

Jesus' Baptism Proves He Is Our Brother and Savior.

"Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to deter him, saying, 'I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?' Jesus replied, 'Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.' Then John consented. As 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. And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.'"

Last summer I needed to renew my driver's license. It was a little harder this time. They made changes with the laws. A plain license means you can drive in the United States, but it will not allow you to fly on a plane or cross the border into Canada or Mexico. So you have to choose between a plain license or one that allows you to fly and so on. So, to renew your license, you don't just take your old one in. You have to prove that you are who you say you are. You need two forms of identification like a birth certificate and social security card. It is a bit of a hassle now to renew your license, but I suppose I can't blame them. Identity theft is a real problem. And we do live in the age of terrorism.

We have before us the Baptism of Jesus' Christ. Please don't gloss over it. The Baptism of Jesus is significant, for him and for all of us. His Baptism is proof he is who he says he is. Jesus proves in his Baptism that he is our brother and our Savior.

I. Jesus' baptism proves he is our brother.

"Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to deter him, saying, 'I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?' Jesus replied, 'Let it be so now.'" You are a waitress in a restaurant. Some people sit at your table. You go over to take their order. Suddenly they say, "Sit down and give us your order book. We want to serve you." That's not right. You're the waitress; they are the customers. Well, that is how John the Baptist felt when Jesus came to him. Something is not right here, thought John. Jesus asked him to baptize him. Earlier John said this of Christ: ***"After me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire."*** John is lesser, Jesus is greater; John is the forerunner, Jesus is the one he was pointing to. John's baptism was a baptism for the forgiveness of sins, but Jesus had no sin. ***"I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?"*** John was the sinner. The sinless Son of God should be baptizing him!

If Jesus were in a crowd of a hundred people, you would not be able to pick him out and say, "He is God." When Jesus came to this earth, he hid his glory as God. We call this his state of humiliation. Outwardly he didn't look any different than anyone else. He didn't glow in the dark or have that halo we often see in paintings. But if you had a chance to mill about that crowd and listen to and observe those hundred people, soon Jesus would stand out. Some people would brag about their looks. Not Jesus. Others would gossip or talk mean about others. Not Jesus. Some would grumble or complain, but not Jesus. He is like us, only he is different in one major way. Jesus is the only human who never uttered a sinful word or had a sinful thought cross his mind. That is because he is the sinless as true God. It would be like putting one real apple in a basket of fake, plastic apples. At first they all look alike, but if you examine them more closely, you can tell which are the fake apples by their texture, smell and taste.

So you can understand why John objected to baptizing Jesus. Jesus had no sin to be forgiven. But Jesus objected right back. ***"Jesus replied, 'Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.' Then John consented."*** Jesus needed to be baptized. It wasn't because he needed the forgiveness of sins. Rather, by being baptized, Jesus was being numbered with sinners even though he had no sin. Sinners needed John's baptism. So, by being baptized, Jesus was declaring himself our brother. War veterans often refer to each other as "brothers in arms." They are not related. They are not biological brothers. But they are brothers in another sense. They shared similar, often frightening experiences in war. Jesus becomes our brother by being numbered among sinners.

This will begin to mean more to us in a few months as we will follow Jesus to Jerusalem and to the cross. There he will die, not for sins he committed. But God made him who had no sin to be sin for us. The sinless Son of God will become sin for us so his death would be the payment for our sins. He is our brother.

Jesus insistence on being baptized also has another special meaning. ***"Jesus replied, 'Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.'"*** Notice how Jesus said, "Now." Earlier he didn't need to be baptized. Later would be too late. He needed to be baptized "now." Why? To fulfill all righteousness. What does that mean? That day, now, Jesus was going to start his work as our Savior. He will begin his ministry of preaching and teaching. But he is also beginning the work to fulfill God's plan and salvation as our Savior. God himself tells us that.

II. Jesus' baptism proves he is our Savior.

"As 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. And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.'"

I have performed between one or two hundred baptisms in my ministry. That never happened. But it happened for Jesus. God rips open the curtain that separates heaven from earth. And he speaks! This Jesus is not Joseph's son. He is God's Son. And yes, the Holy Spirit came down on Jesus like a dove. What does it mean? It means Jesus is the one. He is the Savior God had promised way back in the Garden of Eden. As I needed a birth certificate and social security number to prove I am who I said I was, God now proves that Jesus is the one. Our Old Testament reading said it would happen this way. Remember how it started? ***"Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations."*** Jesus is the chosen one which is what Messiah and Christ means. God the Holy Spirit will come to him just as he did in our text. And he will make God happy as he said in our text.

"... with him I am well pleased." God is proud of Jesus. He is proud he came as a human being with flesh and blood and is our brother. He is proud he was born of the virgin Mary. He is proud he is spotless and sinless and perfect in every way because he is God. Otherwise God would not be pleased with him. And he is proud because Jesus came to fulfill all of God's wishes. It is like that present you got at Christmas. You are excited over it because it is exactly what you wanted. Jesus is exactly what God the Father wanted. God does not delight in the death of the wicked. He wishes that all sinners can be forgiven and spend eternity in heaven. Jesus is that Savior who will make this all happen.

There is no doubt. Jesus is who he claims he is. His baptism proves he is both our brother and Savior. What does that mean to us? Well, it means we are right in worshiping the Triune God. The baptism of Jesus is my proof text to show people that our God is Triune. We worship only one God, but that God is three distinct persons. The Father is not the Son who is not the Holy Spirit who is not the Father. Yet, we don't worship three Gods. We worship one God. It is a mystery that no human mind can grasp. But it is true. We see all three in our text. So we do right in worshiping and confessing the Triune God. We do right in using the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds as confessions of faith. We do right in praying to God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit for they make up the one Triune God.

And this means we do right in displaying the cross in our Church. This Jesus came to save us from our sins by dying for them on the cross. This is what the Father wanted. So we do right in telling sinners they are forgiven in Christ. We do right in having funerals where we can tell the family their loved one is in heaven because they believed in Jesus as their Savior.

And this means we are doing right when we baptize. I am yet to see the sky rip open and hear God's voice and see the Holy Spirit when I baptize. But at your Baptism God the Father was there. He says he is pleased with you because Jesus was there, too. It was his death on the cross that washes you clean of your sins and makes sinners holy and blameless before God in heaven. And as Christ rose from the dead, we rise to a new life in him. And the Holy Spirit was there, too. He comes through the gospel Word so that the water of Baptism is not just water, but a washing and renewal and rebirth. This is why we follow the Lord's direction and baptize infants when we can because God the Holy Spirit can work saving faith even in their hearts.

This is what Paul meant when he says in Colossians 3: ***"Your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory."*** So your Baptism, though rather quiet and mundane, remains the most glorious, life changing event in your life. You are now hidden by faith in Christ. Because we don't see it now doesn't mean it is not true. You have the proof in Jesus' baptism. The Father spoke. The Holy Spirit descended. The Son of God is our brother and Savior. And the day is coming when we don't embrace God simply through his Word and Sacraments. We will see him face to face. Amen.