

**Matthew in Biblical Perspective:
A Biography of Jesus of Nazareth the Christ –
Seeing Jesus: The Ordination, Affirmation,
And Inauguration of Jesus the Messiah**

Matthew 3:13-17

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February 1, 2009 – Morning Sermon

Our text for this study is found in Matthew 3:13-17 which says,

13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. 14 John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" 15 But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented. 16 And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; 17 and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

The grass withers and the flower fades, this is the Word of our God. It abides forever and by His grace and mercy may it be preached to you.

My wife and I this past Monday had the privilege to celebrate our 40th wedding anniversary and I want you to know, being a preacher, you're fully aware that in these 40 years we've never had an argument. Now we have had some very interesting discussions and they even rise to the level of passion from time to time. I want to share with you one of those areas. One of those areas is whenever we take a trip or go on a vacation. My wife wants everything planned. My approach is she says, "Honey, where are we going?" and I'll say, "Why don't we go to (and we'll name a place)." She will say, "When are we going to leave and I'll say, "How about 10 o'clock?" She'll say, "Can I write that down?" and I'll say, "Make that a definite maybe." I don't get to those kinds of decisions really quick. I just like to let it go. She likes to have it pretty well down pat but she's right. You can't start your journey until you know where you are going. Secondly, every journey begins with a first step. Thirdly, you have to get on the right road if you want to get to the correct destination. Now, that's pretty obvious. So where are we going? Now the first step and the first step will not do you any good if you don't take the first step on the right road.

In this study, Jesus has come to do His Father's business. Jesus has come to a destination. That destination is going to take Him to Calvary. He has come to seek and to save His people from their sins. The text we are in now is His first step publicly. He is on the journey and He is on the right road. The right road is under the Law so we can be saved by grace. So He is going to Calvary which is His destination and He is going to save His people from their sins. That means the first step of His public ministry is Matthew chapter 3. Jesus is now 30 years old. We are now on His first step of a three year public ministry as the Messiah.

Remember what Matthew is doing here. This is the Word of God you heard and now the God of the Word you see. This Jesus of Nazareth perfectly fits every prophecy in the Old Testament and perfectly obeys every requirement of the Old Testament so that He can be a perfect sacrifice for your sins. He has written an entire treatise on that which we call the Gospel of Matthew. We have already seen Jesus fulfilling 6 prophecies and we're only at chapter 3. Here is His first step and He says, "Now, I'm going to fulfill the Law as the Messiah."

The Messiah means 'anointed one.' There were three offices in the Old Testament that were anointed offices. They were the offices of prophet, priest and king. He now sets about His ministry as the Anointed One as Prophet, Priest and King. The first step is the most glorious coronation ceremony that has ever been held in all of history by a place called the River Jordan. Now, here's our problem. So here is the first step on His journey to save us from our sins and He has come to be baptized. As He comes to be baptized the problem is that John is baptizing Him.

In the last study we saw that John the Baptizer baptizes with water to call people to repentance. We also know John is preparing the way for Jesus the Baptizer who will baptize His people with the Holy Spirit and gather them into the barn as wheat for all eternity, the fruit of His redemption, or He will baptize with fire which is the chaff who are unbelievers under the unquenchable fire of eternal condemnation. So those who are His will be baptized with the Spirit of God or those who are not His people will be baptized with the fire of everlasting judgment, an unquenchable fire. But John the Baptizer is baptizing with water for repentance and here comes Jesus to be baptized. When you repent you confess that you are a sinner but Jesus is sinless.

So why would Jesus insist on participating in this baptism? The reason is not found in us looking to the text but coming right out of the text. It seems to be a contradiction, though when Jesus is insisting on being baptized by John who is baptizing with water for repentance and yet Jesus is the sinless Savior who has no need of repentance. We will divide this into two categories, one leading up to the baptism and then the other is after the baptism of Jesus by John.

