

The Presentment of King Jesus

Matthew 3:13-17

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Introduction:

For the first thirty years of His life,

- our Lord Jesus Christ remained in relative obscurity.

Yet, we have seen how Matthew demonstrates that He was nevertheless King.

- In chapter 1, He presents His royal ancestry and His divine conception,
- In chapter 2, He presents His adoration by the wise men;
 - then shows how He fulfilled Old Testament prophecies.
- In the first part of chapter 3, He shows us how John the Baptist came as a herald to prepare the way for Him.
 - And now, in Matthew 3:13-17,
 - We that great day when He officially began His public ministry

Matthew tells us that Jesus **came** from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptised by Him.

- The word **came** translates *paraginomai*, in the Greek...
 - *paraginomai* is a specialised word that means:
 - to make a public appearance—
 - It is often used to refer official arrivals of some kind.
- Matthew has already used this word twice to speak of two other official arrivals:
 - In 2:1, of the Magi—
 - “Behold wise men from the east **came** (*paraginomai*) to Jerusalem...
 - In 3:1, of the public appearance of Jesus’ herald—
 - “In those days John the Baptist **came** (*paraginomai*) preaching in the wilderness of Judea...
- But now in 3:13, of the public appearing of King Jesus,
 - the very One for whose sake the Magi and John had made their appearances.

This, my brothers and sisters, is the public presentation of King Jesus for office—

- It is here that He enters into public ministry as the anointed one...

- as Prophet, Priest and King for the Church!

It is not until after this presentation that we see Jesus exercising His public ministry on earth.

- He was not like Moses who tried to take office before the time,
 - and then hesitated when the time finally came...
- He was content to remain in obscurity until the time appointed by the Father.
 - And now was that time—
 - John had appeared to prepare the way...
 - The hour had come for King Jesus to begin His public ministry.
- His presentment is made all the more sublime by the appearing of God the Father and God the Spirit.
 - All three persons of the Trinity appear...
 - just as all three appeared when the heaven and the earth were created!
 - And no wonder!
 - Redemption is a far greater work than creation...
 - the greatest that was ever done among men!
- There is a kind of holy excitement surrounding this glorious event...
 - The highest court of Heaven convenes before the world's eyes to consecrate and commission the Son of God to the work that He has been given to do for ruined sinners!

I. But what an unusual way for King Jesus to begin His public ministry...

- **to go to a wilderness prophet to be baptised!**

A. This is not quite what anyone would have expected!

1. John is perhaps the most bewildered of all!
 - a. In verse 14 it tells us what John did when Jesus came to be baptised of him:
 - “And John tried to prevent Him, saying, ‘I need to be baptised by **You**, and are **You** coming to be baptised by **me**.’”
 - b. John knew that his baptism (like baptism today) was a baptism that presupposed sin—
 - it was a baptism of repentance...

- it was a baptism that testifies to our defilement from sin and the need for cleansing...
 - it was a baptism that pointed to Jesus as the One who would accomplish that cleansing—
 - the One who would baptise with the Spirit!
- c. So how could it be that Jesus was coming for baptism!
- 1) He was the One who was supposed to effect what John’s baptism only pointed to!
 - This was all backwards and John would have no part of it!
 - 2) He knew enough about Jesus to know that He was without sin...
 - He knew that he was not even worthy to carry His shoes...
 - He knew that Jesus would do the divine work of baptising with the Spirit and of judging (as he says in v. 11 & 12)
 - works that only belong to God.
 - It seems that he had some understanding that he was the Son of God
 - 3) To John, for Jesus to be baptised would suggest that He was a part of the problem He had come to resolve!
 - Suppose you were a cancer patient and learned that a doctor was coming to town who had found a cure for cancer...
 - You were ask to admit people to clinic in which they would be treated...
 - And then the day comes when the physician appears, and he asks you to admit him to the clinic for treatment!
 - You have no power to cure cancer—you are just the herald!
 - Like John, you would say, “This is all backwards!”
 - “**I** need to be treated by **you**, and are **you** coming to be treated by **me**?”
2. Little did John know that Jesus’ baptism only foreshadowed things even more backwards that were yet to come!
- a. That the Saviour of the world was to be despised and rejected—
 - then crucified!
 - That the wrath John had warned the Pharisees and Sadducees to flee from was going to fall on **Him**!
 - That the One who was **Himself** without sin would be condemned as the chief of sinners!

