

INTRODUCTION: Matthew 3:13-17 — *Preparing the Way*

Continuing Matthew 3 — Preparing the Way — based off Matthew’s quote from Isaiah 40.

John the Baptist is in the wilderness preaching, “Repent. For the kingdom of heaven has come near.” — The kingdom has come near... because the King himself has come near.

We looked at the extent of our preparing the way... which is that of repentance. — Because of our fallen nature, God Himself must prepare the way. — One of the ways God does this... is by preparing us for Him... through baptism. — So last week we looked at baptism with water — which represented our need to be cleansed — the Spirit... which represented our need to be winnowed... the removal of those things in our life that aren’t conformed to Christ... — and fire... the final purifying judgment through which all must pass. — Some, will come through the fire... pure like refined gold... and others consumed.

Each of these aspects of baptism are preparing us for the King and His kingdom.

Which brings us to Jesus’ baptism... Or the question of **Why was Jesus baptized?**

We’ll look at Jesus’ baptism under 3 headings — The Surprising Nature of Jesus’ Baptism — The Goal of Jesus’ Baptism— and The Qualifications to Which Jesus’ Baptism Testify.

[READ] Matthew 3:13-17

## THE SURPRISING NATURE OF JESUS’ BAPTISM

I don’t know **what’s more shocking**... John who’s been baptizing many from all over the region... who just **rebuked** the **religious leaders** who saw themselves as too righteous to participate in this baptism...

...**to now say to this man, Jesus, “You don’t need to be baptized** — OR — the fact **that Jesus**... the only truly sinless person to ever walk the planet... **participates in John’s baptism of repentance.**

We’re never told the **extent to which John and Jesus knew each other** growing up. — We know they are **relatives**. — But whether they ever met outside their **designated wombs** up to this point... we don’t know.

In the gospel of John... the Baptist says... before now... I did not know him... — But... does that mean Jesus and John never previously met... or that John... up to this point... did not know Jesus was the One... the stronger One... who comes after him.

**What John does have to go on**... is the same thing we have...  
...our **interaction with others**. — What do I mean? —

### [ILLUSTRATION: Redwoods]

I’m reminded of a trip my family made to the Northwest to visit Redwood National Park. — Like you, I’ve seen more trees in my life than could possibly be counted... and as different as one tree may be to another... they’re really quite similar too.

As we made our drive down the Oregon coast into Northern California... we’d see a large tree and ask, “Is that a Redwood.” — Jenny’s sister would keep

telling us, “You’ll know when you see one.” — And how true that was. — When we came upon our first Redwood... not even one of the largest... we had no doubt that we were looking upon a tree unlike any other. — That’s how massive these trees are. — That’s how massive the difference is between a Redwood and any other tree I had ever seen before.

Our **sin nature**... is so **embedded** within us... that it **oozes** out of the core of our being ... **infecting everything**. — To **various degrees** to be sure... and certainly God’s **righteous restraint**... keeps it from corrupting more than it does.

We’ve just grown so **accustomed** to it... that most of the time it **hardly phases**.

**Sin rarely stands out to us as surprising!** —

But **what is surprising**... — ... is **a man with no sin!**

You and I have **never encountered** such an individual... in person... EVER!

That was my experience of the Redwoods. — Sure, we might find ourselves impressed by many of the large trees of the Northwest, but, for the most part, in comparison, they’re just trees. None were what I’d call breath-taking, until we came up on the first Redwood... and we knew we were looking upon a tree unlike any other.

When John encounters Jesus, he is encountering a man like no other... a man with no sin.

And yet... here’s John the Baptist... saying, “*Who am I to baptize you... I need you to baptize me... This is a baptism for repentance... for the forgiveness of sin... But you have nothing from which to be cleansed... no sin from which to repent.*”

If you think that’s an **exaggeration**... that Jesus’ **character** doesn’t **stand out** in **stark contrast** to every other person who’s ever walked this earth...

Jesus himself alludes to such... when he asks... ***which one of you can possibly convict me of sin!*** — The answer ... NO ONE!

