

Matt. 3:13-17

Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented Him, saying, “I need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?” But Jesus answered him, “Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he consented. And when Jesus had been baptized, just as He came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to Him and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on Him. And a voice from heaven said, “This is My Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.”

The Gospel of the Lord

Reflection Questions

Baptism of the Lord, Matt. 3: 13-17

- 1) ***The Context:*** The context for this passage is Matt. Chapters 3-7 and Chp. 28. The beginning of Matt. Chp. 3 describes John the Baptist baptizing many people who had heard his message of repentance in the wilderness of Judea. Then John rejects the Sadducees' and Pharisees' attempts to be baptized by him because they do not approach baptism with truly repentant hearts. Next, John tries to reject Jesus' request for baptism because of His sinlessness (e.g. not in the category at all for the baptism of repentance). John is humbled by Jesus' request. John's disciples get a chance to see why Jesus is ultimately the One to follow. Directly following the baptism of Jesus, is Jesus' temptation in the desert and calling of His disciples (e.g. beginning of His ministry). Matthew's gospel begins Jesus' ministry with His baptism and ends His ministry (***28:19***) with Jesus' commission to His disciples to 'go and Baptize all nations'. John's baptism was different for a number of reasons but one reason stands out: John was baptizing Jews (not just converts to Judaism). This was a new concept for Jewish people, that they, members of the chosen people of God, sons of Abraham, would ever need this baptism of repentance.

- 2) At the time that Matthew is writing this gospel, there is still some tension and conflict between John's disciples and the disciples of Jesus. Matthew wants to make it abundantly clear that Jesus is the one to follow (e.g. the qualitative difference between John and Jesus). How does Matthew do this? Why would it be necessary for Matthew to clarify this issue as early as possible in the early Jewish/Christian community?

- 3) John being a humble man, insists that it is wrong for him to baptize Jesus. We (the readers) find ourselves as surprised as John is that Jesus would present Himself for baptism since we believe, as John did, that it should be the reverse. Jesus gives His reason; "Let it be so for now, for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness." Jesus uses the personal pronoun 'us', both John and Jesus will honor

- God (in this righteous obedience) and glorify God by following this plan. How is God particularly glorified in this scene? In what way did God rely on the humility and obedience of both John and Jesus to accomplish this? How does God continue to rely upon our obedience and humility in order to accomplish His will in our lives and to glorify Himself?
- 4) The concept of ‘fulfilling righteousness’ essentially means to obey God’s will. What kinds of fruitfulness and victories in our lives have we enjoyed when we obeyed God’s will?
 - 5) Jesus has already emptied Himself of the fullness of Godly majesty by taking on human flesh. How is Jesus’ submission to Baptism an expression of His full identification with us and our human condition (even though He did not need it)? How did this humble submission to Baptism evangelize those present? How does Christ’s humility and submission of His will to God’s will continue to evangelize people today?
 - 6) John is clearly uncomfortable with the role reversal, but consents to it. Jesus waits for his consent. God waits for our consent and acknowledges our free will. How does free will factor into this scene?
 - 7) Many of John’s disciples were gathered there for baptism; a perfect audience for what was about to transpire! Why do we think that God set it up that way? How was that foundational in adding to Jesus’ core base of disciples?
 - 8) Matthew does not describe the Baptism itself so much as the heavenly realities that respond to it. The dove descends and the Father’s voice is heard saying “Here is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. Here we have the entire *Trinity* revealed. Why would that be an important part of God’s plan for the kingdom to reveal Himself as Trinity in front of this particular crowd? It is a theological reality that when One person of the Trinity is ALL three are present. When have you noticed this in scripture and in your life?