *disturbed* or *agitated***, moved or separated. That is what winnowing is! It is the agitation of something. When you throw it up in the air you are agitating it, you’re disturbing it. You are getting it out of its comfort zone, if you will... Through that process, the chaff is separated and the wheat remains. Then it says, two things are going to happen:**

1. The wheat is going to be gathered into barns
2. The chaff is going to be burned up in fire.

**This is the ministry of Jesus!** Now again, when was the last time you heard someone go out and say, “Let me tell you what the ministry of Jesus is about?” Do they mention the winnowing fork in his hand? Do they say He is going to go into your life and He is going to agitate you? He is going to disturb you. He is going to throw you up in the air and blow on you, and hopefully the chaff is going to fall off you and blow away and be burned up and what is left, will be a “refined” you. This is also to bring people to repentance. He is blowing up whatever needs to be gotten out of our lives.

OR you can look at it as a division between the sheep and the goats. The chaff would be those who are worthless and the wheat being those who are worthy. The stuff you keep, the stuff that you eat, versus what is useless. It is only good to be burned up.

There is that separation there. It’s like the salt that loses its saltiness. What is it good for? It’s not good for going on the food. It’s worthless, so you just throw it out and it’s trodden under the foot of men. This same thing is being understood here in the ministry of Jesus.

Imagine if YOU had the responsibility of deciding what is chaff and what is wheat in the lives of every person that you come in contact with! What if it was YOUR responsibility to hold the winnowing fork in your hand ... and to agitate people ... and to make a decision about whether or not they are chaff or wheat? Will they go into the barn or will they be burned up? Because Jesus is the One who is baptizing with the Holy Spirit, (those are the ones in the barn) or baptizing with fire (the chaff). So, everybody gets a baptism. It just **depends** on which baptism you want ... the baptism with the Holy Spirit or the baptism with fire! Jesus is the One doing it with the winnowing fork and the fan.

**Buffy:** I thought Jesus goes after everyone and tires to save them.

**Rod:** Yes. The good news is – even if you are chaff, you can turn into wheat. But if you want to be chaff, you can just be chaff. You get blown away and get burned up. So, you’re right. This is why Jesus said, I didn’t come to bring peace on earth, but to bring a sword. (Matthew 10:33-34 “[Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.](#)” I came to divide. I came to separate . . . one from the other ... the sheep from the goats. Sometimes people in your own household:

{[Matthew 10:35 ‘For I have come to turn ““a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—a man’s enemies will be the members of his own household.’](#)}

There is a division, a separation of this person from this person that is occurring in the ministry of Jesus. He is always separating people out. Which way are you going to go? Now He gives them a choice. So everybody has to make a choice of which way they want to go. But Jesus is not leaving you alone. He’s not leaving anybody alone. He is saying that **you** have to decide. So I would imagine that this responsibility weighs heavy

on His heart – knowing that He has the ultimate authority in heaven and on earth deciding who goes to Heaven and who goes to Hell.

**Sharon:** We know that later in Scripture it talks about hardness of heart. Could you speak to that for a moment?

**Rod:** Well, the idea of the hardening of heart ... in fact, one of the passages that deals directly with that is Hebrews 6, and it's a very difficult passage to understand in *some* ways. It begins in Hebrews 5:11-14, where he says, "We have much to say about this, but it is hard to make it clear to you because you no longer try to understand. <sup>12</sup> In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! <sup>13</sup> Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. <sup>14</sup> But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

Then in Chapter 6:1 He says, "Therefore let us move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken forward to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, <sup>2</sup> instruction about cleansing rites, (washings or baptisms) the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. <sup>3</sup> And God permitting, we will do so."

