

Calvary Chapel  Philadelphia



CHILDREN'S MINISTRY TEACHER'S PACKET

1st Grade

Sunday Morning

Study 2

The Baptism of Jesus

The Baptism of Jesus

The Objective is the key concept for this week's lesson. It should be the main focus of the study.

These are the key verses that you will find helpful in teaching your study this week. The "Main passage" is the basis of the study, where the other verses support the objective of the lesson.

There is a memory verse for the students that relates to every study. If a student can memorize the verse for the following week you may give them a prize from the "reward box" found on your cart.

An introductory activity or question that will settle the class, draw their attention to the study and prepare their hearts for God's Word.

Objective To teach the students about our need for repentance through the story of John baptizing Jesus in the Jordan.

Key Verses

Matthew 3—Main Teaching Passage

Luke 3:1-22 (Parallel Passage)

Memory Verse - Matthew 3:1-2

"In those days John the Baptist came... saying, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!'"

Hook

Review last week's memory verse, Matthew 1:21.

Hand out to some volunteers the "title cards" found on your cart, which each have a job title on them (pastor, teacher, thief). Ask the students which one of these people needs to turn from their sin. Explain to them that all of these people need to repent.

In our story today, many different people are told to turn away from their sins. Some people listened, but others did not.

What does the Bible say? This is where we will read a passage or series of passages that teach on the subject of the day.

BOOK

As we will see throughout our study of the New Testament this year, Jesus had a habit of doing unexpected things. On this occasion, we find Him getting baptized by His cousin, John. The story begins with John, nicknamed “the Baptist,” preaching a message of repentance to Jewish people by the Jordan. Many were getting baptized in response to his preaching (explain that baptism is an act in which people are dunked under the water as a symbol of their repentance).

As he was preaching, a group of religious leaders called the Pharisees and Sadducees were listening. This year as we read about Jesus’ life, we’ll see that the Pharisees and Sadducees were deeply religious men who acted spiritual, but in their hearts they did not care about God. John called these men out for being prideful and thinking they did not need to repent because they were Jewish. He then told them that someone was coming after Him with an even greater baptism than his.

After that, Jesus came up to John and asked John to baptize Him. John was startled that Jesus, God’s special Son, would ask to be baptized by him. He protested that Jesus should be the one baptizing him. However, Jesus insisted that John needed to baptize Him. John obeyed, and as soon as Jesus was baptized, the sky opened up and the Holy Spirit came down on Jesus like a dove. A voice from Heaven shouted, “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased,” indicating that Jesus had done the Father’s will.

LOOK

John’s reaction to Jesus’ request to be baptized should be the same as ours the first time we read this story: total surprise. Baptism is an act of repentance from sin (make sure the kids know what repent means: to repent is to turn away from your sins and turn instead to God). Jesus, the Son of God, didn’t have any sin to repent of. You would think, as John did, that Jesus would come to tell John that He was going to baptize him. If there was one person whom you would think would not need to be baptized, it would be Jesus. But as we saw last week, Jesus’ purpose was to save us from our sins. This baptism was a part of that mission. In His baptism, He was showing that He had become like us. Just like the rest of humanity, Jesus too would be baptized. In His baptism, Jesus identified with the rest of humanity and set an example for us that we too need to repent from our sins and be baptized.

Jesus’ willing attitude to obey the Father and His humility in this act of repentance stands in stark contrast with the Pharisees and Sadducees

The interpretation/exegesis of the passage. What does this passage mean? How does this passage apply to my life?

LOOK (Continued)

in today's story. As Jesus submitted, they looked on in pride and arrogance. They thought, "Why do I need to be baptized? I'm Jewish, I keep the law, I go to synagogue every Saturday, and I'm a well-respected religious leader. What sin do I have to repent of?" This prideful attitude, in contrast with Jesus' obedience, should serve as a warning to us. If Jesus Christ, the sinless Son of God, needed to repent and be baptized, then I certainly should too. Every single person since Adam and Eve has sinned. We all need to turn from that sin and turn to God. Just as John preached, we all need to repent.

