

The Baptism of Jesus Christ

Luke 3:15-22

INTRODUCTION: Having been rejected by the Jewish authorities. Having been betrayed by a companion for 30 pieces of silver, haven't been falsely accused, illegally tried and sentenced to die by crucifixion, having been nailed to a cross of wood till dead, having absorbed the totality of the dreaded cup of God's wrath, having been buried 3 long days, having overcome death, hell and the grave, having shown Himself alive by many irrefutable proofs... our Lord gathered together with his disciples one last time and gave them the mission they and all who came after them were to be about until His return.

"Go", He said, "into all the world and make disciples of all nations, BAPTIZING them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit". This is without controversy the Ultimatum of Heaven. It is and has been called, the "great commission" It is the only imperative given to believers in all four Gospels and the Book of Acts.

Central to our adherence to this command is the act of BAPTISM. If there was any act of religious observance that we ought to practice normatively, second only to the preaching of the Gospel itself is the act of Baptism.

Few events in your life will hold greater significance the act of Baptism. Yet for many - it is hardly remembered. We photograph our weddings, we hire professional videographers to capture the monumentous occasion, and rightly so. Yet, however significant the wedding ceremony and the subsequent marriage may be, it is at best temporary. The Christian marriage is, after all, till death to we part.

Baptism on the other hand is a ceremony with eternal implications, no only for the baptizee, but also for those fortunate enough to observe such a thing.

Today's text give us the remarkable opportunity to observe the most significant baptism in all of human history - the Baptism of Jesus Himself. But as we look at the Baptism of our Lord, I want you to consider your own baptism... in light of three questions:

1. **Was your Baptism in proper Order?** *In other words was it after you made a conscious decision to believe on the person and work of Christ for your personal redemption?*
2. **Was your Baptism in proper Mode?** *There is only one way the Bible gives us to be baptized and that is to be totally submerged, or buried in water, then raised up again - in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.*
3. **Was your Baptism in proper Intent?** *In other words, did you call for baptism as as an act of your will, and not someone else's?*

So for the next few minutes, go back in time and look at your baptism. If you have not been baptized, perhaps it is time to correct that. You will see why as we look at the text.

TEXT: Luke 3:15–17 (ESV)

¹⁵ As the people were in expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Christ,

Remember, messianic expectation was rampant in the first century. The time clock on OT prophecies were running out - and everyone knew that the time was at hand for Messiah to arrive. Remember John was just a few months older than Jesus. His birth would also have corresponded to the New Star in the Heaven's that seemed to remain there for two years.

His teaching was with power and anointing - he was in every sense of the word a Prophet of God. It wasn't unusual for a Messianic figure to gather forces in the wilderness, several had already done so during the intertestamental period. So it makes sense that people wondered, "could it be John?".

¹⁶ John answered them all, saying, "I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.

John says, "I have an important roll, introducing you to water baptism as a sign of your repentance... but another is coming". Then John says, "I am not worthy to even untie his sandals".

Remember, Jesus said of John - "he is the greatest man ever born... but John said of John, compared to Jesus, I'm not even a good slave"

BTW, to untie a person's sandals was considered to be such a degrading thing that not even slaves were permitted to do so. These sandals that had walked through the Judaeen wilderness carrying every form of uncleanness known to man. No, this was something you had to do yourself.

John says, "this one who is coming after me is so great... I am not worthy to serve Him in the most menial of ways".

He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

Now, I have heard some peculiar interpretations of that verse. What is meant by the baptism of the Holy Spirit and Fire? Here is my take on it - Jesus would baptize in the Holy Spirit - which is a good thing. Jesus would also baptize in fire - which is a bad thing. One is the greatest of all blessings, the other is the most dreadful of all judgements. We know that because of the next verse...

¹⁷ His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

So allowing the text to interpret itself we see the meaning.

NOW - skip down to verse 21. I will preach 17-20 next week.

Luke 3:21–22 (ESV)

²¹ Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened, ²² and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”

All four Gospel writers speak of this event. It is the most celebrated baptism of all time.

At first glance it seems unnecessary for Christ to be baptized. He has nothing to repent of. He has no need to profess His faith in Messiah. So **why did Jesus need to be Baptized?** The first person to raise that question was the Baptizer himself - John.

