

Humility In Wisdom: 3

John The Baptist Steps Down

In introducing these teaching series I gave you an illustration from a few years ago - I was in a hotel and noticed that in order to get to the upper floors you first had to go down a few stairs to get to the where the lifts and staircases were. So in order to go up a level you had to first take a step down.

This forms the essence of this teaching series – if we want to truly walk in wisdom, we must first learn to take a step down in humility.

Last time we looked at a several Scriptures that teach us to humble ourselves. To be humble is to be submissive to someone higher or greater. It is not as many believe, to debase yourself or make yourself to be so unworthy, so poor, so insignificant. That is a form of inverted-pride which God resists. Humility is measured not in what you say about yourself, but whether you submit yourself to what God says about you.

We have seen that the Scripture says, wisdom will exalt and promote us (**Proverbs 4.8**). When we humble ourselves we are exalted, lifted and raised up. That raising up can only come by taking a step down and submitting to God and surrendering to Him.

While we can take illustration from various Biblical characters – we are going to see some of these – Jesus is our ultimate example. Last time we saw from Philippians that Jesus humbled Himself and surrendered to the Father's will, His own testimony was that He only did and said what He heard from the Father – because of that God highly exalted Him and gave Him the name which is above all others (**Philippians 2.5-11; John 5.30; John 8.28-29**)

Matthew 3.13-17

(13) Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. **(14)** And John *tried to* prevent Him, saying, "I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?" **(15)** But Jesus answered and said to him, "Permit *it to be* so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he allowed Him. **(16)** When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. **(17)** And suddenly a voice *came* from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

(1) Jesus did not need to be baptised by John. John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. Jesus was sinless and had no need to repent, therefore no need of baptism.

(2) John tries to prevent Jesus from being baptised. He “protested strenuously” (Amp) – other translations say “He objected” (CEV); “He forbade Him” (AV); “He tried to make Him change His mind” (TEV)

What is John's reasoning behind this statement - "I'm not worthy to do this". We can gather this from his statement: "I need to be baptised by You, and are You coming to me"

This thought is an overflow of what is in his heart – he testified himself that "I am not worthy to even carry His shoes" (see verse 11). This is what we were talking about earlier, inverted-pride, John is making himself out to be so unworthy.

(3) Jesus answers John's outburst, "Permit it to be so now" - what is He telling John to do? - Take a step down, humble yourself and submit to this request without any objections

Jesus continues "for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" - it is the right and proper way to fulfill righteousness

I want us to closely look at this verse and two words in particular - "for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" - IT & US

Us – Jesus & John

"..for this is the fitting way for [*both of*] us to fulfill all righteousness [*that is, to perform completely whatever is right*]..." (Amp)

Jesus was saying to John that this was necessary for them both to fulfill righteousness, their duty to God.

"this is how we should fulfill all our duty to God" (Moffatt)

"for this is the fitting way for both of us to do our full duty to God" (Williams)

"for it is right for us to do everything that God requires" (Goodspeed)

It – what is that duty? What is it that we must do to fulfill our duty to God? Baptism? If so, why then didn't Jesus baptise John.

"we do well to conform in this way with all that God requires" (NEB)

"It is right for us to meet meet all the Law's demands" - (JB Philips)

I suggest that Jesus is talking about submitting to God so that we fulfill righteousness. He had to submit to God and be baptised, even though He did not need baptism of repentance.

John had to submit to Jesus and baptise Him, when it really should have been the other way round.

Romans 12.1

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is your reasonable service.*"

Our reasonable service (duty) is to present ourselves as a living sacrifice – a life surrendered to God, submitted to Him.

(4) John took a step down and submitted to Jesus and baptised Him

As Jesus came up out of the water, John saw the Holy Spirit descending like a dove and coming upon Him and heard the voice of the Father speaking.

This was the moment that God exalted John and raised Him up. He had seen with his eyes what God had revealed to him some time earlier.

John 1. 29-37

In this passage John testifies that God had shown Him that the one on whom he saw the Holy Spirit descending was the Coming One.

“I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.'” (v33)

God elevated him and his ministry. From then on (the baptism of Jesus) he began to point men and women to Jesus.

“The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" John 1.29

“And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God!"” John 1.36

“He must increase, I must decrease” (John 3.30). John had learnt the lesson to be submitted to God

Matthew 11.2-15; (Matthew 17.11-13); Luke 7.18-28;

Jesus makes some remarkable statements about John.

- More than a prophet (v9)
- My Messenger (v10)
- greatest prophet (v11)
- Elijah who is to come (v14) – fulfilment of Malachi 4.5-6

Jesus elevated him, raised him up – and it all began with John taking that step down.

Have you noticed Jesus said these things to the crowd and not to the 2 messengers sent by John, they had already departed (v7). **Why?**

If you exalt wisdom, wisdom will promote you.

- The messengers saw the miracles Jesus did
- They were told to tell John the things they had seen
- The things they saw (and told John) were the fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy ([Isaiah 29.18-19](#); [Isaiah 35.3-6](#); [Isaiah 61.1](#))
- John knew these prophecies – In his own testimony he cited [Isaiah 40.3](#)
- Jesus was telling him to go back to the word – embrace wisdom, she will exalt you.

John was exalted, not because of what Jesus said, but because of the word