

## **The King's Identification**

**Matthew 3:13-17**

### **Introduction**

In Matthew's Gospel Jesus is the King. He is King by prophecy, paternity, genealogy, and by the identification of the Eastern Wise Men. Jesus has grown up. He is about to embark on His earthly ministry. Raised in Nazareth and relative to John the Baptist, Jesus meets John in the Wilderness of Judea. Now we read of Jesus' baptism. We might think of this as Jesus' coming out party or ministry launch or even the King's identification. This a public ceremony where all three person's of the Godhead unite to initiate the ministry of the Messiah. We have learned that John's baptism is a baptism unto repentance; of turning from sin to God. Why then must Jesus be baptized? What does Christ's baptism really mean? What does baptism really mean? What is the difference between John's baptism and baptism in the Church?

In this passage John the Baptist will at first object to Jesus' request to be baptized and then obey the Savior. The Holy Spirit will descend like a dove upon Jesus. A voice from heaven will boom the Father's approval; "This is my Beloved Son, and I am fully pleased with him."

### **The Sign: The King Is Baptized (vv.13-15)**

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

The distance from the Galilee to the lower Jordan was about 60 miles. You mean Jesus walked 60 miles just to be baptized?

How far are you willing to go to experience the power of God and the presence of God? To hear the voice God and confirm the favor of God in your life and in your ministry?

*14And John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?"*

Why does John protest? Does John realize that Jesus is sinless? Why does John sense the proper order is for Jesus to baptize John? Were John and Jesus relatives? Yes. John clearly was called by God and prepared by God for ministry. John had a life-style of abstinence from ordinary pleasures and a commitment to righteousness; yet John recognizes that Jesus is without sin (v. 14). But Jesus deeply desires to identify with His near relative's ministry; even if he is a Baptist!

Three pastors—A Presbyterian, a Methodist and a Baptist—each faced the problem of bats. The Presbyterian said they shot them with shotguns. The Methodist said, "We are more compassionate. We wrapped them in a big blanket and took them to woods far away and let them go. But they beat us back to the church." The Baptist pastor said, "We baptized each one and made them members of our church, and we haven't seen them since."

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*15But Jesus answered and said to him, "Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he allowed Him.*

The Lord Jesus provides permission. Jesus identifies with John in his ministry; *"for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness."* Warren Wiersbe offers six reasons;

1. Obligation; "to fulfill all righteousness".
2. Consecration; in the Old Testament the priest was washed and then anointed with oil type and picture of the Holy Spirit (Ex. 29:4) Jesus submits to water baptism, and the Holy Spirit manifests His presence in a form like a dove.
3. Commendation; that is Jesus commends or approves the ministry and message of John the Baptist; thus obligating the people to listen to John and obey John's instructions to turn from sin and turn to God. Tragically many of the religious leaders rejected John's baptism (see chapter 21:23-27).
4. Proclamation; this was John's official introduction of Jesus to the Jewish nation (see John 1:31).
5. Anticipation—this water baptism looks forward to Christ's baptism of suffering for us on the Cross (Luke 12:50); Jesus fulfills all righteousness by His sacrificial death on Calvary's Cross.
6. Identification; Jesus identifies Himself with sinful human beings; in the next chapter the Holy Spirit will drive Jesus back into the Judean Wilderness—there we see a kind of picture of the Scapegoat who symbolically carried the nations sin into the wilderness (Lev. 16:1-10). Jesus takes His place—really takes your place—my place and identifies with the believing remnant. Jesus will identify with the nation of Israel, and with the larger world of broken humanity (adopted and expanded from Wiersbe's Expository Outlines of the New Testament; pp. 20-21).

Think for a moment. Jesus identifies with lost humanity. Jesus identifies with every human being. The Bible says (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".

The Lord God poured all human sin and the punishment for that sin into Jesus; and poured all of the righteousness of Jesus into the believing sinner—who becomes the believing saint! Do you have family? They share your name. They share your history. We share a common origin. Jesus is willing to bear your sin and share His name and righteousness with you.

Jesus will identify with humanity. And Jesus will submit to His Father. "Jesus was declaring His submission to His Father's plan, and His expectation of His Father's power" (Courson p.55).

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How are we to think about the statement Jesus makes; “for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness?” What are God’s righteous claims? Do they include the revelation of His identity; His holiness and His love; and man’s sinful condition? Does God have the right to even bring up the problem of sin and the solution for sin?

For Jesus the immersion in water (like the waters of God’s judgment) and emergence from that water (a picture of the resurrection) foreshadow his own death, burial and resurrection. The sacrificial death of Jesus—his burial—his resurrection—and “satisfy the demands of divine justice and provide a righteous basis by which sinners could be justified” (MacDonald; *Believer’s Bible Commentary*; p.1212).