Matthew 3:13–15 (ESV)

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?”

What? Why on earth would you come for Baptism?

¹⁵ But Jesus answered him, “**Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.**” Then he consented.

That’s the first major point...Jesus was Baptized because of...

1. His Identification with Sinners

Simply because the key point of Baptism is IDENTIFICATION.

Our Baptism is a declaration to the world that we find our hope of resurrection in the death, burial and resurrection of another on our behalf. It is a physical symbol of our faith in Jesus Christ... we are saying - identify us with HIM.

As vital as it is that we identify ourself with Christ - ***it does NO GOOD for us to be identified with Christ, lest Christ is first Identified with us.***

In performing a ritual that was only required of sinners - **Jesus was identifying Himself not AS a sinner, but WITH the sinner.**

Hebrews 2:17–18 (ESV)

17 Therefore he had to be made like his brothers **in every respect**, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

Galatians 4:4–5 (ESV)

4 But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

In his life - Jesus would perform every duty, obey every command, keep every statute that would be required of any other individual. He would do this not only in deed, but in motive, from the heart.

In doing so, he was relating HIS identity to Sinners in general - and you as an individual sinner in particular.

Think of it - Here at the inauguration of His ministry, Jesus walks down into the water to declare to the world that He has come to redeem you. Just as our Baptism points back to an event in History - the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. His baptism pointed forward - three years, to a time when again he would stand between Heaven and Earth as if he were not fit for either. Stripped of all dignity. Bearing in his flesh the full penalty for your sins and mine.

He was not ashamed to identify Himself with YOU. Why on earth would you be ashamed to identify yourself with HIM?

2. His Identification with History

The fact that Jesus was laid into the waters of the Jordan, or all rivers held tremendous significance.

One of the ways a theologian studies scripture is by following strands of truth through a particular topic or subject.

The way one might pull a tread in a great quilt and trace it all throughout the garment, a theologian will look for certain ideas repeated throughout the narrative.

WATER is one just concept. The DOVE is another.

a. Jesus's Baptism Points Back to Creation

Genesis 1:1–2 (ESV)

1 In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. ² The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the **face of the deep**. And the Spirit of God was **hovering** over the face of the waters.

The Hebrews translate that word not hovering, but fluttering. It carries the connotation of a bird fluttering over the water.

OK - as a good theologian, is there anywhere else in the progressing narrative that we see WATER and DOVE as a prominent symbol? What about the flood of Noah?

b. Jesus's Baptism Points Back to the Days of Noah

The first great judgement on planet earth in the days of Noah came in the form of what? Water.

Genesis 6:5–6 (ESV)

⁵ The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. ⁶ And the Lord regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart.

So God pours out His wrath on man in the form of a great flood. The wrath of God came in the form of water... that which was designed to give life instead gave death.

NOW - through His baptism, Jesus is being laid under the water - as the water fell upon the body of our Lord, it symbolized the fact that one day the Judgement of the Father would fall upon Him in our stead.

c. Jesus's Baptism Points to the Symbolic Significance of the Jordan

Remember in the book of Joshua as the people were preparing to march into Zion and claim the inheritance promised to Abraham and his descendants forever...they came to the Jordan River.

Remember what was said - 12 men, one from each tribe of Israel went with the ARK, carried by the Priests. When the soles of the Priests stepped into the Jordan,

Joshua 3:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ the waters coming down from above stood and rose up in a heap very far away, at Adam, the city that is beside Zarethan, and those flowing down toward the Sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, were completely cut off. And the people passed over opposite Jericho.

Don't miss the significance of those names - the water stood up in a heap from ADAM to the DEAD SEA. Wow!

According to the Book of Genesis, **Dan** means "judgment" or "he judged"). Remember, Dan was the first of the two sons of Jacob and Bilhah (Jacob's fifth son). His mother, Bilhah, was Rachel's handmaid. She named him DAN saying, The Lord has Judged me.

JOR - DAN -

- JOR means to descend.
- DAN - means judgment.

The Baptism of Jesus portrays the fact that He descended into Judgement on our behalf.

And remember where the waters were heaped up? From ADAM to the DEAD SEA.

