

Sovereign Grace Church

“Credentials” outline

March 18, 2018

Matthew 3

We generally think of “credentials” as official or quasi-official pieces of paper which state that what we are claiming about ourselves is true. These pieces of paper are only as good as the institution which grants them. If your credential for knowing what you are talking about is a PhD in the relevant area from a well-respected University you will usually get more recognition than if it is a “PhD” from a mail-order diploma mill! But even well-respected institutions of higher learning can be played so that the “document” really doesn't represent the level of knowledge in the recipient! Ultimately our credentials for what we know come from a life testimony of character development and acquired knowledge in the proverbial “School of Hard Knocks.” Although paper recognition can be quite useful they will only get you “in the door.” A surgeon with an immaculate credential on his wall will probably not last long if he shows up for work wearing coveralls and brandishing a crosscut saw!

Matthew is presenting Jesus of Nazareth as the true Messiah-King for whom they had been waiting for millennia. Jesus did not have the normal accoutrements of a King. He was raised in a small town of humble origins. His trade was carpentry. He was not part of the religious establishment. His clothing was common and His possessions were few. But this should not have been surprising. After all, just what sort of school would you attend to get qualification to be the Messiah!? The only authority capable of endorsing a candidate for the Messiahship would have to be God Himself. And that is the very credential to which Matthew points.

1. John the Baptist as the Forerunner vv. 1-12

- **His Person**
Lk 3: 2; Isa 40: 3

- **His Message**
Col. 3:2; Phil. 4:8; Deut 29:29

- **His Work**
Isa 40:3

- **His King**

2. The Anointing of Jesus vv. 13-17

- **His dispute with John vv. 13-15**
John 3:30

- **His Credentials**
Ezek 1:1; Isa 11: 2; 61:1; 42:1; John 6: 38

3. Lessons

John 15:4; 14:12; Gal 5: 22-23; John 13: 35

Questions for Conversation and Discussion

- 1. Have you ever had to rely on a credential to gain recognition from someone or access into a special place? Do you think you would have to have some sort of credential to get into the White House? Would I have to have one to get into your house? What would it be?**
- 2. What sorts of paper credentials do you possess? Do they indicate the truth of what they state? If you have a certificate of marksmanship from a military unit does that necessarily indicate your level of expertise with a rifle? Why might this actually not be the case?**
- 3. What sort of credentials will you have to have to get into Heaven? Do you think you will need a Certificate of Good Standing from an accredited denomination? Did John the Baptist have one? What did he have?**
- 4. Must a really good teacher or scholar have a PhD in his field to be a good teacher or scholar? What must he have? If he really doesn't need a paper certificate, what good are they? If Jesus had been baptized by John and then received a message from above asserting he was God's Son and then went about deceiving & manipulating people how far would that public recognition have gotten Him? What did He have to have besides the public recognition?**
- 5. Does a high school diploma from a state accredited high school mean that the graduate is truly educated? Does a non-degree from a non-state accredited home school mean that the graduate is not educated?! What do they mean in our day? What sorts of institutions are more likely to recognize the former? What sorts of institutions are more likely to recognize the latter. What are the advantages and disadvantages of living on the cusp of social rebellion? What were they for John the Baptist? Jesus?**