

The Baptism of Jesus

Matthew

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Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, what a declaration that it's only by your blood that our sins are forgiven, our soul is saved and that victory is ultimately won. God, may it not just be a credal statement but, God, may it be truly the belief of our heart. Now as we open your word, may you show us not only the fact of your shed blood but the power and the impact and what it means for our lives not only in eternity with you but this very day. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

This evening, I want to encourage you to open your Bibles to the gospel of Matthew 3 and those of you that may be new to our Sunday evening study, allow me to share with you that we're very slowly and steadily progressing through the gospel of Matthew with really a bigger picture in mind. Our study of the gospel of Matthew is not just a study of one of the respective gospels but it's very strategic because I'm of the belief that if we can understand what's happening in Matthew, it will open up the entirety of scripture, really our very slow progression through the gospel of Matthew is really a means of studying the entirety of scripture by utilizing one very specific book, the book of Matthew, which serves really as a transition between what we know as the Old Testament and the New, a transition between the temple worship of Judaism and the church of Jesus Christ, a transition between the Jewish people and the church at large. And tonight beginning in verse 13 of chapter 3, we come to one of those passages that is dearly loved and beloved but rarely if ever understood, it's the baptism of Jesus Christ, and to be quite honest with ourselves, it's one of those passages that we're grateful we know of and we're grateful we know the story but oftentimes it creates more questions than it does answers because we know why somebody today would be baptized, we studied last time we were together why John the Baptist was baptizing in the river Jordan, but why would Jesus Christ need to go through this experience of going under the water and coming up.

So tonight, we're going to address that in hopefully three very simplistic ways. We're going to talk about what Jesus' baptism was not, then we're going to talk about what it was, and then we're going to answer a very important question, why did he do it. Matthew 3, beginning in verse 13, it says,

13 Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. 14 But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? 15 And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him. 16 And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: 17 And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

Again, a somewhat familiar story to us in scripture but yet at the same time pretty confounding of why would Jesus feel the need to undergo this experience.

I want to begin tonight by addressing three very important aspects of what Jesus' baptism was not because from the very beginning we don't have the ability or the right to equate his baptism with ours, or his baptism with another. In fact, we're going to discover tonight that his baptism was not like anybody else's anywhere in time and/or history. If you were a statistician, you would call this an outlier. It is unique. It is a "one-off." There is no other baptism in the Bible that you can correlate or make synonymous with Jesus' baptism. It is completely unique in every form or fashion. However, one of the greatest difficulties we have is removing our preconceptions, our lenses, how we see scripture, and we are all guilty at some points of seeing our experience or seeing another story and unfortunately layering the Bible through it.

So why was Jesus not baptized? Now, hopefully for most if not all of us, these will seem pretty obvious but I think it's important to work through them. The first one is this: Jesus Christ was not baptized for the remission of sins. Now previously John the Baptist in verses 6 and 8 of this chapter said that they were coming confessing their sins, for the remission of sins. He said to the Pharisees, "Bring unto me fruits worthy of repentance." That was not only the declaration here in Matthew 3 but as we discussed earlier, you see this in Acts 2 when all the Jewish people at what we know as the Pentecost celebration gathered together initially to offer up a Jewish sacrifice realizing Jesus was the fulfillment of that sacrifice, and thus leaving that Judaistic worship just like these individuals on the Jordan River and following Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God.

What should seem obvious but is bearing of repeating is that Jesus was and is without sin. If one does not possess sin, one does not need them remitted in their life. In 2 Corinthians 5:20-21 it says that he who knew no sin became sin for us that we might be declared the righteousness of him. Hebrews 1:3 and subsequent passages, it talks about the sacrifice that Jesus offered for us upon the cross. It says by himself he purged our sins. Why is that important? Because only one who is sinless is qualified to offer themselves, and so even though that may seem obvious to us tonight, Jesus Christ did not possess any aspect or form and/or of sin that somehow needed to be remitted. You cannot equate him to those who were coming to John the Baptist. In fact, John the Baptist said, "Why are you coming to me? I need to be coming to you."

Secondly, it is not for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Why is this an important designation? Because earlier in this chapter, it was made very clear that when Jesus Christ came, that he would baptize with the Spirit and with fire, two different events that we'll delineate tonight. So when Jesus Christ said he was going to baptize us with the Spirit, it does not mean that his baptism is synonymous with our baptism. You and I tonight as a believer in Jesus Christ, you were baptized with the Spirit of God not when you went underwater but when you got saved. When you went underwater, you did it as a public demonstration but you were baptized, you were immersed, you were indwelt with the Holy Spirit when you called on Jesus to save you. Jesus Christ didn't need that. If he did not have sin to be remitted, then he didn't need to be "indwelt with the Holy Spirit" like you and I needed to do so.