Look at the first word in Matthew 3:13 which says, “*Then...*” We won’t look at every word so rest easy but we are going to look at this one. When is “then”? John the Baptist is 30 years old and he is 6 months older than Jesus. Jesus is now 30 years old. John the Baptist has had a very amazing ministry. I mean the word is out on him. “There is a new preacher in Israel” and everybody is going out to see him. This preacher wasn’t too smart. He didn’t get a good location. For someone to hear this preacher they had to go out into the wilderness but everybody is flocking out into the wilderness. This preacher is very interesting. He is dressed in a leather belt and camel’s hair. He will call people to sack cloth and ashes. He will confront anyone who comes to be “seen” to be baptized by who isn’t coming with repentance like the Pharisees in which he calls them, “You brood of vipers.” He is confrontational. He is preaching a message of repentance and he is proclaiming, “I am leading the way for the Messiah – Prophet, Priest and King – to come after me.” That is where we are.

“*Then...*” one day out by the River Jordan there the baptisms are taking place. There Jesus arrives and on that day the attention moves from the new preacher, preaching the message of repentance, to Jesus whom he baptizes. Why did that moment come? It is because Jesus specifically moved that moment to come. The next phrase in Matthew 3:13 says, *Then Jesus came from Galilee (where?) to the Jordan (why?) to John (why?), to be baptized by him.* Specifically Jesus leaves the Galilean region. He comes down to the River Jordan. He finds John because He comes specifically to John to be baptized, “*by John.*” Jesus is specifically doing that.

As soon as Jesus arrives John says, “You are coming to be baptized by me? I should not baptize you. You should baptize me.” As soon as he says that he makes two confessions. One, he is confessing before everyone that this is the Messiah that he is heralding because he identifies Him as sinless. Jesus has no need to come for a baptism of repentance because He is sinless. The second thing John is doing is acknowledging that he is a sinner and that this is the One that he wants to baptize him with the Spirit of God because he is the sinner not the One coming to be baptized. Notice that Jesus does not disagree with John’s statement but He makes His own statement in response to John’s response and that response of Jesus to John removes John’s reluctance immediately. John is reluctant to baptize Jesus because “my baptism of repentance You don’t need. I’m the one that needs to repent, not You. I need You to baptize me. You are the One who baptizes with the Spirit of God and I need You to baptize me.”

Jesus then says an interesting phrase. Matthew 3:15, “*(Yield, permit it), Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.*” The next phrase says, “*Then he (John) consented.*” Upon what Jesus says, immediately John the Baptist’s reluctance disappears and he now engages in the act of baptizing Jesus. Why? Here’s the key. Jesus is letting him know, “I haven’t come for you to baptize Me with the baptism of John. I have come to be baptized by John. I don’t need repentance John, you’re right. But I have come to be baptized by you,

John, because we must fulfill all righteousness.” We’re going to work our way back now.

There are four keys to that statement. The first phrase, “permit it at this time now.” There is something about the moment, when the moment is. The second phrase, “for in this way” which is the way of baptism. The third key is “us” meaning “John I need you to baptize Me. Permit it at this time, right now. For in this way, baptism, it is fitting for us (Me and you) to fulfill *all righteousness (fourth key).*” So what is He saying?

Let’s start with righteousness. What is righteousness? Righteousness is the opposite of sin. What is sin? Sin is something bad. While this isn’t something highly theological it gets the point across. Sin is rebellion. Sin is doing things wrong but you could take a step to the catechism which would define sin more theologically as sin is the want of conformity unto or transgression of the Law of God. So what is sin? Sin is to step over the boundary of God’s Law in either disobedience or lack of obedience. So if sin is the transgression of God’s Law then what would righteousness be? Righteousness would be obedience to God’s Law. So the key to this baptism is found back in God’s Law – Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. There’s where the key is.

What back in God’s Law would this baptism line up with so that Jesus would fulfill it? Remember Jesus is born under the Law so that we might be saved by grace. That is why Jesus is circumcised. That’s why Jesus is presented in the Temple. That’s why Jesus will observe the Passover. That’s why Jesus will observe the Feast. That’s why Jesus is obedient to the Law at every point including this one which is the first step of His public ministry as Prophet, Priest and King. So what is it back there that lines up right here? It is not that He needs the baptism of John but to be obedient to the Law He needs to be baptized *by* John.

