

"TO FULFIL ALL RIGHTEOUSNESS."

By J. J. Lansdell.

For a long time I have thought that there was something more in what Jesus said to John the Baptist than is ordinarily supposed, when He demanded baptism of him, saying: "For thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." The form of expression shows that the Lord considered it of absolute importance. John's hesitancy, saying: "I have need to be baptized of Thee," shows that he looked on Jesus as his superior.

I do not ignore and set aside the old Baptist notion that the baptism of Jesus is an example for His people in all time, but I regard that as secondary, and not directly connected with what the Lord said to John—"For thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." The words "thus it becometh us" I consider the same as if he had said "thus it becometh you and me," and the words preceding, "suffer it to be so now," show that that was the proper time and place and that it could not be postponed.

It must be borne in mind that John's office or ministry was two-fold: First, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord (Luke 1:7); second, that through his office the Messiah might be made manifest unto Israel (John 1:31). The first part is so open and plain that the most casual reader can see it in John's work of preaching the doctrine of repentance and baptizing those who brought forth the fruits of repentance; but as to the second part so little being said about it, it is almost entirely overlooked, but what little is said is of deep significance. Here is what John the Baptist said to those who were inquiring about his mission: "And I knew him not; but that he should be made manifest to Israel, for this cause came I baptizing in water." And John bore witness, saying: "I have beheld the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not; but he that sent me to baptize in water, he said unto me, Upon whomsoever thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and abiding upon him, the same is he that baptizeth in the Holy Spirit. And I have seen, and have borne witness that this is the Son of God" (John 1:31-34; R. V.).

There are several things in this quotation deserving notice. (1) John says, speaking of Christ: "And I knew him not." Whether we are to understand by this that John did not know Jesus of Nazareth in person, or whether he did not know him as the Christ, we are not informed. The probability is the latter for a sign had been given to John by which he should know the Christ and he was doubtless looking for that sign. But it is evident that John felt the superiority of Jesus over him, when he said: "I have need to be baptized of thee." John, no doubt, had strong impression that Jesus of Nazareth was the one who would baptize in the Holy Spirit, and he wanted that baptism, but it was not for him and he never had it.

(2) John says that he came baptizing in water to make manifest the Son of God unto Israel. Whatever other purpose there was in John's baptism, we have here disclosed a very high and important purpose. The question is often asked, Why was Jesus baptized? But only one Scriptural answer can be given, and that is what John says about it. He baptized Jesus, and he was instructed by the Spirit before it took place, and he ought to know. For this very reason, that Jesus should be made manifest unto Israel, did John come baptizing in water. He tells us so himself. And it was in connection with the baptism of Jesus that the sign which was given to John, by which he should know the Messiah, was seen. When Jesus was baptized, coming up out of the water, the Spirit descended on Him and abode upon Him. And John says he saw it. He had the promise that he should see it, and having seen it, he could and did testify that this Jesus whom he baptized in the Jordan is the Son of God. So much for the sign given to John. I pass now to the consideration of another feature of the baptism of Jesus.

What is meant by the Lord when He said: "Thus it becometh us to

fulfil all righteousness"? My notion is that what the Lord meant by "us" was you and me. There was something for them to do together; it was necessary for Jesus to be baptized by John just at that time and place. Such was the Divine arrangement. When John was apparently pressed into service he yielded to the demand, not knowing what was just ahead, but Jesus knew. They went down into the water together and John baptized Jesus in the river Jordan; and straightway, immediately, coming up out of the water the heavens were opened unto him as though they would contribute to the august and solemn scene; the Spirit descended as a dove upon Jesus and abode on Him, and a voice came from heaven saying: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." John got his sign and a great deal more. We may well suppose a large throng of Jews lining the margin of the river, some who had believed John's preaching and had been baptized by him, and many who had "rejected the counsel of God against themselves, not being baptized by him." It was under these circumstances that Jesus was made manifest unto Israel as the Son of God. See what honor God puts on baptism or immersion in water when done according to His appointment. The entire Trinity was here brought in evidence in manifesting Jesus Christ unto Israel as the Son of God. It was not by baptism alone, but by baptism as it stands connected with the Divine avouchment, that Jesus was made manifest unto Israel. John had the particular sign that had been promised and much more. So it generally is when people follow strictly the Lord's directions: they get more than they expected. There was never such a Divine display at any other baptism, and it is safe to say there will never be the like again, because there will never again be such an occasion.

