

CHAPTER 3

At the start of this chapter, concerning the baptism of John, begins the gospel (~~400~~ Mark 1:1); what went before is but preface or introduction; this is “the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ.” And Peter observes the same date, ~~400~~ Acts 1:22, beginning from the baptism of John, for then Christ began first to appear in him, and then to appear to him, and by him to the world. Here is,

I. The glorious rising of the morning-star — John the Baptist (v. 1).

1. The doctrine he preached (v. 2).
2. The fulfilling of the scripture in him (v. 3).
3. His manner of life (v. 4).
4. The resort of multitudes to him, and their submission to his baptism (v. 5, 6).
5. His sermon that he preached to the Pharisees and Sadducees, wherein he endeavours to bring them to repentance (v. 7-10), and so to bring them to Christ (v. 11, 12).

II. The more glorious shining forth of the Sun of righteousness, immediately after: where we have,

1. The honour done by him to the baptism of John (v. 13-15).
2. The honour done to him by the descent of the Spirit upon him, and a voice from heaven (v. 16, 17).

~~400~~ MATTHEW 3:1-6

THE PREACHING OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

We have here an account of the preaching and baptism of John, which were the dawning of the gospel-day. Observe,

I. The time when he appeared. *In those days* (v. 1), or, *after those days*, long after what was recorded in the foregoing chapter, which left the child Jesus in his infancy. *In those days*, in the time appointed of the Father for the beginning of the gospel, when the *fulness of time* was come, which was often thus spoken of in the *Old Testament*, *In those days*. Now the last

of Daniel's weeks began, or rather, the latter half of the week, when the Messiah was to *confirm the covenant with many*, ^{<282>}Daniel 9:27. Christ's appearances are all in their season. Glorious things were spoken both of John and Jesus, at and before their births, which would have given occasion to expect some extraordinary appearances of a divine presence and power with them when they were very young; but it is quite otherwise. Except Christ's disputing with the doctors at twelve years old, nothing appears remarkable concerning either of them, till they were about thirty years old. Nothing is recorded of their childhood and youth, but the greatest part of their life is *tempus, adelon* — *wrapt up in darkness and obscurity*: these children differ little in outward appearance from other children, as the heir, while he is under age, differs nothing from a servant, though he be *lord of all*. And this was to show,

1. That even when God is acting as the God of Israel, the *Saviour*, yet *verily he is a God that hideth himself* (^{<285>}Isaiah 45:15). *The Lord is in this place and I knew it not*, ^{<136>}Genesis 28:16. Our beloved stands behind the wall long before he *looks forth at the windows*, ^{<219>}Song of Solomon 2:9.
2. That our faith must principally have an eye to Christ in his office and undertaking, for there is the *display* of his power; but in his person is the *hiding* of his power. All this while, Christ was god-man; yet we are not told what he said or did, till he appeared as a prophet; and then, *Hear ye him*.
3. That young men, though well qualified, should not be forward to put forth themselves in public service, but be humble, and modest, and self-diffident, *swift to hear, and slow to speak*.

Matthew says nothing of the conception and birth of John the Baptist, which is largely related by St. Luke, but finds him at full age, as if dropt from the clouds to preach in the wilderness. For above three hundred years the church had been without prophets; those lights had been long put out, that *he* might be the more desired, who was to be the great prophet. After Malachi there was no prophet, nor any pretender to prophecy, till John the Baptist, to whom therefore the prophet Malachi points more directly than any of the Old Testament prophets had done (^{<301>}Malachi 3:1); *I send my messenger*.

II. The place where he appeared first. *In the wilderness of Judea*. It was not an uninhabited desert, but a part of the country not so thickly peopled,

nor so much enclosed into fields and vineyards, as other parts were; it was such a wilderness as had six cities and their villages in it, which are named, ^{<661>}Joshua 15:61, 62. In these cities and villages John preached, for thereabouts he had hitherto lived, being born hard by, in Hebron; the scenes of his action began there, where he had long spent his time in contemplation; and even when he showed himself to Israel, he showed how well he loved retirement, as far as would consist with his business. The *word of the Lord* found John here in a *wilderness*. Note, No place is so remote as to shut us out from the visits of divine grace; nay, commonly the sweetest intercourse the saints have with Heaven, is when they are withdrawn furthest from the noise of this world. It was in this *wilderness* of Judah that David penned the 63rd Psalm, which speaks so much of the sweet communion he then had with God, ^{<3814>}Hosea 2:14. In a wilderness the law was given; and as the *Old Testament*, so the *New Testament Israel* was first found in the desert land, and there God *led him about and instructed him*, ^{<6520>}Deuteronomy 32:10. John Baptist was a priest of the order of Aaron, yet we find him preaching in a *wilderness*, and never officiating in the *temple*; but Christ, who was not a son of Aaron, is yet often found in the temple, and sitting there as one having authority; so it was foretold, ^{<3011>}Malachi 3:1. *The Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple*; not the *messenger* that was to prepare his way. This intimated that the priesthood of Christ was to thrust out that of Aaron, and drive it into a wilderness.

The beginning of the gospel in a wilderness, speaks comfort to the deserts of the Gentile world. Now must the prophecies be fulfilled, *I will plant in the wilderness the cedar*, ^{<3418>}Isaiah 41:18, 19. The wilderness shall be a *fruitful field*, ^{<2325>}Isaiah 32:15. And the *desert shall rejoice*, ^{<2331>}Isaiah 35:1, 2. The Septuagint reads, *the deserts of Jordan*, the very wilderness in which John preached. In the Romish church there are those who call themselves *hermits*, and pretend to follow John; but when they say of Christ, *Behold, he is in the desert, go not forth*, ^{<4226>}Matthew 24:26. There was a seducer that led his followers *into the wilderness*, ^{<4218>}Acts 21:38.

III. His preaching. This he made his business. He came, not fighting, nor disputing, but *preaching* (v. 1); for by the foolishness of preaching, Christ's kingdom must be set up.

