

## Message Six

### **Taking the Way of Righteousness to Live in the Reality of the Kingdom of the Heavens**

Scripture Reading: Matt. 21:32a; 3:13-15; 5:6, 10, 20; 6:33

#### **I. John the Baptist came in the way of righteousness—Matt. 21:32a:**

- A. The New Testament dispensation, the dispensation of grace, that is, the dispensation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, began from the preaching of John the Baptist—Mark 1:1-4:
  1. John came in the way of righteousness and charged the people to repent because of the kingdom of the heavens—Matt. 3:2.
  2. The kingdom of God is of righteousness (Rom. 14:17), and the kingdom of the heavens is particularly based upon righteousness (Matt. 5:20), which is the foundation of God's throne (Psa. 89:14).
  3. When the people received John's preaching and came to repent to him, he right away baptized them by putting them into the water to bury them, indicating that they were men of the flesh who had nothing good (Rom. 7:18) and were worthy of only death and burial.
  4. Following John's ministry, Jesus Christ came and baptized these people with the Spirit, joining them, in resurrection, to God, who saved them by justifying them according to His righteousness—Rom. 1:17; 3:21-25; 1 Cor. 1:30.
  5. Furthermore, after He died judicially for these repentant people, Christ resurrected to live within them that they may live by Christ's life a life of righteousness to be justified by God all the time—Rom. 4:25.
  6. All these people are called "the righteous," who will shine forth like the sun in the coming kingdom (Matt. 13:43), and their righteousness will abide in the new heavens and new earth forever (2 Pet. 3:13).
  7. Thus, to repent and be baptized according to John's preaching and practice were ordained by God according to the righteous requirements of God's eternal economy; hence, this is to fulfill the righteousness of God (Matt. 3:15) as a matter of eternity.
- B. Matthew 3:13-15 reveals the proper and righteous base of Jesus' baptism:
  1. The base for Jesus to be baptized was that He considered Himself, according to His humanity, a man, especially an Israelite, who is a man "in the flesh" (John 1:14); even though He was only "in the likeness of the flesh of sin" (Rom. 8:3), "without sin" (Heb. 4:15), yet He was "in the flesh," which has nothing good but is worthy only of death and burial.
  2. Based upon this fact, at the beginning of His ministry for God, He was willing to be baptized by John the Baptist, recognizing that, according to His humanity, He did not have any qualification to be a servant of God.
  3. As a man in the flesh, He needed to be a dead man, buried in the death water to fulfill God's New Testament requirement according to His righteousness, and He did it willingly, considering it the fulfilling of God's righteousness.

4. Christ's living for His ministry was based upon the significance of His being baptized by John, which declared to the whole universe that He did not depend at all upon the flesh for God's ministry:
  - a. We need to realize that as a natural man in the flesh, we are good for nothing except death and burial; we need to have ourselves absolutely terminated in the water of baptism.
  - b. We all should declare in our life and work, "I am a person in the flesh, worthy of nothing in the eyes of God but death and burial; so I want to have myself terminated, crucified, buried."

**II. Based upon the significance of water baptism, the Lord Jesus as the King-Savior lived and expressed God as righteousness by denying Himself in His humanity:**

- A. He put Himself on the cross and lived under the shadow of the cross all the time denying His self and His natural man—Matt. 16:24.
- B. He had no resting place—8:20.
- C. He had a concern for God's flock—9:36; 11:5; cf. Luke 4:18-19.
- D. He lived under the yoke of God, being meek and lowly in heart—Matt. 11:28-29.
- E. He charged people not to make Him known, meaning that He did not want to be renowned—12:16.
- F. He loved the weak ones—vv. 19-20.
- G. He was flexible—17:27.
- H. He came to serve, not to be served—20:28.

**III. In order to live in the reality of the kingdom today and participate in its manifestation in the future, we need to live out the indwelling Christ as our subjective righteousness—Matt. 5:20; 22:11-12; Rev. 19:7-8:**

- A. It is impossible for our natural life to gain this surpassing righteousness; it can be produced only by a higher life, the resurrection life of Christ.
- B. Both in nature and in standard, the righteousness of life far surpasses the lifeless righteousness practiced by the scribes and Pharisees—cf. Phil. 3:9.
- C. We need to hunger and thirst after Christ as our surpassing righteousness; then God will grant us the very righteousness that we seek, so that we may be satisfied—Matt. 5:6, 10; 6:33.
- D. The principle of the righteous deeds of the kingdom people who are under the heavenly ruling of the kingdom is that they are not allowed do anything in the flesh for the praise of men, but must do all things in the spirit, in secret, for the pleasing of their heavenly Father—6:1-6, 16-18:
  1. We must do our righteous deeds in secret, for our Father is in secret and sees in secret—vv. 4, 6, 18.
  2. The effect of doing our righteous deeds in secret is that the flesh and the self are killed.
  3. The saints who know only to make a show of the self and a display of the flesh will not grow in life.