In other words, if we stay in that place of spiritual immaturity, ***which some people will do that because they can***...if God permits us to do that. But he continues in v. 4-8 "It is impossible\* for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift and who have shared in the Holy Spirit, <sup>5</sup> who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age <sup>6</sup> and who have fallen away, (it is impossible\*) to be brought back to repentance. To their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace. <sup>7</sup> Land that drinks in the rain often falling on it and that produces a crop useful to those for whom it is farmed receives the blessing of God. <sup>8</sup> But land that produces thorns and thistles is worthless and is in danger of being cursed. In the end it will be burned". { \* impossible αδυνατον – see note at end. cc }

Now again, in these passages, He is talking about people who are exposed. They are exposed to the good things of God. In their exposure to it, they build up a tolerance for it. They build up an immunity to it. It's like the immune system where if you are exposed to something long enough, you build up an immunity to it so it doesn't effect you anymore.

It can be the same way with the word of God. You can hear the Word of God, and if you are not responsive to it – if you're not obedient to it, if you're not listening and obeying it, then it can be just like rain that falls on the ground. You know, just because it rains, (go look at my yard), it doesn't mean that everything that grows there is good. There is grass. But that rain will grow weeds just like it will grow grass. In fact, sometimes the weeds grow a lot better than the grass.

What he is saying here is it's a dangerous thing to hear the Word of God and not respond to it. That's how 'hardness' begins. That is how a person becomes hardened. It is when they hear something, and it just rolls off their back. They just don't listen to it. They just

put it aside. With time, it gets easier and easier and easier for them to think, “Well, I've heard that before. I've heard that before.” That is when the heart gets hardened. Sometimes there are things that happen that really break through that hardness. It gets them down and really shakes the person up. Then they think, “Wow.” And you can see it happen.

But then you see somebody like Paul, for instance. Paul was **convinced** that he was doing the right things. He was convinced that he was **obeying** God. He was an **obedient** person. So when the truth was presented to him that Jesus was real, he **responded** to it. He immediately changed, repented and showed that he didn't have a hard heart. He had a **deceived** heart, but it wasn't a hard heart.

**Mike:** I think that's one of the reasons God chose Paul. He knew his heart and knew that he was zealous for Him. He wanted to get him on the right team.

**Rod:** Yes. Yes. Absolutely, and I think that's one of the reasons we've been so successful in places like Haiti. We have a lot of people over there who love Jesus and they love the Lord but they've never really been taught. So they have a very superficial knowledge of it. They have a big *zeal*, and are *willing* to be obedient, but they just need someone to show them *how* to be obedient. We teach them, and when they begin to see that, it's just amazing to me. We had four more denominational preachers who were baptized recently in the Dominican Republic.

**Sharon:** I don't want to take us too far off course, so just stop me, shut me down, but it seems to me from what we just read, it threw all kinds of holes through the “once saved always saved” theory.

**Rod:** I think it does. And when you go to chapter 10:26-30, it continues the theme there because he uses some of the same language there about one who has been enlightened. <sup>26</sup> If we deliberately keep on sinning **after we have received the knowledge of the truth**, no sacrifice for sins is left, <sup>27</sup> but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. <sup>28</sup> Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. <sup>29</sup> **How much more severely do you think someone deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified them, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace?** He's comparing sin “under the law” and sin “after the sacrifice of Christ”.

The point here is that deliberate, willful disobedience to God will cause you not only to be hardened in heart, but also to face the judgment for that. Yes, I believe that Scripture teaches that it is difficult to be lost once we're saved, but it's not impossible. But the Hebrews 6 passage says that there **can** be an impossibility of restoring someone who was once saved and got lost again. There is an impossibility of restoring that person. Okay. **Now, when they reach that point of impossibility, only God knows.** It's not our job to determine that. We continue to work with anybody for their good. So **we** don't decide. Even in cases where someone is under church discipline, and they are being withdrawn from, if you will, (we're not participating with them in the same way), but that's not for the purpose of determining whether or not they have a hard heart and they're going to be

lost forever. That's in order to get their attention and to try to bring them back to the truth.