1. The doctrine he preached was that of repentance (v. 2); *Repent ye*. He preached this in *Judea*, among those that were called *Jews*, and made a

profession of religion; for even they needed repentance. He preached it, not in Jerusalem, but in the wilderness of Judea, among the plain country people; for even those who think themselves most out of the way of temptation, and furthest from the vanities and vices of the town, cannot wash their hands in innocency, but must do it in repentance. John Baptist's business was to call men to *repent* of their sins; *Metanoete* — *Bethink yourselves*; “Admit a second *thought*, to correct the errors of the first — an *afterthought*. Consider your ways, *change your minds*; you have thought amiss; *think again*, and *think aright*.” Note, True penitents have *other thoughts* of God and Christ, and sin and holiness, and this world and the other, than they have had, and stand otherwise affected toward them. The change of the *mind* produces a change of the *way*. Those who are truly sorry for what they have done amiss, will be careful to do so no more. This repentance is a necessary duty, in obedience to the command of God (~~4473~~ Acts 17:30); and a necessary preparative and qualification for the comforts of the gospel of Christ. If the heart of man had continued upright and unstained, divine consolations might have been received without this painful operation preceding; but, being sinful, it must be first pained before it can be laid at ease, must *labour* before it can be at rest. The sore must be searched, or it cannot be cured. *I wound and I heal*.

2. The argument he used to enforce this call was, *For the kingdom of heaven is at hand*. The prophets of the *Old Testament* called people to *repent*, for the obtaining and securing of temporal national mercies, and for the preventing and removing of temporal national judgments: but now, though the duty pressed is the same, the reason is new, and purely evangelical. Men are now considered in their personal capacity, and not so much as then in a social and political one. Now repent, for the *kingdom of heaven is at hand*; the gospel dispensation of the covenant of grace, the opening of the kingdom of heaven to all believers, by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is a *kingdom* of which Christ is the Sovereign, and we must be the willing, loyal subjects of it. It is a kingdom of *heaven*, not of this world, a spiritual kingdom: its original from heaven, its tendency to heaven. John preached this as *at hand*; then it was at the door; to us it is come, by the pouring out of the Spirit, and the full exhibition of the riches of gospel-grace. Now,

(1.) This is a great *inducement* to us *to repent*. There is nothing like the consideration of divine grace to break the heart, both *for sin* and *from sin*. That is evangelical repentance, that flows from a sight of Christ, from a

sense of his love, and the hopes of pardon and forgiveness through him. Kindness is conquering; abused kindness, humbling and melting. What a wretch was I to sin against such grace, against the law and love of such a kingdom!

(2.) It is a *great encouragement* to us *to repent*; “Repent, for your sins shall be pardoned upon your repentance. Return to God in a way of duty, and he will, through Christ, return to you in a way of mercy.” The proclamation of pardon discovers, and fetches in, the malefactor who before fled and absconded. Thus we are drawn to it with the cords of man, and the bands of love.

IV. The *prophecy* that was fulfilled in him, v. 3. This is he that was spoken of in the beginning of that part of the prophecy of Esaias, which is mostly evangelical, and which points at gospel-times and gospel-grace; see ^{<403>}Isaiah 40:3, 4. John is here spoken of,

1. As the *voice of one crying in the wilderness*. John owned it himself (^{<402>}John 1:23); *I am the voice*, and that is all, God is the Speaker, who makes known his mind by John, as a man does by his voice. The word of God must be received as such (^{<503>}1 Thessalonians 2:13); what else is Paul, and what is Apollos, but the voice! John is called the *voice*, *phone boontos* — *the voice of one crying aloud*, which is startling and awakening. Christ is called *the Word*, which, being distinct and articulate, is more instructive. John as the *voice*, roused men, and then Christ, as the *Word*, taught them; as we find, ^{<442>}Revelation 14:2. The voice of many waters, and of a great thunder, made way for the melodious voice of *harpers* and the *new song*, v. 3. Some observe that, as Samson's mother must drink no *strong drink*, yet he was designed to be a *strong man*; so John Baptist's father was struck dumb, and yet he was designed to be the *voice of one crying*. When the crier's voice is begotten of a dumb father, it shows the *excellency of the power to be of God, and not of man*.

2. As one whose business it was to *prepare the way of the Lord, and to make his paths straight*; so it was said of him before he was born, that he should *make ready a people prepared for the Lord* (^{<417>}Luke 1:17), as Christ's harbinger and forerunner: he was such a one as intimated the nature of Christ's kingdom, for he came not in the gaudy dress of a herald at arms, but in the homely one of a hermit. Officers were sent before great men to clear the way; so John prepares the way of the Lord.

(1.) He himself did so among the men of that generation. In the Jewish church and nation, at that time, all was out of course; there was a great decay of piety, the vitals of religion were corrupted and eaten out by the traditions and injunctions of the elders. The *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, that is, the greatest hypocrites in the world, had the key of knowledge, and the key of government, at their girdle. The people were, generally, extremely proud of their privileges, confident of justification by their own righteousness, insensible of sin; and, though now under the most *humbling* providences, being lately made a province of the Roman Empire, yet they were *unhumbled*; they were much in the same temper as they were in Malachi's time, insolent and haughty, and ready to contradict the word of God: now John was sent to level these mountains, to take down their high opinion of themselves, and to show them their sins, that the doctrine of Christ might be the more acceptable and effectual.

(2.) His doctrine of repentance and humiliation is still as necessary as it was then to prepare the way of the Lord. Note, There is a great deal to be done, to make way for Christ into a soul, to *bow the heart* for the reception of the Son of David (¹⁶⁹⁴2 Samuel 19:14); and nothing is more needful, in order to this, than the discovery of sin, and a conviction of the insufficiency of our own righteousness. That which lets will let, until it be taken out of the way; prejudices must be removed, high thoughts brought down, and captivated to the obedience of Christ. Gates of brass must be broken, and bars of iron cut asunder, ere the everlasting doors be opened for the King of glory to come in. The way of sin and Satan is a *crooked way*; to prepare a way for Christ, the paths must be *made straight*,
⁸²³Hebrews 12:13.

V. The garb in which he appeared, the figure he made, and the manner of his life, v. 4. They, who expected the Messiah as a temporal prince, would think that his forerunner must come in great pomp and splendour, that his equipage should be very magnificent and gay; but it proves quite contrary; he shall be *great in the sight of the Lord*, but mean in the eyes of the world; and, as Christ himself, having *no form or comeliness*; to intimate betimes, that the glory of Christ's kingdom was to be spiritual, and the subjects of it such as ordinarily were either *found by it*, or *made by it*, poor and despised, who derived their honours, pleasures, and riches, from another world.

