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The Baptism of Our Lord
Sermons
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MATTHEW 3:13-17 - "BACK TO THE FUTURE"

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Today in the Church Year we celebrate the Baptism of Christ Jesus Our Lord; we remember when the Savior conceived by the Holy Spirit in the Virgin's womb literally stood in the place of sinners; we look back to when John the Baptist, who had been baptizing sinners for conversion from unbelief to faith, actually baptized Jesus, who was born to save His people from their sins. Today we recall the witness of St. Matthew which tells us that the Holy Spirit descend upon Jesus in the form of a dove and God the Father's voice sounded from heaven, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased." Sounds like a strange day, an unlikely happening, a mysterious event.

In order to understand this event in the life of Christ our Lord and its significance for us today we need to jump into our imaginary Deloreans and go "back to the future." So are you ready? It is time to go back to the year 29 AD, when Jesus was baptized!

Quick hide your Deloreans behind those rocks and bushes; horseback, chariot, and foot are the ways of land transportation in this time. Put these robes and sandals on too or you will stick out like a wolf amongst sheep. This way, follow me, the Jordan River is not far off, we should be in time to see John the Baptist preaching and baptizing a whole lot of people. Just remember we are here to watch and listen to the days events don't interfere. You should all have your copy of Matthew' Gospel; this is your guide, events will unfold just like Matthew has recorded, so watch and listen.

13 Then Jesus appeared from Galilee upon the Jordan toward John in order to be baptized by him. 14 But John tried to prevent Him saying, "I, myself am having a need to be baptized by You, and You come to me?" 15 But Jesus replied and said to him, "Permit it now, for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he permitted Him. 16 And immediately after Jesus was baptized He went up from the water; and behold the heavens opened to Him and He saw the Spirit of God descend as a dove and come upon Him; 17 and behold a voice from the heavens said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

Great Scott, what a sight that was! It gives me goose bumps just thinking about it. Did you see the look of shock in John's face when Jesus came to be baptized by Him? He looked like Doc. Brown when Marty told him how many watts of electricity were needed to power the Delorean. It never even occurred to John that he would baptize Jesus. Jesus had no sin; He had no need to be converted from unbelief to faith in the God of Israel. If anything, John should receive baptism from Jesus, for John knew he was a sinner. John had looked forward to Jesus' coming in fulfillment of God's promises; he was expecting Jesus to baptize, to pour out the fire of God's wrath on those who refused to repent and believe the Good News and to pour out the Holy Spirit

and give eternal life to those who had been converted to faith. You can hear John's shock and the truth of this as he tried to prevent Jesus from being baptized, "I, myself am having a need to be baptized by You, and You come to me?"

I never cease to be amazed by our Lord's words! His words are truth spoken in love; they say and accomplish what is needed. John was shocked, and rightly so that Jesus would come to him to be baptized, but Jesus' words at once instructed, commanded, and encouraged John. Jesus looked John straight in the face and said, "Permit it now, for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." All it took to overcome John's shock and doubts was Jesus' Word. John trusted in Jesus' Word and did what Jesus said. John baptized Jesus.

You know another thing that has always stuck with me is that Jesus said "it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness," meaning both John and Himself. I am indebted to Doc. Gibbs for pointing out to me just exactly what is meant by these words; no doubt his many trips back to Matthew's Gospel have proven most insightful. "All righteousness" refers to "God's righteousness" which means God's saving deeds performed on behalf of His people. A great example can be found in **Isaiah 51:5-8** where righteousness is parallel to salvation:

*5 My righteousness draws near,
My salvation has gone out,
and My arms will judge the peoples;
the coastlands hope for Me,
and for My arm they wait.
6 Lift up your eyes to the heavens,
and look at the earth beneath;
for the heavens vanish like smoke,
the earth will wear out like a garment,
and they who dwell in it will die in like manner;
but My salvation will be forever,
and My righteousness will never be dismayed.
7 "Listen to Me, you who know righteousness,
the people in whose heart is My law;
fear not the reproach of man,
nor be dismayed at their revilings.
8 For the moth will eat them up like a garment,
and the worm will eat them like wool;
but My righteousness will be forever,
and My salvation to all generations."*

In other words we saw and heard John participating with Jesus, as Jesus began to enact God's saving deeds for people. Jesus quite literally was standing with sinners and taking the place of sinners, like you and me, by receiving baptism from John, which only sinners received. The descent of the Holy Spirit as a dove upon Jesus and the Father's voice heard from heaven, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," are indications

and signs that Jesus and also John were doing exactly what God willed for the salvation of His people. God sent His Son Jesus to stand in for sinners, to be a substitute for us!