Judgement (Jordan) from Adam onward had led to death... the wages of sin is death. That was an unbroken flow throughout human history... that is UNTIL JESUS CHRIST stepped between ADAM and DEATH and underwent the Judgement we deserved.

The Baptism of Jesus Identified Him with Us, it identified Him with History, and thirdly...

3. His Identification with the the Holy Trinity

We see that after Jesus was Baptized, he stood there praying - 22 and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

So there we have the Holy Trinity, the Godhead fully represented... all fully God... all as unique persons. Father, Son, and Spirit

a. The Holy Spirit's Affirmation of Christ -

The Bible at times uses what is called, ANTHROPOMORPHIC language to describe God. That means, the writers use HUMAN terms to describe God. But here, we see ZOOMORPHIC language... that is God presented in Animal form.

Why is that significant? Well remember we said earlier that in the flood of Noah the Judgement came in the form of Water. Remember how God told them that the Judgment was complete and it was time to start again?

Noah sent out a DOVE from the Ark and it returned with an olive branch.. indicating that new life has come.

Here the HOLY SPIRIT descends upon Christ in the form of a Dove saying - this now is the source of new life.

Not only did the Holy Spirit affirm the person of Christ...

a. The Father's Affirmation of Christ -

22b. and a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

In ancient days, when a King would near death the question would arise, “which of his sons would rule after him?”.

Remember, it was not uncommon for one of the sons to appoint themselves as heir.... Remember Absalom did that near the end of David’s life.

Well David would call for a public ceremony where he would declare Solomon to be his rightful heir.

One of the things he would say is, “THIS IS MY BELOVED SON”. We see some indication of that in Psalm 2.

Psalm 2:1–9 (ESV)

¹ Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? ² The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his Anointed, saying, ³ “Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us.”

⁴ He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision. ⁵ Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying, ⁶ “As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill.”

⁷ I will tell of the decree: The Lord said to me, “**You are my Son; today I have begotten you.**”

So here at the Baptism of Jesus as His Earthly ministry begins... we see another declaration - as the Father identifies the Son as His rightful Heir. “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”

This will happen once more at the transfiguration of Jesus we will see in the days ahead.

So there you see why the Baptism of Jesus was the most significant baptism in all of human history.

NOW - I asked you to consider your Baptism in relation to His baptism. Do you see why your personal profession of faith through baptism is so important?

Jesus Baptism is Him Identifying with you, with History, and with the Godhead.
Your Baptism is your YOUR identifying with HIM, with History, and with the Godhead.

CONCLUSION/INVITATION: So I would ask you -

- 1. Was your Baptism in proper Order?** *In other words was it **after** you made a conscious decision to believe on the person and work of Christ for your personal redemption? While there are many blessings to growing up in a culture heavily influenced by Christianity - one of the dangers is that conversion is presumed and*

not possessed.

As you look over your life... when did you consciously understand the Gospel? When did you personally express faith in the Gospel? When was there a measurable change to the direction and priorities of your life? Fruit in keeping with repentance? As far as possible nail that down to a date or season.

Was your baptism before or after that time? If it was prior to your conversion... it is out of order and you need to be NOT re- baptized... you need to be baptized for the first time.

- 2. Was your Baptism in proper Mode?** *There is only one way the Bible gives us to be baptized and that is to be totally submerged, or buried in water, then raised up again - in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.*

It held significance for Jesus and it holds significance for you. Pouring of water over the head does not constitute baptism. Dabbing water on the brow does not constitute Baptism. The word itself means to immerse.

It was used in extra biblical literature for a garment being dyed or for a ship sinking in the sea. It means to submerge fully. Was your mode of baptism biblical.?

- 3. Was your Baptism in proper Intent?** *In other words, did you call for baptism as an act of your will, and not someone else's?*

Were you baptized, knowing to some degree what it mean and what you were doing? Or did you simply follow suit with your friends? Were you seeking to honor your parents?

When in its proper ORDER, MODE, and INTENT - Baptism can be one of those first building blocks of one's life. The first act of obedience... when it is out of ORDER, MODE, and INTENT it can cause several other things to get out of order as well.

Could it be that thing you've been missing is biblical obedience in the area of Baptism?