**Carole:** It's an act of love

**Rod:** It's an act of love, yes. So Jesus knows the barn and he knows the unquenchable fire. And it's interesting the way he says the fire is unquenchable. The barn (Matthew 3:12 – αποθηκη - apothekay) is the word where we get apothecary from. We don't use that word much anymore but back in the pioneer days it talked about the apothecary. It simply means a place to store things. It was a storehouse – used to store something.

The **fire** is a πυρι ασβεστω - (puri asbestos – a **fire** unquenchable). This fire is inextinguishable. The material Asbestos “resists heat”. {It is defined as a “heat-resistant toxic and natural mineral that can be woven into fabrics, and is used in fire-resistant and insulating materials such as brake linings.”} Asbestos can be exposed to high heat and will not easily be burned up. He uses that to describe the kind of fire that can reach high heat and not be extinguished ... to not burn all the fuel up. Again, I'll leave it to you to try to figure out what all the implications are of that. It's a fire that cannot be put out.

Mark 9:43 describes this **fire** as Hell or Gehenna. This is based on the idea of the Valley of Hinnom {a small valley in Jerusalem. It was cursed in Jeremiah 7:31 and 19:2-6} Mark says, “If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, **where the fire never goes out.**”

Gehenna was a dump, much like those seen in the gullies of Haiti. If you ride through the streets of Port Au Prince during the **dry** times when water isn't running through there, they just throw trash into the gullies and it's constantly burning. Smoke comes up out of it day and night because they are constantly throwing of trash into the fires and the gullies. If you go up into the mountains over Port Au Prince and you look down over the mountains, it's constantly smoky. The environment in Port Au Prince is probably very toxic and if you had emphysema, you would not want to live there.

The fires never go out according to the Bible. The picture is more than an illustration to Jesus. He spoke of it more often than any other. He would be the One to judge whether a person would **go** there or not. “He” would throw people into this.

This raises for me, the question of whether this is a fire meant to torture a person eternally, or whether it is a means by which people are burned up or annihilated. I am not going to go into that tonight, but that is a question that we need to consider more seriously. ‘What is the purpose of Hell’? Is the purpose of Hell to torture a person for an eternity, and that means forever and ever without end, or is it a means by which a person; body, soul, and spirit is annihilated—ceases to exist? If you want to talk about that another time, I'll tell you what I think about that. But I do think there is enough evidence to consider both sides of that question.

For Jesus, neither the barn nor the fire is a baptism that no one should desire. In Luke 3:18 Luke tells us, “**And with many other words John exhorted the people and proclaimed the good news to them.**” John used many other exhortations. To exhort is to

call upon, to admonish, or to persuade people. When he's talking about these kinds of things, he is using the term for preaching as an exhortation.

You will see that same word used in regard to the book of Hebrews. It is an exhortation. It will say at the very end, "thank you for putting up with my short exhortation – Hebrews 13:22. (It's a 13 chapter exhortation). The word exhortation is "παρακλινσεως" in Greek. Much of it is warning people not to allow themselves to become hardened in sin (3:12-13) "See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. <sup>13</sup> But encourage one another daily, **as long as it is called "Today,"** so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness." He is telling them not to be deceived by sin. He tells them to encourage one another or exhort one another **daily**. Do not allow a deceitful heart to grow up within you.

The word "preached" means to evangelize. John was an **evangelist** and his method was **exhortation**. He tried to persuade people to repent to the rule of Christ in their lives even in the way they conduct themselves in their personal affairs.

Back to Matthew 3:12, some additional words are used and I've alluded to this. Instead of "winnowing fork" he uses the word "fan". It means "to spit out" and has two possible meanings in English: to fan something or to spit something out. It is also the idea of thoroughly cleansing the threshing floor. The threshing floor is being winnowed or being fanned until it is thoroughly cleansed. This is no half-way job. No one will escape the process. No grain of wheat will be left. It is a thorough process. There is nobody who is going to escape the winnowing fork or the fan. At the end of it all, the threshing floor will be cleaned.