The first key is to go to what time is it. Permit it at this time. Permit it because of this moment. Now. When is this? The other account in the Gospels of the baptism of Jesus is found in Luke 3:21,22; *21 Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened, 22 and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”* Now when was this? The next verse says (Luke 3:23), “*Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about thirty years of age.*” So Jesus is 30 years old. Have you ever wondered why Jesus begins His ministry as Messiah, the Anointed One, Prophet, Priest and King at the age of 30? He wasn’t doing bad when He was 12 in the Temple, was He? I think He could have pulled it off pretty much at any time but the reason He didn’t was because of scrupulously being committed to the obedience of the Law.

Now a prophet could begin their ministry at any time. A king could begin their ministry at any time and anointed for that ministry but a priest would begin his

ministry at age 30. There are a number of passages we could turn to see this but I'd like for you to see the one in Numbers 4. This is the initiation of setting aside the priests of the Old Testament. Now Jesus is a priest according to the order of Melchizedek, the greater priests, but that subsumes the lesser priesthood, the Levitical priesthood. So what do we learn about the lesser priesthood? Numbers 4:1-3 says, **1** *The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying,* **2** *“Take a census of the sons of Kohath from among the sons of Levi, by their clans and their fathers' houses,* **3** *from thirty years old up to fifty years old, all who can come on duty, to do the work in the tent of meeting.* The priests would then begin their ministry at age 30. This would be modified. This would allow for younger priests to be trained but the initial statement that comes to the people of God is that the Levitical priesthood would begin their ministry at age 30. So when does Jesus begin His ministry? He begins it at age 30. Why? He could be a prophet at any time. He could be a king at anytime but to be a priest He had to be age 30. He is scrupulously faithful to the Law.

Now, how does He begin His ministry? “Permit it at this time, (age 30) and by the way why does John the Baptist understand immediately and he doesn't have to get into a discussion with Jesus? It is because John the Baptist is 30 years of age and he is a priest also. How do we know John the Baptist is a priest? It is because he is of the tribe of Levi. How do we know he is of the tribe of Levi? It is because his father's name is Zechariah and when Zechariah received the prophecy of the birth of his son who would be the forerunner of the Messiah, where was he? He was in the Holy of Holies. Who alone goes in the Holy of Holies? It is a priest. So the John the Baptist is 6 months older than Jesus and very likely has been through this same ceremony and knows exactly what Jesus is talking about. So John presents no argument and knows immediately and John also knows this. Permit it at this time (age 30) for in this way (baptism) it is fitting for us, so why does Jesus come for the baptism by John and not of John? It is because He needs another priest to perform it. The priest would baptize the priests to start their ministry.

Permit it at this time (age 30) for in this way (baptism – ritual cleansing, washing, anointing) it is fitting for us (John is a priest and Jesus is beginning His public ministry as priest and He needs John to baptize Him.) Therefore we can be obedient and fulfill the Law. We can walk in righteousness and I begin My ministry. Where is that described for us? It is described in Numbers 8. We were told in Numbers 4 who, the Levites, when, age 30 and now how did they begin their ministry? Numbers 8:5-7 says, **5** *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,* **6** *“Take the Levites from among the people of Israel and cleanse them. 7 Thus you shall do to them to cleanse them: sprinkle the water of purification upon them.* Then it goes on to describe other things that were to accompany that moment ceremonially. So what is one of the things that you do? You baptize them. You pour and sprinkle the water upon them to set them apart for their ministry. Who does it? It is done by a priest. When? It is done at age 30. Now they are ready to enter their ministry.

