

Christs Baptism

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[0 : 0 0] we're going to turn back to that passage that we read earlier Matthew chapter 3 and we're going to look at the the part that begins on verse 13 to verse 17 and we'll read it again page 975 Matthew chapter 3 verse 13 then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John to be baptized by him John would have prevented him saying I need to be baptized by you and do you come to me but Jesus answered him let it be so now for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness then he consented and when Jesus was baptized immediately he went up from the water and behold the heavens were open to him and he saw the spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him and behold a voice from heaven said this is my beloved son with whom I am well pleased now as you know today is a very special event a special occasion because at the close of this service little Kenneth and Grace and Daniel will be baptized but as always before we do that we're going to turn to God's word and today we're going to look at the most famous of all baptism the way the the most well-known baptism of all time and the most important person ever to be baptized and of course that was the Lord Jesus Christ and his baptism that we read in Matthew chapter 3 and at the end of the chapter he was baptized by his cousin John the Baptist and he was baptized in the river Jordan it's unfortunate of course that this passage has become a subject of dispute as to the how of baptism and many people have battled over whether or not this passage is proof that we should immerse someone instead of sprinkling them in baptism and I'm certainly not going to go into that today it's an interesting question it's a useful question but it's unfortunate that it's kind of a distraction because I think it has distracted us from the why of Jesus baptism it has centered on the how rather than the why and that's the question I want us to look at this morning I want us to look at the significance what it meant for

Jesus to be baptized and I think that we see these things the significance not only in the baptism itself in actual fact we're not told how exactly Jesus was baptized we're not given a detailed account of the actual action that was taken in the baptism of Jesus but what we are told is the events that surrounded the baptism of Jesus and these events of course all come together to make one event in which God is teaching us and pointing our attention and focusing our attention upon Jesus as the son of God and as the son of man and as our savior I want us to look at three things then this morning in relation to Jesus baptism I want us to look at what it tells us about his initiation it is initiation baptism is always initiation it's the beginning of something but I want us to look secondly at Jesus identification his own identification and I want us to look at the twofold identification of Jesus and this is the third thing the the identification of himself as the son of man as one of us and God's identification of him as the son of God and I hope that that will all become much clearer as we go through what we have to look at this morning first of all then I want us to see that Jesus baptism was his initiation now what do I mean by that the baptism of Jesus it marked the beginning of his public ministry indeed his baptism was the beginning of his ministry before his before that event we hear nothing about him apart from what Luke tells us about when he was 12 years old and when his parents lost him and when they found him in the temple discussing with the leaders there is complete silence for 30 years the 30 years since Jesus was born and between that time and his baptism we don't know anything about him and many as an attempt was made to try and speculate and try and surmise as to what kind of boy he was and what he looked like and how he grew up and what kind of home he grew up in we can only guess and I'm sure our guesses are educated ones but we are told nothing about his early days or his boyhood but as soon as he was baptized he of course we read that he was led into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil for 40 days and 40 nights and that marked the beginning of his appearing out of nowhere before that time nobody apart from his close friends and his family knew anything about him after that time he just hit the world he appeared out of nowhere and began to minister began the ceaseless endless round of ministry and

miracles and teaching as tireless activity from day to day city to city street to street town to town teaching people gathering crowds and of course as soon as he began to do so his power became evident to everyone and people saw that this was someone they had never seen before that no matter how great there were people before him that this man was on his own he stood apart from everyone else and indeed Jesus still does stand apart from everyone else in the whole of human history there is simply no one like Jesus I think you'll you'll have to agree with me that amongst all the great leaders and and uh and statesmen and politicians and uh and and what whoever is famous whoever we learn about in history there is no one who has impacted the world and no one who has possessed the qualities of Jesus Christ of Nazareth but it's the difference between the nothing of before and the everything of after is absolutely startling and it's it all was marked by the it's baptism here that we just read about at the river Jordan baptism is about beginnings we're told for example that when the people of Israel they went through the Red Sea they were baptized into Moses this was their baptism into Moses and from then on there was a beginning of a new chapter in the life and in the history of the people of Israel gone were the old days and now there was a new day a new dawning of their life of faith and a life of being led by the Lord and life which was concluded by entering into the promised land baptism is all about beginnings and in church baptism is about beginnings as well sometimes we baptize people who make a profession of faith for themselves you sometimes see that on a communion Sunday someone who hasn't been baptized as a child and they want to demonstrate and they want to profess their love for the Lord Jesus for the first time and before they sit at the table they're baptized usually in that seat over there they're baptized baptized and this is a beginning this is where that person is identifying himself or herself publicly