When John baptized Jesus Christ he filled out the scope of his mission. He had already been preparing the way of the Lord and making ready a people prepared for the Lord, and now, when he baptizes the Lord himself, he performs his part in manifesting or introducing the Lord to the people with whom he had been laboring to prepare them for the reception of the Lord. With these facts before us, I think we have a correct view of what the Lord meant when he said to John, "Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." It became John to baptize Jesus as the initial of His manifestation to Israel, and it became Jesus to submit to baptism, and thus put Himself in common with His people, and in this attitude, to be made manifest unto them and to all Israel as the Son of God.

Baptism was God's chosen medium, so far as man's service was required, for the manifestation of Jesus unto Israel. And John had nothing to do with the choosing; that was done before John was taken into the scene; all he had to do was to act his part as it had been arranged by Divine authority. No suggestion from him was allowed from considerations of humility or unworthiness; all he had to do was simply to obey; and that is the best way for any of us to do. John took his orders from Jesus, even before he had the promised evidence that He was the Messiah. He acted by faith, and it worked out all right. But I do not suppose he had any misgivings of conscience when he submitted to the demand of Jesus and baptized Him. This done, God did the balance and it was done gloriously. And so it generally turns out when we take God at His word and do as He says.

After John had baptized Jesus and had seen the sign—the Spirit descending and remaining on Him—he knew Him and could point to Him and say: "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." John had experience, he had been with Jesus. Experience is the best teacher.

Jesus walked from Nazareth of Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized—a distance of about seventy miles. He could not get along without baptism, because it was a part of the Divine arrangement in His manifestation to Israel. After His baptism the other things came along—but first the natural, then the spiritual.

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ford of the Jordan, opposite Jericho, where the Israelites crossed when they entered the promised land; and that He was immersed is an acknowledged fact by the learning of Christendom. Roman Catholics, Greek Catholics, Reformers and Protestants alike, say that Jesus was immersed, but they deny that His immersion was an example for us; but Baptists think it was. As He, on his part, would not enter upon His public ministry until He was baptized, so Baptists think they ought, in the outstart of a profession of allegiance to Christ, be baptized just like He was; and if there is no visible opening of the heavens, and no visible descent of the Spirit, and no audible voice from heaven of approval, there is at least the sensible comfort of the Spirit and the answer of a good conscience towards God. I speak from experience. In being baptized on a profession of faith in Jesus as our Savior, we may not fulfil all righteousness in the sense that John the Baptist and Jesus Christ did when He was baptized, but we follow the example of Him "who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." (1 Cor. 1:30.)



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TO TAKE EFFECT MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 1903.

5	3		4	6
Passenger Daily.	Passenger Daily.	STATIONS.	Passenger Daily.	Passenger Daily.
Leave.	Leave.		Arrive.	Arrive.
A. M.	P. M.		A. M.	P. M.
8 00	3 30	.....Goldsboro.....	11 05	8 30
8 18	3 50	.....Best's.....	10 43	8 08
8 26	3 59	.....LaGrange.....	10 32	7 57
8 37	4 10	.....Falling Creek.....	10 22	7 47
8 48	4 22	.....Kinston.....	10 12	7 37
9 02	4 36	.....Caswell.....	9 50	7 25
9 13	4 43	.....Dover.....	9 42	7 17
9 30	5 00	.....Cove.....	9 30	7 00
9 50	5 19	.....Tuscarora.....	9 20	6 50
9 54	5 25	.....Clarks.....	9 12	6 42
10 10	5 40	.....New Bern.....	9 00	6 30
10 20	5 50	.....Newberne.....	8 27	
	6 02	.....James City.....		6 02
10 40	6 15	.....Riverdale.....	8 03	5 47
10 43	6 18	.....Croatan.....	7 59	5 43
10 55	6 30	.....Havelock.....	7 50	5 35
11 08	6 43	.....Newport.....	7 36	5 21
11 14	6 49	.....Wildwood.....	7 29	5 15
11 19	6 54	.....Atlantic.....	7 25	5 10
11 32	7 05	.....Morehead City.....	7 17	5 00
11 35	7 07	.....Atlantic Hotel.....	7 00	4 57
11 40	7 15	.....M. City Depot.....	6 55	4 40
A. M.	P. M.		A. M.	P. M.

S. L. DILL, General Superintendent.

B. A. NEWLAND, Master of Transportation. J. C. LEWIS, Chief Dispatcher.