



The Coronation of the King

Series: Matthew: The King and His Kingdom

Matthew 3:13-17

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This morning we are going to look at the first of two intimately connected events that begin the earthly ministry of Christ – the first being His baptism by John in the Jordan River and the second being His temptation by Satan in the wilderness of Judea. The baptism of Christ, in the terms of His kingship, amounted to His coronation, His commissioning, His presentation as the Messiah of God by John the Baptist and by Father God Himself. His testing and temptation in the wilderness would be the proving of His Kingship

The coronation of kings of the earth is often attended by a lot of pomp and circumstance. Frilly dress, lots of music, bowing and genuflecting, formalities and fine food are standard fare at the coronation of earthly kings or the inauguration parties of presidents. What a contrast, then, is this coronation of the Savior-King of Israel, the King of the Church at the Jordan River. In light of the grandeur of the coronation of earthly kings, this coronation of Christ seems quite subdued.

On the heels of the ministry of John the Baptist, his fiery preaching and bold call to repentance, as we pick up the text in verse 13 of chapter 3, we see that the time for the revealing of the Messiah had finally come. John's fervent preaching led to Jews in the hundreds, maybe thousands, following John into the waters of the Jordan confessing and repenting of personal and national sins, looking for the coming of the Messiah, and preparing themselves for the Kingdom of God. After an eternity of glory in heaven and thirty years of obscurity on earth, the Messiah, the Savior-King, is manifested publically at the Jordan River. First we need to see

1) The Baptism that Fulfills All Righteousness (v. 13-15) We need to see that Christ's coming to John is very specific in purpose. He is coming to be baptized by him, plain and simple. This is not a social call that ends up in baptism. Baptism is the reason that Jesus has come. John is

taken aback. It is unthinkable to John that he should baptize Jesus. If we think about it, we can understand the hesitancy of John.

John's baptism was a baptism for confession of sin and repentance and here was the One who is without sin, the One who knows no sin, coming to John to partake in John's baptism of repentance. It was a baptism of preparation for the coming of God's great King. John had far greater need to be baptized by Jesus. He doesn't want to baptize Christ. You remember that John had refused baptism to the Pharisees and the Sadducees who had come out to the Jordan River because they were not worthy of it. On the other end of the spectrum, John wants to refuse baptism to Jesus specifically because He is too worthy for it. John's reluctance is a testimony to the sinlessness of Jesus. When John says -- "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" -- in essence what he is saying is this: "I am only a prophet of God. I am a sinner just like everyone else. I need to be baptized by You. You are the Son of God. You are God's Messiah. You are the one, true King. You are not a sinner, how could I baptize you?" Even in his reluctance, John is fulfilling the role of a herald and the office of a prophet by declaring the perfection of the Messiah. Though the full revelation to all of Israel has not yet taken place, John knows...

Jesus says to John: "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Well, then, here are the obvious questions: Since John's baptism was a baptism unto repentance and Jesus had no sin from which to repent, why did Jesus seek baptism from John in the first place? Why would God's sinless King want to Himself be baptized? And why did he seek baptism to "fulfill all righteousness"? How could baptism add anything to the already perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ? How do we understand this text?

First, we need to see that in Jesus incarnation, Jesus took on human flesh, identifying Himself with us in our humanity, thereby taking on Himself the obligation to fulfill all righteousness so that He would be a perfect substitute and Savior for us, so that He could give to us a perfect righteousness, and so that we could have imputed to us a perfect obedience to the will of God, accomplished by Christ on our behalf, by which we could stand accepted before God the Father. He obligated Himself to do all and to obey all that God commanded of us in our place, for our benefit.

Jesus' desire to fulfill all righteousness is another way of saying "to fully accomplish all that is in keeping with obedience to God." Part of Christ's obedience to God was a perfect obedience to all of God's commands and decrees of God's Law, as well as obedience to God's commands uniquely given to Jesus. Since there was no commandment in the law requiring baptism, it is clear that Christ understood Himself to be specifically under the command of the Father to partake in John's baptism, even though He had no sin for which to repent. Because Jesus was under the command of God to be baptized by John – that is key to see here, it had to be John; that's why Jesus said -- it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness -- Christ was baptized in obedience to the Father, in order to fulfill the Father's will for Him and in so doing to fulfill -- to remain fully obedient to God -- and therefore to fill up the righteousness that He gives to us in salvation, the perfect righteousness of Christ imputed to us by faith, by which we stand before God, accepted in the Beloved. (2 Corinthians 5:21, ESV) So we can see why Jesus was baptized, but what are the reasons for Him being baptized? There are several reasons that we can see that Jesus must have been baptized.