- b. To good men like John who knew the most about Jesus,
 - it did not seem fitting that the One who came to save should die!
 - The disciples of Jesus were highly offended when he told them about this and refused to accept it!
 - And of course, in a way they were right!
 - It was completely unjust for us to sin and Jesus to suffer the curse!
- B. But Jesus says that His baptism is fitting:
- v. 15: “Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfil all righteousness.’”
1. Now you can see how baptism is fitting for the members of Christ’s kingdom...
 - a. The whole purpose of establishing this kingdom was to save people from their sins.
 - b. That is what the kingdom is all about,
 - and it makes sense that the outward symbol of admission would be baptism,
 - the symbol of washing away defilement.
 - It makes perfect sense that every one who wishes to be a member of this kingdom is required to be baptised,
 - confessing that He has come to Jesus to be cleansed from his sins.
 2. But how is it fitting for **Christ** to receive the symbol of cleansing...
 - He is no sinner, so why should He be baptised?
 - a. True true! Jesus was entirely without sin.
 - 1) His self testimony quoted by John is that He always does those things that please the Father.
 - 2) In Hebrews 4:15, we are told that:
 - He was tempted in every way that we are, yet without sin.
 - b. But it was fitting for Jesus to be baptised because He voluntarily joined Himself to a defiled, sinful people—the church.
 - 1) Yes, here at the commencement of His public ministry,
 - Jesus joins Himself, at the Father’s command, to all those who had been or ever would be called to Him for salvation.
 - Jesus knew what they were like!

- He knew that every last one was a sinner who needed forgiveness.
- 2) He also knew what the implications of joining that society were for Him!
- He knew that in making Himself the Head of a defiled, guilty society, that He Himself would become guilty and defiled by association!
 - He knew that it was like a man who joins himself in marriage to a woman who has a great debt...
 - By joining Himself to her, the debt becomes His responsibility!
 - He will have to pay it.
3. In many ways, Jesus' reception of baptism is His signing of His name to take responsibility for the Church's debt!
- a. Here He is accepting responsibility for our debt and putting Himself into the place of one who needed to be cleansed from guilt and defilement!
- By His baptism, He is saying:
 - Now that I have become the Head of this sinful society, I must be cleansed in order to fulfil all righteousness!
 - He fully committed Himself to do all that was necessary to make the Church righteous.
- b. The Bible testifies to this over and over.
- Here are some scriptures that speak about this:
 - Isa 53:6: All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.
 - 2 Cor 5:21: For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.
 - 1 Peter 3:18: For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit,
 - Mark 10:45: "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."
- c. You see then that as soon as Jesus entered public office and became our Head, He needed to be cleansed,
- not because of His own sins, but because of ours...
 - Here we see Him solemnly stepping forward to take this tremendous obligation upon Himself.
 - Baptism was only the first step...
 - In the days to come, it would lead to the cross.

TRANS> So you see then that baptism was not such a strange way for Jesus to begin His public ministry.

- Add to this the fact that the prophets had spoken of the Messianic days as characterised by baptism that cleanses, and you have the complete picture.
 - Look at Ezekiel 36:25:
 - God says:
 - “Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols.”
 - God does not mean that the waters of baptism will themselves cleanse,
 - but that baptism will be a true sign of what He will do through the Messiah—
 - In the day of the Messiah,
 - God will truly cleanse His people,
 - and will represent that cleansing by sprinkling clean water on them.
 - The Baptism that effects real change will be the baptism of the Spirit that is represented in the sprinkling of water, for He goes on to say:
 - Ezekiel 36:26-27: “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do *them*.”

II. At Jesus’ baptism, you are shown that the promised blessing of the Spirit began with King Jesus.

A. This is laid out for you in verse 16:

- v. 16: When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him.
- Allow me to digress for just a moment because this passage has so often been abused by those who would insist that in baptism,
 - Jesus was plunged entirely under the water because it says,
 - “He came up immediately from the water.”
 - Nothing of the kind is implied!
 - James and I went fishing with Dave last year,
 - and time after time, we went down to the water and then came back up from the water without ever getting wet.

