

Philippians 2:6-11, NLT

Jesus comes in unexpected ways... The scene...

- John was surprised that Jesus wanted to be baptized (3:14)
1. John's baptism was for repentance/confession (3:2,6)
  2. John said Jesus was greater than he (3:11)
  3. John said Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire (3:11)
    - a. Jesus did not need to repent (sinless; John confirms)
    - b. Jesus was greater (John's ministry was preparing for Jesus', not Jesus John's)
    - c. John's baptism was not ultimate (Jesus was bringing the Spirit and Fire)

When John said, "I have need to be baptized by you, and you come to me?", he may have been saying:

1. Wait, if anyone here between you and I needs to repent, it is me!
2. You are the expected King, I don't prepare you for the kingdom
3. I need your baptism (Holy Spirit and Fire), not you mine

**Jesus was not coming on the scene in the way John expected**

- So, he and we, are surprised

Why is Jesus doing this?

- This is massive, and tells us everything we need to know at this moment about Jesus:
  - I.e. Jesus goes down into the waters of the Jordan **with** sinners, because he has stepped down out of heaven to die **for** sinners
  - He is Immanuel—God *with us* (and who are we? —sinners)
  - So, what does he do? He **identifies** Himself with sinners (enters our shame)
    - The first thing Jesus does for the human race is go down with us into the deep waters of repentance<sup>1</sup>
    - Jesus' whole life will be like this (friend of sinners, drunkards, prostitutes)
      - Jesus ends His ministry on a cross between thieves, and He begins His ministry in a river among sinners<sup>2</sup>

**Jesus' baptism was total identification with sinners** (He was not one of them, but he placed himself among them)

**He who had no sin took a place among those who had no righteousness**

Hebrews 4:17, NASB

Isaiah 53:11-12, NLT

... my righteous servant will make it possible for many to be counted righteous, for he will bear all their sins... because he exposed himself to death. He was counted among the rebels. He bore the sins of many and interceded for rebels.

This is what stood behind Jesus' explanation to John (v. 15): "Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness"

- Meaning: To do what God intended Jesus to do (good pleasure; will) at that moment in His mission:
  - To identify with sinful humanity—that he might ultimately save them from sin

Isaiah 53:10, NASB

But the Lord was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief; if He would render Himself as a guilt offering... and the good pleasure of the Lord will prosper in His hand.

**He who had no sin took his place among those who had no righteousness...** 2 Corinthians 5:21, NASB

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<sup>1</sup> Frederick Dale Bruner, *The Christbook: Matthew 1-12* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 101.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

This is the concept of **identification** and **substitution**

- In His baptism, Jesus **identified** with sinners, so that He might be the **substitution** for sinners on the Cross
- This is essentially how our salvation is initiated: We **identify** with Jesus as our **substitute** (though baptism)
  - **Romans 6:3-6**, NLT
  - In our being baptized we are identified with Jesus so that we might receive the benefits of His substitutionary death for us on the Cross
  - Jesus' baptism was Him **identifying with sinners**—ours is sinners **identifying with Jesus'** Cross

And then, for us, everything changes—we have a core identity change (pictured in the text)

- **Matthew 3:6-17**
  - Expected One? (Ancestry; birth; Magi; prophecies; John the Baptist; The Father and The Spirit)
  - Endorsement: **The Spirit** + “**This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased**”
    - Jesus identified with humanity—now the Father identifies Him with Deity
    - Before His ministry begins, 2 paramount issues settled: Power and Identity
    - This is a picture of the whole Christian life (**Romans 8:1-6**, NLT)

We have become the beloved of God in whom His Spirit lives

- Not deity—still humanity... but with a brand new core identity
  - (Beloved—not sinners)

**There is some big-time, life changing theology here:**

1. Christ's identification with sinners
2. The believer's identity in Christ

1. Christ's identification with sinners means that we can **confidently** come to Jesus when we sin
  - This is counterintuitive—we want to run (I don't deserve) (Cf. Peter in **Luke 5:8**)
  - That is right—we don't deserve—we are sinners (but Jesus has come to save us)
  - **Hebrews 4:15-16**, NASB
2. The believer's identity in Christ means that we can **confidently** live in, and function out of, God's love
  - This is counterintuitive—we want to earn (I deserve)
  - We don't deserve—we are loved in spite of ourselves/sin not because of ourselves/sin

Who refused to be **numbered among the sinners** because they saw themselves as deserving and worthy?

- The **Pharisees** and **Sadducees (for them there was only judgment)**
- For those who know they are unworthy—there is only grace
- **God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble (James 4:6)**
- **Luke 18:9-14**, NLT

So, Jesus' baptism shows His miraculous humility... followed by glory

- Our path is the same (humble yourself before God as a sinner in need of repentance)

For, Jesus humbled Himself to identify with sinners

- That we sinners, by humbling ourselves, might be given a new identity as the beloved