Regarding the fate of the chaff, Matthew says it will be consumed with inextinguishable fire. Luke said it will burn up. Jesus' thinking, regarding the outcome of his work, certainly puts some great urgency to it, and made him constantly know how important His mission was.

So, in our trying to get into the thinking of Jesus, we have to try to capture the urgency Jesus lived with every day of His life. Knowing how important His ministry was, and literally, how the souls of every person who ever lived and ever would live, was at stake, everybody would be going through this process of separation, one from the other. It even talks about in Matthew 24:40-41, "Then there will be two men in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. <sup>41</sup> Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one will be left." There is this constant idea of separation: of light and darkness; you are either in the sheep pen or you're not in the sheep pen. You are either a branch on the vine that is bearing fruit, or you are being cut off and thrown into the fire. There is a constant separation.

But there is also, like in Romans 11, the idea of being grafted back in. There is a way to be put back into it. You may be separated **from** it but you can be put back **into** it.

This is the thinking that Jesus lived with, I believe, every day of His life. How urgent it was every, person he saw every day of His life. That is why, when the apostles were sent out later on the limited commission to go into every Jewish village, He told them to go to

a house and they should inquire there and determine whether or not someone was worthy or not worthy. Were they worthy or not worthy? Another separation was occurring.

We have about 15 minutes left so let's turn to Matthew 3:13-17, Mark 1:9-11, and Luke 1:21-23. This is a new section. This is about Jesus' baptism.

### **Matthew 3:13-17**

<sup>13</sup> Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. <sup>14</sup> But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?"

<sup>15</sup> Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for **us** to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented.

<sup>16</sup> As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. <sup>17</sup> And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

### **Mark 1:9-11**

At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan, <sup>10</sup> Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. <sup>11</sup> And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

### **Luke 3:21-23**

When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened <sup>22</sup> and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

<sup>23</sup> Now Jesus himself was about thirty years old when he began his ministry.

So in this section about Jesus' baptism, the preliminary thoughts are that Jesus' desire or need to be baptized was fundamentally different from everyone else's desire or need. Everybody else who was coming to John was told to repent, and we had quite a bit of explanation about repentance. Jesus' action was fundamentally different. It's the same action but it is for different reasons.

However, there is one common denominator other than the actual baptism itself. In all cases, baptism was an opportunity for God to do something, and I believe, fundamentally, that we need to look at baptism in that way. Baptism is not just an opportunity for **us** to do something. It is not even **primarily** an opportunity for **us** to do something. It is **primarily** an opportunity for **God** to do something.

Baptism is something that we **submit** to. It's passive. It is not active. God is the active person in the baptism. Our **faith** may be active, our **repentance** may be active, but the **baptism** itself is **passive**. We are *baptized*. Now we can be active in baptizing other people, and that's something we do. But that's a minor role ... that's a supporting role. But what is God doing in the actual baptism?

So the common denominator for everyone, including Jesus, is an opportunity for **God** to **do** something.

For most, or for all, this action of God includes forgiveness. For Jesus, it provided God the opportunity to reveal to Israel the **source** of that forgiveness or righteousness!

Obviously, Jesus didn't need forgiveness—personal forgiveness. But it was an opportunity for God to reveal to Israel, and to all who were there, and all of **us** through the Scriptures, to reveal the One *through whom He would* save the world. *Baptism* was the opportunity for God to do that.

Matthew has the most complete account. Both Mark and Matthew mention that Jesus came to the Jordan from Galilee and Mark says that He came from **Nazareth** of Galilee. I was thinking about the significance of that. For me, the significance of that is the fact that He was **home** before he started His public ministry. So there is no indication that Jesus left home at age 20 and gone somewhere else for 13 years and then he showed up with John. When Jesus came to John, He came from Nazareth where He was raised. He came from His home town. So, again, we don't know **everything** He was doing during that adult time, but we know that He was in Nazareth and that is where He left to start His ministry from there. Jesus had been with His earthly family among people who knew Him as a boy. He wasn't off at some University or some exotic mission. One reason I say that is because some people believe that Jesus came over here for a while ... to America, and worked among the American Indians. They believe that the American Indians were the ten lost tribes of Israel. This is a Mormon belief.