with the Lord by faith and they are being brought in publicly into fellowship with the church of Jesus Christ the same is true for a baby a baby is being brought in and these children are being the mark of the covenant baptism is not necessarily a mark of the person's repentance the baptism is a mark of the covenant in which we are pledged to be the Lord's and in which God pledges himself to be ours a covenant that goes all the way back to Genesis chapter 12 where he called Abraham out of our of the colonies and he pledged himself to be his and his children's God after him and that in him all nations would be blessed and as a mark of that covenant that very special promise that God gave to his people Abraham and his family they were to place a very special mark on their children and the mark was a physical mark circumcision was a physical visible mark just as baptism is a physical visible mark but it was a mark of a spiritual promise and it was to be placed not only on adults it was to be placed on their children as well and we believe that whilst the mark itself has changed the covenant God's pledge to be ours is the same promise what difference is there between the relationship in which God says to Abraham I will be your God and the relationship in which God says to us through the Lord Jesus Christ I will be your

Savior same relationship you cannot get better than that to know God and to love him and to follow him and obey him it just doesn't get better than that you can't have anything greater than that Abraham had it Moses had it we have it God said to Abraham place the mark on yourselves and on your children and he hasn't told us not to today we believe that our children are included not that necessarily they are going to follow Jesus the sad tragedy is that many is a child today who has grown up with the mark of the covenant upon him or her has chosen not to follow Jesus and I would ask you today if you have that mark on you where do you stand have you lived according to that mark have you put God first have you sought first the kingdom of God have you trusted in Jesus as your Savior that is the only way in which that mark will make sense to you what sense does it make for you to have had all the privileges the massive privileges that anyone has growing up in a Christian home and then deciding to turn their back on I want to challenge you today is that you have you turned your back on all the privileges that God has given you so baptism is a beginning and baptism drew the attention of the world upon Jesus Christ and what he was going to do his ministry what he was just about to begin to do Jesus came into the world to seek in his own words to seek and to save those who were lost and the first part of his ministry of course was in teaching people about himself and his relationship to the father and in reminding them that it wasn't in trying to keep the law of Moses that they were going to be saved but it was by faith in him I am the way he said the truth and the life no one comes to the father but by me that is Jesus and his ministry the focus of every baptism ought to be Jesus not the child I know that it's a great occasion when we give thanks to the Lord for our children we do and we give thanks for the children that are going to be brought here at the end of the of the service and it's a chance also to pray for the parents and to

ask that God will assist them as they keep their vows these vows are the most solemn vows that we can take promising before God that we will bring up our children in the discipline the instruction of the Lord that's a massive undertaking a massive responsibility and we can't do it without

[12 : 25] God's help and of course this is an occasion when we're reminded of our responsibility in praying for those those children we pray that God will bless them and nurture them and bring them up in his instruction and bring them up one day to know him and to follow him and to love him with all their heart and to to give themselves that's our greatest prayer we want nothing more for our children than that even if they live in poverty we want our children to love the Lord and to to live for him and we pray for it our children but baptism focuses our attention on Jesus it points us to Jesus just like his baptism did it focused his attention the world's attention on him and what he came to do Jesus John the Baptist said this he said this is the reason I came baptizing that he might be revealed to Israel that's the point of baptism it's not some kind of nice thing that we do as a church it's not even some kind of superstitious thing that we do as a church I hope it isn't I hope there's nobody in here today that believes anyone can be saved by being baptized that's not the point of baptism at all it's about Jesus Jesus takes the central position and everything that we do today I hope centers around Jesus and what he came to do for this reason said John I came baptizing that he might be revealed and I hope that he will be revealed in our service today that's the first thing then his initiation but then secondly I want us to move closer into this passage and to see together how his identification is brought to our attention now you know of course how important anyone's identity is but all the more important if you're going to trust that person for something now we've been talking about Jesus ministry and how he called people and instructed invited people to trust in him for their salvation and he still does today that's what the gospel is all about it's about Jesus the son of God the savior and it's about our entrusting if we're going to listen to him today he asks us and invites us to trust ourselves and our future and the whole of our lives into his hands that's a tall order the most precious thing most important thing you have is your own soul your own life and Jesus in the gospel comes to us and says I am the way the truth and how do we know he's the way how can we be sure how can we trust that this truly is what we've been asked to do is to give the whole of our lives and our future to the Lord we're not going to do that without some kind of background knowledge as to who we're trusting you wouldn't do that if you were going to give a fiver to somebody let alone give your whole life to someone and somebody comes to the door and asks to read the meter probably you probably don't do that here because you know the person who's going to read the meter it does not necessary but if you're on the mainland for example if you lived in the city you would never you'd be mad to let anyone inside your door who just says he's here to read the meter he's probably going to rob you if you don't see his identity you know what how important identity is and God knows how important identity is and he doesn't want us to believe in Jesus without checking him out first and you do that through the gospels and through the ministry of Jesus you check him out he wants us to check him out he wants us to examine him and to see the problem is that more often than not people don't even want to examine Jesus they want to make up their mind about him before they even look at the facts and the evidence they don't want to know about the resurrection don't want to know about calvary they don't want to know about his teaching because they know that if they discover that he really is who he