So now we have the picture. In obedience to the Law Jesus comes not for the baptism of John but the baptism by John at age 30 to begin His public ministry as Prophet, Priest and King. Then if you put Luke's account and Matthew's account together you can almost see it where Jesus comes to the River Jordan. John the Baptist usually baptized in the springs of Inan or at the River Jordan and as he is baptizing Jesus goes down the bank into the River. As I read the Scriptures and understand how it is done, very likely Jesus kneels in the River and the water is poured over the top of his head. It sprinkles Him clean. He then stands up where He comes up out of the water and according to Luke He starts to pray and then Matthew and Luke both tell us what happens next.

The Father from heaven does two things. Upon Jesus' obedience to His Father's Law, the Father one, anoints Him not symbolically but with the Holy Spirit. The Father baptizes His Son with the Spirit and the Spirit of God like a dove descends upon Him to empower Him for this ministry of Prophet, Priest and King and to save His people from their sins. Then secondly, the Father announces, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." I want to give you two little treasure nuggets right here out of this. There are always cults and heresies and one of the cults heresies is denying the Trinity. There are two ways that the doctrine of the Trinity is denied. One is we have three Gods and we don't have One God but we have One God in three persons so there are some who deny the Trinity by saying there's One God who appears three ways where He has three hats. He has a Father hat, a Son hat and a Spirit hat. There's some quick change going on right here. All at the same time what is happening here? Jesus is being baptized in the River Jordan. The Father is speaking from heaven and the Holy Spirit is pouring upon Him. So here you have One God in three persons with all three persons in action at one time.

A second heresy is the denying of the eternal Sonship of Jesus. The Father doesn't allow you to do that here. He doesn't say, "This is a good man, I'll make him my Son." He doesn't say, "Boy, Jesus has got it going so I'll adopt him as my Son." The eternal Sonship of the Son is affirmed by the Father when He says, "This is My Son. This is the eternal Son of God, My Son that I have sent as your Savior, your Messiah, your Prophet, your Priest and your King. Now I have empowered Him with My Spirit. I have affirmed Him as My Son and I tell you now it is in Him that I take pleasure. It is in Him that I am pleased." Of course, immediately how can I pass that moment without asking you, are you in Him? It is there alone is where the pleasure of the Father resides, in Him.

Number one, the Father anoints His Son with the Holy Spirit who by the way will be the Baptizer with the Spirit of all His people. Then He affirms and announces that this is "My Son in whom I am well pleased" and now in this very moment the Messiah has been inaugurated. The Messiah has been ordained. The Messiah has been affirmed and the Messiah, Jesus, Prophet, Priest and King is now being sent forth to save His people from their sins.

So here is the takeaway. The takeaway from this text is very simple. Jesus as the Promised Messiah, now stepping forth in His first step, enters into the battle to seek and to save the lost. He will leave the River Jordan and go to the wilderness which is battlefield number one, the temptation. There will be many other battles over this next three years until He climbs Calvary and there will win the battle over sin, death, hell, the grave and there save His people from their sins. He is now sent forward as Prophet to announce the Good News. You who are in the chains of your sin, you who are in the dungeon of guilt, you who are under the oppressions of idolatry with all of its addictions like money, sex, power, prestige, promiscuity, perversion, drunkenness, or wherever self has led you in idolatry, there was a faint echo that the Savior would come. Now the Prophet announces the day of jubilee has come. A Savior has come. Christ the King is now announcing as Prophet, redemption is nigh. Come and be saved. This is the Good Word of the Prophet.

We will have so much fun in Matthew. We are going to study His six sermons that are recorded as Prophet. We're going to see His teachings, His parables but here is the consistent message of the Prophet. You who are in the dungeon in chains, the Key has entered the chains, it's turned. That Key is Me, the Savior. Come and be free of your guilt. Come and be set free of those sins that would obsess you and control you. Come surrender to Me. Folks, you will surrender either to sin and death or to a Savior and life. Don't think you will go through this life without surrendering. You'll surrender somewhere. We all surrender somewhere. Now, the Prophet announces Good News. There's no echo, no promise. The Promised One has come. Now you come to Him. He is the Priest. Our great High Priest and isn't it glorious that we don't have a priest who needs a Savior. We have a Priest who can save us. We don't have a priest who brings a sacrifice needing a sacrifice. We have a Priest who brings a sacrifice, not only does He not need a sacrifice, this Priest is the sacrifice. This Priest is now in heaven praying for you, interceding for you and this King will leave this River and go to a wilderness. He'll be rejected. He'll suffer Mount Calvary, climb up that hill and He who knew no sin will become sin and make a mockery of the kingdom of darkness and death to set you free. The King had come to the battle. He's my Lord and my King. He's my Savior the eternal Son of God.