Surely the ties to His people had to be undone in some sense. For Jesus to walk out the door to publically accept his life's mission we have to go back to another scene that we looked at early on. He had to **let go** ... He had to **grab hold** ... and He had to **become**. So that is a kind of theme for a lot of what Jesus did.

So then they said that Jesus arrived ... to be by the side of, to approach, He arrived, he's here. He reported to duty. He left home and showed up for duty. The Marine has landed, if you will. He takes center stage. All of heaven must have been watching that day. It was an important day. This was the first day of the ministry of Christ. Jesus steps from the shadows and into the light and baptism is the way of introduction. He come specifically to be baptized by John. Later, John will tell us more about this in John Chapter 1.

John forbade Jesus. The word means that he tried to hinder Him, to restrain Him or prohibit Him. It is interesting, I think, that one of Jesus' first public acts commanded by His Father was opposed, even for noble purposes, by one of the most faithful servants of God ever born.

*This becomes a theme of His life.* He pursues the will of God. Jesus is always pursuing the will of God and others get in His way trying to prevent Him ... even people who are on His side. They are constantly trying to prevent Him from doing what He came to do.

Peter did this in Matthew, Chapter 16:21-23. Jesus announced that He was going to the cross and Peter said 'no you're not. I'm not going to let you'.

<sup>21</sup>“ From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

<sup>22</sup> Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. “Never, Lord!” he said. “This shall never happen to you!”

And Jesus answer was “Get behind me, Satan:

<sup>23</sup> Jesus turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; **you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.**”

Jesus’ mind was to obey the will of the Father. John was showing respect, but he still was in the roll of a restrainer.

This brings to **my** mind, “what is it that **I** want to be in this relationship to Jesus?” I think, sometimes, the apostles, and John, thought that they were in a protective or they kind of had to manage Him. They were in a managing roll for Jesus. They felt that He was like some movie star that they had to manage. And Jesus was basically saying, “Get out of My **way**. You’re supposed to be **following Me**. Get **behind me** and **follow!** Don’t get out in front of me so I have to stumble over you or have to step over you to get to where I’m going. Fall in behind. **I** know where I am going. **You** don’t know where I’m going.” Even that conversation in John Chapter 14:3-7--

<sup>3</sup> And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. <sup>4</sup> ***You know the way to the place where I am going.***”

<sup>5</sup> Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so ***how can we know the way?***”

<sup>6</sup> Jesus answered, “***I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*** <sup>7</sup> If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.”

Jesus told Thomas that they knew where He was going, but Thomas said ‘how can we know?’ And Jesus said, ***I am the way and the truth and the life. You can’t get to the Father except through Me.*** He’s saying, “You’re **right**. You **don’t** know where you’re going! Fall in behind me and don’t get in My way. It’ll be better that way.” But this is a theme in Jesus’ life.

So where am **I** in this picture? Do I sometimes want to manage Jesus, and manage my relationship with Him? Or do I just fall in behind Him wherever He leads **that’s** where I’m going to go!

John has in mind that the baptizer is greater than the one being baptized. But John already said he knows that he’s not greater. He already said that. But now he’s acting as if he **is** greater, as if he knows better than Jesus does.

**Carole:** It's understandable though. You are greater than I am. You are Holy. I'm not. I **can't** baptize you. So we can understand where he's coming from.

**Rod:** Right ... exactly. He is speaking from a noble **purpose**. I'm not saying John had some evil intent in his heart. It's just that, unwittingly, he was getting in the way of this. He had no problem baptizing all the others because of his commission from God. But Jesus was different for him. Jesus should have baptized John, he thought. That's what John thought.

