

Baptism of Jesus

I. Introduction

A. Epiphany

1. Ironically Wednesday was also a holiday in the church calendar—the celebration of Epiphany.
2. The word means “to show” or “make known”. Epiphany celebrates the reality that Jesus Christ has been revealed or made known to be the divine Son of God and sovereign king who will draw all nations to himself.
3. A time to celebrate the manifestation of Jesus through three primary events: Visit of the Magi, Jesus’ Baptism, and Wedding at Cana. (Which we will do over the next three weeks).

B. Jesus’ Baptism (Matthew 3:13-17)

1. Narrated in the synoptic (Matt. 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22) and alluded to by John (John 1:29-34). Jesus’ baptism has far more significance than we might think. No wonder all four Gospels narrate this incident in one form or another.
2. The Servants Apprehension (vv. 13-14)
 - a) Jesus has spent roughly the last twenty-five years of his life as a carpenter in Nazareth. We are not sure how much contact John and Jesus had growing up. One day during John’s ministry, Jesus appears in the crowd to be baptized by John. Matthew is the only writer who records John’s apprehension in baptizing Jesus. In John’s mind Jesus does not fit the requirements for his baptism (ie. sin and the consequent need for repentance).
 - (1) D.A. Carson—“John had difficulty in baptizing the Pharisees and Sadducees because they were not worthy of his baptism. Now he has trouble baptizing Jesus because is baptism is not worthy of Jesus.”¹
 - b) This should raise some questions in your mind if you know who Jesus is... Jesus had no sins to repent of.

¹ David L. Turner, *Matthew, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 117.

3. The Sons Association (3:15)
 - a) Two key themes for Matthew, fulfillment and righteousness.
 - (1) Fulfillment in this context does not necessarily apply to a specific passage of Scripture.
 - (2) “God’s saving activity prophesied throughout the Old Testament is now being fulfilled with the inauguration of Jesus’ ministry, culminating in his death on the cross...Jesus is expressing his obedience to God’s plan of salvation that has been revealed in Scriptures.”²
 - b) Association with Sinners
 - (1) Those who were responding to John’s baptism were those who were preparing themselves for the coming Messiah. “The baptism of Jesus was that He might identify Himself with delivering remnant in Israel. John’s ministry had brought men to faith in his word and the promise of God. This believing remnant was bound together by the sign of John’s baptism. When Jesus Christ came, He came not to identify Himself with the Pharisees, the sadducees, the Herodians, and the zealots, but rather to identify himself with that believing remnant who were expecting the fulfillment of God’s promises.”³
 - (2) Baptism is Jesus’ identification with humanity, and not just with humanity, but with humanity in our brokenness.
 - (a) Isaiah 53:12, “because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.”
 - (3) Leon Morris—“Jesus might well have been up there in from standing with John and calling on sinners to repent. Instead he was down there with the sinners affirming his solidarity with them, making himself one

² Michael J. Wilkins, *Matthew : From Biblical Text-- to Contemporary Life, The Niv Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2004), 140.

³ J. Dwight Pentecost, and John Danilson, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ : A Study of the Life of Christ* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Pub. House, 1981), 94. Publisher description <http://www.loc.gov/catdir/enhancements/fy0633/80022350-d.html>.

with them in the process of the salvation that he would in due course accomplish.”⁴

- (4) D.A. Carson—“By His baptism Jesus affirms his determination to do his assigned work...at this point Jesus must demonstrate his willingness to take on his servant role, entailing his identification with the people.”⁵

II. Interpreting Jesus’ Baptism (Read John 1:29-34)

A. Jesus is the substitutionary sacrifice for the sins of the world.

1. He is the Lamb of God

- a) Used in 1:29, 36; Acts 8:32; 1 Peter 1:19. Peter quotes Isaiah 53:6-7, “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. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.”
- b) “These references assert the atoning work of Christ, who by one final sacrifice of himself removed the guilt of our sins and opened the way to God.”⁶

B. Jesus is the bearer of the Holy Spirit.

1. Torn Open= “The Greek in Mark is unique...the word ‘torn open’...the background here may well be Isa. 63:11, 14, and 64:1, which, looking back at the Exodus, extol God’s saving power through Moses by means of God’s Spirit. The connection hopes for something similar in the final deliverance.”⁷

⁴ Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew, The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1992), 65.

⁵ Frank E. Gaebelien, J. D. Douglas, and Dick Polcyn, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary : With the New International Version*, 14 vols. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995). Publisher description <http://www.loc.gov/catdir/enhancements/fy0633/94047450-d.html>.

