

“The Baptism of Jesus”

Matthew 3:13-17

Keiko was a few minutes late for Sunday worship time. The church plant was in a small rural city in Japan, a paper-making industrial small city. Keiko was a young career woman, attending one of the church plants I was assigned to help with. She was a dedicated believer, who came to church every Sunday she could, and helped out at that small church plant whenever she could. She never was baptized, because even though she was an adult, her parents forbid her to be baptized. Since I was still new to Japan, and young myself, I really did not have the confidence, nor conviction, to instruct Keiko about the importance of baptism.

That was over 30 years ago, when I first went to Japan in the mid 80's, and I worked with veteran missionaries, helping them start church plants.

Today, let's look at the baptism of Jesus. I will open our time with the question: **Why should we continue to follow Jesus Christ and His commitment to make disciples of all nations?**

What does this passage have to do with us today? And, what does, “in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness” mean? To best answer these questions, I want to first ask an important basic question: What did this passage have to do with the original readers? WHO were the original readers?

--Jewish followers of Jesus Christ

--living in Antioch, left synagogue, now in churches in Syrian Antioch, ~ 300 mi. up the coast from Israel.

--committed to the Gentile mission of the church → church that sent Barnabas and Saul out before Matthew written

--under persecution from their family, their friends, and the Roman Government for commitment to Jesus Christ and the gentile mission

--Because of persecution, some were wondering if they should go back to the synagogue and Judaism, their previous religion and lifestyle, to try to find favor with God by obeying the Law!

They were asking themselves, “**Why should we continue to follow Jesus Christ and His commitment to make disciples of all nations?**” They were starting to doubt their decision to follow Jesus and His commitment to the gentile mission.

God guides Matthew to record this account of the baptism of Jesus to continue to answer their doubts.

Jesus goes to John the Baptist. (13-15)

At this time, when Jesus goes to John the Baptist, God is already working *supernaturally*

--John the Baptist had a message from God - “Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!

--Jerusalem, ALL Judea, ALL district around the Jordan → 3 times God says: “Pay attention!”

--they were confessing their sins!!!

--even Spiritual leaders were coming for baptism, and, we assume confessing their sins, and getting baptized!

--GOD was working supernaturally, and everyone saw and knew GOD was moving in the hearts

then... Jesus goes to John the Baptist!

--Jesus is so humble, He goes to John the Baptist

--Jesus accepts and shows He embraces GOD's messenger John the Baptist

And John the Baptist is turned "upside down!"

John the Baptist has JUST proclaimed

--He who is coming after me is mightier than I

--I am not fit to remove His sandal → lowest servant in household's role

--He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire probably John the Baptist is not sure of the meaning, but he knew it was powerful!!

--He must increase, I must decrease

--He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor, He will gather His wheat into the barn, and He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire

--John the Baptist has just proclaimed that Jesus is unquestionably mightier and greater than himself

--and now Jesus comes to John the Baptist and asks him to baptize Him?

--John the Baptist's head must have started spinning!!!

-John the Baptist is seeing the power of God work powerfully through his very preaching,

-John the Baptist had had fiery revelation from God about Jesus,

-he KNEW that his role was to simply introduce people to Jesus!

--Yet Jesus comes to John the Baptist

--John the Baptist is preaching repentance! Did Jesus need to repent? NO.

But Jesus was embracing the truth of needing to turn from self and turn to God!

--Jesus submits to God's messenger, and by doing so, what does Jesus also show John the Baptist?

--Jesus shows He submits to God the Father, completely.

--Jesus' submission to God the Father completely is what made Jesus MIGHTY.

--this complete submission to the Father is the source of Jesus' might!

--_Why should the original Jewish Christian readers of this Gospel undergoing persecution for their faith in Jesus *continue* to follow Jesus Christ and His commitment to make disciples of all nations?

--because in Jesus, a Jew can truly be a Jew, one that fears God and obeys God's Law!

--you see, every day the Jewish household would recite the Shema which is found in Deuteronomy 6:4 - 5

"Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD alone! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. (Deuteronomy 6:4-5)

--in Jesus, WITH Jesus, Jesus who came **not to abolish** the Law but to fulfill the Law, a Jew can be truly Jew, a Jew that fears God and obeys God's Law.

-- Why should the original Jewish Christian readers continue to follow Jesus Christ and His commitment to make disciples of all nations?

--because in Jesus, a persecuted Jew can find a gentle and humble Lord, and he can rest for his soul.

Jesus is baptized by John. (13-15)

--by submitting to baptism by John the Baptist, Jesus identifies with and embraces John's message of repentance and that the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.

--did Jesus have sins He needed to repent of? NO.

--but Jesus embraces John's message of turning away from self, self-centered living, fleshly desires, and turning to God

--Jesus, in accepting baptism by John, affirms the significance of baptism, of dying to self, being resurrected to new life by God, and living for God!

In vv. 13 - 16, I tried to count the number of references and allusions, both direct and indirect, to Jesus' baptism. I was perhaps too ... eager, in my counting, but for emphasis sake, please count with me! I found 7 references, direct and indirect!

I think that Matthew wants to show us that Jesus **submits** to baptism by John, and **affirms** the importance of baptism, of dying to self, being resurrected to new life by God, and living for God!

--Jesus shows that He affirms John the Baptist's message of the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.

--as the original 1st century readers might have witnessed first-hand, Jesus started showing them what the Kingdom of Heaven looked like - a Kingdom where Jesus defeats evil spirits, where healing health and wholeness come from Jesus, a Kingdom where the foreigner, orphan and widow are protected and receive justice, where the last are first, where victory over crying, pain, and death has started.

