

Matthew 3:13-17

Trey Waldrop

Matthew

The lowering of Jesus in the Jordan is the uniting of heaven and earth and the hope of righteousness for the unrighteous.

Jesus was immersed as he calls us to be and empowered by the Holy Spirit as we are to accomplish God's will as He calls us to.

There is intentionality in Jesus arrival to the Jordan.

Matthew 3:13 “13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him.”

The indication of the verse in the original language is that Jesus arrived on purpose. Its the same word used of magi

arriving at His birth. A deliberate conscious decision to go to the Jordan wilderness and specifically to John to be baptized. Its how John too arrives at the Jordan river in verse one of this chapter. Its a reminder to us that although Jesus is God in flesh he too is a man making conscious deliberate decisions that lead toward fulfilling righteousness as He calls us to do the same. We must choose intentionally to be obedient or disobedient. We are in good company when we choose deliberately to go toward that which will fulfill righteousness and declare our hope is in Christ alone.

There is hesitation from John because of Jesus request.

Matthew 3:14 “14 John would have prevented him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?””

John as we do had a hard time understanding why Jesus would need to be baptized. He has been preaching a message of repentance by baptism in preparation for the arrival of Jesus. He has been baptizing known sinners and although we dont know how well he knew Jesus we can affirm that he knew of both his humanity and divinity. He knows Jesus is the sinless messiah. So, a request for baptism seems unnecessary. The text indicates that this is not just a statement John makes, but an ongoing effort to

convince Jesus that this is backwards. He should be the one who is being baptized by Jesus. Not to uncommon is our response to Jesus requests of us altogether different. Sometimes what Jesus calls us to do and requests of us seems backwards, upside down, odd, and as if He would be better off doing by himself or using somebody else.

There is a declaration from Jesus about His request.

Matthew 3:15 “15 But Jesus answered him, “Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he consented.”

The statement by Jesus has perplexed theologians and people much brighter than I for thousands of years. What does Jesus mean here when He says it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness. It is fitting. It is proper. There are several reasons why some have argued it was proper for Jesus to be baptized.

1. The priesthood initiated into service would have been baptised for symbolic purity.
2. Identifying with gentile proselytes into Judaism.
3. An endorsement of John and his ministry.

I don't believe these are bad reasons to assume that Jesus requests is a proper one, but it seems to me that there is more here in Jesus statement to fulfill all righteousness. He alone is righteous and needs no baptism of symbolic repentance. So what does this baptism symbolize if not repentance?

Fulfillment according to Jesus. Fulfill here is to bring to completion or meet the requirements of. I think in fulfilling all righteousness we see the symbols of baptism given that evidence salvation, death, and life.

It is a symbol of Identity.

Consider that John, the last prophet, and sinner is standing alongside the final prophet, priest and king. It is a way of identifying the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God comes in and through Christ. Jesus is the fulfillment of what Isaiah writes hundreds of years before this moment.

Isaiah 53:12 “12 Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, 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.”

It is Jesus who is Identifying with sinners while at the same time fulfilling the prophecies concerning the Messiah so as

to declare that the long expected messiah king is here.

David Turner: In baptism, Jesus as the servant proclaimed and exemplified the righteousness envisioned by the prophets. Additionally he identified in baptism with the repentant righteous remnant within the nation of Israel (cf. Mt 3:5–6). Though he had no sin to confess, his baptism nevertheless demonstrated his humility and anticipated his ministry to lowly but repentant people

In this moment is the fulfillment of Isaiah's words in that Jesus of Nazareth is numbered among those on the banks of the Jordan who just recently too were baptized. Their's was a baptism of repentance, but Jesus who knew no sin was numbered among them so as to identify with their humanity. It is again the condescension of our Lord who walks into the water where symbolically sinners have washed their sins away in preparation for the one who will pardon their guilt and absolve their iniquity.

Here in Jesus baptism is what some commentators call the pre-figurement of Christian baptism. Jesus is identifying with us that by trusting Him we might identify ourselves in Him. In this way is the second symbol I believe.

It is a symbol of death.

Baptism is a symbol of death and Christ has come to fulfill

the promise. The lion from the tribe of Judah is also the lamb who is slain. The symbol of death is pictured in the very greek word used to describe it. *Baptizo* It is to immerse, to place beneath, to dip, or sink. It is always used in this context. It is to place under. There are a couple instances in the new testament where the word is translated as wash as in ceremonial cleansing but I would argue in the context of the act of baptism in the scriptures it is contextually immersion or placing beneath. Just as we would bury a body in death with dirt so the waters of baptism bury the sin stained life of a repentant sinner. Consider what Luke records Jesus sayin in Luke 12:50 as he makes his way toward calvary.

Luke 12:50 “50 I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how great is my distress until it is accomplished!”

It is the baptism of death. Jesus is identifying with humanity not just to be like us, but to die for us that we may be as He already is.

