



Jesus' Baptism and Jesus' Healing: His Personal Practice of Spirituality

Bruce D. Chilton

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Within the environment of the Judaism of his day, Jesus practiced a unique understanding of purity grounded in his eschatological vision of how God was acting to gather his people. But Jesus' practice was not only a matter of getting people to see God in the same way as he did. He also acted directly to put his own view of purity into effect, declaring clean what earlier had been considered unclean. This was already a concern in the ministry of John the baptizer, and it is apparent now that Jesus too was moved by the prospect of the purification of all Israel. The politics of Herod Antipas within Imperial Rome had made John's program appear seditious, and Jesus needed to be aware of this. In addition, John had conceived of God as preparing a pure people by means of immersion, but Jesus saw the people of his Galilee already pure and ready for the disclosure of a kingdom they could already celebrate. This is what caused Jesus to stop baptizing people as he had once done as John's disciple and to begin a dedicated ministry of healing based on his awareness of the Spirit within him, an awareness that emerges as a major concern of this book. A final portion of the book studies how baptism within the earliest church emerged as a celebration of the Spirit of God. "An innovative perception of how a rite of purity might be understood when set over against its manifold historical contexts: religious, sociological, historical, political, and anthropological." — Scot McKnight, North Park University
Bruce Chilton, New Testament and Judaic scholar, is Bernard Iddings Bell Professor of Religion at Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY.

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