



The Credentials of the King

The Coronation and Testing of the King
(Mt 3:13 - 4:11)

Chp 1-4 introduce three key credentials of Jesus' claim to the throne of David as Messiah:

1. His lineage and birth (chp 1-2)
2. His coronation (chp 3)
3. His testing (chp 4)

I. The Coronation of the King - Jesus' Baptism (3:13-17)

The significance of Jesus' baptism is threefold:

A. It serves as a direct, public link between John's message and Jesus' ministry

The baptism of Jesus is the climax of John's work. The announcement of the One to come is clearly identified as Jesus. There is no clearer connection between John's baptism and Jesus' ministry than in John's gospel where the writer quotes the Baptist saying, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! This is He on behalf of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.'" (John 1:29-30).

Jesus' public baptism confirmed concrete continuity between John's and Jesus' ministries. As Jesus identifies himself with John in the baptism, this represents an endorsement of John's ministry and the message and links Jesus' cause to John's. When the king arrived, the herald's work was done. Though John continued to preach and baptize after this event, his ministry soon faded. Observing this, John acknowledged, "He [Jesus] must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30).

B. By it Jesus identifies himself with those who need repentance

The identification of Jesus with those needing repentance was clearly part of the divine plan. For the multitudes the baptismal rite symbolized their desire to forsake their sins, but for Jesus it meant a call to identify himself with a sinful people. At his baptism, Jesus takes upon himself by this cultic act their condition and their predicament. He becomes their representative. This reality is later observed by Paul in 2 Cor. 5:21: "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf..."

C. It serves as the inauguration of Jesus' public ministry marked especially by the descent of the Spirit (in the form of a dove) and the heavenly attestation.

All the evangelists see the baptism of Jesus as the commencement of the public ministry of Jesus. This is marked especially by the descent of the Spirit upon him and by the heavenly attestation. All four gospels directly link with baptism the anointing of Jesus with the Spirit and the declaration of his Sonship.

The anointing of Jesus with the Spirit is an allusion to the suffering-servant found in Isaiah 42:1, "Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one in whom My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him..." At the very inauguration of his ministry, Jesus is marked by the foreshadowing of what he must suffer.

The divine attestation: "This is my son in whom I am well pleased" is an allusion to Psalm 2, a coronation psalm, presenting David as God's anointed. The king is God's agent who is now only to do his will and relinquish all selfish interests. This phrase connects Jesus both to David as well as to one who is commissioned to selflessly do God's will. John's gospel records Christ fulfillment of this purpose in Jesus' statement, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am the one I claim to be and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me. The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him." (John 8:28-29 italics added).

II. The Testing of the King (4:1-11)

Matthew 4:1-2

Immediately following the coronation of the King, Jesus is led into the desert by the Holy Spirit to be tested. This is a significant event in establishing the righteous credentials of Jesus. The "testing" is a familiar motif in the Old Testament. Hagar was tested by being sent out into the wilderness by Sarah (Gen 21:8-21). Abraham was tested by God's command to offer Isaac, the son of the promise (Gen 22:1-19). Most significantly to our current study, however, is Israel's testing in the wilderness (Exodus; Numbers).

There are common elements to a divine test:

- A difficult/impossible ordeal
- An act of faith
- Divine deliverance

The purpose of the test is to reveal what is in a man's heart. God told Israel that he would be their God and that they were his people. Under the Mosaic covenant God made promises to Israel that if they would trust him and walk in his ways, he would bless them, provide for them, protect them and allow them to dwell in the land of promise. If they were disobedient, curses would fall upon them, they would endure droughts and plagues and ultimately be removed from the land.

During Israel's sojourn in the desert, their faith was commonly tested. Repeatedly they failed. Jesus, as God's deliverer for Israel, would also undergo his test in the wilderness. Will he fulfill his duty as the king and walk in complete obedience?

Test #1: Matthew 4:3-4 cf. Deut 8:3

Satan, the master deceiver, has come to tempt Jesus. His goal: disqualify the king by causing him to fail. After 40 days, Jesus became hungry.

Satan's temptation: "Command these stones to become bread."

Jesus' answer: "It is written, Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God."

Israel was tested in this same way. God created a daily provision of bread from heaven called manna. God declared that the manna was provided not only to feed his people but to test what was in their hearts: Would they trust him to feed them every day? (Deut 8:1-3).

Only two rules were given Israel regarding the manna:

1. Only gather what you need for one day (Ex 16:16)
2. Do not gather manna on the Sabbath (Ex 16:25-26)

These two rules were immediately broken in the first week! Some tried to keep the manna for the next day (Ex 16:20) and it rotted by morning. On the Sabbath, some went out to gather the manna, though there was none (Ex 16:27).

These was not only an acts of disobedience, they revealed that Israel did not trust God to provide for them as he promised. This failure is brought to their remembrance in Deut. 8:3 that they should trust in the Lord, that "man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD."

Test #2: Matthew 4:5-7 cf. Deut 6:16

Satan now changes tactics by challenging Jesus' very words. In effect, saying: "So, you trust God's Word do you?" "You trust him to take care of you according to his promises?" "Let's test that..."

Satan's temptation:

If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: "He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'" (Matthew 4:6 cf. Ps 91:11-12)

Jesus recognizes Satan's tactic and sees the flaw in his argument.

Jesus' answer: "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

Jesus knows that one cannot obey one command to the exclusion of another. Not only this, it would constitute putting God to the test.

Israel tested God at Massah (Ex 17:1-7). As God led them in the wilderness, they came to a place where there was no water. The people grumbled against Moses and Yahweh that they were brought there to die. They tested to Lord saying, "Is Yahweh among us or not?"

This revealed a lack of faith in the provision and power of Yahweh. They were, in effect, demanding God to prove his faithfulness to them (as if he had not done so repeatedly already).

Jesus was not willing to test God this way. He was confident in the fact that God was true and above reproach. He would not be guilty of "proving" God's character. He was obedient to Moses' admonition in Deut 6:16:

"Do not test the LORD your God as you did at Massah."

Test #3: Matthew 8-12 cf. Deut 6:13

Satan's temptation: "I will give you [all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor]," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me."

Jesus' answer: Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'"

Again Jesus quotes Deuteronomy to defend the truth and determines to walk in obedience to God's command.

By contrast, Israel failed to fulfill their duty to worship God alone. Their past is tainted by infidelity even before they reached the Promised Land. They failed at Mt. Sinai under Moses (Ex 32) and they failed again in Moab (Num 25). Even after they entered the Promised Land, they compromised this standard repeatedly by worshipping other gods.

The Victory of the King

Jesus won the victory over Satan by doing what no King before him could do - what no MAN before him could do: walk in complete obedience to God in the power of the Holy Spirit.