This passage highlights what an obedient Son Jesus is to the Father. At the end of the story, the Father's voice calls Jesus His beloved Son in whom He is well pleased. This affirmation of Jesus indicates that He was living in complete obedience to the Father. As we read throughout the Gospels and see the life of Christ, we will see that everything He did, He did according to the Father's will. Jesus never acted outside of the Father's will or without the Father's leading. Anything we see Jesus doing, we know it is God-honoring and righteous.

What is my response to this passage of Scripture? How should my life change according to what this passage teaches me? What are the practical things I can do throughout the week to make this true in my life?

TOOK

As a class, memorize Matthew 3:1-2.

Review the lesson by asking the class what "repent" means. Ask them about the difference between Jesus' response to John's message and the Pharisees' and Sadducees' response.

Pray: Thank Jesus for becoming a man like us and going to be baptized. Pray a prayer of repentance over the class.

Parent Question: Why did Jesus go to get baptized?

FURTHER STUDY

Commentary on Matthew 3 by David Guzik

THE MINISTRY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

A. The public ministry of John the Baptist.

1. ([Matthew 3:1-2](#)) The message of John the Baptist.

In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!”

a. **In those days John the Baptist came:** Matthew introduces us to one of the fascinating characters of the New Testament. This was the John born to Zacharias and Elisabeth, whose miraculous birth to this too-old couple was announced, along with his call to be the forerunner of the Messiah, in [Luke 1](#).

i. **In those days:** “It is a general term that reveals little chronologically but insists that the account is historical.” (Carson)

b. **Preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, “Repent”:** John’s message was a call to repentance. Some people think that repentance is mostly about *feelings*, especially feeling sorry for your sin. It is wonderful to feel sorry about your sin, but **repent** isn’t a “feelings” word. It is an *action* word. John told his listeners to make a change of the mind, not merely to feel sorry for what they had done. Repentance speaks of a change of direction, not a sorrow in the heart.

i. Is repentance something we must *do* before we can come to God? Yes and no. Repentance does not describe something we must do before we come to God; it describes what coming to God is like. If you are in New York, and I tell you to come to Los Angeles, I don’t really need to say “Leave New York and come to Los Angeles.” To come to Los Angeles *is* to leave New York, and if I haven’t left New York, I certainly haven’t come to Los Angeles. We can’t come to the **kingdom of heaven** unless we leave our sin and the self-life.

ii. The call to repentance is important and must not be neglected. It is entirely accurate to say that it is the *first word of the gospel*.

Repent was the *first word* of John the Baptist’s gospel ([Matthew 3:1-2](#)).

Repent was the *first word* of Jesus’ gospel ([Matthew 4:17](#) and [Mark 1:14-15](#)).

Repent was the *first word* in the preaching ministry of the twelve disciples ([Mark 6:12](#)).

Repent was the *first word* in the preaching instructions Jesus gave to His disciples after His resurrection ([Luke 24:46-47](#)).

Repent was the *first word* of exhortation in the first Christian sermon ([Acts 2:38](#)).

Repent was the *first word* in the mouth of the Apostle Paul through his ministry ([Acts 26:19-20](#)).

iii. The **wilderness** John preached in wasn’t exactly desert. “It is hot and, apart from the Jordan itself, largely arid, though not unpopulated.” (Carson)

c. **For the kingdom of heaven is at hand:** John wanted people to know that **the kingdom of heaven** was *near* — as close as your **hand**. It wasn’t as distant or as dreamy as they had imagined. This is why John was so urgent in his call to repentance. If the **kingdom of heaven is at hand**, then we must get ready *now*.

i. John's main message wasn't "You're a sinner, you need to repent." John's main message was "*Messiah the King is coming.*" The call to repentance was the *response* to the news that the King and His kingdom were coming — indeed, already here in one sense.

ii. Some dispensationalists see a difference between the **kingdom of heaven** and the *kingdom of God*, the dominant terms used in Mark and Luke. The idea is that the *kingdom of God* is a now-present spiritual kingdom, but the **kingdom of heaven** refers to the coming millennial earth in its splendor. A much better explanation is that Matthew simply used the term **kingdom of heaven** instead of *kingdom of God* so as to avoid offence to Jewish readers, who often rejected direct references to God and would refer to His dwelling place instead of Him directly.

iii. Adam Clarke gives a further idea: "But why is it called the *kingdom of HEAVEN*? Because God designed that his kingdom of grace here should resemble the kingdom of glory above. And hence our Lord teaches us to pray, Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven."