--Jesus Himself shows us that the Kingdom of Heaven is lived through He Himself, and requires our dying to self and living to God through Jesus Himself! In this way, all righteousness is fulfilled.

God supernaturally affirms Jesus and His mission to the Gentiles (16-17)

I really think that Hollywood moviemakers of the Marvel movies, and before that, "Independence Day," got their idea of a huge hole in the sky opening from this passage!!!

This scene in v. 16 Must. Have. Been. Amazing!

It is the only place in Scripture where all three of the God Head are present to see or hear.

God supernaturally affirms Jesus, expresses His approval supernaturally by the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and a voice out of the heavens saying, "This is my son, the Beloved, in whom I am well-pleased."

For us in the 21st century, these words from **Ps. 2:7** and **Is. 42:1** might not really mean much to us, beyond affirming the Sonship of Jesus Christ.

But for the 1st century Jew, who came to know the life and words of Jesus Christ, those words from heaven were powerful words of commission to take the story of Jesus to the nations!

Listen to the context of those words. We hear the Father's heart for the nations of the world:

Ps. 2:7 "I will surely tell of the decree of the Lord: He said to Me, 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You. 8' **Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance**, And the very ends of the earth as Your possession.

Is. 42:1 "Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one *in whom* My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him; **He will bring forth justice to the nations**.

Was Jesus aware of His Father's heart for the nations of the world? Remember where Jesus grew up—not in Bethlehem, but in Nazareth, in the region of Galilee. Galilee of the Gentiles. It was no accident that after coming back from Egypt as a child, God led Joseph to go back to Nazareth to raise his family, and to be exposed to different cultures and nationalities, right there in that small country of Israel.

I really believe that Jesus could speak Galilean slang with the best of them!

So, what did this passage have to do with the original readers then?

The original Jewish readers had left the synagogue, and now were followers of Jesus Christ and His commitment to the Gentile mission. They were being persecuted by family, friends, and the Roman government for their faith in Jesus. Some were openly struggling, wondering if they should go back to their old lifestyle without Jesus, to go back to their family's "traditional" religion.

Matthew points them to the actions and character of Jesus.

Matthew shows them that in Jesus, they can be a true Jew, one that fulfills the Law completely! Matthew shows them that Jesus embraces John the Baptist's message of repentance and baptism, of constantly turning from self and turning to God, of dying to self and living a new life to God. Their strength for following Jesus and His commitment to the gentile mission comes from Jesus within them! Not themselves!

What does this passage have to do with us today?

Why should we continue to follow Jesus Christ and His commitment to make disciples of all nations?

We might be persecuted for our faith in Jesus and commitment to make disciples of all nations. If we do not suffer physical persecution and attack, we can be sure that Satan will still persecute us and attack us. There will be times we get tired of following Jesus and His mission to the nations, when we consciously want to quit. Or we may compromise in our dedication to Jesus, and consider Jesus' mission to the nations of the world not really that important to our Heavenly Father.

Matthew reminds us, like he reminded the 1st century original Jewish readers, to look to Jesus our Lord and Savior always, *as we follow Jesus*. Many times we forget Him in our following.

Jesus submitted to the Father completely, humbling Himself, to identify with repentance and baptism. Jesus shows us that as He submitted to the Father completely, **we need to submit to the Father** completely, to constantly turn from self and turn to God, to die to self and live to God. In repentance and dying to self and living in Jesus, we will find rest for our souls. Matthew reminds us that Jesus' mission to the nations of the world is **our** mission as well.

I think Keiko's parents somehow got it right about baptism, even though they were not followers of Jesus. They somehow knew that baptism was an outward sign of an inner submission to God, to turn from self and turn to God through Jesus Christ, and to die to self and live to God.

That is why they forbade their daughter to get baptized. They somehow sensed, however knowing or unknowingly, that being baptized would confirm a submission to God and a decision to follow Jesus and His mission to the world. They got it.

Let us "get it" right about baptism, and our need to constantly turn from self, die to self, and turn to God, and live for God and His commission to make disciples of all nations!

"THE BAPTISM OF JESUS"

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Main Idea: Why should we continue to follow Jesus Christ and His commitment to make disciples of all nations?

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What did this passage have to do with the original readers?

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Jesus is baptized by John. (13-15)

God supernaturally affirms Jesus. (16-17)

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Family Life Groups

Sermon Discussion Questions

The Baptism of Jesus

Matthew 3:13-17

Main Idea: Why should we continue to follow Jesus Christ and His commitment to make disciples of all nations?

1) 3:2, 15. repent. turn from self, turn to God. Jesus is always with us, and He is always inviting us to a close walk with Him. Looking back on this past week, when and where in your week can you identify that you sensed Jesus was inviting you to a closer walk with Him?

2) 3:13 – 15. baptism. die to self, live resurrected new life to God. Can you identify an activity that you could reduce/stop from your schedule, in order to have more time to walk closer to Jesus?

***“walk closer” - is not limited to personal devotion time, but also might include: helping with EBC’s AWANA ministry, After School ministry, Under the Bridge ministry, helping with the Global ministry.

3) 3:16, 17. God’s Affirming Presence. This passage does not only reveal God’s approval of Jesus. Through this passage God continues to reveal His heart for the nations and peoples of the world. In the Gospel of Matthew, concerning God’s heart for the nations of the world, how many direct references and indirect references, how many allusions can you find?