The most they could accuse Jesus of... was **doing good to others on the Sabbath... giving rest** to those **suffering** from whatever ailments... **...on the day of rest**. — What was Jesus ever guilty of? — Telling the truth

- Jesus claimed to be Lord of the Sabbath — True
- Claiming to be God’s Son — True
- Claiming to be greater than Abraham — True
- Fellowshiping with sinners — True
  - o Because if he didn’t fellowship with sinners — he’d have to live a life of absolute solitude during his sojourn on this earth... indeed, he wouldn’t have left heaven... because everyone here on this planet has sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.
  - o But he came! — without leaving behind any of his perfections — Jesus remained sinless... even as he took on the likeness of our sinful fallen flesh.
  - o In Jesus’ final hours ... Luke records no less than four of Jesus’ enemies pronouncing his innocence. — Pilate, Herod, the thief on the cross who at first reviled Jesus, and the centurion who oversaw his crucifixion.

But Jesus doesn’t waver... “You know, John, you’re right. I don’t need to be baptized... so I’ll just skip it.” — That’s not what happened at all. — Rather, Jesus humbly submits to this baptism, as the only sinless man to participate in a baptism of repentance.

As Jesus tells John... *Let it be so for now... for thus it is fitting to fulfill all righteousness.*

That's the shock of Jesus' baptism — and I hope you do find such utterly surprising... because if you don't... perhaps you haven't yet grasped the dilemma of the world's fallenness — OUR fallenness — and just how utterly set apart our Savior is.

### THE GOAL OF JESUS' BAPTISM

Now, we come to THE GOAL of Jesus' baptism — which gets to the heart of why Jesus came. —

O we could answer why Jesus came many ways which are biblically true: Jesus came to glorify His Father — that's certainly true. — Jesus came to reconcile us to God — that's true. — Jesus came to pay for our sins — Jesus came to die... which is how he pays for our sins... He came to make us new. — All of that is true.

But the language the gospel writers use regarding Jesus' baptism point to something more specific. — **Jesus has come to bring about a New People of God on earth...** and he has come as the head... the representative of this new people... just as Adam in the Garden... but failed.

Perhaps it's easiest to see this if we begin with Noah, rather than Adam. — [How often the account of Noah is passed over as a mere children's story... but O how foundational it is to our theology.]

We looked at ... last week... how the Flood served as a type of baptism — Now, I want you to see how Matthew ties the account of Noah to that of Jesus' baptism.

I'm going to recount the narrative of Noah... in broad strokes... and I want you to look at verses 16 and 17 ... and see if you notice the similar elements Matthew has carefully recorded in his telling of Jesus' baptism. —

When **humanity corrupted** itself... God **OPENED** the **HEAVENS**... and the **rain** — **the WATERS** — **fell** forty days and nights covering the earth. —

But God **remembered** Noah... and **caused** a **wind** to **pass over** the earth... or we might say... **God's SPIRIT passed over the earth...** (same words)... and the **WATER subsided**.

And Noah **released** a **DOVE**... [and the dove returned to Noah] ...after the waters had subsided Noah **offers a burnt offering** ... which is described as a **PLEASING aroma** to the Lord.

I hope you saw it — the heavens opened... the waters of judgment... the ark brought safely through those waters... the Spirit and the dove... and the testimony of God's pleasure... well pleased.

*If you think that's accidental... and perhaps I'm reading too much into the account of Jesus' baptism... I would ask you to consider this: Is not the same divine author of Genesis ... the author of Matthew's gospel also? —*

*An infinitely wise God has planned every aspect of the Script... or we might say... Scripture... to fit together exactly as it does.*

Now... back to Noah. —

When the waters **recede**... Noah and family **stepped out** of the ark... **onto dry land**.

Noah and his family... are a **New People**... on a **newly cleansed dry land**.

The account of Noah is one of **New Creation**... that **harkens back** to **Genesis 1**. — **Each** of these same **elements** are there. — We have the **waters**... the **heavens** split or **separated**... the **spirit hovering**... and the **announcement** of **God's pleasure**... "*And it was very good.*"

*What happens in the original creation?* — God made a people... a **New People**... **to dwell on a new land**... a dry land that God brought forth out of the waters.

That's what the Exodus is intended as... a **New People**... **passing through the waters of judgment**... **entering a new land**.

And again... the **elements** ... when considering the whole of the Exodus narrative... are similar.

Which brings us to **Jesus**... and his **bringing forth a New People**. —

*Adam*... and his *offspring* **failed** to bring God's righteous reign upon the New Land... God had prepared for them.

*Noah*... and his *offspring* **failed**...