- When Jesus was baptised, it was necessary for Him to go down to the edge of the water,
 - but this does not mean He went down under the water!
 - Matthew 3 says nothing about the mode of baptism.
- Ezekiel had already made that clear when he prophesied about baptism—
 - He expressly stated that baptism would be done by **sprinkling** clean water upon the person!
 - He says nothing about plunging people under the water!
- There is a lot more I could say on this topic,
 - but I must move on to what the passage is teaching...
- As I said before, here we are shown that the heavens were opened and that the Spirit came down to bring the blessing promised by the prophets!
 1. Heaven had been shut up to us since the fall.
 - a. In the garden of Eden, Heaven was opened to man...
 - Adam had enjoyed true fellowship or communion with God.
 - By communion, I mean that there was a sharing back and forth between heaven and earth, between God and man.
 - God had breathed into Adam the breath of life...
 - Adam had received spiritual life so that he was full of the life of God.
 - Human beings were created to receive life from the Spirit of God.
 - The plan was that we would be always looking to God and that He would be always giving us His Spirit to cause us to live beautiful, holy lives as His image bearers,
 - that by the Spirit we would to be full of the knowledge of God...
 - and full of wisdom, faithfulness, holiness, goodness, and truth.
 - And then we would communicate the beautiful holy living back to God for Him to delight in—
 - ever looking upon us as the crown of His creation and declaring it all to be very good.
 - This was the rich and fruitful communion that God designed to flow back and forth between heaven and earth.

- b. But when Adam rebelled against God, he broke this fellowship...
 - His iniquities separated him from God.
 - The free flowing communion with heaven was terminated...
 - The artery through which the Spirit flowed from God to man was severed, and man became spiritually dead.
 - No longer did he (or could he) reflect back to God His glorious image.
 - He was deprived of God's Spirit.
 - Heaven was shut up and we were excluded from true spiritual life.

TRANS> But here is the good news!

- 2. At Jesus' baptism, the heavens are opened and the Spirit comes down upon Him!
 - a. As soon as Jesus stepped forth to be our King,
 - The Messianic promise of the Spirit given in Ezekiel began to be fulfilled!
 - He is **the anointed one**, the Christ, the Messiah.
 - b. The barrier that sin had erected between earth and heaven was broken by Him...
 - Heaven was opened to the man Jesus and communion with Heaven had begun to flow once again.
 - Jesus is the One who re-established the connection for the world!

B. We can identify three reasons why Jesus was anointed with the Spirit.

- 1. First of all, in order that He Himself might be godly.
 - a. As I mentioned before,
 - for human beings to be godly,
 - they must live in dependence upon God's Spirit.
 - b. This was just as true of Jesus as of anyone, because Jesus had a true human nature that was not mixed together with His true divine nature...
 - As our confession says, there were
 - "two whole, perfect, and distinct natures, the Godhead and the manhood, inseparably joined together in one person, without conversion, composition, or confusion."
 - c. Of course, in this respect, Jesus already had the Spirit from the day of His birth and did not receive Him for the first time at His baptism.

- But as the One who was called to be our Mediator and to undergo such extreme pressures and temptations,
 - it was necessary for Him to have a very full measure of the Spirit's working to comfort Him and strengthen Him for His work.
 - True, as a person who was divine,
 - Jesus could not sin,
 - but remember that part of "not sinning" in the human nature involves relying on the Spirit for grace and help in human weakness.
 - And so, Jesus was given a full measure of the Spirit that He might remain godly.
2. Secondly, He was given the Spirit in order that He might be equipped for public office.
- a. God always gave the Spirit to those who were called to public office to assist them in their work.
- 1) When Saul was anointed king, Samuel told him that:
- 1 Samuel 10:6 "the Spirit of the LORD will come upon you, and you will prophesy with them and be turned into another man."
 - This was not the Spirit given for salvation,
 - but for ministry—
 - in order that Saul might be able to fulfil the responsibilities of King.
- 2) David was given the Spirit in the same way when he was anointed:
- 1 Sam 16:13: Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward.
 - It is after this that David steps forth to slay Goliath.
- b. In the same way prophets were given the Spirit to enable them to fulfil their respective callings.
- Peter tells us that they were carried along by the Spirit of Christ.
 - This is why we can be sure that they spoke only the word of God.
 - The priests also carried out their work by the Spirit...

