

The Divine Jesus  
Matthew 3:13-17; 17:1-13  
The Laurel Center  
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**Main Idea:** Jesus demonstrates he is divine in his water baptism and the Transfiguration.

**Introduction**

For centuries scholars and theologians have debated what is called to do would preachers of Jesus or the hypostatic union. Oftentimes this boils down to when Jesus acted in the divine way and when he acted in a human way. Human ways include eating, sleeping and traveling on foot or by boat. Divine ways include healing, teaching with authority and moments with the rest of the Godhead.

I have found that even when Jesus travels by boat or sleeps that sometimes these can be divine attributes. Take a moment that the storm is gathering around the disciples' boat and they are all scared out of their minds but Jesus is sleeping. Jesus is showing a trust in God that the disciples are not. His sleeping shows that he is the master of the universe and a little storm is not bother him at all because he has the power to stop it.

From what I have seen in the Gospels Jesus' two natures are very hard to distinguish. But today in our sermon I want to stress to you the two times that Jesus shows up with the rest of the Godhead. We will see that the rest of the Godhead approves of Jesus in these two instances. I will focus on these to show his divinity because God approves him. These two instances demonstrate Jesus' divinity because he is confirmed by the rest of the Godhead. Let's take a look at Jesus' water baptism in Transfiguration.

**Matthew 3:13–17**

**13** Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. **14** John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" **15** But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented. **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; **17** and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

**I.** God proclaims Jesus his Son (Matthew 3:13 – 17).

**A** Jesus demonstrates water baptism for believers (vs. 13-15).

- 1 The background for Jesus' first interaction with the rest of the Godhead comes in a strange moment with John the Baptist. Jesus went out to the Jordan River specifically to be baptized by John.
- 2 The problem with this is that John's baptism is a baptism for repentance from sin but Jesus Jesus as the divine Son of God has never sinned so he does not need to be baptized for repentance.
- 3 John responds in kind saying, "You wish to be baptized by me but I should be baptized by you." John shows that he understands Jesus is the Messiah and is not need to be baptized for repentance.
- 4 So why does Jesus go to John the Baptist to be baptized? Jesus answers the question himself when he says, "It is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness."
- 5 Jesus did this to show the crowd that he was without sin before he started his public ministry. It also provides an endorsement from John the Baptist who is considered to be a great prophet like Elijah.
- 6 Jesus does not need the endorsement but it doesn't hurt. Christians also see that he exemplified the need to be publicly water baptized as a witness of the changed life that Christians experience when they are saved.
- 7 Jesus showed us that public baptism is an important step after we are saved to witness to our family and friends that Jesus is the reason we live differently than before.
- 8 **Application:** Jesus is our example and everything including water baptism. Water baptism gives us a public platform to give God the credit for the change in our lifestyles. Jesus gets all the glory instead of some government plan to make us better citizens or part of some self-help strategy. When you get saved you need to let people know that Jesus is the reason for your transformation. If you have never been water baptized after your salvation experience you need to do it now! Get with your pastor and church leadership to schedule it so that you can invite your family and friends to see the reason for your lifestyle changes.

**B** The Godhead shows approval of Jesus (vs. 16-17).

- 1 What is further unusual about Jesus' baptism is that after he is immersed fully in the water when he comes up out of the water God the Father speaks from heaven and the Holy Spirit comes down in the form of a dove.
- 2 The two other members of the Godhead show up at Jesus' baptism and show their approval just by showing up but God the Father makes his approval clearly no by speaking about Jesus.

- 3 First the Holy Spirit comes down from heaven in the form of a dove and comes to rest on Jesus' shoulder. His presence there demonstrates his approval of Jesus because the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament was known to come upon people when his ministry was needed.
- 4 Next God the Father speaks from heaven and says, "This is my beloved son with whom I am well pleased." This is a ringing endorsement from the Father. God has spoken from the heavens before in the Old Testament. If the crowd did not understand the Holy Spirit as a dove they do understand the voice from heaven.
- 5 Jesus being called God's son is not necessarily thought of as his progeny as much as it connotes his familial relationship with God, that he is intimately close to God, and also that he takes part in the Godhead and their activities.
- 6 The fact that the other members of the Godhead our present at Jesus' baptism and God the Father speaks about him so intimately is as good as it gets.
- 7 Moreover God specifically said that he is well pleased with Jesus. This is high praise coming from heaven from God himself. This would have been more than enough to prove that Jesus is at least associated with divinity if not divine himself.
- 8 **Application:** We need not worry about Jesus' credentials when we come to him in salvation or for healing or any other activity that Jesus can do. He not only is endorsed by the rest of the Godhead but also has God's authority as he says numerous times in the Gospel of John. He also has the ability to do these things. When we pray to Jesus or to the Holy Spirit we are praying to God. This is why worshiping Jesus and the Holy Spirit does not violate the first commandment. You can worship and pray to Jesus just as much as you do God the Father.

### **Matthew 17:1–13**

**1** And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. **2** And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light. **3** And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. **4** And Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." **5** He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him." **6** When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were terrified. **7** But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Rise, and have no fear." **8** And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only. **9** And as they were coming down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, "Tell no one the vision,

until the Son of Man is raised from the dead.” **10** And the disciples asked him, “Then why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?” **11** He answered, “Elijah does come, and he will restore all things. **12** But I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they pleased. So also the Son of Man will certainly suffer at their hands.” **13** Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them of John the Baptist.

