

Rev. Dustin Daniels | River Bible Church  
**Matthew 3:13-17 | The Baptism of Jesus Christ**  
April 10, 2022

**WELCOME:**

- Please turn your Bibles to Matthew 3
- Bibles in back—our gift to you.

**REVIEW:**

Over the last several months, we have studied Matthew's Gospel verse-by-verse.

We teach in this expository fashion because we believe that when you understand God's Word verse-by-verse, you will experience Him day by day.

And not only that, but you'll be compelled to share the Gospel out of love for Jesus, thus fulfilling the Great Commission.

Matthew opened his Gospel <sup>in chapter 1</sup> with the genealogy of Jesus Christ, thus proving that Jesus comes from the lineage/heritage of Abraham and King David.

Matthew then moved to the virginal conception of Jesus Christ, thus proving that Jesus was not stained with sin by having a human father, *like you & me.*

In Matthew chapter 2, we then learned about the arrival of the Magi who came to worship Jesus and then King Herod doing the opposite by trying to kill Jesus.

We read about the obedience of Joseph and his leadership in protecting Jesus and Mary by taking them to live in Egypt.

Matthew taught us about King Herod's rage in murdering dozens of baby boys in Bethlehem.

The Holy Spirit taught us how Joseph led his family back to Israel and all the trials and hardships that went with that return trip home.

In Matthew chapter three, we fast forward thirty years and meet a new character in—John the Baptizer.

We learned of John's message, "**Repent, for the Kingdom of God is near.**"

All of that prepares now for the launch of Jesus ministry  
And that brings us to today's text—the baptism of Jesus Christ.

## **INTRODUCTION:**

Now that phrase—the baptism of Jesus Christ should sound a little strange.

And it sounds strange because we learned last week that John's baptism is a baptism for repentance.

In other words, it's a baptism specifically for sinners—to prepare sinners for the Savior Himself.

So the obvious question becomes, if Jesus is sinless—and He is—why does he go to a sinner (John the Baptizer) to be baptized for sins that He hasn't committed and will never commit?

That's a great question!

It's one we need to answer.

So let's find out.

*\*Please stand for the reading and honoring of God's Word.\**

**SCRIPTURE: Matthew 3:13-17 CSB**

**Matthew 3:13**— Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him.

**Matthew 3:14**— But John tried to stop him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and yet you come to me?"

**Matthew 3:15**— Jesus answered him, "Allow it for now, because this is the way for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then John allowed him to be baptized.

**Matthew 3:16**— When Jesus was baptized, he went up immediately from the water. The heavens suddenly opened for him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming down on him.

**Matthew 3:17**— And a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased."

*This is the Word of the Lord for River Bible Church.*

**EXEGESIS:**

**Matthew 3:13**— Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him.

Right from the very start, we have a purpose statement.

Jesus made this visit to John for the sole purpose of being baptized.

Last Sunday, we learned a lot about John the Baptizer and his ministry.

We saw that his ministry was so large and had so much activity going on that the Sanhedrin sent Pharisees and Sadducees to investigate.

So we come to verse thirteen today, and Matthew writes... *“then.”*

At the height of John’s ministry, *“Then Jesus came...”*

Just as the Magi made an official arrival to worship Jesus as a child, Jesus Himself officially arrived at the Jordan.

It’s possible that Jesus may have walked up to 60 miles from Galilee to where John was baptizing in the Jordan River.

We don’t know the exact location of where the baptisms were taking place.

The Jordan River runs between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea—so it’s a large area. *- MAIN PART*

However, we do have a clue that comes from the Gospel of John.



**John 1:28**— *All this happened in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptizing.*

This town of Bethany is also known as “Bethany beyond the Jordan.”

Now, this is not the same hometown of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus (John 11:1).

I know it’s a little confusing, but their hometown is just east of Jerusalem, about two miles away.

*John is baptizing*  
So ~~this is~~ a different area called Bethany.

Many scholars believe that where John was baptizing was about five miles north of the Dead Sea across from the city of Jericho.

Now, this is where it gets really interesting.

Because if John ~~the Baptizer~~ was baptizing sinners in preparation for the Messiah at this location—near Jericho—

It may in this same area that the Israelites took their first steps toward entering the Promised Land in Joshua 1:1–6.

Now, we don't know that for sure, but what we do know is that Jesus came to be baptized.

Jesus did not come to observe or criticize what John was doing, like the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Think about the humility of Jesus being baptized.

First of all, we have Jesus walking up to 60 miles just to get to this location.

Secondly, there are dozens, if not hundreds, of people in line to be baptized by John.