1. His *dress* was *plain*. This same John had *his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins*; he did not go in *long clothing*, as the *scribes*, or *soft clothing*, as the *courtiers*, but in the clothing of a country husbandman; for he lived in a country place, and suited his *habit* to his *habitation*. Note, It is good for us to accommodate ourselves to the place and condition which God, in his providence, has put us in. John appeared in this dress,

(1.) To show that, like Jacob, he was a *plain man*, and mortified to this world, and the delights and gaities of it. *Behold an Israelite indeed!* Those that are *lowly in heart* should show it by a holy negligence and indifference in their attire; and not make the putting on of apparel their adorning, nor value others by their attire.

(2.) To show that he was a *prophet*, for prophets wore *rough garments*, as mortified men (^{<3834>}Zechariah 13:4); and, especially, to show that he was the Elias promised; for particular notice is taken of Elias, that he was a *hairy man* (which, some think, is meant of the hairy garments he wore), and that *he was girt with a girdle of leather about his loins*, ^{<1108>}2 Kings 1:8. John Baptist appears no way inferior to him in mortification; this therefore is *that Elias that was to come*.

(3.) To show that he was a man of resolution; his girdle was not *fine*, such as were then commonly worn, but it was *strong*, it was a *leathern girdle*; and blessed is that servant, whom his Lord, when he comes, finds with *his loins girt*, ^{<0125>}Luke 12:35; ^{<0113>}1 Peter 1:13.

2. His *diet* was *plain*; his *meat* was *locusts* and *wild honey*; not as if he never ate any thing else; but these he frequently fed upon, and made many meals of them, when he retired into solitary places, and continued long there for contemplation. *Locusts* were a sort of flying insect, very good for food, and allowed as clean (^{<0122>}Leviticus 11:22); they required little dressing, and were light, and easy of digestion, whence it is reckoned among the infirmities of old age, that the *grasshopper*, or *locust*, is then a *burden* to the stomach, ^{<0115>}Ecclesiastes 12:5. *Wild honey* was that which *Canaan* flowed with, ^{<0145>}1 Samuel 14:26. Either it was gathered immediately, as it fell in the dew, or rather, as it was found in the hollows of trees and rocks, where bees built, that were not, like those in hives, under the care and inspection of men. This intimates that he ate *sparingly*, a little served his turn; a man would be long ere he filled his belly with locusts and wild honey: *John Baptist came neither eating nor drinking*

(⁴¹¹⁸Matthew 11:18) — not with the curiosity, formality, and familiarity that other people do. He was so entirely taken up with spiritual things, that he could seldom find time for a set meal. Now,

(1.) This agreed with the doctrine he preached of *repentance*, and *fruits meet for repentance*. Note, Those whose business it is to call others to mourn for sin, and to mortify it, ought themselves to live a serious life, a life of self-denial, mortification, and contempt of the world. John Baptist thus showed the deep sense he had of the badness of the time and place he lived in, which made the preaching of repentance needful; every day was a *fast-day* with him.

(2.) This agreed with his office as Christ's *forerunner*; by this practice he showed that he knew what the *kingdom of heaven* was, and had experienced the powers of it. Note, Those that are acquainted with divine and spiritual pleasures, cannot but look upon all the delights and ornaments of sense with a holy indifference; they know better things. By giving others this example he made way for Christ. Note, A conviction of the vanity of the world, and everything in it, is the best preparative for the entertainment of the kingdom of heaven in the heart. *Blessed are the poor in spirit*.

VI. The people who attended upon him, and flocked after him (v. 5); *Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea*. Great multitudes came to him from the city, and from all parts of the country; some of all sorts, men and women, young and old, rich and poor, Pharisees and publicans; they *went out to him*, as soon as they heard his preaching the *kingdom of heaven*, that they might hear what they heard so much of. Now,

1. This was a great *honour* put upon John, that so many attended him, and with so much respect. Note, Frequently those have most real honour done them, who least court the shadow of it. Those who live a mortified life, who are humble and self-denying, and dead to the world, command respect; and men have a secret value and reverence for them, more than they would imagine.

2. This gave John a great opportunity of doing good, and was an evidence that God was with him. Now people began to crowd and *press into the kingdom of heaven* (⁴¹³⁶Luke 16:16); and a blessed sight it was, to see the *dew of the youth* dropping *from the womb* of the gospel-morning (⁴³¹⁸Psalm 110:3), to see the net cast where there were so many fish.

3. This was an evidence, that it was now a time of great expectation; it was generally thought that the *kingdom of God* would presently appear ([☞]Luke 19:11), and therefore, when John showed himself to Israel, lived and preached at this rate, so very different from the Scribes and Pharisees, they were ready to say of him, that he was *the Christ* ([☞]Luke 3:15); and this occasioned such a confluence of people about him.

4. Those who would have the benefit of John's ministry must *go out* to him in the wilderness, sharing in his reproach. Note, They who truly desire the sincere milk of the word, it if be not brought to them, will seek out for it: and they who would learn the doctrine of repentance must *go out* from the hurry of this world, and be still.

5. It appears by the issue, that of the many who came to John's Baptism, there were but few that adhered to it; witness the cold reception Christ had in Judea, and about Jerusalem. Note, There may be a multitude of forward hearers, where there are but a few true believers. Curiosity, and affectation of novelty and variety, may bring many to attend upon good preaching, and to be affected with it for a while, who yet are never subject to the power of it, [☞]Ezekiel 33:31, 32.

VII. The rite, or ceremony, by which he admitted disciples, v. 6. Those who received his doctrine, and submitted to his discipline, were *baptized of him in Jordan*, thereby professing their repentance, and their belief that the kingdom of the Messiah was at hand.

1. They testified their repentance by *confessing their sins*; a general confession, it is probable, they made to John that they were *sinners*, that they were polluted by sin, and needed cleansing; but to God they made a confession of particular sins, for he is the party offended. The Jews had been taught to *justify* themselves; but John teaches them to *accuse* themselves, and not to rest, as they used to do, in the general confession of sin made for all Israel, once a year, upon the day of atonement; but to make a particular acknowledgment, every one, of the *plague of his own heart*. Note, A penitent confession of sin is required in order to peace and pardon; and those only are ready to receive Jesus Christ as their Righteousness, who are brought with sorrow and shame to their own guilt, [☞]1 John 1:9.