2. ([Matthew 3:3-4](#)) The identity of John the Baptist.

For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying:

**"The voice of one crying in the wilderness:
'Prepare the way of the LORD;
Make His paths straight.'"**

And John himself was clothed in camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey.

a. **Prepare the way of the LORD:** Matthew used this passage from [Isaiah 40:3](#) to identify John the Baptist as the prophesied forerunner of the Messiah. In this role, John's purpose was to **prepare** hearts for the Messiah, and to bring an awareness of sin among Israel so they could receive the salvation from sin offered by the Messiah ([Matthew 1:21](#)).

i. "According to [John 1:23](#), the Baptist once applied this passage to himself. Here Matthew does it for him." (Carson)

b. **Make His paths straight:** The passage Matthew quotes from ([Isaiah 40:3](#)) has in mind building up a great road for the arrival of a majestic king. The idea is to fill in the holes and knock down the hills that are in the way.

i. "The idea is taken from the practice of eastern monarchs, who, whenever they entered upon an expedition, or took a journey through a desert country, sent *harbingers* before them, to prepare all things for their passage; and *pioneers* to *open* the *passes*, to *level* the *ways*, and to *remove* all *impediments.*" (Clarke)

ii. The idea of preparing the way of the LORD is a word picture, because the real preparation must take place in our hearts. Building a road is very much like the preparation God must do in our hearts. They are both expensive, they both must deal with many different problems and environments, and they both take an expert engineer.

iii. Jesus was the coming Messiah and King, and John the Baptist was the one **crying in the wilderness**, and through his message of repentance, he worked to **prepare the way of the LORD**. We often fail to appreciate how important the *preparing* work of the LORD is. Any great work of God begins with great *preparation*.

iv. "Men's hearts were like a wilderness, wherein there is no way; but as loyal subjects throw up roads for the approach of beloved princes, so were men to welcome the Lord, with their hearts made right and ready to receive him." (Spurgeon)

v. In [Isaiah 40:3](#) the way of Yahweh is prepared and made straight; in [Matthew 3:3](#) it is the way of Jesus. This identification of Jesus with Yahweh is common in the New Testament (as in [Exodus 13:21](#) and [1 Corinthians 10:4](#); [Isaiah 6:1](#) and [John 12:41](#)).

c. **Clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt:** In his personality and ministry, John the Baptist was patterned after the bold Elijah ([2 Kings 1:8](#)), who fearlessly called Israel to repentance.

i. "Both Elijah and John had stern ministries in which austere garb and diet confirmed their message and condemned the idolatry of physical and spiritual softness." (Carson)

ii. In the spirit of today's age, John's ministry would have been very different. He wouldn't start in the wilderness. He wouldn't dress funny. He wouldn't preach such a straightforward message. He would use marketing surveys and focus groups to hone his message and presentation. John wasn't motivated by the spirit of today's age, but by the Spirit of God.

iii. It wasn't that John the Baptist was *trying to be* this Elijah-like forerunner predicted in [Malachi 4:5](#), as if he decided on his own to make this his destiny and public image. John knew the words spoken to his father Zacharias before he was born: *He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, "to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children," and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.* ([Luke 1:17](#)) This is simply who John the Baptist was, and one might say he was this before he was even created in the womb.

iv. "His diet, though limited, was nutritious and readily available in the wilderness." (France)

v. "Lord, let not my meat, my drink, or garments, hinder me in thy work!" (Spurgeon)

3. ([Matthew 3:5-6](#)) The success of John's ministry.

Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins.

a. **Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him:** John's ministry met with wonderful response. There were many people who recognized their sinfulness, their need to get ready for the Messiah, and were willing to *do* something about it.

i. Under the blessing of God, John's message of repentance and call to prepare for the Messiah bore great fruit. "Baptism was for sinners, and no Jew ever conceived of himself as a sinner shut out from God. Now for the first time in their national history the Jews realized their own sin and their own clamant need of God. Never before had there been such a unique national movement of penitence and of search for God." (Barclay)

ii. "His preaching created a widespread revival movement, and his followers constituted a significant group within Judaism which maintained its separate existence beyond the New Testament period." (France)

iii. Josephus actually wrote more about John the Baptist than he did about Jesus. The influence of John the Baptist is evident decades after his ministry began, as seen in [Acts 18:25](#) and [19:3](#).

iv. **All Judea, and all the region:** "The term *all* here twice repeated, is enough to let us know, that it is often in Scripture significative no further than *many*, for it cannot be imagined that every individual person in Jerusalem and the region about Jordan went to hear John the Baptist, but a great many did." (Poole)

b. **And were baptized by him:** With baptism, John offered a ceremonial washing that confessed sin and *did something* to demonstrate repentance. Before we can gain the kingdom of heaven, we must recognize our poverty of spirit ([Matthew 5:3](#)). This type of awareness of sin is the foundation for most revivals and awakenings.

i. Baptism simply means to "immerse or overwhelm." John didn't sprinkle when he **baptized**. As was the custom in some other Jewish ceremonial washings, John completely immersed those he baptized. "Naturally, therefore, the baptism was not a mere sprinkling with water, but a bath in which his whole body was bathed." (Barclay)

ii. Baptism was practiced in the Jewish community already in the form of ceremonial immersions, but typically it was only among Gentiles who wished to become Jews. For a Jew in John's day to submit to baptism was essentially to say, "I confess that I am as far away from God as a Gentile and I need to get right with Him." This was a real work of the Holy Spirit.

iii. John's baptism might have been related to the Jewish practice of baptizing Gentile converts, or to some of the ceremonial washings practiced by the Jews of that day. Though it may have some links, at the same time it was *unique* — so unique that John simply became known as "the Baptizer." If there were a lot of people doing that, it wouldn't be a unique title.

iv. "John's baptism was an innovation. The nearest contemporary parallels are the self-baptism of a Gentile on becoming a proselyte, and the repeated ritual washings (also self-administered) at Qumran." (France)

v. Christian baptism is like John's in the sense that it demonstrates repentance, but it is also more. It is being *baptized into Christ*, that is, into His death and resurrection ([Romans 6:3](#)).

c. **Confessing their sins:** This was another important aspect, and is a partner to the call to repentance. These Jewish people were very serious about getting right with God.

i. "The participle means, *while confessing*; not, provided they confessed. This confession of sins by individuals was a new thing in Israel. There was a collective confession on the great day of atonement, and individual confession in certain specified cases ([Numbers 5:7](#)), but no great spontaneous self-unburdenment of penitent souls — every man apart. It must have been a stirring sight." (Bruce)

ii. "The '*Confessing their sins*' which went with baptism in the Jordan gave it its meaning. Apart from the acknowledgement of guilt, it would have been a mere bathing of the person without spiritual significance." (Spurgeon)

4. ([Matthew 3:7-12](#)) John's confrontation with the Pharisees and Sadducees.

But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not think to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

a. **When he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming:** This is our introduction to these two important groups in first-century Judaism. These two groups were very different and often in conflict. Together they represented the leadership of Judaism.

i. Matthew Poole pointed out four things about the Pharisees.

