



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

Inauguration Day

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MATTHEW 3:13-17

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The inauguration and swearing in ceremonies for our elected officials are important events in the West Virginia state capitol. In these events they are formally recognized and approved to perform the duties of their offices. We note that the higher the office, the more dignified and elaborate are the inaugural and swearing in ceremonies.

We have an important event in the life of Jesus Christ where He was officially “recognized” and approved by God the Father to begin the work He had sent Him to do. We read of this event in Matthew 3:

¹³ Then Jesus arrived from Galilee at the Jordan coming to John, to be baptized by him. ¹⁴ But John tried to prevent Him, saying, “I have need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?” ¹⁵ But Jesus answering said to him, “Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he permitted Him. ¹⁶ After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him, ¹⁷ and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.” Matthew 3:13-17

There are two key events taking place here for us to briefly consider. One, Jesus, the Son of God, is baptized by John the Baptist. Two, Jesus is approved for ministry by God the Father and the Holy Spirit. We can look at this as Jesus’ “inauguration” and “swearing in” as He officially begins the ministry He was sent to accomplish.

WHY WAS JESUS BAPTIZED?

When we contemplate this part of the account, we simply have to ask the question, why was Jesus baptized by John? Jesus’ purpose in traveling to meet John was “to be baptized by him” (vs. 13) so we know this was something important. John’s baptism was one of repentance (Mk. 1:4; Lk. 3:3; Acts 13:24; Acts 19:4). John’s message was to prepare the people for the coming of the Messiah. He challenged the people to be ready

for His coming by repenting from their sin and being baptized as an outward demonstration of that inward change. Jesus was the perfect, holy Son of God. He was sinless. So why would He undergo such a baptism? This question obviously perplexed John, who tried to prevent Jesus saying, “*I have need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?*” (vs. 14).

John clearly recognized who Christ was. He knew Jesus was the coming Messiah, “*the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie*” (John 1:27). A day later, John recognized Jesus publically, “*Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! This is He on behalf of whom I said, ‘After me comes a Man who has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.’*”² (John 1:29-30). So it is no wonder that John was hesitant to baptize Jesus. Yet this was important for Jesus to do so He pushed ahead, telling John to *permit it at this time*.

There are many ideas given as to why Jesus was baptized. Some say it was to affirm John’s ministry. Others claim it was to identify with sinful people. It may have pointed to Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection – the culmination of His ministry which would take place in three years. While there may be some truth in these, Jesus Himself gives us the real reason for His baptism by John: “*Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.*” (vs. 15).

Jesus was baptized by John in order to “*fulfill all righteousness*”. Jesus was obedient to everything that God commanded. God sent John to preach and to baptize the people as a sign of their repentance (John 1:33). Though He was not a sinner and therefore had no need of repentance or forgiveness of sins, in order to fulfill all that God had commanded people to do, Jesus was Himself baptized by John. This points us to how and why Jesus lived a life of perfect obedience to all of God’s law. His perfect and complete obedience is demonstrated here in His baptism and in the rest of His life as well. Jesus said He had come to fulfill

BIBLE STUDIES

LOBBYIST / STAFF STUDY: **TUESDAYS, 12:00 NOON**, TREASURER’S CONFERENCE ROOM (EB 54)

LEGISLATOR / ELECTED OFFICIAL STUDIES: **THURSDAYS NOON**, TREASURER’S CONFERENCE ROOM (EB 54)

Inauguration Day

the law (Matthew 5:17). Why is this so important? John MacArthur explains:

Christ lived a perfect life with perfect obedience to everything God commanded, including baptism, in order that His perfect life could be credited to your account. When God looks at the cross, He sees Christ bearing the weight of sin. When He looks at you, He sees Christ covering you with his righteousness. He did everything that God said to be done because He was perfectly righteous, perfectly obedient and it is that perfectly righteous life that has been credited to your account as if you lived it.³

It takes little sincere self-examination on our part to realize how we have failed to keep God's commands. Jesus was baptized so that He was completely obedient to all God had commanded people to do. On the cross, God treated Jesus as if He had committed all our sins. When we repent and trust Christ, God treats us as if we had lived His life of perfect obedience.

Once again with Jonathan Edwards we see the "divine excellencies" presented in the life of Christ. The sinless Son of God, the very Creator of the Jordan River, observed this humble act of baptism in order to fulfill all righteousness on our behalf. While this in itself is a tremendous event in the life of Christ, it is by no means that most amazing part of this passage.

JESUS' INAUGURATION: THE FATHER AND THE SPIRIT APPROVE HIS MINISTRY.

The Trinity is one of the most important doctrines of the Christian faith. It helps us understand the greatest of all questions, "What is God like?" This teaching can be defined this way: ***God eternally exists as three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and each person is fully God, and there is only one God.***⁴ Some have argued against this truth claiming the term "Trinity" is used nowhere in Scripture. Yet we see no clearer presentation in the entire Bible of the presence of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit all together at one time.

Empowered by the Spirit: As Jesus comes up out of the water after being baptized we see "***...The heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him***". This was not Christ without the

Holy Spirit getting the Holy Spirit. As members of the Trinity, the Son and the Spirit were in eternal communion and fellowship. This was not the man Jesus "becoming divine" by receiving the Holy Spirit. This was an anointing for service. This was an anointing for power to fulfill the task the Father had given Him to do. This was a public demonstration that God had put His power upon Christ. In His humanity, Jesus laid aside the independent use of His divine attributes and submitted Himself to the operation of the power of the Holy Spirit. We see Jesus led by the Spirit (Matt. 4:1). Jesus taught in the power of the Spirit (Luke 4:14). Jesus claimed "the Spirit of the Lord is upon me", referring to Isaiah 61 (Luke 4:17-21).

Approved by the Father: Next we see the public approval given Jesus by the Father: "***...And behold, a voice out of the heavens said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased."***" This is the ultimate testimony to the sinless, holy perfection of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. In this passage we have the testimony of John the Baptist to the sinless perfection of Christ. We have the testimony of the Spirit to the sinless perfection of Christ and of His empowerment for ministry. And finally we have the testimony of the Father Himself as the sinless perfection of His Son and of His approval to save sinners.

WHAT AN INAUGURATION DAY!

Jesus baptism showed how He would fulfill all righteousness on our behalf. The Spirit and Father publically approved and empowered Him to do the work for which God had sent Him – to save us from our sin.

- **LET US MAKE SURE WE RECOGNIZE THE WORK GOD SENT CHRIST TO DO FOR US BY REPENTING AND TRUSTING HIM.**
- **WE HONOR OUR ELECTED OFFICIALS WHO HAVE BEEN INAUGURATED AND SWORN INTO OFFICE. LET US RENEW OUR WORSHIP AND SERVICE TO THE ONE WHO PROVIDED SUCH WONDROUS WORK ON OUR BEHALF.**

¹ We find parallel accounts of this event in Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22; and John 1:29-34. We can take all four accounts together to get the best understanding of this event.

² It is important to note that John was six months older than Jesus! (Luke 1:35-36)

³ MacArthur, John. *The Significance of Jesus' Baptism*. Message on Mark 1:9-11. Available online at www.gty.org.

⁴ Grudem, Wayne. *Systematic Theology*. Zondervan. 1994. P. 226.