

## **The Commissioning of the King**

Scripture: Matthew 3:13-17

Code: 2190

We come to the last paragraph in the 3rd chapter of Matthew. We are examining the Gospel of Matthew, and noting, as we go, that Matthew presents the Lord Jesus Christ as King. That's Matthew's particular approach. He wants the world to know that Christ is the promised King, the Anointed One, the Messiah, the King of kings, and Lord of lords. We saw, when we studied the Gospel of John some years ago, that John's major message is that Jesus is God; and in every paragraph almost in the entire Gospel of John, John points up something of the deity of Christ.

Well, in almost every paragraph of Matthew, Matthew is dealing with the kingly nature of Christ, and no different as we come to the end of the third chapter, for here we find the commissioning of the King. Matthew doesn't say it in those terms, but that is precisely what occurs. In the majesty of the moment, Matthew does manage to capture in all of its fullness. There's something strikingly majestic about this text. All of the anticipation of the previous texts seems to come to fulfillment here; because, as we come to Matthew 3:13, we read the words, "Then cometh Jesus." And really, for the first time, the Lord Jesus appears upon the stage. Up until this time, it has been preparatory. Matthew has been commenting on various elements in the beginnings of Jesus, His birth, the things surrounding His birth, His forerunner, etc.; but now, finally, Jesus steps onto the stage. Jesus takes the place of prominence.

The anticipation that has been building since the beginning of this record is now fulfilled. In chapter 1 verses 1 to 17, we saw the ancestry of the King. In chapter 1 verses 18 to 25, we saw the arrival of the King, His birth. In chapter 2 verses 1 to 12, we saw the adoration of the King, the worship given to Him by the magi. In chapter 2 verses 13 to 23, we saw the attestation to the King. That is, He is attested to be the King by the fulfillment of specific prophecy; and in chapter 3 verses 1 to 12, we saw the announcer of the King, John the Baptist. And now, finally, after all of that, we come in chapter 3 verses 13 to 17 to arrival of the King. If you wanna add another one, the anointing of the King.

This is, as it were, His coronation. This is His commissioning, the beginning of His ministry. It's a rich and a blessed section of Scripture. The King comes out of 30 years of seclusion, 30 years of obscurity, 30 years of being hidden, as it were, finally to manifest himself to the world. John the Baptist, the voice of one crying in the wilderness, has made ready the path. The way is prepared. The path is straight, and from the quiet seclusion of Nazareth, the Lord Jesus comes to inaugurate His work, to assume His office, and He is commissioned. He is crowned, as it were, in a very wonderful way right here as we begin in this paragraph.

Now, I want us to see three aspects to the commissioning of Jesus Christ. First, the baptism of the Son. Second, the anointing of the Spirit. Thirdly, the Word of the Father, and you will notice that all the Trinity is involved. The baptism of the Son, the anointing of the Spirit, and the Word of the Father. This is a very important passage for instruction on the Trinity, because all of them are here synonymously, all acting at the very same time; and if you're looking for a passage in which to find the Trinity, this is as good as any.

Thirty years of peaceful preparation, 30 years of being in Nazareth, now comes to an end. That is all buried, and the King comes for the storm and the stress of the unique work that God has commissioned Him to do.

Now, let's look, first of all, at the baptism of the Son; and we're gonna look at all kinds of interesting things in this; and perhaps some things that you wouldn't expect out of the text, but are related, because I think it's a good opportunity to teach you some things even about baptism. But, first of all, the baptism of the Son, verses 13 through 16, at least the first part. Now, here we find a passage of Scripture which has confused many people; and in order for us to get a good grip on it, we have to sort of look at it carefully; and what we wanna do is to consider, first of all, the details of His baptism, and then discuss its significance.

Let's look at verse 13 to begin with. "Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to the Jordan unto John to be baptized by him." Now, you notice the verse begins with then. This is very vague. Doesn't tell us much of anything. We don't know when the then was other than the fact that the then hooks us up with the time of the ministry of John the Baptist. Sometime during the ministry of John the Baptist, while other people were coming to him, as it says in verse 5, "And there went to him Jerusalem and all Judea and all the regions round about the Jordan, and were baptized by him." Sometime during that ministry of John, it was then that Jesus came.

Now, we really don't know how long John had ministered. We have no idea. Verse 5 indicates that it was long enough for Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region round about the Jordan to come; and so it would've needed to have been several months to allow for those people to come, and to take the long journeys that would be involved. No doubt for several months, John had been ministering. Now, some Bible scholars wanna connect up an interesting thought. We know that Jesus began His ministry when He was 30. We know that because Luke 3:23 tells us that. When He was about 30 years of age, He began His ministry.

Now, supposing that John also began his ministry when he was 30, that would mean that John had ministered six months prior to when Christ came, because John was born six months before Christ, according to Luke chapter 1 and verse 26. John the Baptist was Jesus' cousin. You remember that? And so John was part of the family, as it were; and we know the story of Elizabeth and her giving birth

to John, the 1st chapter of Luke; and he was six months older than Jesus. So if he began his ministry at the age of 30, as Jesus did, it would've been going on for about six months.

