

Baptism: Identifying with Christ

Matthew 3:1-17

Matthew 3:1-17 (NASB)

¹ “Now in those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying,

² “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

³ For this is the one referred to by Isaiah the prophet when he said, “THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, ‘MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT!’”

⁴ Now John himself had a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey.

⁵ Then Jerusalem was going out to him, and all Judea and all the district around the Jordan;

⁶ and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, as they confessed their sins.

⁷ But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?”

⁸ “Therefore bear fruit in keeping with repentance;

⁹ and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham for our father’; for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham.

¹⁰ “The axe is already laid at the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”

¹¹ “As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

¹² His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

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.”

Christ began his public ministry with baptism. At the time, John the Baptist was calling people to confess their sins and demonstrate repentance through immersion in the river. So why did Jesus, the sinless One, ask to be baptized?

At first, John actually refused, knowing that Jesus Christ was the “**Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world**” ([John 1:29](#)). But Jesus wasn’t just demonstrating repentance; He was sacrificially identifying with sinful humankind.

As Christians, we’re called to follow His example in all things, becoming more like Him as we grow in our faith. That’s why baptism is so important in following Jesus. As He was willing to identify Himself with us, we publicly identify with Him when we are baptized, which is a symbolic way of declaring, “I have trusted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior and believe that the debt of my sin is fully paid through His sacrificial death on the cross. I believe that as He rose from the dead, I will also be resurrected through Him. I look forward to walking in accordance with the Lord’s will while I’m on the earth and living with Him throughout eternity. Since He loved me enough to identify Himself with me in my sin, I will show my love for Him by following His example right now, and for the rest of my days.”

Baptism demonstrates our connection not only with the Lord but also with our spiritual brothers and sisters—past, present, and future. Joining everyone who’s walked before us in faith, we are saying that we’re members of one body, redeemed and brought to life by the same Lord.