2. The benefits of the *kingdom of heaven*, now *at hand*, were thereupon sealed to them by baptism. He washed them with water, in token of this —

that from all their iniquities God would *cleanse them*. It was usual with the Jews to baptize those whom they admitted proselytes to their religion, especially those who were only *Proselytes of the gate*, and were not circumcised, as the *Proselytes of righteousness* were. Some think it was likewise a custom for persons of eminent religion, who set up for leaders, by baptism to admit pupils and disciples. Christ's question concerning John's Baptism, Was it *from heaven, or of men?* implied, that there were baptisms of men, who pretended not to a divine mission; with this usage John complied, but *his* was from heaven, and was distinguished from all others by this character, It was *the baptism of repentance*, ~~4804~~ Acts 19:4. All Israel were baptized unto Moses, ~~4802~~ 1 Corinthians 10:2. The *ceremonial law* consisted in *divers washings or baptisms* (~~3800~~ Hebrews 9:10); but John's baptism refers to the remedial law, the law of repentance and faith. He is said to baptize them in Jordan, that river which was famous for Israel's passage through it, and Naaman's cure; yet it is probable that John did not baptize in that river at first, but that afterward, when the people who came to his baptism were numerous, he removed Jordan. By baptism he obliged them to live a holy life, according to the profession they took upon themselves. Note, Confession of sin must always be accompanied with holy resolutions, in the strength of divine grace, not to return to it again.

~~4802~~ MATTHEW 3:7-12

THE PREACHING OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

The doctrine John preached was that of repentance, in consideration of the *kingdom of heaven* being *at hand*; now here we have the use of that doctrine. Application is the life of preaching, so it was of John's preaching.

Observe,

1. To whom he applied it; to the Pharisees and Sadducees that came to his baptism, v. 7. To others he thought it enough to say, *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*; but when he saw these Pharisees and Sadducees come about him, he found it necessary to explain himself, and deal more closely. These were two of the three noted sects among the Jews at that time, the third was that of the Essenes, whom we never read of in the gospels, for they affected retirement, and declined busying themselves

in public affairs. The Pharisees were zealots for the ceremonies, for the power of the church, and the traditions of the elders; the Sadducees ran into the other extreme, and were little better than deists, denying the existence of spirits and a future state. It was strange that they came to John's baptism, but their curiosity brought them to be hearers; and some of them, it is probable, submitted to be baptized, but it is certain that the generality of them did not; for Christ says (^{<417>}Luke 7:29, 30), that *when the publicans justified God, and were baptized of John, the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him*. Note, Many come to ordinances, who come not under the power of them. Now to them John here addresses himself with all faithfulness, and what he said to them, he said to the multitude (^{<418>}Luke 3:7), for they were all concerned in what he said.

2. What the application was. It is plain and home, and directed to their consciences; he speaks as one that came not to preach *before* them, but to preach *to* them. Though his education was private, he was not bashful when he appeared in public, nor did he fear the face of man, for he was full of the Holy Ghost, and of power.

I. Here is a word of conviction and awakening. He begins harshly, calls them not Rabbi, gives them not the titles, much less the applauses, they had been used to.

1. The *title* he gives them is, *O generation of vipers*. Christ gave them the same title; (^{<423>}Matthew 12:34; 23:33). They were as *vipers*; though specious, yet venomous and poisonous, and full of malice and enmity to every thing that was good; they were a *viperous brood*, the seed and offspring of such as had been of the same spirit; it was bred in the bone with them. They gloried in it, that they were the seed of Abraham; but John showed them that they were the serpent's seed (compare ^{<419>}Genesis 3:15); of their father the Devil, (^{<424>}John 8:44). They were a *viperous gang*, they were all alike; though enemies to one another, yet confederate in mischief. Note, A wicked generation is a *generation of vipers*, and they ought to be told so; it becomes the ministers of Christ to be bold in showing sinners their true character.

2. The *alarm* he gives them is, *Who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come?* This intimates that they were in danger of the wrath to come; and that their case was so nearly desperate, and their hearts so hardened in sin

(the Pharisees by their parade of religion, and the Sadducees by their arguments against religion), that it was next to a miracle to effect anything hopeful among them. “What brings you hither? Who thought of seeing you here? What fright have you been put into, that you enquire after the kingdom of heaven?” Note,

(1.) There is a *wrath to come*; besides present wrath, the vials of which are poured out now, there is future wrath, the stores of which are treasured up for hereafter.

(2.) It is the great concern of every one of us to flee from this wrath.

(3.) It is wonderful mercy that we are fairly warned to flee from this wrath; think — *Who has warned us?* God has warned us, who delights not in our ruin; he warns by the written word, by ministers, by conscience.

(4.) These warnings sometime startle those who seemed to have been very much hardened in their security and good opinion of themselves.

II. Here is a word of *exhortation* and *direction* (v. 8); “*Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance. Therefore, because you are warned to flee from the wrath to come, let the terrors of the Lord persuade you to a holy life.*” Or, “*Therefore, because you profess repentance, and attend upon the doctrine and baptism of repentance, evidence that you are true penitents.*” Repentance is seated in the heart. There it is as a root; but in vain do we pretend to have it there, if we do not *bring forth the fruits* of it in a universal reformation, forsaking all sin, and cleaving to that which is good; these are fruits, *axious tes metanoias* — *worthy of repentance*. Note, Those are not worthy the name of penitents, or their privileges, who say they are sorry for their sins, and yet persist in them. They that profess repentance, as all that are baptized do, must be and act as becomes penitents, and never do any thing unbecoming a penitent sinner. It becomes penitents to be humble and low in their own eyes, to be thankful for the least mercy, patient under the greatest affliction, to be watchful against all appearances of sin, and approaches towards it, to abound in every duty, and to be charitable in judging others.