When He went to battle He said, "Now I'm going to go send you into the battle to reap the fruits of the battle. You can go reap the fruits. Just win people to me." I'm so grateful that we can all get engaged and involved in this evangelistic endeavor called Bridge to Life. When we were going through the instruction we learned how to conversationally turn things so we could talk about the Lord. We learned how to conversationally wrap it up so that you can invite people to Christ. It is just a very simple way. I'm so grateful that this isn't something new for Briarwood but its just adding on to decades of Briarwood's burden to share the Gospel. It's just were dumber than the people 20 years ago because we had to come up with something a little bit more simple. Well, at least I'm dumber. So we

have something just as simple as we can get it. One verse, one message, here's Jesus and even Pastor Reeder can learn that. The toughest thing for me is the conversational turning to get to the Bridge, to get to people to tell them about Jesus, the Messiah who is the Bridge.

I'm thinking about writing a book call Airplane Evangelism. There are two things I won't do in heaven. I won't sin so I want to sin less and I won't evangelize so I want to do that more before I get there. In 1988 or 89 I was on a plane coming back from Westminster Seminary and I was tired. When you're in that situation you know how it works, don't you? Someone comes and sits down next you and you know you need to talk with them but you are just too tired. So I figured out how to do it. I stack some books up and maybe they won't crawl over the books to ask me something or if they ask me, "What do you do?" If I want to talk to them I will say, "I'm a conference speaker." If I don't want to talk to them I'll say, "I'm a preacher." That cuts off conversation pretty quickly. So I'm sitting on this plane with Frank Barker traveling with me and I know Frank is as tired as I am yet he leads this guy next to him to Christ. I was so convicted so I said alright airplane evangelism that's my thing from now on. So now when I get on a plane I start praying about the person who is going to sit next to me, "Lord, bring me a live one, one that I can talk to." The second thing I ask is, "Lord, give me the strength to do it." The third thing I pray for is turbulence. It is a great help in evangelism. I'm always asking the Lord, "not too much turbulence but just enough so that the luggage compartments come open and something fly out but that's it, no more than that, no 1000 foot drops or anything. That's enough right there."

Then when the turbulence hits I'll turn to the person next to me and say, "Do you think there's a heaven?" I have never gotten a "no" answer on that question. Even people later who have told me they were atheist never said, "no" to that question. Do you know why? In Ecclesiastes it says, "God has put eternity in the heart of a man." Then I will say, "How do you think you get there?" They will give me answer and then I'll say, "There's one verse in the Bible that kind of explains the whole Bible message about God's bridge which is Jesus." Then I just kind of take them through it. It is so much fun to do that. Folks, our Savior is a Prophet, Priest and King. There is no other Savior and He's a glorious Savior. Here He has come under the Law meticulously faithful. Now without flinching He will go to a cross and save His people from their sins. Praise His Name forever more. Don't leave without Him as your Savior.

I don't want God's wrath. I want God's pleasure. Apart from Jesus I'm under God's wrath as a sinner but in Jesus is the pleasure of the Father. This is My Son in whom I am pleased. Come to Him and know the pleasure of the Father. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together. Thank You for the privilege to be in this, Your Word. Father, I thank You for the opportunity to serve You and taking this Gospel to many. Lord, would You speak to the hearts and lives of Your people to encourage them, their Savior unfailingly has obeyed the law, unflinchingly will go to a cross, to gloriously seek and save the lost, in Jesus' Name, Amen.

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