

Baptized into Christ

Romans 6:1—11

Introduction

For two years, I had been introducing the Lectionary and Christian calendar into the Baptist church where I was pastor. After the third Baptism of Our Lord, a deacon greeted me at the door and said, “I don’t get why we celebrate the Baptism of Jesus. What’s the big deal about it?” I thought I had taught that, so I asked him if his baptism was a big deal. When he said it was, I asked who was more important, him or Jesus. But having had a few years to think about it, maybe this is a valid question, at least, if you haven’t been raised in a liturgical church or don’t have it in the right context. Since some may be wondering that, but afraid to say anything out loud, let’s answer that question. “What’s so important about the baptism of Jesus?”

The Context of Repetition

When an event is repeated in the Gospels, that shows its importance. The more often it’s repeated, the more important it is. All four Gospel writers cover the death and resurrection of Jesus. He rose on the first day of the week. Which is why we worship on Sunday. And Easter is the highest Holy Day of the church. Yet, when it comes to His birth, Luke is the only one who gives an account of the Nativity. Matthew focuses on Epiphany. John just says: *The Word became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14)*. And Mark ignores it altogether, beginning his narrative at Jesus’ Baptism. Christmas was added to the Christian calendar much later. Easter, Matthew, Mark, and Luke all record His Baptism, while John references it (read *John 1:32*). The mere repetition of the event shows its importance.

The Context of Purpose

Another context to consider is the context of purpose. Why did Jesus submit to John’s baptism? Jesus is God and is sinless. John’s baptism was *a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sin (Luke 3:3)*. In *Matthew*, when Jesus comes to be baptized, John says, “*I need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?*” [to which Jesus replies,] “*Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness*” (*Matthew 3:14—15*). What “righteousness” were they fulfilling? Jesus was to be the Sacrifice for our sins. As such, He had to be one of us. In His baptism, Jesus was identifying with us fallen humans who needed John’s baptism of repentance. This made Him a valid sacrifice for us. He was our true representative. Yet He was sinless. To be our Sacrifice for sin showed the importance of His baptism.

The Context of Identification

In all three accounts, a Voice from heaven identifies Jesus as the Son of God. That’s why this is the first Sunday after the Epiphany. Jesus is shown to be the Son of God. But not only is Jesus shown to be the Son of God, the entire Trinity is introduced. The Voice from heaven is the voice of the Father. The Son is being baptized. And the Holy Spirit is present in the form of a dove. This shows that they are three distinct persons in one Godhead. That Jesus is identified as the Son of God, the Second Person of the Trinity further shows the importance of the baptism of Jesus.

The Context of Effect

Possibly the greatest thing about His baptism is what it does for us. Because of it, Paul can say *we are baptized into Christ* (**Romans 6:3**). It replaces John's baptism of repentance with a baptism of salvation. Here's what that means.

Benefits of Baptism

- Being baptized into Christ, we have victory over sin, death, and the devil (read **Romans 6:3—6**).
- Being baptized into Christ, we have forgiveness of sin and the Holy Spirit (read **Acts 2:38**).
- Being baptized into Christ, we have God's grace and renewal of life (read **Titus 3:4—7**).
- Being baptized into Christ, we are united with Christ in His death and resurrection (read **Romans 6:5**).

We receive all these things as we are baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, because Jesus was baptized for us, died and rose for us. That's why we cross ourselves in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, to remember our baptism and all the benefits we receive from it. And that's why the Baptism of Our Lord is such a big deal, and why we celebrate it today. We are **BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST**.

*And the peace of God,
Which surpasses all understanding,
Will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*