- They believed that one was made righteous by keeping the law, and they believed themselves to be righteous in this way.
- They often misinterpreted the law.
- They held many traditions to be of equal authority to Scripture.
- They were often hypocrites in their practice, neglecting the core and spirit of the law for aspects of outward observance.

ii. Bruce called the Pharisees "Legal precisians, *virtuosi* in religion." Of the Sadducees, he said they were "Men of affairs and of the world, largely of the sacerdotal class."

b. **Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come:** John accused these leaders of wanting to *appear* anxious for the Messiah, but not truly repenting and preparing their hearts. Therefore John demanded **fruits worthy of repentance**.

i. "Many Pharisees and Sadducees may have come for baptism with the ostentation that characterized their

other religious activities... they were showing the world how ready they were for Messiah, though they had not truly repented.” (Carson) John reminded them that real repentance will show itself in life. It has to be a matter of *living* repentance, not just *talking* repentance.

ii. “You come here and thrust yourselves into a crowd of penitents, but this is not enough, true repentance is not a barren thing...you must bring forth the fruits of holiness, fruits that may answer the nature of true repentance.” (Poole)

iii. Of course most of the Jewish people believed in **the wrath to come**; the difference was the targets of that judgment. “They conceived of the judgment as concerning the heathen peoples; he thought of it as concerning the godless in Israel.” (Bruce)

iv. We can learn much from John the Baptist’s preaching, “**Flee from the wrath to come.**”

- This wrath is the **wrath** of God.
- This wrath is fair and well deserved.
- This wrath is often ignored or disregarded because it is not immediate; it is **to come**.
- This wrath is not any less certain just because it is delayed and is **to come**.
- This wrath is terrible when it comes because it is God’s wrath.
- This wrath cannot be stood against; the only way to survive is to successfully **flee** from it.

v. What John told them to do is also instructive: **flee**.

- To **flee** implies *immediate action*.
- To **flee** implies *swift action*.
- To **flee** implies *straight movement with no diversions*.

c. **Do not think to say to yourselves, “We have Abraham as our father”**: John warns them to stop trusting in their Jewish heritage because they must truly repent, not simply trust in Abraham’s merits.

i. It was widely taught in that day that Abraham’s merits were plenty for any Jew’s salvation and that a Jewish person *couldn’t* go to hell. John points out that these Pharisees and Sadducees are of a different family; they are a **brood of vipers** — meaning a family associated with serpents!

ii. **Even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees**: “It has been well observed, that there is an allusion here to a woodman, who, having marked a tree for excision, lays his axe at its root, and strips off his outer garment, that he may wield his blows more powerfully, and that his work may be quickly performed.” (Clarke)

iii. “No mere pruning and trimming work did John come to do; he was the handler of a sharp axe that was to fell every worthless tree.” (Spurgeon)

d. **I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance**: John’s baptism was one of **repentance**. In this regard, it was not identical to Christian baptism or *baptism into Christ* ([Romans 6:3](#)), which includes a demonstration of repentance and cleansing, but also recognizes the believer’s identification with Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection ([Romans 6:3-4](#)).

e. **Whose sandals I am not worthy to carry**: John recognizes his own place before Jesus. He is one **not worthy to carry** the **sandals** of Jesus, and he did not consider himself far above those whom he has called to repentance, and he knew where he stood in relation to Jesus (instead of becoming proud of the crowds he drew and the response he saw).

i. In saying this, John put himself lower in relation to Jesus than a normal disciple of a normal rabbi. “A Rabbi’s disciple was expected to act virtually as his master’s slave, but to remove his shoes was too low a task for even a disciple (*Ketuboth* 96a).”

f. **He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor:** John warns them to prepare for the Messiah's coming, because He is coming with judgment.

i. **Baptize you with the Holy Spirit:** This is the promised out-pouring of the Spirit promised with the New Covenant ([Ezekiel 37:14](#)).

ii. **And fire:** To baptize with **fire** means to bring the fires of judgment, which will purify the pure, but destroy the wicked like **chaff**. **Chaff** is the worthless residue of a wheat stalk after the kernel of grain has been removed. These proud and unrepentant leaders were just as useless to God. "Purification by *fire* was also a prophetic hope ([Isaiah 4:4](#); [Zechariah 13:9](#); [Malachi 3:2](#); cf. [Isaiah 1:25](#)). John therefore predicts a real cleansing, in contrast with his own merely outward token." (France)

iii. "A winnowing fork tossed both unto the air. The wind blew the chaff away, and the heavier grain fell to be gathered up from the ground. The scattered chaff was swept up and burned and the threshing floor cleared." (Carson)

iv. The Jewish leaders thought that the Messiah would come with judgment, but only against Israel's enemies. They were blind in their self-righteous confidence that only others needed to get right with God. Many today have the same idea. "John the Baptist is sadly needed to-day. Much of what we call Christianity is but christianized heathenism...we need that John the Baptist should come with his stern words about the axe, the winnowing-fan, and the fire. Nothing less will avail to prepare the way for a new coming of Christ." (Meyer)