So we have the sinless Son of God, get in line for baptism like every other sinner.

Can you picture that?

Jesus sees the line and gets in the back of it.

He's not going to cut in line. Nobody knows who He is.

Picture this...

The person in front of Jesus turns around and says, "*Shalom.*"

Jesus says, "*Shalom, Shalom.*"

The man continues, *"It's pretty exciting isn't it? The first prophet in over 400 years!"*

Jesus replies, *"Yes, exciting indeed."*

The man sticks his hand out to introduce himself, and Jesus says, *"I'm Jesus of Nazareth, and it's a pleasure to meet you."*

Meanwhile, this man is oblivious, just like everyone else standing around in this line like cattle, that they are standing next to the one who spoke the cosmos into existence.

*obviously I'm reading between the lines.*

So, does everybody get the picture of the humility of where Jesus is and what he's doing at this moment?

Finally, it's Jesus' turn to be baptized—who knows how long they've been waiting in line.

John recognizes Jesus.

Remember, they're cousins.

It's possible that they played together as children.

John's mother, Elizabeth, called Jesus Lord.

John's father, Zechariah, had a conversation with the angel Gabriel.

Believe me, John knows exactly who Jesus is.

Scripture confirms it, and we'll see that in a moment.

**Matthew 3:14**— But John tried to stop him, saying, *"I need to be baptized by you, and yet you come to me?"*

John finds himself in a pickle.

If you remember from last week, John didn't baptize the Pharisees and the Sadducees because they were unrepentant—

And now John doesn't want to baptize Jesus because Jesus is too holy.

That's quite the dilemma.

The picture here is that John and Jesus had a longer conversation than what Matthew penned.

And during this conversation, there was a continued effort by John to stop this baptism—*"John kept trying to prevent Jesus from being baptized."*

John didn't directly contradict Jesus like Peter did (Matt. 16:22),

But John thought that somehow and in some way, he was misunderstanding what Jesus was saying.

Put yourself in John's shoes—wouldn't you think that Jesus could not possibly mean what He seemed to be saying.

John is saying, *"I need to be baptized by you because I'm the sinner—your not."*

Notice here how John's attempt to stop Jesus from being baptized is in itself proof of Jesus' sinlessness.

### **KEYPOINT #1**

*Jesus, who had no sin, got in line to be baptized with those who had no righteousness.*

Jesus' ministry starts with divine scandal.

In John's Gospel, the Apostle John writes—

**John 1:29**— *The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"*

John didn't say:

- "The Alpha and the Omega."
- "King of kings."
- "Lord of lords."

John said, "*The Lamb of God.*"

John is referring to the Old Testament sacrificial system.

The lamb<sup>is</sup> that was slain on the Day of Atonement had to be a perfect/flawless lamb<sub>s</sub>

The Day of Atonement is a feast day for Israel.

It's one day a year which Israel fasted, and dealt with their sin through a temporary animal sacrifice.

The lambs they sacrificed could not have any defects—a lamb without blemish.

A lamb with deformities could not serve as an atonement/<sup>temporary</sup>payment for sins.

So John recognizes Jesus as the fulfillment of the entire OT sacrificial system.

Now, we learned last Sunday that John's baptism was for the confession of sin and repentance.

However, Jesus has no need to confess sins.

Jesus has no need for repentance.



Remember when Jesus asked the Jews, “ Who among you can convict me of sin?”  
(John 8:46)

So do you see John’s dilemma?

Jesus doesn’t need to be saved from anything, and yet...

John has the *Lamb of God* standing before him, asking to be baptized.

Awkward!

### **KEYPOINT #2:**

*Jesus doesn’t need saving because He’s the Savior.*

Jesus offers forgiveness— He doesn’t *need* forgiveness.

So John and Jesus are talking this whole thing out—holding up the line.

**Matthew 3:15**— *Jesus answered him, “Allow it for now, because this is the way for us to fulfill all righteousness.”*

Jesus’ response is one of *incomprehensible* humility.

*“John, I know this doesn’t make sense. But I don’t have time to give you a theological dissertation on why you must baptize me.”*

*Jesus says, “We must fulfill all righteousness.”*

**“To fulfill all righteousness”** means that Jesus is going to be *perfectly obedient* to God the Father.

Jesus will make things right with the Father on behalf of mankind.

One of the many things that Jesus did was fulfill every OT law perfectly.

He dotted every "I" and crossed every "T."

In fact, Jesus said it this way:

**Matthew 5:17**— "Don't think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to abolish but to fulfill."

**Matthew 5:18**— For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or one stroke of a letter will pass away from the law until all things are accomplished.