First, in submitting to John's baptism, Jesus is identifying with those sinners who had come for baptism out of obedience to the preaching and the call of John. So, Christ was here identifying Himself with repentant sinners, whose sins He will ultimately bear on the cross. He who knew no sin took His place among those who had no righteousness. He who was sinless submitted to a baptism that was specifically for sinners. This was to show that He is the Messiah who "poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors." (Isaiah 53:12, ESV) In this act, Christ is presenting Himself as the King of repentant sinners, as the King over His Kingdom. He is not ashamed to be our King. (Hebrews 2:11-12)

Second, in submitting to baptism, Jesus was acknowledging God the Father's claim on Him for total consecration of life and holiness of character. In an even greater way, this act of baptism is reminiscent of the washing and cleansing of Aaron and his sons recorded in Exodus 29 and Leviticus 8. There, God commanded Moses to wash them with water in order to set them apart for God as His priests and as an expression of their willingness to serve God. How fitting it is that God's High Priest, the one who will offer the final sacrifice for sinners by the sacrificing of Himself, would be consecrated, set apart, by God for His work as Mediator through this washing by John – the forerunner of the Messiah and the proclaimer of the Kingdom of God. It is the sign that Christ Himself is willing to take on His role as our Mediator. He is willing to be our Redeemer. (1 Timothy 2:5, ESV)

Third, the baptism of Christ foreshadowed His full and intense baptism upon the cross which would come in the future in which He would satisfy fully God's demand for a sacrifice. Jesus made only two other references to His personal baptism. In Luke 12, just prior to His final trip to Jerusalem, Jesus told his disciples: (Luke 12:50, ESV) Later he would say to James and John as they were maneuvering for positions of authority in the Kingdom of heaven: (Mark 10:38, ESV) Here, in these passages, Jesus speaks of His coming suffering, of His coming crucifixion and death as a baptism. Christ had undertaken to "make his soul an offering for sin," and, by death, to propitiate (suffer the wrath for) and expiate (carry them away) the sins of our fallen race so that sinner may be saved. Jesus' supreme identification with sinners was His taking their sin upon Himself and dealing with it on Calvary. To deal with sin would require suffering that is incomprehensible and a resurrection that seemed impossible – and that is prefigured for us in this baptism of John. And it serves as a picture of our own baptism. In Christian baptism, we are identified with Jesus in his death and resurrection, a picture that by faith His death has become our death and His resurrection has become our resurrection.

Fourth, and not inconsequentially, by submitting to John's baptism Jesus was affirming and approving his ministry and bringing it to its fullness of purpose. John had been sent into the world as his forerunner, to announce the advent of the Christ, and to call men's attention to him as the one true Savior King. Christ was baptized by John and in that act declaring that his message was true, that his ministry was faithful, and bringing John's ministry to its climax. John the Baptist had made it clear to everyone that his ministry of baptism wasn't an end in and of itself. It was a ministry of preparing people for the ministry of Jesus by calling them to a visible sign that demonstrated that they turned from their sins, and looked to the Savior from sin. The Apostle John records for us these words of John the Baptist (John 1:30–31, ESV) In Jesus' submitting to the baptism of John, the ministry of John is completed – the Messiah is made known.

This baptism was the first act of Christ's ministry, the first step in the fulfillment of the redemptive plan of the Father that He came to fulfill. Evident in all of this – in identifying with sinners, in acknowledging His submission to the Father's plan, in the foreshadowing of the baptism of the cross and in affirming John's ministry and submitting to baptism is great humility, humility born of greatness, humility born of confidence in his place as the Son of the Living God. There is no grasping for glory but simple obedience to the will of the Father. Notice what takes place as a result. See with me

2) The Display and Declaration that Destroys Doubt and Reveals Delight (v.16-17)

When Christ is baptized, a miracle ensues. The heavens are opened up, the Spirit of God descends, and the voice of the Father is heard from heaven declaring His good pleasure with His Son. It is a momentous occasion. It was for John. Again, the Apostle John records for us the words of John the Baptist, saying:(John 1:32–34, ESV)

