

Everything comes together in our Lord's kingdom in baptism. Matthew's account of Jesus's baptism, only 5 verses but so many narratives flow together to become a new story, in geography, in biography, in signs that are means -how God gives grace and life.

You don't read far into the Bible before you realize God is huge on geography. Nothing just happens in random places. In fact, it's divinely imperative that it happen at this Jordan river.

Why? The Jordan is the pivotal place for Israel -the location of leaving the past behind, stepping into the future. In this river the ark of the covenant, carried by priests, dams up the rushing waters. Here, the nation leaves behind the killing wilderness land with old Moses with new Joshua. Jesus comes, the incarnate ark of the covenant, to bring us out of the death, wilderness past, into the exodus future of a new creation breaking forth in Him.

God also deeply committed to biography; very specific about who does certain doings. It's divinely imperative John baptizes Jesus, not the other way round, as John suggests.

Why? John is the second Elijah. He's about done with his life's labor, a voice in the wilderness, preparing the way for the Lord. The first Elijah, likewise passed on his mantle to Elisha on the banks of the Jordan. At the Jordan three prophetic handoffs occur: Joshua took over after the death of Moses; Elisha took over after the charioting away of Elijah; Jesus end the Old testament, takes over from John, last OT prophets. Jesus tells John **it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.** "us" not "me." Both were necessary: John to baptize, Jesus baptized.

Three images merge: a man in the water, heavens opening, a dove appearing. This occurs also in the flood account. Noah, the man in the water, floating in the ark. God "opened the heavens" to rain down the flood. And the signal the waters reseeded, new creation sprouting, a dove returned to Noah with an olive branch.

The flood story is the creation story retold. Now here stands Jesus. This new Noah, the heavens also open, but rather than raining down a destruction curse, the Father pours forth speech, **This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.** And a new Dove, Holy Spirit from creational waters of Gen. 1 now hovering upon the one anointed of God, the Christ, new Adam, new creation.

You see in Scripture, God always works unto His people in means. God puts 'a mark, sign, seal' upon people's heads.

Already in Genesis, God put a **mark/sign** on Cain after he murdered his brother. Cain was punished, but this sign was *not* the punishment. Quite the opposite. The **sign** was a shield, **lest anyone who found him should attack him.** A mark of divine mercy, not a curse.

Later, the mark/sign of circumcision given to Abraham for babies for God to bring them into the Old Covenant; which fulfillment according to Paul, in the New Covenant of baptism in Christ.

Later, in Exodus, another **mark/sign**, same word. The blood of the Passover lambs on God's people doorway, **sign so the angel of death would pass-over**

their homes. This blood-sign was a mark, in brush strokes of a cross on the doors a mark of the Lord's mercy. Safe behind this blood shield of a Lamb..

In Ezekiel's vision, the Lord tells an angel to go through Jerusalem and **put a mark on the foreheads of all** who were appalled at the idolatry of the city. Hebrew for "put a mark" is literally, trace the final letter of the Hebrew alphabet, a taw, letter "t" as a seal on their foreheads. Even Job uses this t/taw upon him because the Lord answered him.

Much like the high priest wore a golden frontlet on his forehead that said, **Holy to God**, so believers had the divine signature written upon their foreheads.

Finally, in Revelation, the saints who represent God's people on earth **are sealed on their foreheads**. This seal later described as the **Lamb's name and his Father's name written on their foreheads**. This seal, shield, they're safe from evil, even as the signs/seals in the OT kept Cain safe from attackers, Israel safe from the angel of death, and believing Jerusalem safe from divine destruction.

Seals, mark ownership or authorize something; means: this is mine; from me; you are holy in my works.

Already by 200 AD, the Church Fathers speak of Christians making the sign of the cross upon themselves. For many Christians, the first time the cross traced upon them, the day they're baptized.

Baptism. Your baptism.

-This is like a Jordan that now flows eternal life, the new Joshua leading His people in exodus to a greater land, from wilderness of sin and death.

-This is like the protective mark on Cain, only infinitely better.

-This is the circumcision not of flesh but an eternal covenant of new.

-This is like the shield sign of Passover blood, only far superior. Not just a cross shaped mark of doorway blood but His blood marks you, death pass-over you.

-This is like the mark of Ezekiel, only it's Christ's cross not just a cross-shaped Hebrew letter.

-As Peter links Noah and says, **Baptism now saves you.**

-You are sealed in baptism. The Lamb of God writes His name ,His Father's name upon your heads. You are Holy; the New Covenant, new creation in Him.

-Paul points you're joined to His life, death, resurrection there, says you are sealed with the Holy Spirit.

Beneath the surface of those 5 verses about Jesus's baptism are Adam, Cain, Noah, Moses, Joshua, Elijah, Elisha. the Passover, Ezekiel, saints in heaven's Revelation, so much more.

Everything comes together in our Lord's kingdom, the eternal story, His works delivered in your own baptism. always with Jesus, whose baptism fulfilled all righteousness on your behalf. See your baptism with joyful reverence, daily to walk in newness of life in His kingdom. You're entire identity. You have everything given to you at the font.