What Adam failed to do, Jesus accomplished.

That's why Jesus is sometimes called "the new/second Adam."

Because Jesus came as the representation of Israel.

For Jesus to fulfill His mission, He had to obey every law that God had placed upon Israel.

So even though Jesus had no sin —His entire ministry was vicarious.

Jesus was the substitute for every man and woman in Israel.

And then, when Israel rejected Jesus as their Messiah—

Jesus was murdered on the cross, not for His sins but for the sins of His people—by His own people.

**Matthew 3:15** - Allow it for now, because this is the way for us to fulfill all righteousness.

~~So in verse fifteen~~, Jesus is saying, *"Your right, John, I should be baptizing you.*

*But even though this doesn't make sense right now, allow it, and it will make sense later."*

So the question then becomes, *"How could Jesus' baptism add anything to the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ?"*

In other words, what compelled Jesus to be baptized?

So let's think this through.

There are three common views I want to share with you.

First, some people think that Christ's baptism points to the purity laws of Israel.

Last Sunday, we discussed how John's baptism was just a bit out of the ordinary for the Jews.

The Jews had their heritage—they are God's chosen people—they didn't need to be baptized, because they had the law.

The Jews baptized proselytes into Judaism, but they themselves were not baptized.

However, Jews did have to be ritually pure before entering the Temple.

And purity could be lost in many ways.

So the primary way of restoring a Jew's purity was through a *mikveh* (a pool of water.)

It kinda sorta looks like a baptism—but it's not.

Judaism is a very symbolic religion.

And the *mikveh* in Judaism is a symbol of identification.

So even though Jesus is the sinless Son of God, Jesus chooses to identify Himself with sinners within John the Baptizer's message.

Now that sounds good—but that's not what the text says.

Secondly, some say that Jesus' baptism is the symbolic cleansing of a priest before the start of a time of ministry.

So, in other words, Jesus takes a *mikveh* as a public testimony that this is the start of his public ministry.

That view sounds like great symbolism, but that's not what the text says.

Text SAYS  
Jesus WAS  
baptized

Thirdly, some theologians say that the nation of Israel needs to repent of its sins, and Jesus is part of the nation, so Jesus is providing the example with His baptism.

So we may see a biblical basis for a corporate confession of sin.

Once again, there is nothing in Scripture that says any of that.

If we look closely again at verse fifteen, Jesus tells us exactly why He is being baptized.



**Matthew 3:15**— ... because this is the way for us to fulfill all righteousness."

baptist

Jesus: John

The key here is that Jesus came into the world to identify with mankind.

And to identify with mankind means that Jesus must identify with sin.

Because mankind and sin are two sides of the same coin.

You can't have one without the other.

So, by receiving John's baptism, Jesus identifies with mankind rather than distancing Himself from us.

In other words, Jesus could not "fulfill righteousness" for mankind if He did not identify with mankind's sin.

Would it surprise you that this identification was prophesied in the OT?

**+** *Isaiah 53:12*— He was counted among the rebels. He bore the sins of many and interceded for rebels.

Interceded: Pleaded to the Father. Made peace with the Father.

Jesus acted between the Father and mankind for reconciliation.

In other words, it was predicted that Jesus would be the substitute on our behalf.

So after John has this extended conversation with Jesus ...

**+** *Matthew 3:15*— Then John allowed him to be baptized.

Jesus' baptism was the first act of His ministry.

And within the very first act of obedience, we see something divine take place.

**+** *Matthew 3:16*— When Jesus was baptized, he went up immediately from the water. The heavens suddenly opened for him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming down on him.

First, notice the mode of baptism— "He went up from the water."

So to come up from the water means that Jesus first had to go down into the water.

Jesus was immersed/dipped.

That word baptize comes from baptizo, which simply means to dip.

And the reason the mode of baptism is important is because it reflects the Gospel—the life, the death, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Secondly, the heavens opened.



**Matthew 3:16**— *The heavens suddenly opened for him,*

If you have the ESV or NASB, verse 16 reads, “***Behold! The heavens opened.***”

In other words, Matthew is saying, “*Pay attention! This is important.*”

The heavens opening was not some type of sentimental private emotional experience in the heart of Jesus.

It was a miracle. *for everyone to witness.*

What did they see when the heavens opened?

We don't know. Scripture doesn't give us those details.

But it seems that a spiritual layer blocks us from seeing into Heaven.

Scripture does share a couple of experiences when <sup>(50)</sup> ~~He~~ chooses to remove that spiritual barrier from people's eyes.