*Moses*... and the *descendants* of *Jacob*... **failed**...

**Everyone** ... thus far... has **fallen short**... **failing to bring about the Creation mandate of Genesis 1** — pointing to the need for a better head... than Adam, than Noah, than Moses, or anyone else who has come before... which brings us to why it was necessary for Jesus to be baptized to bring this about.

## THE QUALIFICATIONS TO WHICH JESUS' BAPTISM TESTIFY

The Testimony of Jesus' baptism qualifies him as the only representative who can bring about this New People of God. — Only Jesus is **sufficient** to bring about such a **humanity**... who will **live out God's will on earth as in heaven**.

So, what are the qualifications displayed here at Jesus' baptism?

**QUALIFICATION #1** — **Jesus comes... to be baptized... as the only perfectly obedient one... who does his Father's will** — and thus, Jesus is baptized... in accordance to His Father's will... to fulfill all righteousness.

Recall... up until now... God's will has not been done on earth as in heaven. — So here Jesus is come to do that will perfectly... the King of the kingdom has come to show perfect obedience... as He humbly submits... [unlike the religious leaders who refused]

**QUALIFICATION #2** — Jesus is baptized in order to identify with His people.

See... if Jesus comes as the only truly sinless person... which he must be... then what keeps His being set apart from being a hinderance to His ability to save us... How is he able to identify with our condition?

Since he is so infinitely set apart from us... if we are to have a **genuine union** with Christ... **Jesus must meet us where we are**...

So Jesus comes and steps down into the dirty Jordan... not to be cleansed...but to enter our filth.

...which overlaps with **QUALIFICATION #3** — Imputation.

This is a baptism of repentance... a baptism for the remission of sin. — So why does Jesus submit to it? — The easy answer is that Jesus isn't baptized for himself... He's baptized for us.

**Jesus takes our judgment** upon himself... bearing our sin in our place. — Our sin is credited to Him... and his righteousness is credited to us. — The waters of baptism... are a symbol of a transfer taking place ... our sin is washed off us and onto Jesus... and Jesus' righteousness is washed onto us.

Jesus has come as a wrath bearer... who **endures** the **flood** of God's **wrath** in our place... because He is the only One... **able... to pass through... God's righteous judgment... of His own merit.**

Which brings us to **QUALIFICATION #4** — Jesus is righteous in himself.

Notice... that when Jesus was baptized... **immediately** he **went up** from the **water...**

Now, I don't think this is suggesting that... **when John baptized others... he was holding them down... under the water. You know the wages of sin is death... so I'm going to hold you under until you receive your just penalty for sin!**

I believe Silas, and Sandi, and Samuel... would have had some pretty strong reservations about being baptized if that's what we were doing.

No... **everyone else** John baptized... was brought up out of the water as well. — *John wasn't drowning people... he was baptizing them.*

But the **gospels** are **written** in such a way ... as to **draw out theological points.**

Since the **waters** of baptism **represent judgment** ... Matthew is at least making the point that... such **judgment couldn't hold Jesus.**

**Jesus passes through the waters of judgment due to his own righteousness.**

**QUALIFICATION #5** — is the testimony that Jesus is Yahweh come down to rescue His people... which is the point of Matthew's allusion to Isaiah 64... and the heavens being opened. —

Due to Israel's **constant rebellion...** it **seemed** as if **Yahweh** had **utterly rejected** his people... So, in Isaiah 64, the prayer is that God would... **tear open the heavens and come down...** once again performing **mighty works** of old... in saving his people.

Jesus's baptism is... **a testimony that God has not forgotten His people...** but has now come.

**QUALIFICATION #6** — is the testimony of the Spirit — Jesus, as a man ... lives out his life of perfect obedience... through the power of the Holy Spirit. —

Now, that might not seem as important at first glance... but here is why it is...

You see, if Jesus, as the divine Son... conquers sin through his divinity... resisting temptation with a power unavailable to us... then is Jesus truly tempted in every way you and I are? — (We'll get to this next week.)

**This is where the Spirit comes into play. — The Son of God... did not lay aside his divinity... in the incarnation... BUT... he did set aside certain prerogatives he has as the Son... in order to live out his humanity in such a way... that never compromised his overcoming of sin in the flesh.**

**Jesus overcomes sin, through the power of the Spirit... who is available to all who trust in Him.**

Indeed, such was available to Adam before he sinned. — In Genesis 2, after God formed Adam out of the dust of the earth... God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life — OR — we might even say... the Spirit of Life.

