

## Epiphany I: Matthew 3:13-17: The Baptism of Jesus

1. Cf. parallels at Lk. 3:21-22; Mk. 1:9-11 and Jn. 1:32-34. For the exegesis of Lk. 3:21-22 cf. Epiphany I, Series C. The baptism of Jesus is a wonderful Epiphany (appearance) account.
2. Vs. 13: Τότε, Lenski: "when the Baptist was at the full height of his activity." Ylvisaker: "The peaceful period in the life of Jesus was now at an end." παραγίνεται, the same word used of John in vs. 1. It denotes entering one's office. Γαλιλαίας, until now He had lived in Nazareth. ἐπὶ τὸν Ἰορδάνην, Fahling: "It is now quite generally agreed that it (the locale of John's baptism) was located at Arbarah, a ford of the Jordan above Beth-shean, and near the Sea of Galilee. . . . This was about twenty miles from Nazareth. . . . Jesus knew John and his mission." πρὸς τὸν Ἰωάννην, Lenski: "Denotes contact and communication with John." τοῦ βαπτισθῆναι, articular passive infinitive denoting purpose. ὑπ' αὐτοῦ denotes agent, John. Note four adverbial prepositional phrases in this vs.
3. Vs. 14: δὲ is plainly "but". Note that the 26th ed. of Nestle restores the word Ἰωάννης here. διέκωλυεν occurs only here in NT. An intensive word, impf. of attempted but interrupted action. RSV, TEV, NIV, JB, NEB, NKJV, NASB and AAT bring this out. This clearly shows that John recognized Jesus, though he had not yet received the sign which would make this sure, beyond the shadow of a doubt. Jn. 1:31.33. Cf. John's message to the people in vs. 2. Jesus did not need repentance. And John knew that the Kingdom of Heaven was near. He recognized this in Jesus. The need for Jesus' baptism was incomprehensible to John as it is to us. That's why he tried to prevent Jesus. Note emphatic Ἐγὼ. Here βαπτισθῆναι is exegetical, defining the need. John is admitting that he is a sinner and that Jesus is sinless. καὶ "and yet". Note emphatic σὺ. Obviously, "to be baptized" must be supplied after me.
4. Vs. 15: Here we have Jesus' second recorded utterance since His boyhood visit to the Temple and the first word recorded since His entrance upon His ministry. "Permit it now." Bengel: "Now, without delay, this once." Jesus is agreeing with John, but though He is sinless He is the sin-bearer, and therefore the exception. Lenski: "The 'now' implies that at another time, instead of John serving Jesus, John may well expect and ask to be served by Jesus. . . . The exceptional character of the baptism requested is thus implied in Jesus' case. The word 'now' refers to this moment when Jesus is about to assume his office." γὰρ is explanatory "you see". οὕτως "in this way". πρέπον ἐστίν, periphrastic present tense. On the verb cf. Hebr. 2:10 and 7:26, also of Jesus. ἡμῖν "for us", John and Jesus. Bengel: "It becomes ME as the principal, THEE, as the minister." Well said. "To fulfill all righteousness." The only other occurrence of πάντα δικαιοσύνη in NT is at Acts 13:10, in stark contrast to our passage. Note that both John and Jesus are active in fulfilling all righteousness. Kretzmann quotes Luther: "If that shall be performed that the poor sinners may come to righteousness and be saved, you must baptize Me. Because for the sake of sinners I have become a sinner, must therefore do what God has charged the sinners to do, in order that they may become just through Me." Bengel: "Jesus uttered the words here recorded, instead of that which others who were baptized, being sinners, confessed concerning their sins. Such a speech suited none save the Messiah Himself." Ylvisaker: "As a wretched sinner, Jesus presents Himself before John; He was the Lamb of God who bore the sins of the world. Here Jesus really begins to be Christ, Luther says. Now He accepts His threefold office for our sake." Lenski: "Jesus thinks, not of himself alone, apart from sinful men and concerned only about his own person, but as being concerned with men, as being sent to assume the great office and work of saving them." Matthew, Mark, and Luke record and describe the baptism of Jesus but only Matthew records this fifteenth vs. It is as incomprehensible to us as it was to the Baptist. Lenski writes: "Luther presents the view that in this baptism Jesus acted as our substitute.

