

40-03-01.wpd—Why Is Our Baptism Important?

baptism, epiphany, consecration, witness

Mat 3:13-17

Baptism personally identifies us with Christ.

INTRODUCTION: (text as Scripture reading)

–*Epiphany means revelation, manifestation, appearing.* Among various *epiphany themes* [Christ’s temple presentation, the Magi’s visit, His 1st miracle], *Christ’s baptism especially manifested His identification with us.* **Why is our baptism important?** Because **HOM.idea**. First, let’s see how...

I. His Baptism Identified Him with Us– v.13, from Galilee to the Jordan

A. He was leaving a private task [**“the silent years”** in Galilee] (30 years of day-in, day-out human living...He knows what it’s like.)

1. He was just being one of us– Isa 53:2a, He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of **dry ground**. (*no fruit*, for 30 yrs.)
2. It was time to grow– Luke 2:52, And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men. (mental, physical, spiritual, social)

B. He was entering a public task, when He came to the Jordan...

1. “to be baptized by John”– He was joining a crowd of sinners seeking forgiveness (*sinners, like us*) [Jesus was called **“friend of sinners”**].
 - a. He wasn’t a sinner Himself, but became sin for sinners– 2 Cor 5:21, God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. [**my quote**: “*The only way God could get any closer to humanity than to take upon Himself our human flesh was to take upon Himself our human sins.*”]
 - b. Jesus didn’t need baptism– v.14, John tried to deter him, saying, “*I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?*” [**John’s reaction** was unlike Peter’s, at the foot-washing. John knew he needed Christ’s washing.]
2. v.15, Jesus replied, “*Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.*” Then John consented.
 - a. Christ’s baptism was an epiphany—manifesting His identity with us and of His priestly ministry for us.
 - b. It was “*proper*,” because **it identified Him with...**
 - (1) those needing His baptism [**John**: “*I need to be baptized by you*”].
 - (2) ...with the message of repentance that John was preaching.
 - (3) ...with His future crucifixion (Jesus described His death on the Cross as a *baptism*– Luke 12:49-51, “*I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! But I have a*

baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is completed! Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but **division**.)

- c. Jesus knew His baptism [His death] would “fulfill all righteousness”
 - (a) It would bring a “division” on earth between the *baptized* and the *unbaptized* (believers and unbelievers).
 - (b) It redefined the Jewish mikveh ritual [**the nude immersion** in flowing water that symbolized a spiritual bath, which John was using] (Christian baptism goes beyond the idea of cleansing from sins to that of consecrating believers as servants of God) [**Early church fathers** saw many spiritual lessons in practicing *nude baptism*, but they also believed that Christ fulfilled all righteousness by sanctifying the baptismal waters with His own sinless body. He needed no spiritual cleansing Himself, but His baptism consecrated baptism for all who would follow Him in it.]
 - (c) It showed us what baptism signifies: total dedication– v.16a, “*As soon as Jesus was baptized,*” [*immersed in God’s will*], “*he went up out of the water,*” [and went to work] (baptism should initiate our own life of service to God) [**I baptize stillborns**: like Jesus, they’ve committed no sins, but our earthly baptism of their bodies consecrates them for heavenly service until Resurrection Day.]

TRANS: Christ’s baptism identified Him with us, and ultimately that identification took Him to the Cross. For us, **baptism is our decision to identify with Him**. It brings us to His Cross, which, as a crossroads, brings a division between our old life and our new life in Christ.

II. His Baptism Identified Him with God– v.16b, heaven was opened

- A. Christ’s baptism was an epiphany of the Trinity! (3 earthly kings came to the birth; the 3 Kings of heaven attended His baptism.)
- B. Christ’s baptism manifested a new beginning (paralleling Gen.1):
 1. The Father’s “voice from heaven”(v.17) (in Genesis: “and God said”).
 2. “*the Spirit of God descending like a dove*” in the midst of a group of sinners (in Gen., “God’s Spirit was hovering over” formless creation).
 3. God’s Son, “the Word...made flesh” (He was the 2nd Adam, the 1st of a new race of humans, yielded and ready to do the Father’s will).
- C. Christ’s baptism transformed the Jewish mikveh into a Christian sacrament [a means of grace that imparts a divine blessing to the recipient].
 1. The Trinity’s presence there that day baptized baptism!
 2. There God introduces His Son; later [at the Transfiguration] He

instructs us to obey Him— Mat 17:5, While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!” (Listen! He is Lord! And as Lord, *He call us to be baptized like He was.*)

- a. He commands a Trinitarian invocation at our baptism to remind us of His own— Mat 28:19-20, ... go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them **in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit**, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.
- b. Baptismal water is holy water, made *sacred by the Triune God*.

[Leanne Payne: “*Let this holy water put you in mind of your baptism.*”]

D. Christ’s Baptism manifests Christ’s will for us: (“Follow Me”)

1. “*the Spirit of God descending*” on Him reminds us that the baptized believer is to be led by the Spirit of God, just as Jesus was led.
2. The Father’s word to Christ is meant to be His word to us:
 - a. “*my Son, whom I love*”— Can you believe that? [Augustine, “The only Son of God, made Son of Man, makes many sons of men sons of God.”]
 - b. “*with him I am well pleased*” (In baptism we identify with the grace that can transform our lives, so that this statement is true of us.)
 - (1) Christ’s baptism manifested His commitment to please His Father, which is what *He wants our baptism to be*.
 - (2) Our baptism is the 1st step of obedience that brings us an internal epiphany of God’s presence and grace in our lives— John 14:21(NKJ), “He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.”

CONCLUSION:

—As Jesus offered Himself to the Father and to sinners at His baptism. He calls us to the same baptized lifestyle of *serving God and others*. Our lives, like our baptisms, are to be places of public manifestation that God is our King. Our conversion declares Jesus is our *Savior*; our baptism declares He is our *Lord*.

—**Baptism personally identifies us with Christ**. But *in our baptism*, as with Christ’s, God the Father commits Himself to manifest His grace in our lives. We become an epiphany of His very presence in the world.

—*Are any of you still lingering in Galilee? Come down to the Jordan with Jesus, and be baptized.*

Matthew 3:13-17 (NIV)

13Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John.

14But John tried to deter him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?”

15Jesus replied, “Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.” Then John consented.

16As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him.

17And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”