says he was then the logical conclusion is you have to put your trust in him that's what you don't want to do because it means turning away from a life that God doesn't want you to live he wants you to have a new life a new beginning a new new purpose and a new objective altogether and we don't want that because we're sinners and we like what's darkness Jesus said he said this is the condemnation that light has come into the world that's him the light of the world light has come into the world and what happened men love darkness rather than light that's the big issue that it's not the issue whether Jesus truly is the son of God or not that can easily be proved in the gospels and I hope that as we read further into this chapter that will be proved but the issue is whether you're going to follow him or not that's it isn't it the issue is whether we are prepared to stake everything to turn away from the old life and to yield ourselves and to surrender ourselves to him the first form of his identification was his own identification with our nature in other words what I'm saying is he wants us to know that he is one of us he's one of us truly one of us and Jesus the most amazing fact of the gospel tell you what I always find amazing in the gospel when I think of this it sends a shiver down my spine the truth that God himself the eternal God without beginning or without end who spoke the universe into being we can't even begin to imagine his his vastness

coming all the way down into this world and being born in Bethlehem as a helpless tiny baby does it not blow your mind does it not really really excite you today but after he was born as we said he grew up nobody knows much about him and then and then he grew up to be a man and this is where we begin to find out about him and the mind boggles when we read about his life but one of the things that that is so clear about Jesus is that he was one of truly one of us in every way said the the the bible sharing our weakness our tiredness our need for food and water our need for sleep able to feel pain just the same as we are some people have the mistaken notion that because Jesus was the son of God he had some kind of immunity to pain no he didn't he was one of us in every way and yet there was this one great difference that he was without sin there was no sin in him not original sin not actual sin there was no sin in Jesus whatsoever why then here's the question if Jesus was without sin why did he have to be baptized that's a good question isn't it it's a question that surely jumps up at us from this page if we're thinking about what we're reading why was it that Jesus had to be baptized

John was startled when Jesus suggested that he be baptized by him no he said I need to be baptized by you and that's because John was thinking logically about what his baptism was remember what John was John was a preacher and his mission in life God had called him and and prepared him for this purpose and this purpose alone to prepare the way for the coming of Jesus Christ and what he did was he focused on people's need to be saved he focused on their sinfulness the wrongdoing that there was in their own lives whether you were a Jew whether you were a Roman whether you were young or old John's gospel well or rather John's message focused on how much they needed to be forgiven and cleansed now there was something about John I don't know what it was that seemed to just compel people to come out and listen to him crowds of people would come out in their hundreds to the wilderness and they would sit and they would listen to John and it wasn't as if John was saying nice things about them he wasn't he was telling them the truth about themselves all about their corruption and their deceit and their hatefulness and their lust and all the twisted stuff that was going on in their lives and that they were turning a blind eye to and they had gone like that for years they had forgotten all about their accountability to God and God's nearness to them and the fact that one day they would all have to stand before God and give account to him they had forgotten all that just the same way as we do but yet as they listened to John

God's message came home to them with an incredible power so much so that they asked him well what can we do what do we have to do to be saved now their baptism was an initiation into a new phase in which they were waiting for the Messiah but in doing so they were turning away from their sin so every person in that queue and we can only imagine all of these people this day all of these people listening to John and being really powerfully convicted by his preaching and then queuing up to be baptized by him they all wanted to turn away from their sins they were all sinners guilty of who knows what deceit lies pride corruption all you name it they were guilty of it and there was just queue of all these people and if you were in that queue you were saying

