



The Crooked Shall Become Straight

Text: Luke 3:1-22

Tony Chute, Interim Pastor

Overview: As foretold in the Old Testament and narrated by Luke, the ministry of John the Baptist served as preparation for the greater ministry of Jesus. His call to repentance for the forgiveness of sins was symbolized by baptism, a rite that signified a change of heart and status before God. John resisted the lure of popularity by calling for genuine repentance from those who presumed on God's grace, and he instructed sincere penitents on how to live for the Lord in their daily lives. As the forerunner to Jesus, John also pointed people to the work of Christ, without which the ritual of baptism has no ultimate effect. The superiority of Jesus in that regard is evident through his personal identification with sinners, his approval by God the Father, and his gift of the Holy Spirit.

01. Proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ begins with stating the bad news about humanity. All of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God and none of us likes to hear this about ourselves.

02. Baptism is the natural outward response to the inner work of regeneration in our lives. It therefore belongs to disciples of Jesus who evidence repentance from sin and a willingness to grow.

03. While baptism is important, salvation comes through the finished work of Christ. Therefore, no one will go to heaven because of a formality and no one will go to hell due to a technicality.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION & DISCOVERY

1. Have you been baptized? If so, what do you recall about your baptism? Do you feel that you were adequately prepared to be baptized? If you have not been baptized, what is keeping you from following this command from Jesus?

2. Read Romans 6:1-14. What does this text suggest about our identification with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection? How does the act of being immersed during baptism symbolize the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ? What promises do you find in this text to assure you that the work of Christ is truly the basis of our salvation?

3. Read Matthew 3:13-17. Why was John hesitant to baptize Jesus? Since Jesus never sinned, what was the purpose of his baptism?

4. Colossians 2:11-12 is often used to support infant baptism as a replacement for the rite of circumcision in the Old Testament (see Genesis 17:1-14). Do you find Paul referring to a literal or spiritual circumcision in this text? How does your conclusion influence your understanding of who should be baptized?

5. Some people who were baptized at a young age ask to be baptized again because they were not as serious about following the Lord at the time. Can you find any evidence for using baptism as a way to recommit ourselves to the Lord? If not, have you considered that our real focus should be on the Lord's commitment to us due to the work of Christ? See 2 Timothy 2:11-13 for further consideration.

For Further Reading: Thomas Schreiner and Shawn Wright, *Believer's Baptism: Sign of the New Covenant in Christ* (B&H Academic, 2007).