According to Matthew 1:18 when Jesus Christ was conceived, it says that he was born of the Holy Ghost. You realize that did not happen in anybody listening or watching me tonight's lives. None of you. None of you were born of the Holy Ghost. You were born again of the Holy Ghost when you got saved. And so Jesus Christ not only did not have sin that needed remitting, Jesus Christ had the indwelling of the Holy Spirit the entirety of his earthly existence in the flesh. In fact, a while ago we had the privilege of hearing that song about the blood of Jesus Christ. In Acts 20:28, it's speaking about the church as a whole, it's talking about shepherding and the flock that the Lord has given, and it says that the church of Jesus Christ which God purchased with his own blood. Why is that important? Because the blood of Jesus Christ is different than your blood and my blood. The blood of Jesus Christ is not tainted by human sin. The blood of Jesus Christ does not need the remission from, the repentance of, or the forgiveness of sin. He was born of the Holy Ghost. His blood, according to Acts 20:28, is different than our blood.

So he was not baptized because he had sin to be confessed, he was not baptized so he could have the Holy Spirit present in his life, and last, and I know this is obvious, he was not baptized for judgment. In fact, if you'll go back in verse 11 and 12 it says, "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." Now I'm not here to cast proverbial stones but I've had brothers and sisters in Christ who have come to me and asked me, "Have you been baptized with fire?" I know what they mean, what they mean is what John Wesley said years ago, the founder of what we know as the Methodist denomination, when he spoke about preaching and living a life for Christ, he made this statement, he said set yourself on fire for the Lord and people will come and watch you burn. But when people ask, "Have you been baptized with fire?" My quick answer is, no, and I never will be because according to Matthew 12, that baptism of fire is what you and I know as hell.

And so I know it is obvious here that that is not the "baptism" that Jesus Christ experienced because it says that he was brought out of the water and we have the Holy Spirit as a dove and the Father speaking which begs this question: so what was his baptism? Now this is going to seem overly simplistic but I think it's necessary to discuss.

Verse 15, the words of Jesus, "Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." There is only one single solitary reason that Jesus Christ would allow himself to be taken under the water and brought back up by whom we know as John the Baptist, to fulfill the scripture. That was it. In fact, you see this phrase all throughout the gospel of Matthew, "As it was written. So it might be fulfilled." Again, the book of Matthew is this connection, it's this mediator between the Old and the New Testament showing us that what the prophets spoke of years ago is now being fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ.

He basically said, "The only reason I'm doing this is so that you will know I'm the one who the Old Testament spoke of." The book of Revelation 19:10, it says the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. In other words, the fact that it spoke about where he would be born, where he would be raised, how he would give his life for us, how he would be raised from the dead, all of those prophecies testify to who he is, was, and always will be. For those of you that are interested in numbers, there are 48 specific prophecies that are mentioned in the Old Testament about who Jesus Christ would be from his birth, his life, his death and his resurrection. Now there's more than 48 verses, we just categorize them into 48 events, okay? These statistical odds of all those things happening to one person in a single lifetime having been spoken of hundreds of years in advance, is 1×10 to the 157^{th} . That's a number that you cannot fathom even if you tried. Why is that critical for tonight? Because Jesus Christ said, "The reason we're doing this, John, the reason you're going to put me under the water, and the reason I'm going to come up, is so that people will know that I am the one that the prophets spoke of." Not because he had sin to be remitted. Not because he had need of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. And surely not the baptism of fire.

So tonight the "why" of Jesus' baptism. What were these prophecies of old? What needed to be fulfilled? What needed to be put on display in such a manner? Well, we're going to discover that there are three aspects of who Jesus Christ was and is that needed to be testified in this very significant event and the first one is this, that his baptism solidified the fulfillment that Jesus Christ was the prophet that had been foretold for thousands of years. In fact, all the way back in the book of Deuteronomy 18, we have the character whom we know as Moses. Moses was used mightily of the Lord to deliver the people of God out of Egypt, not only an actual bringing out of captivity into eventual freedom but a typology, a picture of what Jesus Christ would do in our life. He takes us out of the bondage of sin. He brings us, as we studied this morning, into paradise, that promised land not just of this life but of eternity.