The heavens are opened to Christ. It is hard to conceive of that that may have looked like and if everyone who witnessed the baptism of Christ saw it and understood it, but we know. This account of Matthew, this picture of heaven opening to Christ reminds us in a brilliant fashion that though the way to God had been closed by our sin, it has been opened for now and for all eternity in Christ. Man's sin had closed the way to God, had cast mankind out of the manifest presence of God in the Garden, and had erected a barrier between God and man, even repentant and believing man, but now the long-awaited Messiah would open the way for sinners to enter into God's presence with a new righteousness not of their own doing. It was this of which the writer of Hebrews wrote saying (Hebrews 10:19–22, ESV) It the very same truth of which Jesus spoke when He said(John 14:6, ESV) The heavens opened signifying that the way to God the Father was opening through Christ, the Son.

Even more we see that at the baptism of Christ, the entire Trinity is present. It is a public announcement that this redeeming work of Christ was the result of the eternal will of all of the persons of the Godhead. The work of redemption must be seen in this light. The Father conceived the Eternal plan of the redemption of sinners, the Son took on human flesh to achieve the redemption of sinners by his blood and the Holy Spirit applies the redemption planned by the Father and achieved by the Son to lost sinners, regenerating them and bringing them to faith in Christ and transforming them from lost sinners to found saints. The plan of redemption is the pleasure of the Triune God.

Matthew writes: he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him. What does that mean? The Spirit of God descends upon Christ and the idea here is not that an actual bird appeared or that the Holy Spirit looks like a dove, but that the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus with some visible manifestation which led observers to recognize that Spirit of God was anointing Christ for ministry. The obvious question is: Why would the Holy Spirit need to

descend upon Jesus? Here, in the descent of the Spirit upon Christ, is the affirmation of God the Father that Jesus is indeed the Son of God, and has indeed been equipped by the Spirit of God to bring about the Kingdom. He is empowered by the Spirit for His ministry as the Messiah who would preach repentance and the good news of the Kingdom of God.

Don't misunderstand this. When he took on human flesh and became a man, Jesus did not lose His divinity. He remained God in every way. In His deity, Jesus needed nothing. But in his humanity, here Jesus is being anointed for service and being empowered for the ministry that He would accomplish. The Holy Spirit anointed Jesus for His mighty ministry just as the prophet Isaiah had predicted of the Messiah: (Isaiah 61:1, ESV) Even more, Isaiah had prophesied of Him, (Isaiah 11:2, ESV)

So the Spirit of God descends upon Christ and then we hear the words of the Father: "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." Hear these words of the Father. What amazing words these are. The word "beloved" describes a deep, rich, intense and profound love and affection in the relationship between the Father and the Son. God the Father delights in his Son. He delight in the display of His Son's radiance and glory. He delights in His character and obedience. He delights in His attributes. He delights in His glory. He delights in His servanthood. He delights in His work as Redeemer. He delights in His place as King over the Kingdom. When He looks at His Son He sees the fullness of deity displayed, the perfection of sinless humanity displayed; He sees the perfections of glory revealed and it delights Him fully and satisfies Him completely.

Jesus is His beloved Son, the one with whom He enjoys perfect communion. John 3:35 testifies: The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand. (Joh 3:35) The Jesus the Father's dear Son, the Son of his love – and He must be. The Father delighted in Him in eternity past just as He loved Him in His incarnation, when He presented Himself to be baptized, when He ministered the Word of God among men; when He laid down his life for the sheep: when he was bruised, and his soul made an offering for sin; he loved him when He was on the cross, and even when God hid his face from him, judging the sin that was on Him; when lay in the grave the Father did not leave Him nor allow Him to see corruption. He loved Him in raising Him from the dead and receiving Him in to glory and loved Him in placing Him at His right hand, and now looks with pleasure upon him, upon his person, his sacrifice, blood, and righteousness and upon His exalted glory. His love is love of satisfaction and delight and is from everlasting to

everlasting. God wants us to know and to remember as the life and ministry of Christ is played out before our eyes in the gospel of Matthew that Jesus is His beloved Son