III. Here is a word of caution, not to trust to their external privileges, so as with them to shift off these calls to repentance (v. 9); *Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father*. Note, There is a great deal which carnal hearts are apt to say within themselves, to put by the

convincing, commanding power of the word of God, which ministers should labour to meet with and anticipate; vain thoughts which lodge within those who are called to *wash their hearts*, ²⁰⁰⁴Jeremiah 4:14. *Me doxete* — *Pretend not, presume not*, to say within yourselves; be not of the opinion that this will save you; harbour not such a conceit. “*Please not yourselves* with saying this” (so some read); “rock not yourselves asleep with this, nor flatter yourselves into a fool’s paradise.” Note, God takes notice of what we say *within* ourselves, which we dare not speak out, and is acquainted with all the false rests of the soul, and the fallacies with which it deludes itself, but which it will not discover, lest it should be undeceived. Many hide the lie that ruins them, in *their right hand*, and roll it *under their tongue*, because they are ashamed to own it; they keep in the Devil’s interest, by keeping the Devil’s counsel. Now John shows them,

1. What their pretense was; “*We have Abraham to our father*; we are not sinners of the Gentiles; it is fit indeed that *they* should be called to repent; but we are Jews, a holy nation, a peculiar people, what is this to us?” Note, The word does us no good, when we will not take it as it is spoken to us, and belonging to us. “Think not that because you are the seed of Abraham, therefore,”

(1.) “You *need not repent*, you have nothing to repent of; your relation to Abraham, and your interest in the covenant made with him, denominate you so holy, that there is no occasion for you to change your mind or way.”

(2.) “That therefore you shall *fare well enough*, though you do not *repent*. Think not that this will bring you off in the judgment, and secure you from the wrath to come; that God will connive at your impenitence, because you are Abraham’s seed.” Note, It is vain presumption to think that our having good relations will save us, though we be not good ourselves. What though we be descended from pious ancestors; have been blessed with a religious education; have our lot cast in families where the fear of God is uppermost; and have good friends to advise us, and pray for us; what will all this avail us, if we do not repent, and live a life of repentance? We have Abraham to our father, and therefore are entitled to the privileges of the covenant made with him; being his seed, we are *sons of the church, the temple of the Lord*, ²⁰⁰⁵Jeremiah 7:4. Note, Multitudes, by resting in the honours and advantages of their visible church-membership, take up short of heaven.

2. How foolish and groundless this pretence was; they thought that being the seed of Abraham, they were the only people God had in the world, and therefore that, if they were cut off, he would be at a loss for a church; but John shows them the folly of this conceit; *I say unto you* (whatever you say within yourselves), that *God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham*. He was now baptizing in Jordan at Bethabara (^{<412>}John 1:28), *the house of passage*, where the children of *Israel passed over*; and there were the twelve stones, one for each tribe, which Joshua set up for a memorial, (^{<60>}Joshua 4:20). It is not unlikely that he pointed to those stones, which God could raise to be, more than in representation, the *twelve tribes of Israel*. Or perhaps he refers to ^{<251>}Isaiah 51:1, where Abraham is called *the rock out of which they were hewn*. That God who raised Isaac out of such a rock, can, if there be an occasion, do as much again, for with him *nothing is impossible*. Some think he pointed to those *heathen soldiers* that were present, telling the Jews that God would raise up a church for himself among the Gentiles, and entail the blessing of Abraham upon them. Thus when our first parents fell, God could have left them to perish, and out of stones have raised up another Adam and another Eve. Or, take it thus, “Stones themselves shall be owned as Abraham's seed, rather than such hard, dry, barren sinners as you are.” Note, As it is lowering to the confidence of the sinners in Zion, so it is encouraging to the hopes of the sons of Zion, that, whatever comes of the present generation, God will never want a church in the world; if the Jews fall off, the Gentiles shall be grafted in, (^{<424>}Matthew 21:43; ^{<5112>}Romans 11:12, etc.

IV. Here is a word of terror to the careless and secure Pharisees and Sadducees, and other Jews, that knew not the signs of the times, nor the day of their visitation, v. 10. “Now look about you, now that *the kingdom of God is at hand*, and be made sensible.”

1. How strict and short your trial is; *Now the axe is carried before you*, now it is *laid to the root of the tree*, now you are upon *your good behavior*, and are to be so but a *while*; now you are marked for ruin, and cannot avoid it but by a speedy and sincere repentance. Now you must expect that God will make quicker work with you by his judgments than he did formerly, and that they will *begin at the house of God*: “where God allows more means, he allows less time.” *Behold, I come quickly*. Now they were put upon their last trial; now or never.

2. “How sore and severe your doom will be, if you do not improve this.” It is now declared with the axe at the root, to show that God is in earnest in the declaration, that *every tree*, however *high* in gifts and honours, however *green* in external professions and performances, if it *bring not forth good fruit*, the fruits meet for repentance, is *hewn down*, disowned as a tree in God's vineyard, unworthy to have room there, and is *cast into the fire* of God's wrath — the fittest place for barren trees: what else are they good for? If not fit for fruit, they are fit for fuel. Probably this refers to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, which was not, as other judgments had been, like the lopping off of the branches, or cutting down of the body of the tree, leaving the root to bud again, but it would be the total, final, and irrecoverable extirpation of that people, in which all those should perish that continued impenitent. Now God would make a full end, wrath was coming on them to the utmost.

V. A word of instruction concerning Jesus Christ, in whom all John's preaching centered. Christ's ministers preach, not themselves, but him. Here is,

1. The dignity and pre-eminence of Christ above John. See how meanly he speaks of himself, that he might magnify Christ (v. 11); “*I indeed baptize you with water*, that is the utmost I can do.” Note, Sacraments derive not their efficacy from those who administer them; they can only apply the sign; it is Christ's prerogative to give the thing signified, ⁴⁶¹⁶1 Corinthians 3:6; ⁴¹⁰⁶2 Kings 4:31. But *he that comes after me is mightier than I*. Though John had much power, for he came in the *spirit and power of Elias*, Christ has more; though John was truly great, great in the sight of the Lord (not a greater was born of woman), yet he thinks himself unworthy to be in the meanest place of attendance upon Christ, *whose shoes I am not worthy to bear*. He sees,

(1.) How mighty Christ is, in comparison with him. Note, It is a great comfort to the faithful ministers, to think that Jesus Christ is mightier than they, can do that *for* them, and that *by* them, which they cannot do; his strength is perfected in their weakness.

(2.) How mean he is in comparison with Christ, not worthy to carry his shoes after him! Note, Those whom God puts honour upon, are thereby made very humble and low in their own eyes; willing to be abased, so that

Christ may be magnified; to be any thing, to be nothing, so that Christ may be all.

