

# GRACE GAZETTE

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*Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.*

*Hebrews 12:12-13*

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## THE BAPTISM OF CHRIST

*Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. Matthew 3:13*

The GOD who rules in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; HE who is in the heavens and hath done whatsoever HE hath pleased, is under no form of necessity except that which HE has designed, in order to fulfill HIS own desire and purpose. Only with that rightly in mind can we begin to discuss the work of JESUS CHRIST in the redemption of HIS people.

We often hear men describe CHRIST's undertaking of this redemption as though HE was under some cosmic necessity which was laid upon HIM which HE was powerless to escape. There would have been no creation had HE not been pleased to make one, so it is sheer folly to entertain any such notion as that of any compulsion to save all or any part of that which was HIS to do with as HE pleased. HE alone inhabiteth eternity and is before all things and by HIM all things consist. (see Isa.57:15; I Tim.6;16; Col. 1:17)

It seems quite clear from the scriptures that HE has created some vessels unto honor and some unto dishonor as it has pleased HIM. (see Rom.9:20,21; Isa.64:8; Jer. 1:5) Who can question HIS doing or imagine some scenario under which HE might fall prey to some form of necessity which is not the complete undertaking of the fulfillment of HIS own design. The scripture is also clear that before the design of this creation ever took place that HE loved a people which HE chose in HIS SON. (see Eph.1:4; II Thes.2:13; I Pet. 2:9)

Most all people who claim to believe in the Bible agree that GOD chose a people in CHRIST according to HIS "foreknowledge". Even as Peter declared, "*Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.*" (1Pet 1:2) and as Paul stated, "*For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.*" (Rom 8:29)

The natural man has an innate aversion to the notion that GOD has determined the future of all men and things. They will ascribe all sorts of power, knowledge, and ability to HIM; but will balk and rebel against the notion that it is HE and not them who is in the ultimate control of their destiny. They will fall and worship at the shrine of free will much more readily than at the feet of an Absolute GOD who does all things according to the good pleasure of HIS will.

Therefore, while they cannot outright deny that the scripture speaks of an "election", they seek in a "de facto" manner, to actually deny that GOD made the "choice" at all. They do this by explaining HIS foreknowledge to be simply a matter of knowing what would occur ahead of time. In doing so they liken HIM to a two bit, gypsy fortune teller rather than a SOVEREIGN ruler who says of HIMSELF, "*I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things.*" (Isa 45:7)

While it is true that HE does "foreknow" what will occur, the reason that HE does is because HE has ordered all things to occur according to HIS pleasure. (see Rev.4:11) The foreknowledge upon which HIS election is based is much more than a simple look into the future, but rather it is

the “knowing” of HIS people or HIS “love” of them. We read in the scripture that Adam knew his wife, and we clearly understand that it means more than that he became acquainted with who she was. The LORD said HE knew HIS sheep. HE means that HE loves HIS sheep. HE loves them because they are HIS, not because they decided to be HIS. Their love of HIM is predicated on the fact that HE loved them. John said, *“We love him, because he first loved us.” (1John 4:19)*

So it seems quite plainly revealed, that HE chose a people whom HE loved in CHRIST before the foundation of the world. These people were ordained unto eternal life by HIM who alone hath immortality and the ability to grant eternal life to whomsoever HE will. In speaking of those who are HIS sheep, HE says, *“And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.” (John 10:28)*

The decree of the fall of man into sin occurred because man’s ruin set the stage for the revelation of the glory of HIS grace in the redemption of the people whom HE loved. To this end was the world created and to this end the LORD JESUS came into it as the SALVATION of HIS elect children. When we understand that, then we can say that HE did all that was “necessary” unto the complete and perfect redemption of them.

HIS baptism at the hands of John the Baptist (i.e.; Immerser) was just such a necessity. HE alluded to this when HE said to John (who was reluctant to baptize HIM), *“Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.” (Mat 3:15)*

The baptism of John was a harbinger of the Gospel, even as his whole ministry was for the purpose of announcing the Messiah. Yet John did not preach the gospel as we now know it but rather he was the last of the Old Testament prophets, and the message which he preached was more closely related to the demands of the law, than the mercy of grace. Even as the LORD said, *“For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.” (Luke 7:28)* While it is true that John saw more clearly the *“LAMB of GOD which taketh away the sin of the world”* than did any of those prophets which came before HIM, yet he died not having received the promise.

He was given an understanding of the inferior nature of his ministry and baptism as he was enabled to see the unfolding of the ministry of ONE far greater than himself. *“I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire.” (Mat 3:11)*

He confessed that his “baptism” was unto repentance, which signified the knowledge of a broken law but was an incomplete remedy thereof. Yet CHRIST our LORD, came to him to be baptized with this baptism when HE had broken no law and needed no repentance. Yet in order to *“fulfill all righteousness”*, it was necessary that HE subject HIMSELF to the law as a sinner, since HE was made sin for us. Our sin was upon HIM as our SUBSTITUTE and HE did bear it in every jot and tittle, both as to the keeping of the law as a perfect MAN and in the necessity of repentance as a sinner made guilty with our guilt.

It was necessary under the law that the sin offering be washed and that the priest be clean when he entered into the Holy of Holies. Thus our Great HIGH PRIEST who was also our SACRIFICE did fulfil the jot and tittle of the law in submitting HIMSELF unto John’s “washing”. In so doing HE manifested that HE fulfilled all legal requirements for HIS people insofar as baptism (i.e., washing) in water is concerned.

It is clear from the scriptures that HE commanded HIS disciples to baptize those who would be HIS followers, yet we find that this “baptism” is not to be carried out as some legal act or as a fulfillment of some religious requirement. Rather the act of Baptism is the answer of a good conscience toward GOD, or we might say, a testimony or confession of faith in HIM who is the FAITH of HIS elect. Religious men will seek to make baptism in water to be “valid” according to many requirements which they might set forth, such as who performs it, who “authorizes” it, etc. Yet the only baptism of the Christian faith has but one requirement, *“What doth hinder me to be baptized?----If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest.”*

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