[23 : 04] I am a sinner and there is Jesus amongst them in that queue and you're saying why is he there of course they weren't saying that because they didn't know who he was it was only when he actually got to the front of the queue and John saw him and he said of all people what are you doing here nobody else knew who he was but we know who he was and we're the ones who are asking the question why was he there what possible need did Jesus have of cleansing well of course he didn't and yet he was amongst those who needed to be saved and that's it isn't it Jesus came into the world to be amongst us and his baptism is a picture of his life amongst sinners what was it that people said to him he's the friend of publicans and sinners the scum of the earth the people that no one else would talk to the prostitutes and the tax collectors of the world they used to moan and groan about him because they thought religion was only for good people but Jesus came into the world to show that religion was for bad people salvation is for bad people heaven today is not full of good people it's full of bad people people who have recognized their badness and their guilt before God and have turned to Jesus and it was only because Jesus came to be amongst those bad people he was not himself a sinner and yet he came to identify this is what we mean by his identification with sinful people like ourselves he came to be one of them but he came to do more than that he came to bear and to carry our guilt on the cross that was what the cross is all about

Jesus becoming our sin bearer instead of us suffering the punishment that we deserve for our sin it was him that went instead of us to the cross and suffered the anger and the wrath of God in its

entirety instead of us that's why Jesus was amongst those and as we look at him in amongst all of those people we see him as one of us able to save because he is our representative as a human being as a real man but he's also the son of God and that's why there's another identification of Jesus in this passage this time it is it is made by Jesus by the father himself but before we before we come on to that great announcement at the end of the chapter behold a voice from heaven said this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased something else happened look at what happens in verse 16 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 don't just pass quickly by over that phrase the heavens were opened that is an immensely meaningful phrase don't just pass it by it wasn't to allow the Holy Spirit out there the Holy Spirit doesn't need heaven to be opened to go anywhere

God doesn't need a door to be opened or shut but the heavens were opened in front of everyone this is God speaking to the disciples and to Jesus and to John the Baptist and to us because it's in our Bible and because God wants us to know today that Jesus in beginning his work to save us from our sins is heaven opened you might ask well is heaven not always open no it isn't heaven is closed the great tragedy of the human world is that it's not what it was designed and built to be we were we were designed in God's image to glorify and to enjoy God and to enjoy his favor and his fellowship and his friendship but because of that because of our rebellion against him heaven has become closed the Bible tells us our sin has separated us from God the greatest problem we have today is separation from God that's what needs to happen before anything else can happen you can be as religious and as diligent and as respectable as you want but unless heaven is open to you then you're nowhere but this is the good news heaven is open so that to them to Jesus and to the world so that

Jesus can be revealed this is the moment that all history has been waiting for this is the moment that the angels were waiting for this is the moment that the Old Testament the prophets Moses looked forward to Abraham looked forward to Isaac looked forward to this is the moment at which heaven which has been closed up to that point is now opening so that salvation can come to where we are and so that God can redeem all those who trust in him so that God can reach out his hand through the skies down to where we are and to pick us up from our you remember what we sang there about being in the slimy pit and the miry clay that's where we are today he took me from a fearful pit and from the miry clay and on a rock he set my feet establishing my way why are these words so precious to us because they tell our story don't they if you've been saved today if you've been converted that's your story it's my story he took me from a fearful pit and from the miry clay if heaven is open then God and sinners this morning are reconciled if heaven is open there is therefore no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus if heaven is open then there is peace with God through our Lord

Jesus Christ and it was Jesus who opened heaven there was none other good enough to pay the price of sin he only could unlock the door of heaven and let us in isn't that true do you know that to be true in your own heart in your own life today is that the greatest message you've ever heard heaven is opened in order for first of all that Jesus can come to earth but it's opened also in order that we can go to heaven one day that's the great promise that that is given to those who follow the Lord Jesus Christ now let me just let me just close I can see that the time is passing the spirit the other event that took place not only was heaven open but the spirit descended in the form of a dove and many's many's an attempt has been made to try and explain why that particular form was adopted by the