### **The Spirit: The King Is Sealed (v.16)**

*16When 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.*

In the opening chapter of John’s gospel John the Baptist told the people; “I did not know Him; but that He should be revealed to Israel, therefore I came baptizing with water.” (32) And John bore witness, saying, “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him”.

This was the exact sign and seal that God the Father promised to reveal to John to identify the Christ—the Messiah. The dove of course becomes a picture of peace and purity, meekness and beauty—all attributes that He passes on to those He empowers—Jesus is the King and the King’s subjects are given the gift of the Holy Spirit and the ability to walk in peace and purity and meekness and beauty and love.

This is the presence of God.

But it is also the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit. Someone might ask why would the second person of the Trinity needs to receive the Holy Spirit? Jesus is God. And Jesus is human—and as human the Holy Spirit qualifies and empowers Jesus for His work and ministry on the earth as Redeemer. Some have mistakenly taken the idea too far—and suggested that Jesus never performed a single miracle as God the Son—but rather as a man filled with the Holy Spirit. But I think this denies the doctrine of the uniqueness of our Savior.

Doesn’t the scene sound familiar to you? Where else in the Bible do we have a picture of water, judgment for sin and a dove? Yes—that’s right! Noah and the flood. Noah grew up in a contaminated world filled with sin, wickedness and corruption. In Genesis 6 we are given a picture where the imaginations of men were filled with wickedness all the time. A world polluted beyond our comprehension. But the Scripture says “Noah found grace in the eyes of the

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Lord". The Lord told Noah that God would judge earth and mercifully drown the earth (that's right mercifully). The judgment would not be slow and painful but quick and merciful. You know the story. God visited judgment for 40 days and 40 nights. All flesh perished except those eight souls and the life-forms brought into the Ark. When the rain let up Noah sent a raven (a type of the flesh that feeds on the decaying and the dead) and a dove. The raven did not return—it had much to feed on. But the dove—a bird of purity—circled and could find no place to land. So the dove landed on the ship and returned to Noah. Jon Courson writes; "The picture is incredible to me: A man called Comfort, surrounded by water. A polluted world has been drowned. The dove comes upon him".

Do you think those watching the baptism recalled Genesis 6? The story of Noah gives us insight into the meaning and importance of baptism. When you are baptized you are leaving the dying, leaving the dead, the decaying world behind you! The world in the past was judged by water. The world in the future will be judged by fire. You get a picture of what this world has to offer apart from Christ (nothing). The world is void, decaying, dying, sinful, corrupt. The world is a temporal place—its days are numbered. That is what happens when you are baptized—the world is plunged into a watery grave—judged—put to death. But like Noah—you rise above the water—you rise above the flood—you are safe—in God's Ark (Jesus) and you will survive to live in a new world.

Paul writes; "Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom.6:4). When we as Christians are baptized we identify with Jesus in his death and resurrection. It is an outward act that communicates an inward transformation. It is more than a physical bath. It is a spiritual commitment to obey God. And it is also "a dying to the world around you, and a resurrection to newness of life" (Courson p.57).

Every Christian should be baptized. If for no other reason, than to fulfill all righteousness. Jesus knew no sin and identified with you. You have known nothing but sin—yet Jesus asks you to be baptized. Jesus wants you to let the world go. Let it drown. You must rise to a new way of living.

Baptism is central to our faith. The early church baptized new believers. Baptism unites Christians as members in a mutual body; but baptism has no ultimate significance apart from faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Don't you think it's time for a change in direction?

The Bible tells another story about a guy who found himself under water. He had a radical baptism. His name in Hebrew was 'dove' but you know him as Jonah! Jonah was a prophet tasked with the duty to proclaim a message of repentance to the people of Nineveh. There was only one problem; Jonah hated Gentiles and he really hated the Assyrians. He knew God was kind. He knew that if they repented God would spare their lives. Jonah rebelled against God and

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decided to take a Cruise Ship in the opposite direction. He was thrown overboard and would up in the belly of a great Sea Creature. For three days Jonah was in a watery gastrointestinal hades! He was broken and he repented of his arrogance and disobedience. “And suddenly he was resurrected as the whale had the urge to regurgitate on the beach in Assyria (taken—really stolen from Jon Courson). Jonah’s baptism was not a drowning of the world around him—it was a drowning of the rebellion and selfishness within him. Jonah had his own agenda, but through baptism Jonah surrendered his agenda and fulfilled God’s agenda.

And what was Jesus’ agenda? To save you. To rescue you. From drowning in God’s judgment—from burning in the certain future of this world and this universe. You were meant to survive in a new world. Jesus knew exactly what baptism meant. It was to fulfill the will of God.