But on the other hand, we have no reason to believe that he began at 30. There's nothing in the Scripture that tells us that. That would be purely conjecture. Now, some people say, "Well, in Numbers, Numbers chapter 4, the Word of God says that the priests were to begin their ministry when they were 30; and there's some indication that David actually embarked upon certain dimensions of his ministry to the Lord when he was 30; and so that 30 does at least hang around as a number significant among ministries; and it was according to Numbers 4 the time when the priests began to function. But that principle was very temporary, because, by the time you get to the 8th chapter of Numbers, the priests' age is lowered to 25; and if you read in 1 Chronicles chapter 23, David lowered the age to 20 for special reasons; and that early age of 20, for the beginning of a priest's ministry was continued through the reign of Hezekiah, according to 2 Chronicles 31; and it was continued after the captivity, according to the Ezra 3 verse 8.

So the 30 of Numbers 4 quickly becomes 25 in Numbers 8, and, in 1 Chronicles 23, becomes 20 and seems to stay that way; so I really don't think that the 30 is that significant. All of that to say we don't know when Jesus came, and we don't know how long John was ministering. There's no way that we can push ourselves to any answer; and in Luke chapter 3 and verse 21, a parallel passage. The Word of God says, "Now when all the people were being baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also being baptized." Now, Luke then tell us that Jesus came when all the other people were coming. This was no private audience with John. This was no little intimate tãate-ã-tãate. This was no secret commissioning. Jesus just came along with everybody else, and we will see the absolute significance of that in a little while.

Now notice again in verse 13 some other of the details. You'll notice that he uses the word cometh. Very interesting word, paraginami. It is a word that has multiple meaning potential, but it is a word that is used specifically in many places to refer to making a public appearance. It was a word used sometimes to speak of the arrival of a teacher, somebody who was to take a public...a significant place in public vision or the public eye. In fact, it is the same verb used in verse 1, "In those days came John the Baptist." It seems to be used, then, at least in some cases, for the initiation of a public ministry; and so, in that sense, this text is saying, "Then Jesus initiating His public ministry came from Galilee." And, by the way, Mark 1:9 adds, "From Nazareth in Galilee." We don't really know exactly where on the Jordan River John was, but it could've been as much as a 60-mile walk for the Lord to get there; and, at this time, He's coming alone. Just beginning His ministry. Nothing really has taken place at all. He steps out of the obscurity of Nazareth, walks maybe as much as 60 miles, makes His public appearance, initiating His ministry.

It's amazing to me, as I thought about that, that Christ waited 30 years in the carpenter's shop in Nazareth performing the simple duties of the home and the simple duties of the shop, and all the time

knowing He was God incarnate, and all the time knowing there was a lost world, and all the time knowing that that world was waiting for Him and never, ever being frustrated, because it was all in the Father's plan. Thirty years of obscurity, waiting for the Father's timing, patiently, in a complete kind of unquestioning submission to the Father, He waited for 30 years; and now the hour struck; and when it struck, He came forth; and it says He came to the Jordan.

Now, we don't know where on the Jordan. We don't know specifically where John was. I mean we know a name, Bethabara, but we don't know where that was. We don't know whether it was way south by the Dead Sea or up a little bit north. We have no way to reconstruct the specifics, but someplace on the southern part of the Jordan River; and you will notice also that it says He came unto John. He came unto John, specifically, His cousin and His forerunner; and here it's kind of a...like a relay race. John is about to pass the baton to Christ. This is the phasing out of the ministry of John and the beginning of the ministry of Jesus.

Now, perhaps Jesus and John knew each other. I know they knew about each other. I know Jesus knew about John, the forerunner, 'cause He was omniscient. I know John knew about Jesus, because they were cousins. You say, "Well, how does that...how does that prove that John knew about Him?" Well, for many reasons. Perhaps when they were babies, they may have played together. Perhaps when they were little children, they may have spent time together. Then John went his way into the wilderness, and Jesus remained in the seclusion of Nazareth... Nazareth. John staying for his lifetime in that wilderness area. Perhaps they never met again; but I'm quite confident that John knew that Jesus was the Messiah.

There's several things that help me to understand that. One is that Elizabeth called Jesus Lord; and if she, John the Baptist's mother, believed He was Lord, there's no question in my mind that she would've passed that on to her son; and the very fact that he is instantly recognizing Jesus here and recognize Him...recognizes Him for who He is is another indication that, indeed, he knew. We'll talk more about that in a minute.

So He comes to meet John, and He has a very specific purpose in mind. Look at the end of verse 13. It says, "To be baptized by him," and the Greek construction here for you Greek students, when you see infinitive with to, you know that this is a purpose that's being denoted. He came with the purpose of being baptized by John. That was His express intention. He came there to be baptized. Now at first this is shocking, and it has really been a problem for a lot of people. It was a problem for John the Baptist, and it's still a problem for people unless you really examine the text carefully. He came to be baptized.

Now, what's shocking about it is from verse 6. Go back to verse 6. "And when John was baptizing...it says...he was baptizing in the Jordan, and the people were confessing their sin." This was based on his message in verse 2, "Repent." He was preaching repentance, and his baptism was a baptism of

repentance with the confession of sin. Look at verse 11. John said, "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance."

Now, repentance admits what? Sin. John's then was a baptism for sinners. John was baptizing people who admitted their sin, who confessed their sin, who repented of their sin, and who desired that God would transform them and prepare them for the coming of the King. His was a baptism for sinners. It was meant, as we have already seen, to be an outward sign of an inward transformation. It was to symbolize a conversion, a turning from sin, a repentance, a baptism for sinners.