[30 : 57] Holy Spirit in order to make himself visible the Holy Spirit is God he therefore is invisible normally but on this occasion he made himself visible in order for him to perform this particular function of coming to rest on Jesus and therefore therefore confirming the importance of his baptism why is it what is the Holy Spirit's place now I want you to notice that here we have God in three persons before us we have Jesus standing being baptized we have the Holy Spirit descending upon him like a dove in a few moments time we're going to read a voice from heaven the voice of the Father saying this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased here we have God in the Trinity presented before us the Father speaks the Holy Spirit descends and Jesus is being baptized but what was it that what was the relation of the Holy Spirit to Jesus the Holy Spirit of course is no less

God than the Father or the Son all these the three persons are one God equal in power and in glory and yet the Holy Spirit takes on a particular role and a function in the ministry of Jesus Christ that's because Jesus needed to be supported and guided in his human nature it is so that the Holy Spirit would keep him and minister to him he needed the guidance of the Holy Spirit every step of the way that's because he humbled himself and he came into our world as one of us just as we need the Holy Spirit the Lord Jesus himself was reliant and dependent upon him here he is descending why was it a dove why did he choose the form of a dove well there are three particular explanations that people give and I'm not saying but that all three have something in themselves first of all the dove has always been seen as a symbol of innocence or purity that's the first thing in Matthew 10 chapter 16

Jesus says I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves and here is the Holy Spirit he's coming in the form of a dove and people would see the perfect purity of God not only in the Holy Spirit but in Jesus himself now the second thing is it's also a symbol of intense love love in the song of Solomon the writer says open to me this is the man speaking open to me he says my sister my love my dove it's an expression of his intense love for his bride my perfect one and I would suggest to you that the gospel is the love of God a love that you will never find anywhere else in all the world a love because God comes to us as sinners and rescues us from our sin and our guilt but it was also thirdly a symbol of peace you remember in Genesis chapter 8 in the time of Noah when the flood had stopped rising and Noah opened the window what did he do he sent out a dove the first time the dove found no resting place and came back seven days later he sent the dove out again and this time it found a tree an olive tree and broke off a branch and came back with the branch the third time seven days later sent it out again and it didn't come back which proved that there was dry land the waters have subsided but that olive branch has always been the symbol of peace and in the

Bible the gospel is our peace peace with God peace the peace that we desperately need and the peace that only Jesus can bring so here we have the pure Lord Jesus Christ here we have the love of the Lord Jesus Christ and here we have the peace that Jesus came to bring us he is our peace says Paul therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Now, does this mean that Jesus somehow didn't have the Holy Spirit beforehand? This was the first time. Not at all. We read that the Holy Spirit was involved in his birth, his conception. And we've no reason to believe but that the Holy Spirit was with him all every step of the way. But here is the Spirit coming in this particular function and giving him the support, anointing him with the power that he particularly needs to carry out his ministry that is to come. But then lastly, and I know I've gone on too long, but lastly, there is this wonderful statement from heaven. There's no question of who's making the statement.

You don't need to ask who it is. It is God the Father himself who, as it were, shines the spotlight on his son. And I reckon that as that voice was sounded, everything went so completely quiet that you could hear a pin drop. This is my son, my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased.

[36 : 44] And it's like God himself is announcing to us, he's bringing out his son from nowhere. And he is standing him in that public place and he is saying, I have something to tell you.

Let me introduce the greatest man who has ever walked the face of the earth. He's not just the best man that has ever lived. He's not someone I have chosen as the best of all men and I've made him perfect in his baptism. You know, there were some people who believed that.

No, no. God is saying to us, this is my eternal, beloved son. God himself, who has entered into your world in order to save you from your sin.

And I am absolutely thrilled with him and what he came to do.

Now, the question today is this. If God is thrilled with Jesus and he's thrilled with everything he said and everything he did, are we thrilled with him?

[38 : 06] I just leave that with you. Are you thrilled with him today? Do you notice the joy that's in this statement? This is my beloved son.

And it reflects a perfect, unbroken, eternal joy that you only find in heaven. And you know what? It's a joy that God wants us to have. He wants us to enter into the joy of the Lord.

There is no place in the universe with more joy than heaven. Do you know something of that joy?

You can only know it through Jesus Christ and through what he came to do.

And I hope that what we do today will point our attention to him and to him as Savior. And we'll draw each one of you to put your trust in him.

Let's pray. Let's pray. Our Father, bless, we pray, your word to us.

[39 : 06] Bless, Lord, all that we have done and said in your name already and all that we are about to do and say in your name. Forgive our sin, we pray in Jesus' name.

Amen. And Dr. Joe, bless, we pray in God. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen.. Amen. Amen. Amen.