



The Church Catholic:

"O God, You once delivered Your people Israel from bondage under Pharaoh and led them in safety through the Red Sea, thereby giving us a picture of our Baptism. Grant that we may ever be faithful to Your baptismal promise, live in its grace, and show forth to all people Your desire that all should be made the children of Abraham; through Jesus Christ, our Lord." (*Vigil of Easter* – Lutheran Worship Agenda, p.82)

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Around the Word Bible Study Epiphany, 2017

The Light of Christ St. Matthew 3:13-17

Introduction: The Light of the Father

Not to be outdone by the angels, stars, or the Magi, the Father Himself sheds His light on Christ, rending the heavens wide. Though heaven's light is a lesser light, because the Light of light, the Light of the world stands in the middle of the Jordan river, not as a show of magnificence, but a show of servitude.

Opening: Psalm 89:20-29

²⁰I have found David, my | servant,*
with my holy oil I have a- | nointed him,
²¹**so that my hand shall be estab- | lished with him,***

my arm also shall | strengthen him.

²²The enemy shall not out- | wit him,*
the wicked shall not | humble him.

²³**I will crush his foes be- | fore him*
and strike down those who | hate him.**

²⁴My faithfulness and my steadfast love shall | be
with him,*
and in my name shall his horn be ex- | alted.

²⁵**I will set his hand | on the sea*
and his right hand on the | rivers.**

²⁶He shall cry to me, 'You are my | Father,*
my God, and the Rock of my sal- | vation.'

²⁷**And I will make him the | firstborn,*
the highest of the kings | of the earth.**

²⁸My steadfast love I will keep for him for- |
ever,*
and my covenant will stand | firm for him.

²⁹**I will establish his offspring for- | ever*
and his throne as the days of the | heavens.**

**Glory be to the Father and | to the Son*
and to the Holy | Spirit;
as it was in the be- | ginning,*
is now, and will be forever. | Amen.**

Read St. Matthew 3:13-17

v.13: Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him.

Who? Jesus (Matthew 2:2)

What? Baptism (Matthew 3:1, 6, 7, 11)

Where? Galilee to the Jordan (Matthew 2:22-23)

When? Then (Matthew 3:1)

How? John (Matthew 3:3-4)

Why? Baptism (Matthew 3:7)

The specificity of the Gospel is such that we make no mistake about what is going to happen next.

Jesus' first task as a grown man is to be baptized.

What makes John the Baptist such an important person? See Matthew 3:3, 11:14.

Who is John *not* and what *hasn't* he come to do? See Matthew 3:11; John 1:19-21, 27.

Is baptism a new idea? See John 1:25; Exodus 30:18, 38:8, 40:7; 1 Kings 7:23.

v.14: John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?"

Why is John preventing Jesus? See Matthew 3:11-12.

Have other attempts been made to prevent Jesus? How well did those go? See Matthew 16:21-23; John 11:10-15.

Should John really be surprised at this turn of action; him baptizing God? See Matthew 9:8; Luke 9:1; John 20:22-23.

v.15: But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented.

When is "now"? See Matthew 18:11; Luke 19:10 (note the context of each).

Jesus, both God and man, has come: The Coming One (cf. Matthew 3:11, 11:3; John 6:14; Psalm 118:26).

The word "righteousness" is used about 92 times in the New Testament alone. What do some of those places have to say about this baptism? See Jeremiah 23:6; Matthew 21:32; John 16:8; Acts 17:30-31; Romans 1:16-17, 3:21; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Philippians 1:11; Revelation 19:6-8.

Galatians 3:27 declares that we are clothed with Christ in our baptism. What kind of clothes are these? See Isaiah 61:10; Zechariah 3:4; Matthew 17:2.

What, then, is baptism for us today? See Titus 3:5-7; 1 Peter 3:21.

v.16: And 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;

If baptism is for making one righteous and saved, does Jesus need baptism? On that same line of thinking, does Jesus need to be born, or be circumcised, or pray, or anything?

Not only as an example and not only as a mere ordinance, He who knew no sin (2 Corinthians 5:21) and needed nothing from earth or man was baptized. Not for His sake (ordinance/example), but for ours. See John 20:31; 1 John 5:13.

Instead of gaining righteousness, Christ fulfills *our* righteousness. Instead of being washed clean, Christ is sullied with our sin, in His baptism. In the backwards way that John, not Jesus, is baptizing, so now is sin placed upon Jesus, instead of taken from Him.

Jesus had worked through clouds in the Old Testament (see this discussion in the Transfiguration study). This cloud, the dove, and the Voice declare the Trinity present. Why is it important to have the Trinity present at baptism? Is the Trinity present at baptism today? See Matthew 28:19.

v.17: and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

Contrary to Hollywood's portrayal of God speaking to men, His voice is never disembodied, like a ghost. It is always accompanied by either an angel or Jesus Himself, the Word of the Lord. See Genesis 15:1; Exodus 3:2; Joshua 5:13-15; 1 Samuel 3:21; 1 Kings 16:7; Isaiah 2:1; Jeremiah 1:2.

The Word of God is known in His Body and is revealed as the Only-begotten Son, the *only* one with Whom God is pleased (cf. Galatians 3:16). Thus, we need to be *in* Christ in order to have any good thing from God given to us. (cf. Romans 6:3-4).

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Who else spoke similarly, but at a different event in Jesus' life? See Matthew 27:54; Mark 15:39; cf. Luke 23:47.

"Him whom the devil's craftiness attacks as man, the ministries of angels serve as God," (Leo the Great, NPNF:XII:41). While baptism, on the surface, may look like just an act of man, God takes great pains in order to make sure He is baptized. It's important, because He does the washing.

Glancing at the icon, you can see and recognize many things,

which is what a true icon should do. You see John the Baptist, of course, and Jesus. Maybe you notice St. Andrew, who was a disciple of John (John 1:40), and another disciple (Peter?; John 1:41) on the far left. You notice the dove and the cloud, the angels also.

Notice also Jonah on his great fish; St. Michael wrestling the dragon of the deep, Leviathan; Jesus standing on the stum-

bling rock with the old serpent being crushed underneath.

One image that may float past you is the axe and the tree. It may be that this is a reference to Matthew 3:10, but it may also take us back to 2 Kings 6:1-7. Here, Elisha throws a piece of tree (Acts 5:30, 10:39; 1 Peter 2:24) into the water in order to retrieve the heavy iron (Deuteronomy 4:20; Proverbs 27:17; Jeremiah 6:28; Ezekiel 22:18).

In other words, "...our Christ has ransomed us at Baptism from our heaviest sins by His crucifixion on the wood and Baptism in the water," (Justin Martyr, ANF:I:242).

Closing: To Jordan Came the Christ, Our Lord (LSB, 406)

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