2. The design and intention of Christ's appearing, which they were now speedily to expect. When it was prophesied that John should be sent as Christ's forerunner (^{<300>}Malachi 3:1, 2), it immediately follows, *The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come, and shall sit as a refiner*, v. 3. And after the coming of Elijah, *the day comes that shall burn as an oven* (^{<300>}Malachi 4:1), to which the Baptist seems here to refer. Christ will come to make a distinction,

(1.) By the powerful working of his grace; *He shall baptize you*, that is, some of you, *with the Holy Ghost and with fire*. Note,

[1.] It is Christ's prerogative to baptize *with the Holy Ghost*. This he did in the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit conferred upon the apostles, to which Christ himself applies these words of John, ^{<400>}Acts 1:5. This he does in the graces and comforts of the Spirit given to them that ask him, ^{<010>}Luke 11:13; ^{<400>}John 7:38, 39; See ^{<400>}Acts 11:16.

[2.] They who are baptized with the Holy Ghost are baptized as *with fire*; the seven spirits of God appear as *seven lamps of fire*, ^{<600>}Revelation 4:5. Is fire enlightening? So the Spirit is a Spirit of illumination. Is it warming? And do not their hearts burn within them? Is it consuming? And does not the Spirit of judgment, as a *Spirit of burning*, consume the dross of their corruptions? Does fire make all it seizes like itself? And does it move upwards? So does the Spirit make the soul holy like itself, and its tendency is heaven-ward. Christ says *I am come to send fire*, ^{<020>}Luke 12:49.

(2.) By the final determinations of his judgment (v. 12); *Whose fan is in his hand*. His ability to distinguish, as the eternal wisdom of the Father, who sees all by a true light, and his authority to distinguish, as the Person to whom all judgment is committed, is the *fan* that is *in his hand*, ^{<400>}Jeremiah 15:7. Now he sits as a Refiner. Observe here

[1.] The visible church is Christ's floor; *O my threshing, and the corn of my floor*, ^{<200>}Isaiah 21:10. The temple, a type of church, was built upon a threshing-floor.

[2.] In this floor there is a mixture of wheat and chaff. True believers are as wheat, substantial, useful, and valuable; hypocrites are as chaff, light, and empty, useless and worthless, and carried about with every wind;

these are now mixed, good and bad, under the same external profession; and in the same visible communion.

[3.] There is a day coming when the floor shall be purged, and the wheat and chaff shall be separated. Something of this kind is often done in this world, when God calls his people out of Babylon, ^{<684>}Revelation 18:4. But it is the day of the last judgment that will be the great winnowing, distinguishing day, which will infallibly determine concerning doctrines and works (^{<403>}1 Corinthians 3:13), and concerning persons (^{<402>}Matthew 25:32, 33), when saints and sinners shall be parted for ever.

[4.] Heaven is the garner into which Jesus Christ will shortly gather all his wheat, and not a grain of it shall be lost: he will gather them as the ripe fruits were gathered in. Death's scythe is made use of to gather them to their people. In heaven the saints are brought together, and no longer scattered; they are safe, and no longer exposed; separated from corrupt neighbours without, and corrupt affections within, and there is no chaff among them. They are not only gathered into *the barn* (^{<413>}Matthew 13:30), but into *the garner*, where they are thoroughly purified.

[5.] Hell is the *unquenchable fire*, which will burn up the chaff, which will certainly be the portion and punishment, and everlasting destruction, of hypocrites and unbelievers. So that here are life and death, good and evil, set before us; according as we now are in the *field*, we shall be then in the *floor*.

^{<403>}MATTHEW 3:13-17

THE BAPTISM OF JESUS

Our Lord Jesus, from his childhood till now, when he was almost thirty years of age, had lain hid in Galilee, as it were, buried alive; but now, after a long and dark night, behold, *the Sun of righteousness* rises in glory. *The fulness of time was come* that Christ should enter upon his prophetic office; and he chooses to do it, not at Jerusalem (though it is probable that he went thither at the three yearly feasts, as others did), but there *where John was baptizing*; for to him resorted those who *waited for the consolation of Israel*, to whom alone he would be welcome. John the Baptist was six months older than our Saviour, and it is supposed that he

began to preach and baptize about six months before Christ appeared; so long he was employed in preparing his way, *in the region round about Jordan*; and more was done towards it in these six months than had been done in several ages before. Christ's coming from Galilee to Jordan, to be baptized, teaches us not to shrink from pain and toil, that we may have an opportunity of drawing nigh to God in ordinance. We should be willing to go far, rather than come short of communion with God. Those who will find must seek.

Now in this story of Christ's baptism we may observe,

I. How hardly John was persuaded to admit of it, v. 14, 15. It was an instance of Christ's great humility, that he would offer himself *to be baptized of John*; that he *who knew no sin* would submit to the baptism of repentance. Note, As soon as ever Christ began to preach, he preached humility, preached it by his example, preached it to all, especially the young ministers. Christ was designed for the highest honours, yet in his first step he thus abases himself. Note, Those who would rise high must begin low. *Before honour is humility*. It was a great piece of respect done to John, for Christ thus to come to him; and it was a return for the service he did him, in giving notice of his approach. Note, Those that honour God he will honour. Now here we have,

1. The objection that John made against baptizing Jesus, v. 14. *John forbade him*, as Peter did, when Christ went about to wash his feet, ^{<416>}John 13:6, 8. Note, Christ's gracious condescensions are so surprising, as to appear at first incredible to the strongest believers; so deep and mysterious, that even they who know his mind well cannot soon find out the meaning of them, but, *by reason of darkness*, start objections against the will of Christ. John's modesty thinks this an honour too great for him to receive, and he expresses himself to Christ, just as his mother had done to Christ's mother (^{<416>}Luke 1:43); *Whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?* John had now obtained a great name, and was universally respected: yet see how humble he is still! Note, God has further honours in reserve for those whose spirits continue low when their reputation rises.

(1.) John thinks it necessary that he should be baptized of Christ; *I have need to be baptized of thee* with the baptism of the Holy Ghost, as of fire, for that was Christ's baptism, v. 11.

[1.] Though *John was filled with the Holy Ghost from the womb* (^{<Q15}Luke 1:15), yet he acknowledges he had need to be baptized with that baptism. Note, They who have much of the Spirit of God, yet, while here, in this imperfect state, see that they have need of more, and need to apply themselves to Christ for more.

[2.] *John has need to be baptized*, though he was the *greatest that ever was born of woman*; yet, being born of a woman, he is polluted, as others of Adam's seed are, and owns he had need of cleansing. Note, The purest souls are most sensible of their own remaining impurity, and seek most earnestly for spiritual washing.