Warren Wiersbe - Jesus was not baptized to confess any sins (v. 5), since He was sinless. His baptism was His presentation to Israel (John 1:31) as well as a picture of His future baptism on the cross when “all the waves and billows” of judgment would go over Him (Matt. 20:22; Ps. 42:7). The baptism of John looked forward to the coming of Messiah (Acts 19:1–7). Christian baptism today looks

back to the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ and witnesses of the believer's identification with Him (Col. 2:12; Acts 10:47–48). (BORROW With the Word)

It is a symbol of identity, a symbol of death, and lastly a symbol of life.

It is a symbol of Life.

Jesus baptism identifies His person and work. He is sinless. He is the son of David, the king. The son of Abraham, the promised one. He is life. He wades into the water of the Jordan to be numbered among those who know without doubt they are guilty, but he guiltless. He is placed beneath the waters and covered with the symbolic filth of what they've confessed and left there. He is covered with and would in coming days bear the full extent of the wrath deserved for sinners. He who knew no sin became sin, that in Him we might become the righteousness of God. Life is in Christ alone. Baptism is a symbol of our confession of Christ openly and unashamedly as devoting ourselves fully to Him by recognizing that He has come as God, as man, and for the payment of our sin. Through His baptism of death and subsequent resurrection, not only are our sins paid for, but our righteousness is by way of God seeing us as He sees His perfect son.

What Is Baptism? (Chapter Four: The Meaning of Baptism)

Westminister Confession of Faith “Baptism is a sacrament of the New Testament, ordained by Jesus Christ, not only for the solemn admission of the party baptized into the visible church, but also to be unto him a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, of his engrafting into Christ, of regeneration, of remission of sins, of his giving up unto God, through Jesus Christ, to walk in newness of life: which sacrament is, by Christ’s own appointment, to be continued in his church until the end of the world”

There is a sign from heaven personifying the power of Jesus.

Matthew 3:16 “16 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;”

The heavens opened. Ezekiel would describe this in His vision and we are told Stephen the martyr would see the heavens open and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, but this is the only occurrence when the dove as a symbol of the Holy Spirit appears. There is a sense in which Jesus as God in flesh needs nothing. In another sense Jesus as man is dependent upon God to provide for His needs. Consider what Isaiah says of which Jesus read in the temple.

Isaiah 61:1 “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;”

It is the anointed king who was recognized by the people. Remember David was not the tallest, most handsome, or skilled, but in fact the least likely candidate to be king. Yet God’s choosing was not from the outward, but inward. It is the anointed son of God who in Himself is perfect but in fleshly condescension is weak and dependent. He is anointed by the Spirit’s power, He cannot fail.

It is the symbol of the dove that these Jews on the banks of the Jordan would’ve recognize in association to sacrifice. Rich folks could afford large sacrifices such as bulls, middle class folks maybe a lamb, but the poor would often sacrifice doves. The sign of the dove is a sign of anointing and power. The power that rested upon Christ in the sign of the dove now resides in us.

Greater is He who is in us, than He who is in the world. We are the temple of the Holy Spirit of God who being baptized into His death are raised to walk in new life and thereby consciously, intentionally, and deliberately obeying God.

There is a word from heaven proclaiming the pleasure of God.

Matthew 3:17 “17 and behold, a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”

Beloved Son

Lexham Theological Wordbook ἀγαπητός

ἀγαπητός (agapētos). adj. beloved, dear. A person who is in a special, close relationship with another.

The term of endearment agapētos is related to the verb ἀγαπάω (agapaō, “to love”) and is used to indicate someone who is considered dearly loved or valued. Agapētos occurs frequently in the NT, mostly in the letters. In the Synoptic Gospels, a voice calls Jesus “my beloved Son” both at his baptism (Mark 1:11) and at his transfiguration (Mark 9:7; compare 2 Pet 1:17). For authors like Paul, Peter, and John, the word is used to indicate their close bond as believers in Christ, but it also can function as a rhetorical device to signal exhortation.

The beloved son of God is Christ. The son who is more near to the father than any son in Israel. David was a man after God’s own heart, but Christ is God in flesh with the perfect heart of God. The beloved son is the son in whom God is well pleased. Consider that of all the sons and daughters in Israel there had never been one with whom God could say He was well pleased. Incredible stories of miraculous feats, yet Ezekiel, David, Moses, Abraham, Isaac or Jacob were sons in whom God was well pleased.

Consider that the system, symbols, and structures although prescribed by God as a means of satisfying His wrath were never able to fully please God. They were inept to do so. Year after year the sacrifices offered, but that's the point... year after year.

Consider that Christ has done nothing really other than be baptized. The voice of God from heaven declares over His son before one miracle performed that He is well pleased. How could God be pleased with Jesus and on what basis is this pleasure.

Hebrews 1:1–4 “1 Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. 3 He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, 4 having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.”

J.C. Ryle There is a rich mine of comfort, in these words, for all Christ's believing members. In themselves, and in their own doings, they see nothing to please God. They are daily sensible of weakness, shortcoming, and imperfection in all their ways. But let them recollect that the Father

regards them as members of His beloved Son Jesus Christ. He sees no spot in them. (Song 4:7.) He beholds them as "in Christ," clothed in His righteousness, and invested with His merit. They are "accepted in the Beloved," and when the holy eye of God looks at them, He is "well pleased."