



## CHRISTIAN EDUCATION: LESSON 119

**Active obedience of Christ** – Scripture has a lot to say regarding Christ’s active obedience. In Galatians 4:4-5 Paul teaches that at the time appointed by the Father, Christ was born of a woman, testifying to His full humanity, but also born under the law, testifying to His role as federal head and substitute for His people, having come under the curse of the law, and thus obligated to obey its demands. Paul says that Christ did this in order to redeem or buy back sinners from the curse and demands of the law.

In Luke 2:21-24 we read that according to the law of God, Jesus was circumcised (Genesis 17:12; Leviticus 12:3), and Mary after her time of purification presented her first born son to the Lord, and offered the required sacrifices, as atonement for her (Exodus 13:2, 12-16; Leviticus 12:1-8). In this we see that though these rituals represented the reality of sin, Jesus, who was the sinless God-man, was ordained to go through these, as the true representative for sinful man. Right from the beginning, we see that everything having to do with Jesus, even when carried out by others, was ordained such as to be performed in accordance with and in obedience to the law of God. Also in Luke 2:41-42 we read of Jesus celebrating the Passover in Jerusalem, at age twelve, according to Jewish custom.

The next thing we read about Jesus is His baptism at the Jordan by John the Baptist, being the beginning of His earthly ministry. Though this baptism was linked to the baptism instituted by Christ, it was not the same. John’s ministry and baptism were a preparatory ministry, calling people to confession and repentance, preparing the way for the coming of the long awaited Messiah and King (Matthew 3:1-12).

In the Old Testament, baptism was for Gentiles wanting to convert to Judaism, who being considered unclean needed to go through a cleansing. And now God was announcing a new requirement for the Jews, calling them to go through such cleansing from their sins, as they awaited the promised Messiah. It is within this historical background that we come to Jesus’ baptism (Matthew 3:13-14). John was surprised and protested, as for him this would have meant that Jesus needed cleansing and repentance from His sins, and if so then He wouldn’t qualify to be the Messiah. But in verse 15 Jesus answered saying, “Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Jesus needed to be baptized, not because He was a sinner, but because He needed to identify with His people as their sin bearer, and thus submit to all of God’s requirements, including this new requirement of baptism.

After that we read that the Spirit drove Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil (Matthew 4:1). This is reminiscent of the temptation our first parents faced in the garden, and Israel faced in the wilderness. Yet with all their blessings, Adam and Israel disobeyed their Creator, putting Him to the test and “demanding the food they craved” (Psalm 78:18); whereas Christ, the last Adam and true Israel, obeyed His Father, refusing to test God, having the will of God as His food (John 4:34; 5:30; 6:38; Deuteronomy 8:3). This was the same throughout Christ’s entire life and all the way to His death, as He was tempted in every respect as we are, yet He withstood them all, and was without sin (Hebrews 4:15).

Even at the end of His life, before His crucifixion, being in deep distress, Jesus prayed to the Father, agonizing over the fact that He was to drink the cup of the full wrath of the Father. Though He pleaded three times for it to be removed, each time He desired the will of the Father (Matthew 26:39-44).

Jesus had come not to change or abolish the law of God but to fulfill it through His obedient life (Matthew 5:17-18). This summed up Christ’s thirty three years of life, being necessary for man’s salvation, as demanded by God. Sinful man is saved by grace alone, but the grounds of his salvation is good works, not his works but the works of another – Christ Jesus, who perfectly fulfilled the terms of the covenant of works, and earned the blessings promised by God for His people, which included being established in righteousness forever, and eternal life and fellowship with God in heaven.