Now do you see the problem? Why does Jesus come to be baptized with a baptism that really belongs to sinners? Why should He seek this? Did He need salvation? Why did He desire to join a crowd of sinners? To enter into that which was a symbol of conversion.

Well, there's some interesting solutions to the question. One very ancient writer suggested that Jesus came to be baptized only because His mother wanted Him to, and His brothers wanted Him to. Now, this is recorded in a book called the Gospel according to the Hebrews. This is what we call an apocryphal book. It is a non-Scriptural book. These books rose in the first couple of centuries. They were false. They were untrue. They were not offered by the Holy Spirit, and it was Satan's attempt, of course, to worm them into the canon of the...of the New Testament and make the confusion. They didn't get in, but many of them have interesting things that do show us the thinking of the day; and according to the Gospel of Hebrews, we read this. "Behold, the mother of the Lord and His brethren said to Him, 'John the Baptist baptiseth for the remission of sins. Let us go and be baptized by him.' But He said to them, 'What sin have I committed that I should go and be baptized by him, except perchance this very thing that I have said in ignorance.'"

In other words, the question is why would He go to be baptized? And, apparently, whoever the phony guy was who wrote the Gospel according to Hebrews, he couldn't figure it out either...and so he just took a wild guess that Jesus' mother and brothers sorta laid this responsibility on Him; but the spurious Gospel according to the Hebrews, while not giving us an answer, does at least help us to know that the early writers faced the question. They tried to deal with it. It was a puzzle to them. Why should Jesus be baptized in a baptism for sinners? And, secondly, why, by a sinner himself, John the Baptist?

Now, there was a group of people in the early days of the church called the Gnostics. You remember that? From the Greek word gnosis, to know. They were the know-it-alls. They were the ones who supposedly had the inside track on God, and this is what they taught. They taught that Jesus was just a man -- that the human Jesus was just a man; and, at His baptism, He got incarnated with the divine Spirit. Okay? That up until His baptism, He was just an average, normal human being who was sinful like other people, and He was just a human being; and then at His baptism, He was incarnated by this very high-level, sort of divine Spirit called the *logos*, the Christ-Spirit.

So they say He needed the baptism, because the baptism purified the sinner Jesus to receive this deity element; and so this was a cleansing preparatory act, so that He could be incarnated. Well, that doesn't cut it, folks. That doesn't make it, because it doesn't square with Scripture that, when He was born, His name shall be called Emmanuel, God With Us. He was God from the very beginning. He didn't become God at His baptism. He didn't get incarnated at His baptism. He was incarnated in His birth. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit. Had no earthly father, so that doesn't make it either. So the Gospel according to Hebrews is out, and the Gospel according to the Gnostics is out...

Well, if He didn't have any sin, and He didn't need any confession, and He was already God, and His mother and His brothers didn't tell Him, and He had nothing to repent of, and He didn't need a conversion, and He didn't need a transformation, and He didn't need to change His life or change His heart, then what in the world is He doing? Well, if it's any consolation, John had the same problem. Look at verse 14. "But John...and this is an imperfect tense...kept on hindering Him, saying, 'I...and incidentally all the pronouns here are emphatic in the Greek...I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me?' They're all emphatic. "John kept on hindering him." The verb form denotes an attempted action. John constantly tried to stop Jesus from getting baptized. He sounds a little like Peter, doesn't He? Trying to stop Jesus from going to the cross and, finally, the Lord had to say, "Get thee behind me, Satan." "Get out of My way, will you, Peter? I gotta do this."

The verb, incidentally, is compound. Anytime the Greeks take a verb and add a preposition to the front of it and compound it, they intensify it; and so John was earnestly, strongly, intensely continuing to hinder Jesus from getting baptized. He wouldn't hear of it. It made absolutely no sense to him whatever. "I...he said...have need to be baptized by you." "What are you doing coming to me?" This is all backwards...

I was interested as I thought about this to notice that John's treatment of Jesus is the very opposite of the way he treated the Pharisees and the Sadducees. Verse 7, they came to be baptized, and "When he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come for baptism, he said to them, 'O generation of vipers, who's warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits befitting repentance.'"

Now, listen, he refused to baptize the Pharisees and the Sadducees because they weren't repentant. You see that? He refused to baptize them because they were in impenitent. They were sinful. Here, he refuses to baptize Jesus because He is sinless and has nothing to repent of; and so the whole idea makes no sense to him...he who towered above the Pharisees and the Sadducees, who thought they towered above everybody, finds himself bowed in deepest humility before Jesus.

Now, it's obvious to me, people, that John recognized Jesus. He recognized who He was. Elizabeth, as I said, his mother, was well informed about Mary's firstborn, and Elizabeth called Him my Lord in

Luke 1:42 and 43, so you know she knew about Jesus; and you know Mary must have confided something of her heart. In John 1:29, John seized Jesus' coming and says, "Behold, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." John recognized Jesus...John had some information.

Now, I agree. John didn't ever yet, at this point, have a divine confirmation. Look at John 1. This is most interesting, verse 31. I just read you verse 29 where he says, "Behold, the Lamb of God takes away the sin of the world." Then in 30, "This is He of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me.'" Boy he's really...he sees Christ as the eternal Christ; and then in 31 he says, "And I knew Him not; but that He should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water." Verse 33, "And I knew Him not."