And that raises the question, "who **did** baptize John?" Who baptized the baptizer? Have you ever thought about that? Hmm ... I don't know. John says he **needed** to be baptized by Jesus. I wonder if Jesus baptized him before the day was over. I don't know.

So Jesus words to John regarding the purpose of His baptism are curious to me. Again, what was Jesus thinking? He says three things:

**1. Permit** now – those are the literal words.

He was telling John to let go of the objection, to remove the obstacles, and to act on Jesus' will rather than on John's will. This was a mild struggle between Jesus' will and John's will. Hebrews 6:1 says, "**Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ ...** The word for leave, is the same word as "permit" in Matthew 3:15...**permit** it for now.

Leaving is something that you **let go of**. You **leave**. Matthew 5:40 says "give up your shirt or tunic". Let go of it. This is about "**letting go**" at the present moment. There are two ways to take this phrase. You either 'permit it for now' or "permit it now." In other words, "John, stop hindering Me. Permit it...**now**." Get me in the water...we're going to do this baptism. I'm not sure, but Jesus definitely knew what was right, and persuaded John to cooperate.

**2. Jesus** speaks of "**what is fitting**" – We are going to do what is **fitting**.

To us, and not JUST for Jesus ... it is **right** or **proper**. It is becoming. It is suitable. It's decorous {in keeping with good taste}. It's same word used in Ephesians 5:3 speaking about things that are improper for God's holy people to do ... or the attire that suits women professing godliness. Or the thing that makes some practice "fitting" as a value associated with righteousness, Holiness and goodness. There are certain things that are fitting or appropriate for righteousness, Holiness and goodness.

So does this act express this value? In other words, what is the value? We do what is fitting and what is of value. If so, it is fitting. Otherwise, it is out of place. In other words, John was thinking that this was out of place. "It's out of place for Jesus to be baptized by me". Jesus is saying, "No it's not. This is the most fitting thing you're going to do today. This is the most apropos thing that you are going to do today. You may not understand it. But this is suitable." So the baptism was fitting or proper. And again, it's not just proper for Jesus but it was also for John since he was a participant, and he needed to agree ... not to be coerced to do something he could not do in his spirit. John yielded or submitted to the will of Jesus.

So many conflicts center in what people **think** is proper and not proper. So what is the value to which Jesus appeals? And we'll take that up when we talk about righteousness.

**Sharon:** I wonder, the word "us". Is it referring to John and Jesus, or to John, Jesus and all the rest of us?

**Rod:** I believe it is referring to John and Jesus. When Jesus says it is proper for *us* to be doing this today.

Go to John Chapter 1.

There is no mystery as to why this baptism is taking place. This is a pre-arranged sign by God. John has already been told about this, and that's another reason why John should not have been opposing Jesus. He already knew ... God had already told him that this was the means by which to reveal the Messiah to the world.

### **Read John 1:32-34**

John had already said,

"I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. <sup>33</sup> And I myself did not know him, but the **one who sent me to baptize** with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' <sup>34</sup> I have seen and I testify that this is God's Chosen One."

So this was fitting. It was appropriate because God had said it was appropriate. We'll look at it more next week. And we'll look at the righteousness part. It was fitting for all "righteousness". What makes it fitting for righteousness within this context? We'll find out what makes it fitting for righteousness.

### **\* Added Note:**

{My comment on Hebrews 6:4-6 – (\* impossible αδυνατον – also in Luke 11:7-cc) is to show that the word impossible means "impossible without great difficulty". It is used in Luke 11:7 "Suppose you have a friend and you go to him at midnight and say, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; <sup>6</sup> a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have no food to offer him.' <sup>7</sup> And suppose the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children and I are in bed. **I can't** get up and give you anything.' <sup>8</sup> I tell you, even though he will not get up and give you the bread because of friendship, yet because of your shameless audacity he will surely get up and give you as much as you need. The word for can't is ου δυναμαι meaning **I cannot**. It is from the word αδυνατον and means "impossible without great difficulty".}