⁶ Gaebelien, Douglas, and Polcyn.

⁷ Darrell L. Bock, *Jesus According to Scripture : Restoring the Portrait from the Gospels* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2002), 86.

2. Spirit Descending= It is important to note, it is not as though the Holy Spirit has not been with Jesus prior to this event. This descending on Jesus at his baptism brings to mind the great promise that the Holy Spirit would be upon Messiah to carry out his mission of “bringing good news to the poor and setting the captives free...” (Isaiah 61:1).
 3. Spirit descending on Jesus at his baptism had prophetic significance.
 - a) Isaiah 11:1: Coming Davidic King
 - b) Isaiah 42:1: Coming Servant of the Lord
 - c) The Spirit’s descent empowers Jesus’ to accomplish his Messianic task (Luke 3:21-22; 4:1, 14, 18).
 4. Jesus accomplished his ministry by the anointing of the Holy Spirit; Acts 10:38, “...how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.”
 - a) He did the Father’s will through the power of the Holy Spirit; consequently this is exactly how He works through us.
 5. He is the Spirit empowered One, who will impart the Spirit to others.
- C. Jesus is the beloved Son with whom the Father is pleased.
1. Father’s voice is heard—an audible affirmation of Jesus’ identity.
 - a) What gets lost in our discussion about why Jesus is baptized is the declaration which immediately follows the event...According to Gospel writers Jesus is the unique Son of the Father.
 - (1) ”This is not the language of adoption but of confirmations of an existing relationship of divine love between the heavenly Father and his Son.”⁸
 2. “The language of ‘beloved Son’ and one with whom ‘God is pleased’ recalls two ancient texts. One is Ps. 2:7, which attributes sonship to the chosen king of the nation. The other is Isa. 42:1, which highlights God’s acceptance and election of a servant to represent him and show the way of deliverance.”⁹

⁸ Wilkins, 143.

⁹ Bock, 87.

III. Closing Thoughts

- A. Jesus is the Son of God, who offers forgiveness of sin and the presence of the Spirit for all who identify with him.
- B. By participating in John's baptism, Jesus identifies himself with broken humanity in order to redeem us. We stand under judgment, what are we to do? Here comes Jesus, the God-man who fully identifies with broken humanity for the purpose of redeeming us.
 - 1. 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."
 - 2. Here is the Gospel!
 - 3. By recording this event the Gospel writers are clear—you cannot have the Father, without the Son in whom He is well pleased. You cannot reject the Son, and please the Father.
- C. Have you identified with the Son?
 - 1. This is what Christian baptism is about.
 - a) Common Misunderstandings
 - (1) Religious Ritual—no real spiritual benefit.
 - (2) Necessary for salvation—Baptismal regeneration
 - (3) Re-Set Button when I Screw up (this is what we see in many re-baptisms.
 - 2. A Sign and a Seal of our union with Christ and the Church.
 - a) Baptism (along with Communion) are 'visible words', meaning "they communicate the believers unions with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection..."¹⁰
 - b) In the ancient world, seals often served the purpose of identifying ownership. "In baptism, God places his mark upon the one baptized...God speaks to us in baptism: 'This one so marked or sealed belongs to me.'" (Anyabwile and Duncan 2012)
 - 3. Of our union with Jesus...

¹⁰ D. A. Carson, Timothy Keller, and Gospel Coalition., *The Gospel as Center : Renewing Our Faith and Reforming Our Ministry Practices* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2012), 232.

- a) Romans 6:3-5, “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ 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. ⁵ 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.”
 - b) “[Baptism is] a dramatic act that tells a story. It speaks about dying to an old way of life, an old set of values, an old community, and a former identity. It also speaks about rising to a new way of life, a new set of values, a dynamic new community, and a revolutionary identity. Baptism is a communal act, not a solitary affair. It is how we experience the corporate, shared life of the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.”¹¹
4. Of our union with the Church
- a) 1 Corinthians 12: 12-13, “For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³ For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.”
 - b) Ephesians 4:4-6, “There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”
5. We are being joined with the God of the universe; His life is in you and you are in Him; mystically, powerfully, and genuinely joined to the life of God; therefore, you will live forever because His life is in you. In our Baptism, God speaks to us. He tells us that we belong to Him. He tells us that He has made us new! He tells us that we will live for him precisely because He lives in us!

¹¹ Chester, Tim; Timmis, Steve. *Total Church: A Radical Reshaping around Gospel and Community*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2008, 112.

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