Now, what he's saying is this. "I knew Him physically, but I had not yet the divine confirmation...I had not that yet that assurance."...Until verse 32, "I saw the Spirit descending from Heaven like a dove and abiding on Him. And I knew Him not. But he that sent me to baptize with water, the Same said to me, 'Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on Him, the Same is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.'"

Now, John had an idea who He was humanly; and so God said to him, "You'll know for sure with divine confirmation. The sign will be the dove descending upon Him. When you see the dove coming out of Heaven and abiding on Him, that's the One who will baptize with the Holy Spirit. That's the King. That's the Messiah." And John says, "Until that time, I didn't really know. I didn't really have the divine confirmation."

But, backing up again to Matthew 3, it is obvious here by John's stopping Jesus from being baptized before Jesus says anything, and before John ever announces, "Behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world," it is obvious that physically, humanly, as John perceives Him, he knows this is the Messiah, and the divine confirmation comes immediately in verse 16 of...of Matthew 3 when the Spirit descends; but, even here, John knows that this is, in fact, the Christ.

Now, John's statement -- this is an incredible statement, and I want you to see how rich it is. His statement is one of the most clear and one of the most powerful, and one of the most forceful declarations of the sinlessness of Jesus Christ ever given in the Scripture. When anybody wants to argue about the sinlessness of Christ, whether Christ was really without sin, this is a great place to start. Virtually, John is saying, "Look, You can't be baptized with my baptism, because mine is a baptism for sinners." And what is he, in effect, saying? "You're not a sinner. You're not a sinner." He is declaring, on the other hand, that, "I have need to be baptized by You. I am a sinner. You and I are opposites. I...he says...am in the class of the people I'm baptizing. You are not," and he is saying, "Not only are You sinless, but You are beyond even the very prophets of God." See.

People say, "Jesus was just a prophet." No, here is the only prophet of God alive in his time. Here is the greatest man who ever lived up until his time. Matthew 11:11, "Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist," the greatest prophet who ever lived, and he says, "Jesus, You aren't in my class. I am in a class with sinners. You're sinless." And the greatest prophet who ever lives exalts Jesus Christ above his category...

So, from the very beginning, it is clear that this is the sinless, undefiled, Holy Messiah of God; and John starts out with the very first thing that he says -- the first time Jesus ever shows His face publicly to minister -- with a declaration of the absolute sinlessness of Jesus Christ; and he sets Him above even the greatest prophet who ever lived. Now, mark it. Jesus is not just another prophet. He's in a totally unique category. Prophets are sinners. Jesus is sinless.

Hebrews 4:15, "He was at all points tempted like as we are, yet...what?...without sin." Without sin, and he said, "Jesus, I need to be baptized by You. Let's get this thing right." And by the way, Jesus and the disciples did do some baptizing. They joined in John's baptism, and they got some people ready for the Kingdom. In John 3 and verse 22, "After these things came Jesus and His disciples into the land of Judea, and there He tarried with them and baptized." John 4:1, "When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John (though Jesus Himself baptized not, but His disciples), he left Galilee...or He left Judea and departed again into Galilee." Jesus and His disciples baptized. Jesus Himself, not doing it, but having His disciples do it; but, nonetheless, it was the same kind of baptism. It was a baptism of Old Testament saints who were ready to get their hearts right and to repent of their sin, to be converted, to be transformed, to get ready to accept the Messiah and His Kingdom. It was a baptism very similar to John's, not yet the Christian baptism that is initiated in the church; and so he's saying, "I need You to do it for Me. You don't need me to do it for You."

Mark it now. The Holy Spirit wants it understood, though Jesus desires John's baptism and, though that baptism is a baptism for sinners, let it be made clear, Jesus is no sinner. So He has another thing in mind. He has something completely different in mind. What does He have in mind? Why does He wanna get baptized? Why does He wanna go into a symbolic river of death? Why does He wanna show some kind of a transformation and some kind of an act of sinfulness? Why does He wanna do this if, in fact, He is no sinner?

Well, some people say...lemme give you some options before I tell you the right one. What I believe is the right one. Some say His baptism was just an initiatory rite. They go back again to Deuteronomy chapter 4. Or rather Numbers chapter 4, and in Numbers chapter 4, the 30-year-old priests were washed. They were bathed as a preparatory kind of initiatory rite for their entering the priesthood, and so some say this was just an initiation. Christ is washed symbolically as He enters upon His high priestly work...Some others say that Jesus knew that this kind of baptism was in the Old Testament proselyte baptism. Remember that? That when a Gentile became a Jew and identified himself with



Judaism religiously, not racially, obviously if he's a Gentile. He couldn't become a Jew racially. But if you joined up with Judaism, and he was a proselyte from the Gentiles, he was put through a baptism as a symbol of the transformation, and some say that Jesus was then baptized, because He wanted to show Gentile acceptance to God. Here was the Messiah taking on the role of a Gentile, and so some say He was simply being initiated to the priesthood. Some say He was sort of playing along with this concept of Jew and Gentile being one, and He was taking the place of a Gentile and being initiated into Judaism, which would've been a very shocking thing for them to see their own Messiah taking the place of a Gentile, and it would've maybe softened this a little bit, so that they would be accepting of the Gentiles. By the way, neither of those has any particular Scripture. Those are just, you know, out of the air.

Thirdly, some say Jesus was simply sort of accrediting John. John was doing a good job, and Jesus wanted everybody to know that John was really doing God's work, so Jesus just let John do it to Him, so everybody would know He approved. It was sort of a...an accreditation. Sort of, "John, I want everybody to know that I'm for you, and that I'm in this with you, and that you're My man, so you do it to Me, and they'll know that you're really God's man." Now, again, the Bible doesn't say that. That's sort of out there in the air.