You might be thinking, “I understand that during the time of Noah’s flood there was a judgment that resulted in the death of all things outside the Ark. In Noah is a dying to the sin around us. And in the baptism of Jonah is a dying to the sin within us. But I have failed. I was baptized years ago and have failed miserably in my walk with Christian walk.

Guess what happened to Noah after his baptism? He failed miserably. He got drunk. He disgraced himself. He found himself exposed in such a humiliating way that it invited a curse on one his grandchildren; a curse that causes suffering even to this day. Noah’s sin was not eradicated with the destruction of humanity. Noah did not cease to be human on the other side of the flood. He still sinned.

What about Jonah? He preached the greatest single revival in the history of revivals—an entire city turned from their sin and turned to the Lord. 400,000 people of Nineveh turned to the Lord and were spared destruction. And what did Jonah do? He threw a pity party. He experienced severe and profound depression. He failed miserably. The selfishness should have died in the belly of the whale but when his ministry mission was over he failed miserably.

During Noah’s baptism it rained 40 days.

After Jonah’s baptism he emerged and preached for 40 days (in the hopes—at least for Jonah that God would destroy the people of Nineveh).

After Noah’s baptism—a trial.

After Jonah’s baptism—a trial.

After Jesus’ baptism—a trial.

But Jesus will overcome temptation and trial. Jesus will emerge victorious.

Noah who found grace and exercised faith failed.

Jonah—gifted preacher failed.

But Jesus will not fail. Jesus succeeds where you and I fail. Jesus will overcome the Devil.

In your baptism—you died to the sin around you.

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In your baptism—you died to the sin within you.

In your baptism you believe in the one who died for you!

When you are baptized, you are not perfected. That happens in Heaven when you are glorified.

You are not perfect—but you are perfectly forgiven. You are perfectly loved. Jesus paid for your sins. All of your sins. There is nothing imperfect about His sacrifice. The same Jesus who triumphed over trials lives inside of you!

### **The Son: The King Is Identified (v.17)**

*17 And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."*

In the New Testament the Father speaks to the Son from Heaven three times (here; Matthew 17:5 and John 12:28). The voice quotes Scripture; "this is My beloved Son"(Psalm 2:7); "in whom I am well pleased" (Isaiah 42:1).

This is my priceless Son—I am deeply pleased with Him. The Father approves of Son—in what Jesus says and what Jesus does! The hidden years are over. The ministry of Jesus must begin. The Father's approval means Jesus is ready to begin His ministry.

Jesus is God's Son. Psalm 2:7; "The Lord hath said unto Me, 'Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten Thee'. Acts 13:22 informs us that this 'begetting' refers to His resurrection from the dead, and not his birth in Bethlehem. This statement ties in perfectly with the Lord's baptismal experience of death, burial, and resurrection" (Wiersbe p. 17).

Jesus is the Servant of the Lord; the Son of God; the Son of David; the Spirit Bearer; Matthew is trying to tell us that in Jesus God fulfills all of His promises. Paul writes all the promises of God find their 'yes' in him" (2 Cor.1:20).

We have a powerful picture of the Trinity. The baptism of Jesus reveals the anointing of the Son of God—by the anointing manifestation of the Spirit of God and the verbal declaration by God the Father! We see the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. We see distinctions within the Godhead (vv.16, 17 and see 28:19). The Father is not the Son and the Spirit is not the Father and the Son is not the Father or the Spirit.

Simply put; "the Son is baptized, the Spirit descends like a dove, and the Father speaks from heaven. As He entered His ministry, the Son was approved by the Father; as He (Jesus) approaches the cross (17:5), He receives that commendation again" (see Wiersbe's Outlines of the New Testament p. 21).

Your head might be swimming right now. But the Holy Spirit is shown to be a Person (God Himself); someone who possesses (the Spirit indwells) and a power (the power of God over sin and the power to do the work of God).

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### **Conclusion**

So then. . . “the baptism of Jesus was an affirmation of John’s ministry, an identification with us personally, a declaration to the Father prophetically and an illustration of the Trinity practically” (Courson p.56).

In the baptism of Jesus we see a living illustration of our own baptism. We are baptized by Jesus into the Holy Spirit and we become members of Christ’s forever family and members of His Church. We are baptized in water and we identify with Jesus in His death, burial and resurrection. We have the right to pray.

Have you been baptized by the Spirit into the body? Have you been baptized by the water in obedience to Christ? Are you ready to fulfill all righteousness?

If you’ve already been baptized—maybe its time to remember;  
Be like Noah—watch the world drown in judgment as you live by faith.  
Be like Jonah—die to selfishness, walk in newness of life, speak God’s message to a world on the verge of extinction.

And if you’ve failed, like Noah, like Jonah; comfort and dove—cry out to God and thank Him that Jesus did not fail! Jesus succeeds where others fail.