

Jan 27, 2008 (LS)

JESUS' BAPTISM AND OURS
MATTHEW 3.13-17

1. JESUS' BAPTISM: THE NEED TO FULFILL ALL RIGHTEOUSNESS (13-15)

The Lord comes (13): Completion of what was started in 3.1-12: John preparing the bride for the husband. John's ministry is temporary. John comes in v. 1. Jesus comes in v. 13 (i.e., the one coming after John; v. 11).

John is embodiment/representative of all prophets in old creation (cf. 11.13). He is "the firstborn" who must give way to the younger brother, the seed of the woman (Jesus the Baptist!).

Jesus/Joshua must cross the Jordan to lead God's people into the promised land.

John's reservations (14): John believes he needs to be baptized by Jesus. A couple of reasons.

(1) John's baptism is into repentance, which means that it deals with sin in some respect (cf. v. 6). Jesus is w/o sin. John is not.

Jesus is identifying with the sins of his people. He came to save his people from their sins (1.21).

(2) John's baptism leads to Jesus. John needs to be brought into the new age that Jesus brings in. John sees this as backwards.

Fulfilling all righteousness (15): What does it mean "to fulfill all righteousness?"

Righteousness = covenant faithfulness (the covenant being the standard by which "right" and wrong are measured).

"To fulfill all righteousness" is not obedience to an arbitrary set of rules. Conformity to the covenant. E.g., we are righteous when we conform to God's covenant. When we sin in violation of the stipulations of the covenant we obey the other aspects of the covenant and come and seek forgiveness based upon what God has provided in his covenant.

When we do this God is faithful and *righteous/just* to forgive us of our sins (1Jn 1.9). God acts in righteousness when he acts in accord with his covenant.

This involves punishment on the impenitent, but its focus is on the salvation of his people. "Righteousness" and "salvation" are parallel in the following OT passages: Isa 51.5-6; 56.1; cf. also Isa 45.8; 46.13; 51.8; 59.16; 62.1. God is righteous when he saves his people.

Jesus' baptism: YHWH is acting to save his people in the baptism of Jesus just as he promised.

Why baptism to accomplish this? Because Jesus is the Son who is called out of Egypt (2.15). When the Son comes out of Egypt he must pass through the waters of deliverance (for the people of God) and destruction (for the enemies).

2. JESUS' BAPTISM: THE SON'S INAUGURATION INTO THE MINISTRY (16-17)

The Son emerges from the water: Baptism = a death and resurrection event (cp. Rom 6.1ff.). The only answer for sin and the uncleanness that it brings is death. Only then is resurrection into new life a possibility (cf. Rom 7.1ff.)

Jesus' baptism foreshadows his death and resurrection (cf. 20.20-28).

Note: Jesus "coming up from the water" does not necessitate the mode of baptism being immersion. In fact, if Jesus is fulfilling OC rites, immersion would be all wrong. There are no prescribed immersions in God's prescriptions for baptism. Waters for baptism came from above (i.e., the waters above the firmament; heavenly waters).

The heavens are opened: Heaven = firmament (cf. Gen 1.6-8). That which separates the waters above from waters below.

God's throne sits above the firmament-heavens. Represented in the Tab/Tem with the veil between Holy Place and Most Holy Place. Behind the veil is the throne of God.

God stays hidden so as not to destroy the people. The firmament is a protection for us. People cannot draw near in the OC except through animals and the high priest once a year (and not w/o the blood of animals).

Heavens opening = Jesus is high priest who enters behind the veil (cp. the tearing the veil in the Temple later in Mt 27.51).

Hebrews: Tab/Tem = shadow of heavenly reality; a replica of heavenly structure Moses saw on the Mt. (Ex 25.40; Heb 8.5). In Jesus the copy is done away with and the heavenly reality/substance is realized.

Jesus is being anointed as a priest. John the Baptist = a son of Aaron. Handing over the priesthood to the one who will be a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. He is the one who enters behind the veil (cf. Heb 6.19-20)

The Spirit descends: Spirit descending draws several old creation lines together. (1) the anointing oil of the high priest. Cf. Lev 8.

(2) Gen 1.2 - The Spirit brooding over the original creation who will form and fill it.

(3) Gen 8 - Noah ("rest") and the dove. The dove lights upon Noah (Gen 8.9), the one who brings in the new creation. Jesus is the new and true Noah who will bring rest and new creation.

The Father speaks: Word from behind the veil is a new word; not the word written on stones but the Word in flesh and Spirit.

Three references employed: (1) Psa 2.7 - enthronement Psalm; the Son is God's King/Messiah whom he has appointed.

(2) Gen 22.2 - Isaac, the beloved son of Abraham who was going to be sacrificed.

(3) Isa 42.1 - The Servant, the Elect One in whom God delights. He will be the suffering Servant (Isa 53)

Jesus' baptism and ours: Calvin (*Institutes*, 4.15.6) "... [O]ur faith receives from baptism the advantage of its sure testimony to us that we are not only engrafted into the death and life of Christ, but so united to Christ himself that we become sharers in all his blessings. For he dedicated and sanctified baptism in his own body [Matt. 3:13] in order that he might have it in common with us as the firmest bond of the union and fellowship which he has deigned to form with us. Hence, Paul proves that we are children of God from the fact that we put on Christ in baptism [Gal. 3:26-27]. Thus we see that the fulfillment of baptism is in Christ, whom also for this reason we call the proper object of baptism ... For all the gifts of God proffered in baptism are found in Christ alone." (4.15.6)

1) *Baptism is a Trinitarian event.* cp. 28.19-20; the Trinity participates in our baptism and engrafts into the community.

2) *Baptism gives sanctuary access.* We become priests (1Pt 2.9; Rev 1.6). We have access to draw near in Christ.

3) *Baptism means participation in the Spirit.* Jesus gave the church the Spirit he received on the Day of Pentecost. Cf. Ac 2.38-39.

4) *Baptism is a declaration of sonship.* Jesus is declared to be the Son and we are sons in him.

Your Father delights in you! Your father is well-pleased with you and delights in you because you are in the beloved Son. United with him we are loved and delighted-in by the Father just as Jesus himself is loved and delighted-in.

Assurance in temptation. Cp. 4.11. "If you are the Son of God ..." In baptism the Father declared him to be.

Martin Luther, when he was assailed by temptations from the devil would say, "I am baptized." He was looking to God's word, not his own feelings.

5) *Baptism is the declaration of God about us, not our declaration about God.* God is doing the speaking in baptism and we are to listen. We are not to tell God what baptism should mean to us or what it ought to mean.

6) *Baptism is an act of deliverance.* Cp. 1Pt 3.20-21; part and parcel to God's "effectual means of salvation." Baptism, the Lord's Supper, with the Word and prayer are the outward ordinary means whereby Christ's communicates the benefits of his mediation to us; i.e., his saving work (cf. WLC 154, 161; WSC 88, 91). Blessings received by faith.

7) *Baptism is a calling to mission.* To be sons of God is not only a privilege but a responsibility/mission/vocation. Saved by grace through faith unto good works (Eph 2.8-10). Walk worthy of the calling (Eph 4.1).