Now, a fourth one. Some have said that Jesus was baptized vicariously and, actually, in His baptism, purchased a certain amount of righteousness and pardon for sinners, so that the sin bearing of Jesus is a combination of His baptism and His death on the cross. Now, that's a little strange. Nothing in the Bible says that Jesus was baptized for our sins. He died for our sin. I'm not sure I can handle that one. Those are nice suggestions, but they really don't make sense in the context. If Jesus was being initiated into the priesthood, John wouldn't have argued with that. If Jesus was just trying to show a proselyte the identification, John wouldn't have argued with that. If Jesus was simply sorta saying, "John, I just wanna be a part of what you're doing, so everybody'll know you're God's man," I don't think John would've argued with that. And if Jesus was gonna bear sin, I don't think John would've argued with that, either.

But John only defined his baptism one way. It was a baptism for sinners, and he was saying, "If you do this, Jesus, you're only saying one thing."...It wasn't a priestly initiation rite, believe me. It wasn't a proselyte exercise. These were Jews being baptized. It wasn't just a way that you could agree with John. It wasn't a sin-bearing efficacious baptism. It had one thing in view. It was a baptism of sinners, and John was, in effect, saying, "If You do this, You're just saying one thing, Lord, and I don't know how You can possibly say it when You're sinless."...John is saying, "If You enter my baptism, You enter it on these terms, and that's it." Well, what's the answer?

Well, let Jesus give it Himself in verse 15. By the way, these are the first recorded words of Jesus since He was 12 years old and spoke to His mother and told her He had to be about what? His Father's business. This is the first time He's said anything other than that in all of Holy Scripture since

His incarnation, and they are words with royal dignity and humility. Verse 15, "And Jesus answering said unto him, 'Permit it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness.' Then he consented to Him. And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water."

John finally gave in, but he didn't give in. He didn't stop hindering Jesus until Jesus told him why. He said, "Permit it to be so now." Now, Jesus does not deny that He is a superior, and John is an inferior...He does not deny that John needs also to be baptized, because John is a sinner. He does not deny that John needs repentance. He does not deny that He doesn't need it; but He says, "There's a special reason, John, and permit it to be so now." This is an idiom. "I know it's unusual, but let it go this time. Allow it now. Yield to Me this time. It's unusual, but it's necessary."...

Why? "For thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness." The phrase "thus it becometh us" means it is proper for us to do this. "This is okay, John. This is right to do, even though I have no sin, and even though you're a sinner, even though it is a baptism of sinners, it is a baptism of repentance. We've gotta do it." And notice the "us." "For thus it becometh us. We both have a part. You must do this to Me, and I must have it done." Why? "To fulfill all righteousness."

Now, here's the key. "To fulfill all righteousness." Does it mean that Jesus wants to do everything that's righteous? Yes. That Jesus wants to do all the righteous good deeds? Yes. That whatever good work there is, Jesus will do? Yes. Is baptism such a good work? Yes. Then perhaps Jesus is simply identifying with it as an act of righteousness. It was repentant sinners who came to that water. It was righteous men and women who came to that water; and is Jesus simply identifying with all the various acts of righteousness?...All the various acts of godliness and holiness? Well, certainly, in His life He did that.

Tax collector in Matthew 17 said to Peter, "Does your Master pay taxes?" He said, "Yes." And Jesus...and Peter talked about this; and Peter said, well, came in to talk to Jesus, and when he was come to the house, Jesus spoke to him and said, "What do you think, Simon? What's going on in your mind?" He says, "Of whom do the kings in the earth take custom or tax - of their own sons or strangers?" And Peter said to him, "Of strangers." In other words, kings don't tax their own children. They tax strangers...And Jesus said, "Then are the sons free? And if God is the King of everything, and we're the sons of God, we oughta be free from all of this, right, Peter?" "Right." "However," He says, "lest we should offend them, let's pay our taxes." Whatever the righteous deed was, paying taxes or anything else, even though the Lord may not have felt bound to do it, He did it, 'cause it was a righteous thing to do, and so perhaps this is part of it. Fulfilling all righteousness means that if baptism is a righteous thing, Christ will do it; but that still leaves us with this problem of the sin thing, doesn't it? And that's why I have to say there's more richness here yet.

Listen. John looks into Jesus' face. He is conscious of the absolute perfection of Jesus. He is conscious of the sinlessness of Jesus. He doesn't dare lay a hand on Jesus to baptize Him in the

Jordan; and, as far as the sinless life of Jesus is concerned, John is absolutely right; but he misses one great point. One great point. I'll be you've already thought of it. Jesus came into the world to do one thing and that was to identify with what? Sinners. That's the reason He came; and in order for Him to fulfill all of God's righteousness, in order for Him to purchase righteousness for anybody, He had to identify with sinners; and in the incarnation, Jesus saw Himself as one with sinful men.

