

**Refuge City Church — January 21, 2024**  
**Gospel of Matthew: “Baptism of Jesus” (Matthew 3:13-17)**

**Introduction**

- *Last time:* We looked at the beginning of the prophetic ministry of John the Baptist, the one who preceded Jesus to prepare the way for the Way.
- *Today:* Jesus comes on the scene to make a special, albeit confusing, request from John. He asks to be baptized by John.
  - Questions:
    - If John’s baptism was for repentance of sins, why did Jesus get baptized? Wasn’t He perfect?
    - Does this contradict Matthew’s earlier testimony of the divinity of Jesus? Does this make Jesus just a prophet and good teacher because he sought to get baptized?
    - Did Jesus have to be baptized?
  - **John 1:31**, “...but for this purpose I [John] came baptizing with water, that he [Jesus] might be revealed to Israel.”
    - The baptism of Jesus will be a revelatory moment that introduces Jesus in his adult ministry.
  - **John 1:32-34**, “And John bore witness: ‘I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.”

**{verses 13-14}**

“Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?”

- In his prophesied purpose, John knew of the Messiah, but at this request of Jesus, John’s hesitation seems validated, doesn’t it?
  - John understood his sinful nature. A prophet of God [**Matthew 11:11**, “...among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist.”]... yet still human, with a sinful nature.
  - Jesus, righteous and sinless.
    - **Hebrews 4:15**, “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.”
    - Jesus requests to be baptized. *But why??* The answer we find in Jesus’ response in the next verse.

**{verse 15}**

“But Jesus answered him, ‘Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.’ Then he consented.”

- Jesus says it is necessary to “fulfill all righteousness”.

- In one sense, this act validates the ministry of John the Baptist, as he was doing all that God required of him.
  - In another sense, it may bring a little confusion.
- 1. What does Jesus mean by righteousness?**
    - We can eliminate the idea that He needed to become righteous [right standing].
    - He is God in the flesh. He is the embodiment of righteousness.
  - 2. We can look at how other translations render this verse: “...for we must carry out all that God requires.”**
    - It was the divine plan from the beginning to redeem humanity through Jesus.
      - **2 Corinthians 5:21**, “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”
      - **Romans 8:3-4**, “For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.”
    - What does God require? Humility, obedience, and righteousness.
      - **Ephesians 4:22-24**, “to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.” [this is how we condemn sin]
    - God became flesh to give humanity someone to identify with.
      - So Christ identifying Himself with those He came to save.
      - Baptism is an outward display of an internal transformation brought on by God’s grace.
      - Jesus stepped into baptism as a display of God’s grace who would take on our sin, suffer death, and then rise again to redeem our soul.
  - 3. The baptism of Jesus is a visual display of Christ’s identification [foreshadowing] of what He would do in our place.**
    - **Luke 12:50**, “I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how great is my distress until it is accomplished!”
    - Jesus equated His physical death with the forgiveness of sins.
    - So baptism is a spiritual picture of what we can do to celebrate His victory over death, bringing us freedom, righteousness, and eternal life.
    - **Romans 6:3-5**, “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.”
      - **Galatians 3:27**, “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”
    - So John consented... how do you deny the one you serve?

**[verses 16-17]**

“And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, ‘This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.’”

- As Jesus confirmed the ministry of John, God now confirms the ministry of His Son.
- In other cases of when the “*heavens were opened up*” those who witnessed saw the glory of God.
  - Ezekiel saw the glory of God displayed through 4 living creatures [angelic beings].
    - **Ezekiel 1:28**, “Like the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud on the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness all around. Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. And when I saw it, I fell on my face...”
  - Stephen at his execution, gazed into heaven.
    - **Acts 7:55-56**, “But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. And he said, ‘Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.’”
  - Consider all of the Apostle John’s visions of heaven in the book of Revelation!
- After Jesus was baptized, the heavens opened and the the Spirit of God descended.
  - “Like a dove”
    - In His humanity, Jesus is empowered with the Holy Spirit.
    - A dove represents peace. [**Genesis 8:11**, “And the dove came back to him in the evening, and behold, in her mouth was a freshly plucked olive leaf. So Noah knew that the waters had subsided from the earth.”]
    - A dove also represents sacrifice.
      - Who are the ones that could only afford to present a dove for sacrifice under Mosaic law? The poor.
      - **Matthew 5:3**, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”
    - This whole instance, as Matthew has been pointing out, is prophetic.
      - **Isaiah 42:1**, “Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations.”
      - **Isaiah 61:1**, “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound.”
  - Then God speaks, “*This is my beloved son*”...
    - We see the prophetic fulfillment in what we read in the Old Testament.
      - **2 Samuel 7:13-14**, “...I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son...”
      - **Psalms 2:7**, “I will tell of the decree: The Lord said to me, ‘You are my Son; today I have begotten you.’”
        - “*Begotten*”: The Apostle Paul uses this verse to proclaim the resurrection of Jesus [Acts 13:33]
        - So the importance of recognizing the symbolic role of baptism as an expression of spiritual death and life [“rebirth”]
    - “*In whom I am well pleased.*”
      - It’s not difficult to continue to make the connection to the sacrifice of Jesus.

- Under the Mosaic law, if sacrifices were made accordingly, they would be a “sweet smelling aroma” to the Lord; it would be pleasing to Him.
- The ultimate purpose for the coming of the Lord, was to become the perfect sacrifice to redeem all of humanity from their sins.
- **John 3:16**, “For God so *loved* the world, that He gave His only *begotten* Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”

## **Conclusion**

- Allow me to end with one more question: So is it necessary that we get baptized?
  - Simple answer:
    - For salvation? No.
    - To identify with our Savior? Yes. Jesus was baptized, why shouldn't I?!
  - Granted, when we submit to the Lordship of Christ, we are justified, and at that moment filled with the Holy Spirit.
    - **1 Corinthians 12:13**, “For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body..”
    - **Colossians 1:13-14**, “He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”
  - Your physical baptism is an outward expression of an inward transformation, and you are now telling those around you, “I am born again, am identifying myself with Jesus, and will now pursue a life honoring to God, bearing fruit of righteousness because I'm connected to the vine.”
- *Next week*: As God confirmed the ministry of Jesus through the presence of the Holy Spirit, we'll see how the Adversary will do what he can to invalidate and disrupt Jesus' ministry before He even begins.