

Questions About In Who's Name Did John the Baptist Baptize

By Pastor Ed Anderson

When John baptized the Lord Jesus...the Lord's instruction to baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost had not yet been given by the Lord Jesus...how then did John baptize the Lord Jesus?...in what Name?

Answer:

That's an excellent and thoughtful question—let's walk through it step by step:

When John baptized Jesus, what name did he baptize in?

You're absolutely right:

The **instruction to baptize “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost”** (Matthew 28:19) was not given until **after Jesus' resurrection**, as part of the Great Commission.

So when John baptized Jesus, he was not baptizing in that Trinitarian formula. But here's the key:

John's baptism was not Christian baptism—it was preparatory

John the Baptist's baptism was:

- A **baptism of repentance** (Mark 1:4; Acts 19:4)
- A call to prepare hearts for the coming Messiah
- **Symbolic of confession and cleansing**, not yet the full expression of faith in the crucified and risen Christ

John said:

“I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I... He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.” —Matthew 3:11

Jesus' baptism by John was **not because He needed repentance**, but:

Jesus was baptized to “fulfill all righteousness”

“Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness.”—Matthew 3:15

This means:

- Jesus was **affirming John’s ministry** and the movement of repentance
- He was **setting an example** for us to follow
- He was **identifying with humanity** and beginning His public ministry with humility

There is no indication that John invoked any specific name when baptizing Jesus—because he was baptizing **under the authority of God**, as a **prophet**, not under a formal New Testament baptismal formula.

The Trinitarian formula came after Jesus’ resurrection

Jesus gave the command in **Matthew 28:19**, after He had:

- Died
- Risen again
- Defeated death
- Been glorified

Now, with **full authority**, He instituted baptism “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”

This reflects a **new covenant reality**—salvation through Jesus, and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Summary

- John baptized Jesus as part of a **unique prophetic moment**, not using the later baptismal formula.
- It was **not in any “name” per se**, but in obedience to God’s call and purpose.
- Jesus’ own baptism inaugurated His ministry and **modeled righteousness**, not repentance.
- The Trinitarian baptism came **after the resurrection**, when Jesus had all authority in heaven and earth (Matthew 28:18–20).