

ID CARD

Scripture Reading: Read Matthew chapter 3

Whenever you travel by air today, you are strongly encouraged to arrive at the airport an hour or two in advance of your flight. This extra time is required because of the increased safety procedures at the airport. Recently, I traveled to the west coast to watch my oldest son take part in a cross-country race and had to pass through security to get to my gate. As part of the new procedures, I was required to show a photo ID. Once security personnel validated my license and I met the other requirements, I was allowed to pass.

In Matthew chapter 3, we read the account of Jesus' baptism. Have you wondered why Jesus chose to be water baptized by John the Baptist? John's baptism was a baptism for repentance from sin but Jesus never sinned. There was no sin from which he needed to repent. So, why did he do it? According to Jesus, it was "to fulfill all righteousness." Jesus chose to be baptized to identify himself with sinful humanity according to his Father's plan for him to serve as our substitute on the cross. In response to his obedience, the Father affirmed his Son by declaring, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." In a way, Jesus' baptism served as his ID card for it was only after his baptism and the Father's declaration of his Sonship that Jesus was tempted and challenged by the devil in the wilderness (*see Matthew 4*).

At the end of his life on earth, before he ascended to his Father in heaven, this same Jesus made it clear that we too are to be baptized (*look ahead to Matthew 28:19*) in water. If Jesus' baptism was his identification with us (and it was!), then our baptism is our identification with Christ in his death, burial and resurrection. It's also our public declaration to the world that we belong to Jesus. Our baptism is in response to faith in Jesus Christ and serves as an outward sign of an inward reality, of a heart change and the forgiveness of our sins. In a sense, baptism is the Christian's ID card. This truth was forcefully brought home to me years ago when I heard a former princess speak at a missions' service I attended. She mentioned how people in her country viewed believers in Jesus Christ. She said that family members and her country's officials tolerated believers in Jesus until the point they were baptized. Once they were baptized, they were considered truly committed to the faith and a threat. She, herself, testified to having been disowned and disinherited the day she was baptized. She lost everything her family had but gained everything her Father in heaven promised her.

My photo ID was proof to security that I was who I claimed to be. Our baptism in water is proof to the world that we are who we claim to be, followers of Jesus.

Action Step: If you have never followed the Lord in the waters of baptism, sign up today for our next water baptismal service. If you have been baptized, reflect on its importance in light of the devotion above.

Prayer Focus: Give thanks to Jesus for identifying with us in our sin so that we can identify with him in our baptism.

Take-a-way: *Baptism...an ID card for Christians!*