TRANS> Jesus, in His human nature, also carried out His work by the power of the Spirit...

- c. Therefore, Jesus was anointed by the Spirit to be our prophet, our priest, and our king; to equip Him for the work He had come to do.
- 1) In Acts 10:36-38, Peter reminds Cornelius how Jesus was anointed in order that He might carry out His work:
 - That word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ—He is Lord of all—that word you know, which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.”
 - Peter is talking about the anointing that took place at Jesus’ Baptism!
 - 2) Jesus Himself took Isaiah’s words about anointing as fulfilled in Himself:
 - Isa 61:1: "The Spirit of the Lord GOD *is* upon Me, Because the LORD has anointed Me To preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the broken hearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives, And the opening of the prison to *those who are* bound;
 - a) Jesus claimed that He spoke by the Spirit
 - John 3:34: for speaking: "For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God does not give the Spirit by measure.
 - b) Jesus claimed that He cast out demons by the Spirit.
 - Mat 12:28: "But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you.

TRANS> How thankful we should be that Jesus was anointed with the Spirit to carry out His work for our sake!

3. But there is also a third reason that the Spirit was shown to have come down upon Jesus at His baptism...
 - He received the Spirit in order that He might give Him to all of His disciples.
 - a. Here is the great encouragement for you!
 - Jesus our Head was anointed with the Spirit for all the members of His body.
 - He is like Aaron in Psalm 133 where it is said that the oil that was poured on His Head flows down over all His body!
 - The same Spirit that worked so wonderfully in Him is at work in you if you are a member of His body...
 - That is, if you believe on Him for eternal life!

- b. The Spirit is at work in you to make you Holy—
 - This is the work of the Spirit that Ezekiel referred by which He would:
 - cause you to walk in God’s statutes, and keep His judgments to do *them*.
 - The Spirit works in you who believe to fill you with His fruit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.
 - He is at work in you to make you like Jesus—
 - to transform you into one who beautifully bears the image of God.
- c. And the Spirit is also given to enable you to serve God in your calling...
 - In 1 Cor. 12,
 - Paul tells us that the Spirit gives a diversity of gifts to the members of Christ’s body so that each may serve Him.
 - The Spirit gives you the grace you need to minister to your brothers and sisters in the church, as well as to those outside.
 - And He gives gifts to your brothers and sisters in the church so that they are enabled to minister to you...

TRANS> What an encouragement all this is!

- As Mediator, Jesus was given the Spirit that He might serve us—
- He is the connecting link between you and heaven if you are a believer!
 - He is the ladder that Jacob saw in His dream upon which communication with Heaven is opened!
 - He has re-established for His church fellowship with Heaven and has brought the Spirit down to us!
 - The Spirit was poured out in this way when Jesus ascended into Heaven:
 - John 7:37-39: On the last day, that great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.” But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet *given*, because Jesus was not yet glorified.
 - Jesus obtained the blessing of the Spirit for us, and now He gives Him to all His disciples to give them new life.
 - Jesus is the Anointed One, and it is by Him that we are all anointed.
- But the blessing about which Ezekiel spoke did not end with the Spirit.

- Not only does He say:
 - (Ezekiel 36:27) "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do *them*."
 - But also announces that God's divine favour will rest upon His people in the days of the Messiah!
 - v. 28-29: "Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God. I will deliver you from all your uncleanness.
 - He goes on to speak about how His blessing will rest upon them in every way.

III. At Jesus' baptism, we are also shown that God's approval was gained by Jesus.

- This is brought out in the words spoken by the Father in verse 17:
 - "And suddenly a voice *came* from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

A. Remember! Jesus has just now publicly stepped forward to be our Mediator.

- He has just identified Himself with His sinful church!
 1. Now we know that Jesus enjoyed the sweetest fellowship with the Father and the Spirit for all eternity...
 - a. All the love that you have ever seen on earth between man and man is but a pale reflection of the divine love that had been shared for all eternity between God the Father and God the Son.
 - b. But as the Son stepped forth to identify Himself with sinners—the question might arise:
 - "What is to happen now—now that Jesus has become the Head of a sinful people?
 - a people worthy to be judged, condemned, and rejected forever?"
 - The Son of God apart from us was surely loved and approved,
 - But what about now that He is identified with us?