In the Book of Isaiah in chapter 53 it says, "He was numbered with the...what?...transgressors, sinners." I believe the supreme element...listen...in the baptism of Jesus was the identification of the sinless Son of God with sinners; and I think the first thing Jesus ever did when He stepped out of obscurity, and He stepped into the limelight, was declare the very primary reason for which He came, and that was to identify Himself with sinners...He who had no sin took His place among those who had no righteousness. He who was without sin went down into a baptism that was only for sinners, and He was saying as loud and clear as ever He could say, "I take My place with sinners." And let it be clear from the start that this Jesus is the friend of sinners. Let it be clear that Paul was right. He who knew no sin became what? Sin for us. His ministry began that way. How fitting. He didn't come to just teach. He didn't come just to set an example. He didn't come to be a moralist. He didn't come to be a revolutionary. He came to identify with sinners, and He was numbered with the transgressors; and there in His baptism He identified with sinners. Even in His birth, He identified with sinners. He was the Child of Mary, who was a sinner.

In His death, He identified with sinners. Two, one on each side, and He bore the sins of every sinner who ever lived. Listen, in order to bring sinners to righteousness, He had to go to the depths of the waters of death. He had to bear sin. He had to identify with sinners. There was no other way to fulfill all righteousness.

And in Isaiah 53:11, it says, "My righteous servant shall make many righteous...How?...He shall bear the sin of many." Isaiah 53:11, "My righteous servant shall bear the sin of many." Jesus submitted to John's baptism as a symbolic act of identifying with sinners who were seeking salvation; and I'll go a step further. I believe that His baptism was a symbol of His death. I believe it was a symbol of His dying as He went into that water, and a symbol of His rising as He came out.

You say, "Apparently, you believe he was immersed." True, and I will defend that in a moment; and I think it was...it was the same picture, really, as Christian baptism. I think Jesus was showing His identification with sinners. I think He was previewing His death and His resurrection.

You know, only two times in all of His speeches, all of His discussions, did Jesus ever refer to a personal baptism. Lemme show them to you. In Luke 12:50, Luke 12:50...He says this, "But I have a baptism to be baptized with...and how am I constrained till it be accomplished!" What did He say? "I have a baptism to be baptized with." What do you think He was referring to? His death. It's exactly right. In His mind, what then was His baptism? His death. His death, and I believe that when He was

baptized by John, He was simply being baptized as a preview of that, a symbol of His identification with sinners that would become a real identification when He died on the cross bearing the sins of all the world. So He begins His public ministry with a declaration that, though He is absolutely sinless, He has come to identify with sinners, to redeem sinners; and the culminating work will be the cross. He cannot win men by His preaching. He cannot win men by His example. He can only win them by His dying, and he knows it.

So Jesus goes with sinners down into the waters of death to cancel sin, to fill...fill all righteousness. The baptism of Jesus, beloved, has absolutely no application to us at all. It was totally unique. J. R. Miller says, "The shadow of the cross fell on the green banks and on the flowing river Jordan, and it fell also across the gentle and holy soul of Jesus as He stood there. He knew what that baptism meant, to what it had reduced Him, what its end would be. Yet knowing all, He voluntarily came to be baptized, thus accepting the mission of redemption." So He joined Himself to sinners from the very beginning. Isn't that great? That's why He came.

Let's look at the second, and this one we'll see very briefly. The second part of His commission, the anointing of the Spirit, verse 16. "And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water. And lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting upon Him." Now, here we come to the second element in His commissioning, the anointing of the Spirit. This is phase two. I want you to notice a couple of things. Then we'll see the significance.

His name here, Jesus, "And Jesus, when He was baptized," how fitting that He is called Jesus here. The name means Savior. He shall save His people, so that the whole idea of this commissioning, beloved, is to see Jesus as the Savior, the One who identifies with sinners to save them. Now notice this. It says, "When He was baptized." Now, it's most interesting to see the word baptized for just a minute. It's the word baptidzo. Now, Presbyterians and Baptists have argued all through the years about sprinkling and immersion; and then somebody comes along and says, "Well, no, it's pouring," and there's people who pour and who sprinkle and all kinds of things. Then there's the brethren who baptize you three times face forward, and everybody wants to talk about the mode.

Well, does the word help us at all? Lemme see if it does. Baptidzo, well, before we look at the word, the context helps us, and so does the concept. Now, listen, if John the Baptist had a baptism that symbolized conversion -- the word repent means conversion -- if it symbolized a transformation, if it symbolized a purification, a washing of sin, it would seem to me that immersion is the only proper picture. It isn't just a little dribble on the top. It's a cleansing. It's a washing, so the very significance of the baptism of John points to immersion. Further, if Jesus was using this as a symbol of His death and resurrection, that also points to what? Immersion. Trickling water on someone's head does not fit the symbolism of dying, being buried, and rising again as immersion does. Further, it says, "And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water." Whatever kind of baptism this

was, He had to go into the river to get it. Certainly not necessary for sprinkling or pouring.

Now, I would add that verse 6 says, backing up, "They were baptized by him in the Jordan." In the Jordan. Now John was baptizing in the Jordan River. The word en, E N in the Greek, is translated in, is used often interchangeably with the word ase, which means into, and I won't take the time to show you all the parallel passages, but the two words are used interchangeably; and when they are used interchangeably for the same incident, into is the stronger word. We take in to mean into; and in other accounts of the baptisms of John, we find the word into; and if the word in here is used and elsewhere into is used, we would take into as the strong word, and this word then would have the meaning of the into. Now, maybe you're out of it listening to that. Maybe that wasn't too clear, but that's the truth anyway...