Well, let's get back to our Deloreans we need to take another trip just a little forward into the future, by three years or so to the time of Jesus' death and resurrection. Make sure to be quiet and listen as you watch the most important events in the history of the world. For we are about to see and hear where Jesus fulfilled His baptism by offering up His life as the ransom payment in the place of the many. On the cross Jesus was stood up in place of sinners, for you and for me.

(Very quietly) Great Scott! My eyes can barley take it in, to our Lord naked and bloodied upon the cross. What pain, humiliation, and rejection He endured for me and for you. The shame of the cross is precisely the punishment we deserved for our sin and rebellion against God. Yet we are not the ones on the cross, but Jesus is. Jesus is standing in our place bearing our guilt and shame. Jesus didn't belong there; He is God's Son and King of Israel and yet there He is for me and for you.

Listen and see what Matthew tells us: **33** And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull), **34** they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall, but when he tasted it, he would not drink it. **35** And when they had crucified him, they divided his garments among them by casting lots. **36** Then they sat down and kept watch over him there. **37** And over his head they put the charge against him, which read, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews." **38** Then two robbers were crucified with him, one on the right and one on the left. **39** And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads **40** and saying, "You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross." **41** So also the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocked him, saying, **42** "He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. **43** He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he desires him. For he said, 'I am the Son of God.'" **44** And the robbers who were crucified with him also reviled him in the same way; **Matthew 27:33-44**.

Jesus accomplished what God the Father sent Him to do. As the faithful Son of God, He stood in the place of sinners and died as the ransom for the many; Jesus died for you. Yes it was your sin and mine that put Jesus on the cross. Yes it was the sin of Israel and all people that led to His death. Each one of us is guilty before God, each of us owes God a debt we can not pay. The Good News is Jesus has paid that debt for you and for all! Come, back to the Delorean, we have another stop to make on our way back to the future. We have more astonishing events to hear and see, from Friday to Sunday we must go.

1 Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. **2** And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. **3** His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. **4** And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. **5** But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I

know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. **6** He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. **7** Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. See, I have told you.” **8** So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. **9** And behold, Jesus met them and said, “Greetings!” And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. **10** Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me;” **Matthew 28:1-10.**

Great Scott! Jesus is risen from the dead! How astonishing! How amazing! The Lord who died as the ransom for the many, who stood in your place, is alive! Jesus has defeated sin and death for you, all righteousness has been fulfilled! Great Scott! The enemies and invaders of God’s good creation, sin, death, and the devil, have been defeated! Great Scott, indeed! Come, each of us has one last trip in our Deloreans before we get back to the future. The last stop is the day of your Baptism.

Right there in your Baptism in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Jesus has met you, looked you in the face as He did John, and spoken His Word to you. Your shock, your guilt, your shame, your sin, your doubts are all known to Jesus as were all of John’s and all the people of Israel. Jesus has met you in the water and Word of Baptism to cleanse you from sin, guilt, and shame, to unite you to His death and resurrection so that you might rise from the dead and inherit the new heavens and the new earth. Jesus has fulfilled all righteousness for you; He stood in your place at His Baptism and in His Cross. Now in your baptism, Jesus has brought you back into His life, death, and resurrection that you might have an eternal future!

I pray all these trips in your Deloreans have not left you dazed and confused, but that they have brought clarity to your mind. I pray that you will remember your Baptism in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit each and every day, for in this way God brings you “back to the future”; back to where Jesus stood in your place in the Jordan; back to where Jesus died and rose for you; and back to present and into the future newness of life, Amen.