[3.] He has *need to be baptized of Christ*, who can do that for us, which no one else can, and which must be done for us, or we are undone. Note, The best and holiest of men *have need of Christ*, and the better they are, the more they see of that need.

[4.] This was said before the multitude, who had a great veneration for John, and were ready to embrace him for the Messiah; yet he publicly owns that he had *need to be baptized of Christ*. Note, It is no disparagement to the greatest of men, to confess that they are undone without Christ and his grace.

[5.] John was Christ's forerunner, and yet owns that he had *need to be baptized of him*. Note, Even they who were born before Christ in time depended on him, received from him, and had an eye to him.

[6.] While John was dealing with others about their souls, observe how feelingly he speaks of the case of his own soul, *I have need to be baptized of thee*. Note, Ministers, who preach to others, and baptize others, are concerned to look to it that they preach to themselves, and be themselves baptized with the Holy Ghost. Take heed to thyself first; *save thyself*, ^{<S016>}1 Timothy 4:16.

(2.) He therefore thinks it very preposterous and absurd, that Christ should be baptized by him; *Comest thou to me?* Does the holy Jesus, that is separated from sinners, come to be baptized by a sinner, as a sinner, and among sinners? How can this be? Or what account can we give of it? Note, Christ's coming to us may well be wondered at.

2. The overruling of this objection (v. 15); *Jesus said, Suffer it to be so now*. Christ accepted his humility, but not his refusal; he will have the

thing done; and it is fit that Christ should take his own method, though we do not understand it, nor can give a reason for it. See,

(1.) How Christ insisted upon it; It must *be so now*. He does not deny that *John had need to be baptized of him*, yet he will now be *baptized of John*. *Aphes arti* — *Let it be yet so; suffer it to be so now*. Note, Every thing is beautiful in its season. But why *now*? Why yet?

[1.] Christ is *now* in a state of humiliation: he has emptied himself, and *made himself of no reputation*. He is not only *found in fashion as a man*, but is *made in the likeness of sinful flesh*, and therefore now let him be *baptized of John*; as if he needed to be washed, though perfectly pure; and thus he *was made sin for us*, though he *knew no sin*.

[2.] John's baptism is now in reputation, it is that by which God is now doing his work; that is the present dispensation, and therefore Jesus will now be baptized with water; but his baptizing with the Holy Ghost is reserved for hereafter, *many days hence*, ~~ACTS~~ Acts 1:5. John's baptism has *now* its day, and therefore honour must *now* be put upon that, and they who attend upon it must be encouraged. Note, They who are of greatest attainments in gifts and graces, should yet, in their place, bear their testimony to instituted ordinances, by a humble and diligent attendance on them, that they may give a good example to others. What we see God owns, and while we see he does so, we must own. John was now increasing, and therefore it must be thus yet; shortly he will decrease, and then it will be otherwise.

[3.] It must *be so now*, because now is the time for Christ's appearing in public, and this will be a fair opportunity for it, See ~~ACTS~~ John 1:31-34. Thus he must be made manifest to Israel, and be signalized by wonders from heaven, in that act of his own, which was most condescending and self-abasing.

(2.) The reason he gives for it; *Thus it becomes us to fulfil all righteousness*. Note,

[1.] There was a propriety in every thing that Christ did for us; it was all graceful (~~SCRIPTURE~~ Hebrews 2:10; 7:26); and we must study to do not only that which behoves us, but that which becomes us; not only that which is indispensably necessary, but that which is *lovely, and of good report*.

[2.] Our Lord Jesus looked upon it as a thing well becoming him, *to fulfil all righteousness*, that is (as Dr. Whitby explains it), to own every divine institution, and to show his readiness to comply with all God's righteous precepts. *Thus it becomes* him to justify God, and approve his wisdom, in sending John to prepare his way by the baptism of repentance. *Thus it becomes us* to countenance and encourage every thing that is good, by pattern as well as precept. Christ often mentioned John and his baptism with honour, which that he might do the better, he was himself baptized. Thus Jesus began *first to do, and then to teach*; and his ministers must take the same method. Thus *Christ filled up the righteousness of the ceremonial law*, which consisted in divers washings; thus he recommended the gospel-ordinance of baptism to his church, put honour upon it, and showed what virtue he designed to put into it. It became Christ to submit to John's washing with water, because it was a divine appointment; but it became him to oppose the Pharisees' washing with water, because it was a human invention and imposition; and he justified his disciples in refusing to comply with it.

With the will of Christ, and this reason for it, John was entirely satisfied, and *then he suffered him*. The same modesty which made him at first decline the honour Christ offered him, now made him do the service Christ enjoined him. Note, No pretence of humility must make us decline our duty.

II. How solemnly Heaven was pleased to grace the baptism of Christ with a special display of glory (v. 16, 17); *Jesus when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water*. Others that were baptized staid to *confess their sins* (v. 6); but Christ, having no sins to confess, *went up immediately out of the water*; so we read it, but not right: for it is *apo tou hydatos* — *from the water*; from the brink of the river, to which he went down to be washed with water, that is, to have his head or face washed (~~433~~ John 13:9); for here is no mention of the putting off, or putting on, of his clothes, which circumstance would not have omitted, if he had been baptized naked. *He went up straightway*, as one that entered upon his work with the utmost cheerfulness and resolution; he would lose no time. *How was he straitened till it was accomplished!*

Now, when he was coming *up out of the water*, and all the company had their eye upon him,

1. *Lo! the heavens were opened unto him*, so as to discover something above and beyond the starry firmament, at least, to him. This was,

(1.) To encourage him to go on in his undertaking, with the prospect of the glory and *joy that were set before him*. Heaven is opened to receive him, when he has finished the work he is now entering upon.

(2.) To encourage us to receive him, and submit to him. Note, In and through Jesus Christ, the heavens are opened to the children of men. Sin shut up heaven, put a stop to all friendly intercourse between God and man; but now Christ *has opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers*. Divine light and love are darted down upon the children of men, and *we have boldness to enter into the holiest*. We have receipts of mercy from God, we make returns of duty to God, and all by Jesus Christ, who is the ladder that had its foot on earth and its top in heaven, by whom alone it is that we have any comfortable correspondence with God, or any hope of getting to heaven at last. *The heavens were opened* when Christ was baptized, to teach us, that when we duly attend on God's ordinances, we may expect communion with him, and communications from him.