And I'll tell you something interesting. It says in John chapter 3 verse 23, "And John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there." Now, there's no reason to be concerned about where there's the most water if you're sprinkling. "There was much water there." Water that could be used for immersion; and in the 8th chapter of Acts and verse 38, "And Philip and the eunuch went down into the water. Both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him."

So it seems to me that the references, and, by the way, there is no reference to sprinkling anywhere in the entire New Testament. The only word we ever have in reference to baptism is baptidzo. By the way, Old Testament proselyte baptism was always immersion. Read Leviticus 14 verses 8 and 9. So you have the Old Testament standard of immersion. You have the idea of into -- the preposition used frequently in reference to it. You have the concept that much water was there. They went down into the river. They came out of the river. You have the picture of death and resurrection. You have the idea that this is a transformation that is symbolized. All of this seems to point to immersion. If you wanna do something with those two prepositions, look up Mark 1:9 as a starting point. "It came to pass in those days, Jesus came and was baptized by John into the Jordan." Ase, into the Jordan.

Now, the term baptidzo literally means to dip into water. To dip. If we had just translated that way, we wouldn't have had a problem; but somebody Latinized the word and just made it say baptized; and that doesn't tell us anything. If every time you saw that word in the Bible, and it said, "And Jesus came to John to be dipped," nobody would have a problem; but that's precisely what the word baptidzo means. Universally, the English and the Latin lexicons say it means to dip into the water, literally. Simple translation of the Greek would've solved the whole problem. Wouldn't even have any Presbyterians...

Now, the...lemme show you something interesting. The same verb is used, for example, in Luke 16:24. You don't need to look it up, but it says, "Lazarus and the rich man, and the rich man says, 'Tell Lazarus to dip his finger in water and cool my tongue.'" That's baptidzo. It just means to dip. That's its meaning. In John 13:26, it says, "Jesus dipped the sop and gave it to Judas." That's all it

ever means -- to dip into...to dip into. Immersion, then, is the only thing conveyed by the verb baptidzo, and I really feel that this is what John was doing, and that Jesus was picturing, and this is the proper mode, the expression of baptism.

By the way, it might be interesting to you to know that immersion was the only mode of baptism until the Middle Ages. The only one. You know that even the Roman Catholic church never did anything but immerse people until the Middle Ages? Thomas Aquinas, the great Catholic theologian who died in 1274 said this, and I quote, "In immersion, the setting forth of the burial of Christ is more plainly expressed, in which this manner of baptizing is more commendable."

In 1311, a council called the Council of Ravenna declared sprinkling permissible, 1311; and in 1645, the same thing happened in England as a result of some people who said that's what John Calvin believed. The Eastern church never did accept it; and to this very day, the Eastern Orthodox church immerses and only immerses. And by the way, the Roman Catholic church never really changed its view until 1400, and the Reformers kept the Roman view of sprinkling, and that's how sprinkling got into Reformation theology, Protestantism. But, historically, it was only immersion, because that's what the terms mean.

Well, that's enough about that. What happened? "Jesus walked straightway up outta the water. And lo, the heavens were opened unto Him." Now, I don't think this is some kind of a subjective feeling. I don't think Jesus is having some little experience in His mind. I think Heaven literally went open. Now, you say, "Well, what happens when that happens?" I couldn't tell you, folks. I haven't got the faintest idea, except that I'll bet ya if you open the door of Heaven, you'd see some pretty amazing stuff. Whatever it was that happened to Ezekiel in chapter 1, you wanna read it? The Lord opened Heaven in chapter 1, and Ezekiel started talking about stuff that nobody's ever understood since he wrote it. There was a wheel, and then another wheel, and a wheel within a wheel, and that wheel was within a wheel, and then there were four of those and six of those, and stuff was turning and spinning, and we just say, "Praise the Lord, Ezekiel, it was wonderful. We're so glad for your experience."...

And another time it happened with dear Stephen. Dear Stephen was being stoned to death, and he was crushed beneath the stones. At the last moments of his life, Heaven opened to him, Acts 7:56; and you find it in Revelation 4, where Heaven opens, and you get a vision of the throne of God; and you find it in Revelation 11, and you find it in Revelation 19 as it opens and the sun comes forth on his horse to conquer; and sometimes God pops open Heaven and gives somebody a look. That's exactly what happened that day. Maybe it's something like Paul experienced in 2 Corinthians 12 when he was caught up to the third Heaven. He saw things too wonderful to be uttered; but God opened Heaven. It was split open, and that's wonderful, because the heavens were opened to Him. He's made it possible that one day the heavens are gonna be open to us.

One old commentator said, "Just as the veil of the temple was rent in twain to symbolize the perfect access of all men to God, so here the heavens are rent asunder to show how near God is to Jesus, and Jesus is to God; and immediately what happened, He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting upon Him. The Holy Spirit has no body, can't be seen with physical eyes, but to secure a visible sign so that John would know, because God said to John -- read John 1 -- John...John the Baptist we're talking about. Read the Gospel of John chapter 1 verses 30 and following, and God said, "The one the Spirit descends on and lights on as a dove, that's the One." And John knew it humanly; but, boy, when that Spirit came in the form of a dove and lighted upon Him, he knew this was the Messiah, even though later in his life, because of the way certain things were going, and the way Jesus was rejected, and the way his whole ministry seemed to be turning, and John couldn't figure it out, and he sent a messenger and said, "Is this really the One? Or am I wrong?"...