These words of the Father, spoken over Christ would have immediately brought certain OT scripture to mind for any devout Jew and would have served, for anyone who was aware enough to notice, as an identification of the true person of Jesus. It is a fusion of two OT texts. The first phrase – “This is my Son” would have brought to mind the words of the Messianic Psalm 2: (Psalm 2:7–12, ESV) The second part of the sentence, “with whom I am well pleased”, comes from Isaiah 42 at the beginning of the prophecies of God’s suffering servant who would atone for Israel’s sin. (Isaiah 42:1, ESV)

Only in His glorious Son could God be truly well pleased. The Father finds eternal pleasure in the Son. He receives in this holy act the seal of divine approval. The Heavenly Father will sustain Him. His voice is heard from heaven. The abiding presence of the Holy Spirit will be His strength. His coming ministry will have the divine delight and approval in all that He does. The Father publically declares with these words that Jesus is the divine Savior, appointed from all eternity to carry out the work of redemption. He is announcing to the world that He is satisfied with Him as the propitiation, as the substitute, as the ransom-payer for the children of Adam and as the head of a redeemed people. And so the question this morning is obvious and inescapable...

3) Do You Delight in the Beloved Son of God?

Are you well pleased with Christ? God is. He finds His greatest delight in His Son. He is thoroughly pleased with the perfections and glories of His Son. Do you delight in Him? Does the consideration and the thought of his person and work thrill your heart? Does exuberant and passionate worship flow from your heart as you consider the Savior? If God loves Christ and delights in Him shouldn’t we? Shouldn’t we who have been redeemed through His faithfulness, and freed from the curse, by His willingness to take upon himself our sin and suffer and bleed and die in our place, to extinguish the wrath of God against us and to open the way of heaven to us, to completely fulfill God’s law for us and give to us a perfect righteousness by which we may stand before God the Father without fear of judgment? Shouldn’t we delight in Christ, who for the sake of our souls was willing to be identified with us in our sin so that we might be united with him in death and united with Him in the resurrection from the dead? Shouldn’t we love Him who by His gracious work of redemption have been raised from the miry clay of our

sin to be seated with Him in the heavenly places for all eternity to forever enjoy beholding His glory face-to-face – we who had earned condemnation by our wicked rebellion against God now given adoption as sons through Jesus Christ. Are we well pleased, are you well pleased with Christ? The Apostle Paul said to the Corinthians: “If anyone has no love for the Lord, let him be accursed. Our Lord, come!” (1 Corinthians 16:22, ESV)

Delight grows in the soil of a humble and contrite heart. Delight in Christ is the fruit of delivered soul. A true delight in Christ is evident. It shows. And this delight manifests itself like this:

You long to promote His glory. Worship is your first and over-riding priority – to give Him the honor of which He is worthy is first and foremost in your soul. You long to love Him and serve Him with your heart and soul and mind and strength. You delight in His beauty. You love to talk about Him, You love to read about Him, you love to fellowship with Him. You desire to know Him better and to know Him deeper. You are compelled in your heart to want to be like Him. You will hate sin and the way that it obscures His glory. You find your satisfaction in Him and in His good gifts and find no need to pursue a thousand other desires. You are stable and secure in Him not wavering and tossed about by every circumstance or situation. You long to be holy as He is holy. He becomes your greatest joy and every other joy is seen in light of Him.

And if Christ is your delight, your joy will never dry up. As you find you delight in Christ, all other joys will be put in their proper perspective. Every legitimate joy will be seen as it is, as a gift from Christ, and as a result will create in you even greater thankfulness and a deeper joy in Christ. Every good gift from Christ will be seen as a gift of His grace and will draw from your heart even greater rejoicing. Do you delight in Christ? Are you well-pleased with Him.

Charles Spurgeon: “Study much, then, the word of God: be diligent in turning the pages of Scripture and in hearing God's true ministers, that the flame of love within your hearts may be revived by the fuel of holy knowledge which you place upon it. Pile on the logs of sandal wood, and let the perfumed fires burn before the Lord. Heap on the handfuls of frankincense and sweet odors of sacred knowledge that on the altar of your heart there may always be burning the sacred flame of love to God in Christ Jesus... Oh, if the love of the Father to Christ once enters into a man's soul it will change him; it will sway him with the noblest passion; it will make him a zealot for Christ; it will cast out his selfishness; it will change him into the image of

Christ, and fit him to dwell in heaven where love is perfected. Beloved, find your delight in Christ.

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