For example:

When Ezekiel saw the heavens open, he saw four living creatures, the chariot and the wheels within wheels that had more wheels. (Ezek. 1:1–19).

Just before Stephen died in Acts 7, he saw “the heavens opened up and Jesus standing at the right hand of God” (Acts 7:56),

John, the apostle, writes about several heavenly visions in the book of Revelation. (Rev. 4:1; 11:19; 19:11).

The apostle Paul had an experience of being “caught up to the third heaven.”

That incident was so wonderful and amazing that Paul couldn’t explain it.

He had no words. It was “inexpressible” (2 Cor. 12:2–4).

He couldn’t have explained it if he wanted to.

So we don’t know what everyone saw, but here’s what we do know...

**+** **Matthew 3:16**— ...and he (John the Baptizer) saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming down on him (Jesus).

Notice how the Holy Spirit descends “like” a dove.

At Jesus' baptism  
not an actual physical dove —  
like a dove

This terminology suggests that no actual dove appeared but rather some visible demonstration of the Holy Spirit revealed like a dove.

Why a dove?

Couple reasons:

First, Jews connected a dove with the Holy Spirit in the first century.

Here’s why:

**Genesis 1:2**—Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness covered the surface of the watery depths, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters.

The Hebrew verb “hover” is the same word used to describe a bird flutter’s its wings.

The picture is that the Holy Spirit identifies and empowers Jesus as the one who brings new creation.

Just as Jesus was involved in the creation, we see Jesus involved in redemption.

**2 Corinthians 5:17**— Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, and see, the new has come!

Jesus is doing a new work.

He is creating something new.

Secondly, the Jews recognized a dove as the most common sacrifice in the first century for a sin offering.

So we see the picture of sacrifice with the Holy Spirit like a dove.

So we have the background of why the Holy Spirit is like a dove, but why did the Holy Spirit come upon Jesus in the first place?

This is so cool! When Jesus became a man, Jesus did not lose His divinity.

Jesus is the Son of God, meaning that He is divine.

Jesus is also the Son of Man, meaning that He is human.

Theologically this is called the hypostatic union.



The union of the Divine and human natures in the One Person — ‘Hypostasis’ of Jesus Christ.

So although Jesus stepped down from Heaven to become a human being, Jesus was still fully divine in every way.

Jesus was not a man who became God. — *heresy*

Because Jesus is the second person of the Godhead—He has always existed.

So, In His deity, Jesus needs nothing.

But in His humanity, Jesus needed the Holy Spirit, just like we do.

Remember now, Jesus laid aside his divine abilities while on the earth.

**Philippians 2:5**— *Adopt the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus,*

**Philippians 2:6**— *who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be exploited.*

In other words, Jesus did not perform miracles on His own behalf.

Jesus never pulled out His “divinity card” to show it off.

Let me give you a couple of examples.

**Matthew 12:28**— *If I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.*

Jesus relied on the Holy Spirit to drive out the demons through Him.

Jesus didn’t preach on His own either.

+ **John 3:34**—For the one whom God sent speaks God's words, since he gives the Spirit without measure.

As a human being, Jesus depended solely on the Holy Spirit to speak through Him—just like we are.

+ *one more example.*  
**Acts 10:37**—You know the events that took place throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John preached:

+ **Acts 10:38**—how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how he went about doing good and healing all who were under the tyranny of the devil, because God was with him.

Now you and I are not going walk around healing the lame and casting out demons like Jesus—that apostolic dispensation is over.

But the point is that we have the same Holy Spirit leading and guiding our lives just as Jesus did in His humanity.

And this is what we see here in verse sixteen.

+ **Matthew 3:16**—...and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming down on him.

The Holy Spirit was here *Anointing* Jesus for ministry.

Guess what? This anointing was also prophesied in the OT.

**+** **Isaiah 61:1**—The Spirit of the Lord God is on me, (Jesus)  
 because the Lord has anointed me  
 to bring good news to the poor.  
 He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted,  
 to proclaim liberty to the captives  
 and freedom to the prisoners;

**+** **Isaiah 11:2**—The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him (Jesus)  
 a Spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
 a Spirit of counsel and strength,  
 a Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.

Jesus is being ordained for the redemption of mankind, by the Holy Spirit.

And as Jesus is being commissioned, look what happens next!

**+** **Matthew 3:17**— And a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son,  
 with whom I am well-pleased."

The Holy Spirit ordains Jesus, and the Father confirms the ordination.

Any Jew who knew the Old Testament would immediately recognize these words from the Father.

The first part of the sentence ("**You are my Son**") comes from Psalm 2:7,

**+** **Psalm 2:7**—~~I will declare the Lord's decree.~~  
 He said to me, "You are my Son;  
 today I have become your Father.