Deuteronomy 18:18, this is the prophecy that the Lord spoke, "I will raise up a Prophet as unto thee." In other words, this is why when the Pharisees came to John the Baptist they asked him, "Are you the guy?" Have you ever questioned why did they not ask him what are you doing? I mean, after all, there is no record anywhere in the Old Testament of anybody taking anybody else and dunking them underwater. This was not a common practice and so from just a purely human perspective, what they should have said was, "What are you doing?" What they said was or what they asked was, "Are you the guy?" Because what we read in 1 Corinthians 10 later is this very specific passage, it says that

as Israel was baptized unto Moses. Think about that picture. When the Israelites were delivered from the captivity of Egypt, what did the Lord do? Even though they were on dry ground, he brought them under the walls of the water to picture them coming out of bondage and into freedom. That was the picture that was given through the testimony. So when Moses made this statement that a prophet will rise up as unto him, when John the Baptist is taking people and taking them under the water and bringing them up, they rightfully ask, "Are you the guy? Are you the one we're looking for?"

So when Jesus says so to fulfill of all righteousness, the "why" of Jesus' baptism is it showed the fulfillment that he was the one that was being spoken of in Deuteronomy 18. secondly, it shows that he was the fulfillment of his priestly office, and this is where we've got to draw a division because up until this point when we spoke about the priestly office, that meant the heritage and the lineage of one whom we know as Aaron, the brother of Moses, the one who would speak on his behalf, the one that would come alongside of. And you see this heritage in the Old Testament of the priest going into the altar, the tabernacle, the temple, etc., there was always a connection to Aaron, the brother of Moses.

If you have the ability tonight, I'm going to encourage you to fast forward to the book of Hebrews 7 for just a moment. I'm want to introduce you to a character that you may or may not be familiar with. In Hebrews 7 we're going to meet a man by the name of Melchizedek. He shows up originally in Genesis 14. He is called the King and Prince of Salem. Now interestingly what we know as Jerusalem, it has that same word within of peace. There in Genesis 14, Abram shows up, he's not Abraham yet. He has won a victorious battle and supernaturally he just knows to give this man 10% of all of the victory and all of the winnings. He receives it, he accepts it, and Melchizedek is the only person in your Old Testament who holds both the office of king and priest at the same time. Now you could be a prophet and a priest, you could be a prophet and a king, but you couldn't be a priest and a king. Remember, that's how Saul got in trouble. Remember Saul went and offered the sacrifice for the priest. Samuel came and said, "Whoa, whoa, that's not for you."

Hebrews 7, beginning in verse 1 it says, "For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace; Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually." So when Jesus Christ allowed himself to go through this act with John the Baptist, not only was he fulfilling the Old Testament scripture that he is the prophet of whom Moses spoke of that would be like unto him, but he also fulfilled the prophecy that there was a priest coming that would not be of the lineage of Aaron, a supernatural direct descendant from God, intermediary and intercessor on our behalf.

Now when we talk about Melchizedek, it's a hard name to pronounce, it's even a harder name to spell, so I just call him Uncle Mel. It just makes it easy. But when you deal with

Uncle Mel there's a lot of different options there. I will share with you for brevity tonight that there are many who would claim that whom we know as Melchizedek is what we call a Christophany. That's kind of a big fancy word which means a physical appearance of Jesus Christ within the creation before his Incarnation, his birth, his life, his ministry, death and resurrection. In other words, Jesus Christ has always been but we know the Christmas story of when he dwelt in the flesh, there are many who believe that Melchizedek, among other places in the Old Testament, are these stories where since he's always been there are times that he reveals himself to the creation, the creative order prior to his Incarnation. Notice what it said in Hebrews 7, without mother, without father, without beginning, without end. A continual priesthood. So when Jesus Christ suffers himself to go under and out of the water, he's identifying with the prophet role that Moses said would come, he's identifying with the priestly role not of Aaron that makes sacrifices year after year after year, but after the order of Melchizedek who would offer the sacrifice continually.

Last but not least, it would be the fulfillment of his role as a king. It's interesting that when you get to verse 16 and 17 of Matthew 3, we have this incredible rendition of Trinitarian doctrine. It says, "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." I find it interesting that this is one of the very rare places in the Bible where we have a clear distinction and designation of all the specific persons of the Trinity at one time, in one place, vocalizing or demonstrating themselves to us, the creation. You have Jesus Christ in the flesh going under and out of the water. You have the Holy Spirit visually descending. And then you have the Father audibly speaking. All at one time.