2. *He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, or as a dove, and coming or lighting upon him*. Christ saw it (⁴⁰⁰Mark 1:10), and John saw it (⁴¹³John 1:33, 34), and it is probable that all the standers-by saw it; for this was intended to be his public inauguration. Observe,

(1.) *He saw the Spirit of God descended, and lighted on him*. In the beginning of the old world, *the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters* (⁴⁰⁰Genesis 1:2), *hovered* as a bird upon the nest. So here, in the beginning of this new world, Christ, as God, needed not to receive the Holy Ghost, but it was foretold that *the Spirit of the Lord should rest upon him* (²¹⁰Isaiah 11:2; 61:1), and here he did so; for,

[1.] He was to be a Prophet; and prophets always spoke by the Spirit of God, who came upon them. Christ was to execute the prophetic office, not by his divine nature (says Dr. Whitby), but by the afflatus of the Holy Spirit.

[2.] He was to be the Head of the church; and *the Spirit descended upon him*, by him to be derived to all believers, in his gifts, graces, and comforts. *The ointment on the head ran down to the skirts*; Christ *received gifts for men*, that he might give *gifts to men*.

(2.) He *descended on him like a dove*; whether it was a real, living dove, or, as was usual in visions, the representation or similitude of a dove, is uncertain. If there must be a bodily shape (^{<4122>}Luke 3:22), it must not be that of a man, for the being seen *in fashion as a man* was peculiar to the second person: none therefore was more fit than the shape of one of the fowls of heaven (heaven being now opened), and of all fowl none was so significant as the dove.

[1.] The Spirit of Christ is a dove-like spirit; not like *a silly dove, without heart* (^{<371>}Hosea 7:11), but like an innocent dove, without gall. *The Spirit descended*, not in the shape of an eagle, which is, though a royal bird, yet a bird of prey, but *in the shape of a dove*, than which no creature is more harmless and inoffensive. Such was the Spirit of Christ: *He shall not strive, nor cry*; such must Christians be, *harmless as doves*. The dove is remarkable for her eyes; we find that both the eyes of Christ (^{<2115>}Song of Solomon 5:12), and the eyes of the church (^{<2115>}Song of Solomon 1:15; 4:1), are compared to *doves' eyes*, for they have the same spirit. The dove mourns much (^{<2334>}Isaiah 38:14). Christ wept oft; and penitent souls are compared to *doves of the valleys*.

[2.] The dove was the only fowl that was offered in sacrifice (^{<3114>}Leviticus 1:14), and Christ by the Spirit, *the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God*.

[3.] The tidings of the decrease of Noah's flood were brought by a dove, with an olive-leaf in her mouth; fitly therefore are the glad tidings of peace with God brought by the Spirit as *a dove*. It speaks God's *good will towards men*; that his thoughts towards us are *thoughts of good, and not evil*. By the voice of the turtle heard in our land (^{<2112>}Song of Solomon 2:12), the Chaldee paraphrase understands, *the voice of the Holy Spirit*. That God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, is a joyful message, which comes to us upon the wing, *the wings of a dove*.

3. To explain and complete this solemnity, *there came a voice from heaven*, which, we have reason to think, was heard by all that were present. The Holy Spirit manifested himself in the likeness of a *dove*, but God the Father by *a voice*; for when the law was given they *saw no manner of similitude, only they heard a voice* (^{<1042>}Deuteronomy 4:12); and so this gospel came, and gospel indeed it is, the best news that ever came from heaven to earth; for it speaks plainly and fully God's favour to Christ, and us in him.

(1.) See here how God owns our Lord Jesus; *This is my beloved Son*. Observe,

[1.] The relation he stood in to him; *He is my Son*. Jesus Christ is the Son of God, *by eternal generation*, as he was *begotten of the Father before all the worlds* (⁵⁰¹⁵Colossians 1:15; ³⁰⁰³Hebrews 1:3); and by supernatural conception; he was *therefore* called *the Son of God*, because he was *conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost* (⁴⁰¹⁵Luke 1:35); yet this is not all; he is the Son of God by special designation to the work and office of the world's Redeemer. He was sanctified and sealed, and sent upon that errand, *brought up with the Father* for it (⁴⁰⁸⁰Proverbs 8:30), appointed to it; *I will make him my First-born*, ⁴⁹²⁷Psalms 89:27.

[2.] The affection the Father had for him; *He is my beloved Son*; his dear Son, *the Son of his love* (⁵⁰¹³Colossians 1:13); he has lain in his bosom from all eternity (⁴⁰¹⁸John 1:18), had been *always his delight* (⁴⁰⁸⁰Proverbs 8:30), but particularly as Mediator, and in undertaking the work of man's salvation, he was his *beloved Son*. He is *my Elect, in whom my soul delights*. See ²⁰¹¹Isaiah 42:1. Because he consented to the covenant of redemption, and delighted to do that *will of God, therefore the Father loved him*. ⁴⁰¹⁷John 10:17; 3:35. *Behold, then, behold, and wonder, what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us*, that he should deliver up him that was the Son of his love, to suffer and die for those that were the generation of his wrath; nay, and that he *therefore* loved him, *because he laid down his life for the sheep!* Now know we that he loved us, *seeing he has not withheld his Son, his only Son, his Isaac whom he loved, but gave him to be a sacrifice for our sin*.

(2.) See here how ready he is to own us in him: *He is my beloved Son*, not only *with* whom, but *in* whom, I am well pleased. He is pleased with all that are in him, and are united to him by faith. Hitherto God had been displeased with the children of men, but now his anger is turned away, and he has made us *accepted in the Beloved*, Ephesians 50:6. Let all the world take notice, that this is the Peace-maker, the Days-man, who has laid his hand upon us both, and that *there is no coming to God as a Father, but by him* as Mediator, ⁴³⁴⁶John 14:6. *In him our spiritual sacrifices are acceptable*, for his the Altar that *sanctifies every gift*, ⁴⁰¹⁵1 Peter 2:5. Out of Christ, *God is a consuming Fire*, but, in Christ, a reconciled Father. This is the sum of the whole gospel; *it is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that God has declared, by a voice from heaven, that Jesus*

Christ is his *beloved Son, in whom he is well pleased*, with which we must by faith cheerfully concur, and say, that he *is our beloved Saviour, in whom we are well pleased*.