At the incarnation... the Son of God never stopped upholding the universe... all his divinity was completely available to him at any given moment... BUT ... not once did Jesus use that divinity for his own benefit... or to fend off sin and temptation... — He entrusted himself to His Father's care... by relying on the Holy Spirit.

APPLICATION: Which means... in Christ... you and I have the same helper Jesus had ... to overcome sin.

Final qualification — [QUALIFICATION #7](#) — The testimony of the Voice from Heaven — verse 17 — *This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.* —

Now we could spend a great deal of time on this last verse... and the two passages from which it is quoted... **Psalm 2**... and **Isaiah 42**.

For now... let me just point out.. **Psalm 2**... refers to **Jesus' divine Sonship**... that he is the **Son of the King**... and thus **rightful heir** of the throne... **God's throne**.

And as King... he will **break** all **nations**... all people... who **refuse** to **submit** to his **righteous rule**... with a **rod of iron**.

*BUT*... **Isaiah 42**... is the **beginning** of the **Servant Songs**... the Lord's suffering servant ... who will **bring about** the **redemption** of God's people... **including** those from among the **nations**... ...and the way he **brings about** such **redemption**... is **being broken himself**.

So, this Jesus... who is **born king**... who is the **rightful king**... — ...**before** he **executes judgment** as king...

...is going to **give** his **life** as a **ransom** for many... **pardoning** rebels... you and me... by **paying** our **penalty** in our place.

[ILLUSTRATION: Physician]

Think of it like this. — Independently wealthy physician — Island — Pacific — terminal disease — all tribes — every individual — impact every aspect of life — greatly shortened lifespan

Every attempt for a cure failed — couldn't develop necessary antibodies — due to compromised immune system — Rather than fighting the virus — it simply mutated into numerous forms.

With every resource at his disposal — the wise Physician knew there was but one cure — a pure healthy host — who could develop the necessary antibodies. — The dilemma, however, this host would have to willingly subject himself to the disease — and all its mutations — which would certainly kill him. — Moved by his compassion for this people — the Physician decided he himself would go.

That's what Jesus has done for us. — He is the only perfectly healthy and pure host — who can provide a cure for our disease of sin. — But to do so — he must come into contact with our disease... with us... knowing such will cost him his very life.

Each of these testimonies... serve as witness to why **Jesus is the only qualified individual... to bring about this New Kingdom People**

Because Jesus is the **firstborn... the only begotten... preeminent one... the true heir and King...** who comes as the **Suffering Servant...** bearing our disease of sin — ...the Father looks down at his Son... who **humbled himself...** — ...to participate in this baptism... a baptism the rest of the religious leaders shunned... and the **Father declares... *I am well pleased.***

Which is another way of saying... as God did at the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> day... *and it was very, very good.*

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### CONCLUSION:

This baptism... at the Jordan... **points to the Greater Baptism...** Jesus is yet to endure... the fires of hell as it were... **enduring the full wrath of God towards sin...** on the cross.

It is this baptism... that Jesus endures... that **Prepares the Way for us...** to be with God... in the Garden... a new garden... once again.

But understand this... **the ark... didn't save everyone...** but only those with Noah.

The **Red Sea didn't remain parted for everyone to pass over...** — ...but only those with Moses.

The cross will not save everyone... but only those with Jesus on the cross... — I hope you get that! —

Only those **who die** with Christ... who are **crucified... endure the waters of judgment... now...** with Christ... will withstand judgment... because Jesus has borne the fullness of the judgment on our behalf.

Those who choose not to submit to this baptism of repentance... will endure them later... without Jesus to *Prepare the Way.*

Everyone must pass through the cleansing... purifying baptism of God's judgment. — The question is... whether you pass through it ... as one who receives mercy... because you're in the ark with Noah... walking through the Sea with Moses... dying with Christ on the cross... — OR — whether you go through it on your own... apart from God's chosen head. —

The choice is yours. — God has prepared the way... for us in Christ... or you can take your own.

A final word: — Our repentance is not works... but faith. — You turn to the Lord... not as a work... but as a continual trust... in His finished work... as a desperate reliance on Jesus to save... to sustain... to bring you... safely through His righteous judgments... into His loving arms.

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