

Epiphany 3; The Baptism of Jesus
January 12 & 13, 2020

The Baptism of our Lord

Did you know that you could become a Duke or Duchess? Did you know that you could become a Lady or a Lord? Did you know that you could be a Baron or Baroness? If that were the case, you could enjoy:

- *Privileged Treatment everywhere, including Luxury Shops, Airlines, Exclusive Restaurants.*
- *You could flash your official card with your name and title to Impressionable Waiters, Waitresses, Flight Attendants, Bank Managers.*
- *You could enjoy a Sense of Grandeur and Historical Belonging, Social Status and Prestige, An incredible Source of Joy, Happiness and Amusement.*
- *The Red Carpet would be rolled out in front of you everywhere.*
- *People would value your opinion.*
- *You would be given gifts, both small and big, just because you would have a title in front of your name.*

All you have to do is go to a website like: “royaltitles.com”, and give them around \$200 and you will get, according to their website:

- *Hand signed letters with a gold seal of the Kingdom of Pomerania and Livonia.*
- *Hand Signed Certificate of Authenticity*
- *An impressive blue and gold medal with a blue ribbon*
- *And a guide to show you how to add your title to your credit cards, bank accounts, and so much more.*

Yet, we all know that it would take much more than \$200 to add the title of Duke or Duchess to our name from one website. My guess is that we could go online and probably find a website to put almost any title in front of our name. You could become a doctor, a pastor, a PHD, etc. and all it would take is.....

This morning, we see a man who had been given a title. His title was not a title that he had bought off a website. It was a title that was given to him by God. His title: “Baptist” – “John the Baptist.” John was not a lord, a duke or a member of royalty. He was a man who was a tough looking character. He wore clothes of camel’s hair. He ate honey and locusts. Yet, there were thousands of people coming out to the desert to see this man who was teaching repentance and baptizing people. John knew that he was the one who would prepare the people to receive a man who would be much greater than him. A man whose sandals he would not be fit to carry. People were coming out into the desert by the thousands to see and hear John the Baptist. John knew his place, even though people were beginning to wonder if John was the Messiah that had been predicted in the Bible.

John clearly told the people that he was not the Christ. I wonder if people began to think that if John was not the Messiah, then the Messiah would have to be even greater than John. The expectations of the coming Messiah were beginning to get even bigger.

Then one day, a very ordinary looking of man stood along the shore of the Jordan River. Perhaps, many people didn’t even notice Jesus. Jesus stood there watching people lining up to be baptized by John. Then he walked into the water and stood in front of John. John knew who was standing there. Even though Jesus was his cousin, he knew that the person in front of him was the Messiah. Can you imagine how John felt? The one who John had been talking about for the past six months was standing right in front of him. This is the Messiah. This is God. What kind of God gets baptized? Jesus had no sins to repent from. He had no guilt that was his own.

But Jesus came to be baptized. Why? Jesus knew that his time had come. It was time to begin the mission that he had come to do – save this world from its sin. As Jesus was standing there on the bank of the Jordan, he watched sinners get into the water. He saw them get baptized. Their baptism signified their repentance. They acknowledged their sin and the justice of God’s judgment. Through the water of baptism, their sins were forgiven. As Jesus watched them be baptized,

he jumps in with sinners. Not as a sinner, but as one who was a man who came to rescue sinners. He jumps into the waters to save all people from drowning in their sin.

“But John tried to deter him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” Jesus replied, “Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.” Then John consented.” At that moment, Jesus announced that he had come to carry out his Father’s plan. It was now time to **“fulfill all righteousness.”** Jesus knew he couldn’t do this alone. So, he heard his Father’s voice: **“This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”** **“He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him.”** Then John baptized Jesus. He baptized Jesus not to forgive his sins, but to inaugurate Jesus into his office of the Messiah. Now it began – a journey to the cross.

To see how truly beautiful this act of Jesus is, consider how Matthew has surrounded the event of Jesus’ baptism to show the depth of God’s rescue plan for this world. Before the baptism, the wilderness is filled with God’s judgment. John is preaching the impending coming of God. This Messiah will be like an axe to cut down trees. God will burn the chaff with unquenchable fire. After the baptism, we see the wilderness filled with Satan’s terror. Satan prowls about like a roaring lion. He attacks Jesus. He takes Jesus from place to place, claiming to rule this world, and trying to force his reign upon Jesus.

In the middle of this section of John’s Gospel, we see Jesus as the one who will face the terror of God’s Judgment. He will bear the ax of God’s Judgment so they we don’t. We see Jesus going to battle with Satan. He will face the full attack of Satan to defeat him which we could never do. There in the Jordan we see the full extent of God’s love. We see Jesus clearly saying that he is the answer to this world’s problems. He will come out of the water and successfully crush the head of Satan. Oh, he will be bruised by Satan on the cross. But he will walk out of the tomb to declare victory over Satan.

There in the water of Jesus’ baptism, we see God carrying out his promise; as the Apostle Paul would write: **“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”** (2 Cor 5:21) God took upon himself the sins of the world. As we come to the baptism font, we see Jesus’ love. We see Jesus becoming sin for us, so that we have his righteousness. His forgiveness becomes our forgiveness.

So, today, we only can marvel at the title that Jesus gives us. He calls us **HIS CHILDREN**. This title wasn’t given off some website. This title wasn’t give from some person. It didn’t cost any sum of money. This title becomes ours through the blood that Jesus will shed from the cross. Today he says to **“us”** that we are connected to him. This title comes from God himself. We’re saved. You can trust it with all your heart. Amen.