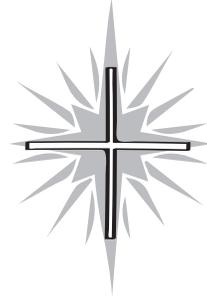


# BAPTISM OF OUR LORD



Study Notes for the Christian Layperson

by: Rev. C. Brian Bucklew

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## Matthew 3:13-17 ESV

### Author and Date:

Matthew Levi the apostle around AD 50. This is the Baptism of Jesus, who is revealed to be the Son of God, and who prepares the waters of Baptism for us. (Matthew 28:19; Titus 3:5-8).

<sup>13</sup> **Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him**

- This is the same river Jordan that was miraculously parted by the Lord in Joshua 3-4, where the Lord through Elijah and Elisha miraculously divided its waters (2 Kings 2:8, 13-14), and where Naaman the leper was miraculously cleansed of his leprosy (2 Kings 5:14).
- Now people were being baptized here by John, confessing their sins (Mark 1:5). John was proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins (Luke 3:3). The forgiveness of sins by God's Word and water is an even greater healing than that of Naaman the leper. Why then is Jesus, the sinless Son of God, coming to be baptized?

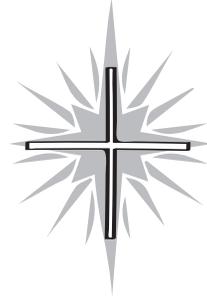
<sup>14</sup> **John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?"**

- John is confessing that he is unworthy to baptize Jesus, because John is a sinner but Jesus is the sinless Son of God. John knows he is not worthy to even untie the strap Jesus' sandal, much less to baptize him (John 1:27).

<sup>15</sup> **But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented.**

- Here is the answer from Jesus' own mouth on why He is baptized: to fulfill all righteousness. "In other words, in order that poor sinners might come to righteousness and be saved, [Jesus says to John you must now baptize me. For I have for the sake of sinners become a sinner and must fulfill that which God imposed upon sinners, in order that they might become righteous through me." (Martin Luther, *House Postils: Epiphany: Third Sermon* – 1534). "For our sake he

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made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” (2 Corinthians 5:21)

- St. John Chrysostom says of this verse: “I am come to do away the curse that is appointed for the transgression of the law. I must therefore first fulfill it all, and having delivered you from its condemnation, in this way bring it to an end. It becometh me therefore to fulfill the whole law, by the same rule that it becometh me to do away the curse that is written against you in the law: this being the very purpose of my assuming flesh and coming hither.” (*Homily XII, Matt. III., 13.*)

**<sup>16</sup> 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;**

- This verse is beautifully explained in the Collect of the Day: “Father in heaven, at the Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River You proclaimed Him Your beloved Son and anointed Him with the Holy Spirit.”
- The one who came down from heaven has the heavens opened to Him. He is anointed by the Holy Spirit resting on Him. This is fitting, for He is the Christ (Christ means the “Anointed One”), conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary

**<sup>17</sup> and behold, a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”**

- The entire Trinity is present and at work in Holy Baptism. The Father is pleased on account of Christ who is with the waters of baptism. The Holy Spirit comes upon the baptized. Jesus is not merely setting an example in being baptized. Jesus is sanctifying the waters of baptism with His very body. He is the Word with the water (Ephesians 5:26). He is the Word made flesh (John 1:14).
- Heaven is opened to the baptized. Jesus’ baptism not only shows, but ensures that “baptism is not just plain water, but it is the water included in God’s command and combined with God’s Word.” (*Small Catechism, Baptism*)



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