Why is this important? Because it's one thing to be the fulfillment of a prophet, it's another thing to be the fulfillment of a priest, but when you declare that one day you are going to be the King of kings and the Lord of lords, you've got to fulfill that you are also a king. Now remember when we studied the magi, these wise men coming from the east, they gave these very specific presents: gold, frankincense and myrrh. They all represented his prophet, priesthood and kingship. His baptism fulfills the same thing. He didn't go under the water because he needed sin to be forgiven. He didn't go under the water to be indwelt with the Holy Spirit. He surely didn't go under as a baptism of fire. He did so, according to his words, to fulfill scripture so that he could visually, audibly verify for those that were there that he was the one that they had anticipated for centuries, there was no need to look for any other.

You know, it's interesting that those that were there that day, those Pharisees, those scribes, those ones who would come to the Jordan River time after time who John the Baptist said they didn't have fruits of repentance, how this should have but made little to no impact on their lives. In fact, you almost get the idea that they witnessed it and went about their business to try to eradicate it immediately, and yet the lost world recognized his kingship even better than these men who, according to the Bible, knew the Bible better than anybody. Let me remind you in John 18 toward the end of his life and

ministry, whom we know as Pilate asked Jesus this question, "Are you a king?" Interesting. Pilate asked him, "Are you a king?" Then when Jesus Christ was crucified, they put above him the phrase "King of the Jews," and in the book of Revelation it says that on his thigh written where it is seen by all, it will say, "King of kings."

You see, in the Old Testament Samuel was a prophet and a priest. David was a prophet and a king. There's a lot of individuals that had a combination therein but nobody was allowed to possess all three but God himself. So when Jesus Christ is baptized, he did so for no other reason but to visually, audibly make this declaration, "I am the one not only that you've been looking for but all these guys said that was coming. I am the fulfillment," in his own words, "it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness." He was stating to those that were there and to us today that he was prophet, priest and king. Saul was not allowed to do so. David was not allowed to do so. Solomon was not allowed. No other person in your Old Testament was ever allowed to possess these and when they attempted to, they were condemned and chastised.

What does the Lord say at the conclusion, the last statement of chapter 3? "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." When we talk about the baptism of Jesus, it's an important event but it's often a very misunderstood event not only in his life and ministry but in the gospel accounts, and here in the gospel of Matthew it makes it clear the only reason he did so was to show us his fulfillment as prophet, priest and king. Jesus Christ not only in Matthew 3 but today in our lives is the only one who can fulfill these roles, he's the only one who is qualified, and he is the only one who is justified declaring that this is who he was, he is, and he always will be. He did not go under that water like you did. He did not go under that water like I did or anybody else. His baptism was unlike any other baptism not just in the Bible but throughout time. Why? Because there has never been anybody like him. He is and was God in the flesh and he came to demonstrate that on our behalf. He testified that it might be fulfilled.

So tonight, we see him undergoing a rite very differently than anybody else. Jordan River, Opelika, Alabama or anywhere in between, nobody has ever been baptized for these reasons because nobody possesses the identity that he possesses. He is prophet. He is priest. He is king. Which means he is Savior, he is Redeemer, and he is Lord.

Let's pray with our heads bowed and our eyes closed. Tonight as we come to our time of response in these passages that we read such as this, I know oftentimes it's easy to get caught up in the details in the Old Testament and the prophecies, the fulfillment therein, but if you allow tonight before we have our time of response and invitation, just to dwell on the fact that Jesus Christ even through his baptism is truly the only one we need for whatever is happening or going on in our life. For those of you who need a word of comfort, he is prophet. For those of you who need sin forgiven, he is priest. And for those of you who feel downtrodden, he is king. And yet he is all these at one time.

So again, he reminds us that whatever we're walking through, he is the answer. For those of you tonight who need to be saved, he says whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. For those of you who are dealing with the struggles and the bondage of sin, he

says that if you confess your sin, he is faithful, he is just to forgive. For those that are struggling with the downtroddenness of life, he says greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world. Much like the river Jordan 2,000 years ago, in this place tonight we stand before, we worship one who is all these in our lives. May we tonight respond appropriately.

Heavenly Father, as we come to this time of decision, God, thank you that there is nothing that occurs in our life, nothing that happens in our life, no thought that we entertain that not only you understand but you grasp. And God, help us as 1 Peter 5:7 says, help us to cast our burdens before you knowing that you careth for us. God, tonight thank you that there is nothing in our lives that is beyond your capacity, there is nothing we can walk through that you do not and cannot understand. Thank you, O God, that you are prophet, you are priest, you are king, you are Lord, you are Savior, and you are Redeemer. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.