The Baptism of the Lord Jesus Christ - Gospel of Matthew chapter 3, verses 13 – 17:-

Remember that Matthew was most probably writing his record of the Gospel events with Jewish Christian converts in mind. In this short passage of five verses there are numerous references back to events in the Old Testament. Again a deeper understanding of the Old Testament can help us to understand the importance of this event.

Chapter 3, verse 14:- Why 'the Jordan'? John could and did baptise elsewhere – see Gospel of John chapter 3, verse 23. Reading back in the Old Testament we find a number of reasons for the importance of the Jordan. It was where Joshua led God's people across the Jordan into freedom in the 'Promised Land'. Remember that the name given to Jesus by the angel was Yeshua, 'Joshua' ('the Lord saves' - Matthew chapter 1, verse 21,). Jesus delivers God's people from sin and death and leads them into the Kingdom of Heaven. The Jordan was the place of 'handover' of prophetic ministry – Moses to Joshua in Deuteronomy chapter 34; and Elijah to Elisha in 2 Kings chapter 2, verses 7 – 14.

Verses 14 – 15:- Note the *"us"* not 'me' in verse 15! The Lord Jesus was the one who identified Himself with sinners and died in their place on the cross the righteous for the unrighteous. He identified Himself with the unrighteous and their need for cleansing in baptism, In the baptism it needed both the baptised (Jesus) and the baptiser (John). Their ministries were God given and distinct.

Verse 16:- The appearance of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove was visible to both Jesus and John. (see also Gospel of John chapter 1, verse 32). The image of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove is there in the Old Testament. The combination of a dove and the Spirit over the water of the Jordan reminds us of the beginning of creation when the Spirit of God broods over the chaotic deep (Genesis chapter 1, verse 2.) Note that Jesus is the one who brings in the new creation (see 2 Corinthians chapter 5.verse 17) In the account of Noah and the flood, in Genesis 6–9, a dove also comes across the water (Genesis chapter 8verses 8-12) . Noah's father believed that Noah would bring people 'rest' and relief from the curse of sin (Gen 5.29), so Noah leads a faithful remnant, rescuing them from the judgement of God on the sin of the world. The Lord Jesus through His suffering and death on the cross brings the true eternal rest to His people. - (see Hebrews chapter 4, verses 1 – 11).

Verse 17:- The *"Voice from heaven"* speaks to the Lord Jesus three times in the Gospels. First, here at His baptism; again at the Transfiguration (Matthew 17, verse 5) and then just before His passion and crucifixion (Gospel of John chapter 12, verse 28).
The language of *'my Son, my Beloved, in whom I delight'* take us back to at least two significant OT passages. The first is in Genesis chapter 22, where God calls Abraham to offer his *'son, whom you love'* (verse 2) as a sacrifice; the end of that narrative is the fulfilment of Abraham's claim that *'God will provide the sacrifice'* (verse 8). The second is the Servant Song in Isaiah chapter 42, where God's servant *'in whom I delight'* ,will be anointed with God's Spirit and will bring justice to the nations (verse 1) and has been *'called in righteousness'* (verse 6).

Almighty God, Father of all mercies, ... We bless thee for our creation,preservation and all the blessings of this life; but above all for thine inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; for the means of grace and for the hope of glory . . . ."
(From the Book of Common prayer)

Terry Brighton 20 / 2 / 2025