2. Here the Father gives His answer!

- a. He says:
 - "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased!"
- b. What an encouragement to His Son!

- There He was,
 - in the weakness of human flesh identifying Himself with sinners,
 - and the Father graciously assures Him that His favour remains as strong as ever!
 - His love has not changed!
- c. What an encouragement to you who have fled to Christ for salvation!
 - Brothers and sisters, you are bound up with Christ so that the Father's approval of the Son is His approval of you!
 - Now that Jesus has joined Himself to us, it is a package deal...
 - The Son cannot be accepted unless His people are accepted with Him—
 - they go together, they are now one, and He is not ashamed to call us brethren...

TRANS> “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased!”

- This does not mean that Jesus will not have to the cross—
- But it means that the Father knew that the Son would undertake all that was required to fulfil all righteousness—
 - He knew that He was committed to do all that was required to fulfil all righteousness for every member of His body.
 - And so He looks upon Him—Him and us together—and He says,
 - “I am well-pleased!”

B. Here is the most desirable thing in all the universe! Divine acceptance!

1. How the world craves approval!

- a. There are many examples of this:
 - See the woman who dresses like a prostitute to gain the approval of men—
 - or who lives like one for the same purpose!
 - See the woman in the church living constantly in anxious fear about whether the other people in the church like her and approve of her.
 - See the man trying to prove himself with his new car or new computer—
 - with his education—
 - with his common sense—
 - with his success—
 - with his strength.

- b. Of course there are some who despair of ever pleasing others...
 - These are miserable persons...
 - Some of them try to please themselves—but what good is that?
 - Let me illustrate:
 - Little Billy is asked to clean his room—
 - He is pleased with his work, but when his mother comes to inspect, she does not approve.
 - Self-approval is nearly worthless!
 - We have nothing unless we have God’s approval.
 - Yet, this is what people crave!
 - c. And I tell you, when you crave the lesser approval of other people, or of self, it is because you have despaired in gaining God’s approval...
 - 1) You know it is impossible to gain it in yourself...
 - And so you settle for something worthless instead!
 - You spend yourself trying to gain what is worthless!
 - 2) But in Christ, you can indeed have God’s divine approval!
 - In Christ, God looks upon you as redeemed by the cross!
 - God looks upon you as a member of Christ who has fulfilled all the righteous requirements of His law...
 - He looks upon you as one in whom Christ is at work by His Spirit to make you holy...
 - And already, He approves of you!
2. To have this divine approval is to have *everything* and to lack *nothing*.
- a. As Paul once put it, “If God be for us, who can be against us?”
 - If God is for us, all the powers of heaven earth will be used to bring about blessing for us.
 - 1) Let Satan rant and rage and attack and destroy—
 - It will all be used to further God’s purposes for the people in whom He delights!
 - It will sanctify them and fit them more for heaven.
 - 2) Let Satan and his allies rage against Christ—

- Let them crucify Him!
 - It will only accomplish the full forgiveness of sin for the entire body!
- b. But above all this,
- Divine approval assures you the richest and fullest blessing that God can bestow!
 - Jesus was so desirous of this for us that before He went to the cross He prayed:
 - John 17:24-26: "Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. "O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me. "And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare *it*, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them."
 - This is absolutely astounding!
 - Jesus is talking about **you**,
 - His people,
 - living under the very same love that existed between He and His Father from all eternity!
 - He is bringing you into the circle of that most unfathomable, most wonderful love!

Conclusion!

What comfort there is for every believer in the presentment of Jesus Christ at His baptism!

- Are you defiled by sin and in need of cleansing?
 - Look, Jesus has undertaken for your cleansing.
 - Tell God, "I have been baptised in Jesus name."
- Are you longing for holiness, beauty, and usefulness in your life?
 - Look, Jesus was given the Holy Spirit as your Mediator...
 - Tell God, "Give me of the Holy Spirit, for I belong to Him."
- Are you feeling rejected?
 - Look, God's favour rested upon Jesus even after He had joined Himself to sinners!
 - Tell God, "You have accepted my Head—accept me, for I belong to Him!"