Notice how all three members of the Trinity and involved in Jesus' baptism.

The Holy Spirit anoints the Son, and the Father speaks to the people with His confirmation.

Therefore the Son is anointed and confirmed for ministry.

Just as all three members of the Trinity were present in creation, we have all three members present at the beginning of mankind's redemption.

**+** **Matthew 3:17**— *"This is my beloved Son..."*

**Beloved:** agape-dos (*agapētos*) signifies a deep, rich, and profound relationship.

God the Father loves God the Son.

Now the most famous Bible verse says this:

**+** **John 3:16**— *For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.*

So God loves the world, but...

Jesus is the Father's *beloved*— agape-dos (*agapētos*) — above everyone and everything else that He loves.

Think about your own children.

You may love kids, but you have to admit that you love your own children more, don't you?

**+** **Matthew 3:17**— *...with whom I am well-pleased."*

The second part of the sentence comes from Isaiah 42:1.

**Isaiah 42:1**—“*This is my servant; I strengthen him,  
this is my chosen one; I delight in him.  
I have put my Spirit on him;*

Only in God's Son could the Father ever be fully well-pleased.

Why?

It's as if God the Father examined the life of Jesus—the 30 years of Jesus working in complete and total obscurity—

The time between Matthew 3:12 from last week to verse 14 this week.

God the Father examined every thought, heard every word, scrutinized every motive, every agenda...and found Jesus to be perfect and without blemish.

God the Father loves the Son and is well pleased because Jesus is the only one who is capable of offering Himself as a sacrifice for the sins of mankind.

No higher love is ever possible than the Father's love toward his Son.

**PREACH:**

And here's the most amazing news anyone could ever hear.

Because God the Father loves His son with an agape-dos (*agapētos*) type love...

AND because the God the Father finds no imperfection in His Son,

God the Father also finds no imperfection, no fault, and no defect in those who confessed Jesus as Lord with their mouth and believe that Jesus was raised in their hearts. (Romans 10:9).

Once again, Jesus lived a vicarious life that involves identifying with sinners and as a substitute on our behalf.

And here's what I want us to think about as we finish—1) Identification 2) Substitution. *of Jesus Christ*

The world has a different definition for identification.

The world says that I can establish my own-identity.

If I choose to identify as tall, dark, and handsome, then I can do that.

But, the reality is that I'm not.

I'm short, white as a ghost and bald.

*But* The world says that you can identify as someone or something that you're not—all for personal gain or worldly applause.

That's not how Jesus identifies with sinners.

*Jesus' identification cost Him His perfect life.*

It's God who tells us who we are—not the other way around.

Do you see the rebellion in that?—Me telling God who I am?

It's God who sets the standard for truth—we don't make up our own version of truth.

And it's God who tell us who God is and how we are to know Him through Scripture.

We generally are to the left or right of center.

Center being Scripture. And it's our job to adjust to Center.

And it's in baptism, we are identified with Jesus in his death and resurrection.

### **KEYPOINT #3:**

*Jesus' death becomes our death, and His resurrection our resurrection.*

**Galatians 2:20**— I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

In other words, Jesus identified with sinners for this reason:

**2 Corinthians 5:21**— He (God) made the one who did not know sin (Jesus) to be sin (offering) for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.

↳ Today's text w/ baptism fulfills All righteousness.

Identification and Substitution is the heart of the Gospel message.

That's why the Gospel is called, "The Good News."

**Romans 5:8**—But God proves his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

That proof comes with Jesus' identification—Jesus was murdered as a criminal and crucified between two criminals.

**John 19:30**—he said, "It is finished." Then bowing his head, he gave up his spirit.

What's the result of Jesus finishing His work?

**Hebrews 4:14**— Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens—Jesus the Son of God—let us hold fast to our confession.



**Hebrews 4:15**— *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in every way as we are, yet without sin.*

But dear friends, if Jesus Christ is not your substitute—Jesus doesn't identify with you.

You're not one of His—you are the world's.

This means that you must come to God the Father, apart from the grace of His Son.

In other words, you will one day stand in front of Jesus, not as a Savior, but a judge.

And instead of allowing Jesus to be your substitute, you come before a holy God on your own merit, with no good deeds, because you have not repented, and are not converted.

The price for your sinfulness and pride is an eternal hell where the worm doesn't die and the fire is never quenched. (Mark 9:48).

That is your destiny and this is your best life now.

But it doesn't have to be.

Dear friend, I pray that you would do some business with God today.



**PRAY:**

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