## **II.** Jesus is approved by God the Father and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 17:1-13).

### **A** Peter tries to make shelters for Jesus (vs.. 1-5).

- 1 In our next passage we find three witnesses to Jesus’ transfiguration. Peter, James and John, Jesus’ inner circle, are with Jesus when he is transfigured.
- 2 Transfigured simply means that Jesus’ appearance in figure are transformed or changed into something resembling his human appearance but also looking very different.
- 3 I would suggest to you that Jesus appears as he may in heaven and that it is more his natural appearance than his human form alone. Often people affected by God’s glory demonstrate a brilliance of light on their person.
- 4 After this happened Moses and Elijah showed up on the mountain with them. Moses died and was buried while Elijah never experienced death but was taken up to heaven in a chariot of fire.
- 5 While Jewish teaching provided for Elijah to come back at a later date, most likely the day of the Lord or the end of days as we know it, Elijah never died and therefore could show up again any time. Many teachings held him to be the possible Messiah.
- 6 Peter reacts to all of this by wanting to make shelters for each of them because for him as a Jew Moses is revered as the founding father of the Israelite people and Elijah is considered to be the greatest prophet.
- 7 For Peter, James and John to meet Moses and Elijah would be the pinnacle of their lives because they do not understand that Jesus is the Messiah. They do not realize that Jesus is greater than Moses and Elijah.
- 8 While Peter was still offering to make shelters for the three most important people in Judaism God spoke from heaven about Jesus and spoke the same words he did at his baptism. Peter, James and John were not at the water baptism of Jesus so it is the first time he hears them and has this experience.
- 9 God spoke from heaven and intervened when the inner circle disciples focused on Moses and Elijah rather than Jesus. He repeated the phrase he spoke about Jesus at the baptism and then added, “Listen to him.”

### **B** The Godhead shows up to approve of Jesus (vs.. 6-13).

- 1 When God speaks from heaven everyone on earth listens. The Old Testament tells us that the voice of the Lord is the voice that brought creation into existence and when he speaks creation itself responds to his presence and voice.
- 2 After the disciples see Jesus along with Moses and Elijah and then hear God speak from heaven favoring his son Jesus over there other popular and revered human founders of the law and the prophets, the disciples realize that Jesus is the bigger deal according to God.
- 3 After they see this play out in Jesus comes and reassures them telling the have no fear, Moses and Elijah disappear and the heavens return to normal while the disciples now have their attention on Jesus.
- 4 Moses and Elijah showed up to show them that these important figures of Judaism and Israel although revered by Israelites everywhere are not more important than Jesus himself. With God's endorsement of Jesus above all of the other people they revered, the disciples properly placed their focus on Jesus alone.
- 5 Next they travel down the mountain and Jesus tells them not to tell others about their experience until he is raised from the dead. Of course, the disciples do not fully understand this as well because they did not put together the resurrection of the Messiah in the Old Testament because you have to tie several passages together to get the full picture.
- 6 The disciples then asked Jesus the pertinent question from their perspective because Jewish teachers have taught them that Elijah will come back in the day of the Lord.
- 7 Jesus assures them that Elijah has his place in the end times to restore all things. Many scholars believe that Elijah is one of the two witnesses in Revelation that come as a final warning and final rollcall for believers.
- 8 Jesus then stresses that Elijah was already there in antiquity and people did not believe him despite his words, signs and wonders that accompanied his ministry. They may not listen to Elijah either.
- 9 Jesus further talks about himself as the Messiah when he refers to suffering at the hands of Jewish leadership but because these bits about the Messiah are also covered in different sections of the Old Testament they don't put these points together either.
- 10 Jesus then says that the Son of Man will suffer at their hands and he used Son of Man earlier when they thought it was referring to Elijah instead of him. So it is not clear to the disciples that Son of Man refers to Jesus and not-for-prophet.

11 Even after Jesus clarifies about the Son of Man not referring to Elijah with his second statement the disciples still misinterpret the Son of Man to be John the Baptist whose head ends up on a silver platter by Herod.

### **Conclusion**

It is clear that Jesus meant himself when he talks about the Son of Man. He is essentially talking in the third person as he refers to himself by another title. That title is shared by some of the prophets in the Old Testament. So it would be confusing to the disciples who did not yet see Jesus as the Messiah. After his resurrection he had to open their minds to understand what was happening and who he was.

We have seen that God showed his support of Jesus on earth when he broke into the earthly realm to show people that he was endorsing Jesus who had the same divine attributes that God has. While Jesus may have displayed divine ability in healing people and raising people from the dead these are things that were demonstrated by Elijah as well. After the resurrection and when Jesus opens their minds to understand the Old Testament properly that is when the disciples see Jesus for who you really is.

When we are saved from sin and into God's kingdom that same realization is made known to us by Jesus and his disciples. We trust that Jesus is who he said he is. And then we see that divine Lord working in our lives on a daily basis and answering our prayer requests and doing the things that we need that we cannot do for ourselves. He really is divine and Lord of the universe and Lord of human time, and wants to be chosen as the Lord of our hearts. Jesus has demonstrated his credentials to us throughout the New Testament. He has made his case for his divinity over and over throughout the Gospels and then confirmed by the apostles in their writings. The only thing that's left is for you to choose to accept him as the divine Christ and to continue to trust him every day after that.