Loaded with the world's sin, he buried it in the waters of Jordan. . . . Luther's view strains the words by attempting to give the same significance to Christ's baptism as is given to that of the sinners who flocked to the Jordan, Christ coming with the sins removed. This produces a double removal of the same sins." Lenski is plainly in error and we side with Luther. It is well-known that Lenski denied objective justification. In Christ, righteousness, justification, forgiveness, atonement was an established fact for all men. That is objective justification. The personal application comes to the individual through the means of grace. Jesus fulfilled ALL righteousness when He was baptized, not just SOME righteousness. Luther is right. Bengel rightly distinguishes the UNIVERSAL compass of righteousness in Jesus' baptism, and the PARTICULAR view of righteousness in all other cases. Of course, this is incomprehensible to us. But it is true and a matter of faith. Just one more quote: In his Large Catechism, Baptism, par. 21 (Tappert 439), Luther says: "In the same manner, and even much more, you should honor and exalt Baptism on account of the Word, since God himself has honored it by words and deeds and has confirmed it by wonders from heaven. Do you think it was a jest that the heavens opened when Christ allowed himself to be baptized, that the Holy Spirit descended visibly, and that the divine glory and majesty were manifested everywhere?" Jesus was baptized. That's passive voice. But therein He fulfilled all righteousness. That's active voice. No parallel to this can be found in all of literature. τότε, at the end of vs. 15, practically means "immediately". The obedience of John is total and immediate.

5. Vs. 16: βαπτισθεὶς "after He was baptized". εὐθὺς "immediately". He went up from, not out of, the water. All ancient artists picture Jesus standing in the water, not under the water. καὶ ἰδοὺ introduces a remarkable occurrence. On ἐνεφύθησεν: Fahling: "actually rent asunder". Lenski quotes Luther: "Heaven opens itself, which hitherto was closed, and now becomes at Christ's baptism a door and a window, so that one can see into it; and henceforth there is no difference any more between God and us; for God the Father himself is present and says, 'This is my beloved Son.'" Note that in Nestle 26th (ἀντφ) is again included. AV, TEV, and NKJV include it. If it be textual it amounts to dative of advantage. εἶδεν here refers to Jesus. According to Jn. 1:32.22 we know that the Baptist too saw what happened. Both John and Jesus saw. Matthew's concern is not with John but with Jesus. On "the Spirit of God" cf. 25th and 26th ed. Nestle. The difference is of no consequence. "As a dove": much has been written about this. We reject all attempts to find symbolism here. The closest parallel is perhaps Gen. 1:2. Kretzmann: "God wanted to convey the idea of an unlimited imparting of the Holy Spirit to His Son, according to His human nature, Ps. 45:8; Hebr. 1:9; Acts 10:38." Fahling: "John beheld that wonderful sign which had been promised to him to make him absolutely sure that this was indeed He that was to come." Ylvisaker: "Jesus is now anointed with the Holy Ghost (Acts 10:38). Jesus is not the person acting, but the One who is acted upon. He had the Spirit, for He was conceived of the Spirit; and the fulness of the Godhead dwelt in Him bodily. But nevertheless He is now made recipient of the Spirit. Chemnitz says: 'The Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus, not as though He were without the Spirit, the fulness of the Godhead dwelt in Him; but because it was prophesied that the Messiah, when He became our Mediator, should be anointed, not with oil, but with the Holy Ghost (Ps. 45:8; Is. 61:1), in order that all might rest assured that He was the Prophet whom they should hear. We must remember likewise that Jesus had the Spirit as the spirit of life, not only as God, but also as man; now He received the Spirit as the Spirit of His office and as the Spirit of power, without measure. Because Jesus was a true man, with the weakness and frailty of human nature, albeit without its sin, therefore He was, as a man, in need of the equipment and preparation by the Spirit for the duties of His great work.'"
  
6. Vs. 17: Another καὶ ἰδοὺ, another miracle. ἐκ τῶν οὐρανῶν is adverbial, the source of the voice. It is obviously the voice of the Father. Οὗτος means the God-man standing there. ὁ υἱὸς μου assures us that He is the second person of the Godhead. ἀγαπητός (note that it is articular) is a passive

adjective. This speaks of the Christ ἑνσάρκος, the incarnate Christ, not the preincarnate (ἄσαρκος) Christ. AV, RSV, TEV, NIV, NKJV and NASB translate: "In whom I am well pleased." JB and NEB read: "My favor rests on him." Lenski and Kretzmann see the idea of eternal choosing in the verb εὐδοκέω. Kretzmann says: "It is an eternal act of loving contemplation with which the Father regards the Son. It is with the consciousness of the Father's good pleasure, His full and unequivocal consent and blessing, that Christ enters upon His ministry." Bengel: "He is the Beloved, the only one, 'in whom', the preposition ἐν, indicates especially the object, and then also the cause of the Father's good pleasure. The Son is of Himself the object of the Father's good-pleasure, and in the Son, all persons and all things." That is correct. Because the Father is pleased with His Son, He is pleased with me. Jesus is my substitute. And, finally, all commentators dwell on the fact that here we have one of the clearest portrayals of the Trinity in the Scriptures. The Triune God is the saving God. Kretzmann: "The Triune God, at the baptism of Jesus, set the seal of His approval upon the work of redemption." Fahling: "There occurred a most exceptional manifestation of the Triune God." Ylvisaker: "The entire Trinity is revealed. All three persons are active agents in our redemption." In vs. 16 John and Jesus plainly saw and in vs. 17 plainly heard. The forerunner and the Messiah were witnesses for our sake.