Those were just the doubts; because it wasn't going like it shoulda gone; but the sign was a confirmation. Why a dove? Well, why a dove? By the way, this is the only time the Spirit is ever seen as a dove. It has nothing to do with us. It was for Jesus. To us, the Spirit appears in other ways than a dove. Why a dove?...Well, I thought a lot about it, and I read a little about it, and I think...I think I understand why a dove...

What would a Jewish person see in his mind when he saw a dove? Sacrifice, that's the first thing he'd see, because the dove was the most common sacrificial animal. A bullock, that's for the rich. A lamb, that's for the upper middle class. A dove, that was the sin offering for almost everybody, the common folks; and here in a marvelous, wonderful way, the Spirit of God descends in a form that'll make people think of only one thing... sacrifice.

Now there's two things then to talk about here. First of all, the very coming of the Spirit itself. Why did the Spirit come? Well, you say, "Jesus needed the Holy Spirit." Well, in one sense He didn't, right? 'Cause He was God, right? His deity didn't need the Holy Spirit. He was one with the Spirit, one with the Father. He was born of the Spirit. He and the Spirit are indivisible. In His deity, He didn't need anything extra. He was filled with the Spirit. Oh, as only God is filled with Himself. His divine nature needed no special gift. It needed no strengthening; but, you see, there were two parts that we need to understand here that were taking place in terms of His humanness. One, He was being anointed for service; and, two, He was being granted strength in His humanness. The Spirit came to anoint Him for kingly service.

Psalm 45:7, "God, Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows." Isaiah 61:1, listen to this. "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord hath anointed Me to preach good tidings to the meek. He hath sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted, to procure...claim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound...etc...The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me. He has anointed me to preach." The Spirit of God came upon Him in His

humanness to empower Him to preach, to anoint Him as the Prophet of God. In Acts 10:38, the writer says, "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit."

You notice that God anointed Jesus of Nazareth. That's His human identification. So His humanness was anointed. He was inaugurated into His kingly office. He was empowered for ministry. His humanness needed to be strengthened. Do you know that? He grew weary. He grew thirsty. He grew tired. He grew hungry. His humanness needed strengthening, so the Spirit of God descended to announce, "This is the King. This is the Anointed," and to strengthen Him in His humanness for His ministry.

Now, this isn't something we need. We don't need to pray for the dove to descend on us. When you were saved, you received the Holy Spirit. You're not Christ. Don't make this the norm... You already have the power and the resource when the Spirit was given to you at your salvation. This is unique. We...our baptism isn't like His, and our receiving of the Spirit isn't like His. It was a heavenly sign. Now, you say, "Well, why did God make it visible?" Because there had to be a divine confirmation that He was the King; and John saw it...and He came to empower; and then the other thing that I mentioned. The dove, I think, speaks of sacrifice. The dove is a reminder of the necessity that One be the sacrifice for sin. Here was the dove. The One who would bear sin for the commonest, the lowest, the poorest, the humblest of men. He was the sacrifice, and the very symbol was sitting upon Him. In a sense, then, He was anointed for death. He was anointed to be a sacrifice. Baptized, He showed His identification with sinners. Anointed, He showed that that identification would take Him to be a sacrifice...

And, finally, there was one other part to His commission - the Word of the Father. Verse 17, "And lo, a voice from Heaven, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'" Now, listen, there's one thing about a sacrifice. Whenever a sacrifice is offered to God, it has to be the right one. True? Without spot, without blemish, and that is precisely what God is saying. "This One, who identifies with sinners, this One who is to be the dove of sacrifice. I say in Him I am well pleased. I accept Him as the sacrifice." Great statement...

The Trinity is completed in the picture. "This is My beloved Son," Agapaytoy, "My beloved, deep, rich, profound relationship. The Son of My love. This, My beloved Son," right outta Psalm 2. "My beloved Son. This One in whom I am well pleased," and, by the way, the term well pleased is delighted, past tense. "In whom I delighted." Past tense. In other words, the statement flashes back over 30 years; and God says, "I've examined this sacrificial dove. I've examined this One who will identify with sinners. Is He without spot? Is He without blemish? Yes, this is My beloved Son, in whom I delighted. I've checked Him out, and I here set the seal of perfection on the Son. The hidden years I've examined, and He is without spot, and I am well pleased."...



So, beloved, what do we see in the commission here? He is chosen to be a King, but His...but His throne is gonna be a cross. He's chosen to be a King, but He's gonna die, a sin offering. So He is commissioned. By baptism, He identifies with sinners and pictures His death. By being anointed with the Spirit, He is empowered to minister a ministry that ultimately will make Him a sacrifice. The dove of sacrifice. And by the Father's Word, He is said to be the worthy sacrifice. What an introduction. What a beginning. What a ministry was His. Let's pray.

Father, we thank You for the introduction of Christ that we saw tonight. As He began His ministry, made it very clear at the very start that He began as a sacrifice, that He began as an offering for sin, that He came to identify with sinners, that He came to be empowered by the Holy Spirit to preach and then to die victoriously for sin as a sacrificial lamb, a sacrificial dove... And that You said You were pleased with His sacrifice. He was the spotless, sinless, without blemish sacrifice You require. Father, we thank You for the One who introduced Himself as our Savior, who's chosen to identify with us and to die for us. And to know that that death is acceptable to You, because He's a worthy offering gives us great joy, Father. His death is efficacious. It does purchase our salvation. So we praise You. Jesus' name. Amen.

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