B. John's ministry in baptizing Jesus.

1. ([Matthew 3:13-14](#)) Jesus comes to John for baptism.

Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. And John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?"

a. **Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized:** This is a significant emergence of Jesus from His many years of obscurity. These first works in His public ministry carry great meaning in understanding the rest of His ministry.

b. **Jesus came:** No one compelled Jesus to be baptized. He came to John of His own choice. There are some old and false traditions (mentioned in Barclay) that Jesus was baptized because of pressure from His mother and brothers. Since everyone else was doing it, they thought He should also.

c. **I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me:** John recognized the inherent irony in this situation. Jesus had nothing to repent of, and it would be more appropriate for Jesus to baptize John.

i. It was as if John said to Jesus, "I need your Spirit-and-fire baptism, not you my water-baptism." (France)

2. ([Matthew 3:15](#)) Jesus allows Himself to be baptized by John.

But Jesus answered and said to him, "Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he allowed Him.

a. **It is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness:** Jesus understood why this seemed strange to John, but it was nevertheless necessary **to fulfill all righteousness**. It wasn't that this one act in itself fulfilled all righteousness, but it was another important step in the overall mission of Jesus to identify with fallen and sinful man, a mission that would only finally be fulfilled at the cross.

i. Yet it would be easy for any onlooker to think that Jesus was just another sinner being baptized; so He identified with sinful man. "Christ's baptism might create misunderstanding, just as His associating with publicans and sinners did. He was content to be misunderstood." (Bruce)

b. **Then he allowed Him:** The purpose was for Jesus to completely identify Himself with sinful man. This is exactly what He did in His birth, His upbringing, and His death. So here, as John **allowed Him** to be, Jesus

stood in the place of sinful man.

i. "In baptism He confessed, as His own, sins which He had not committed, and repented of them before God. He was numbered with the transgressors and bore the sins of many." (Morgan)

ii. There is also a sense in which this was an important new beginning for Jesus; not in the sense of turning from sin, but in making a break with His previous life. "In accordance with the symbolic significance of the rite as denoting death to an old life and rising to a new, Jesus came to be baptized in the sense of dying to the old natural relations to parents, neighbors, and earthly calling, and devoting Himself henceforth to His public Messianic vocation." (Bruce)

3. ([Matthew 3:16-17](#)) The Divine witness to Jesus' status as the Son of God.

When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

a. **The heavens were opened:** It was important for God the Father to publicly demonstrate that Jesus' baptism was not just like anyone else's, in the sense of being a display of repentance. It was *not* a display of repentance, but instead it was a righteous identification with sinners, motivated by love, was *well pleasing* to the Father.

b. **The Spirit of God descending like a dove:** This was a dramatic experience with the Holy Spirit, with the **Spirit of God** coming upon Jesus in a way that could actually be seen (somewhat similar to the coming of the Spirit of God upon the gathered disciples in [Acts 2:1-4](#)).

i. [Luke 3:22](#) says it like this: *And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him*. In some way the Spirit was present, and "flew down" upon Jesus **like a dove**. Whatever exactly it was, it was real. [John 1:32-34](#) indicates that John the Baptist *saw* this phenomenon and understood what it meant.

ii. This was not a temporary gift of the **Spirit of God**. John the Baptist's testimony in [John 1:32-33](#), when he said that he saw *the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him*. Jesus was about to begin His public ministry, and He would do it in the power of the **Spirit of God**. "It was the Spirit of God who gave success to Jesus Christ's ministry." (Spurgeon)

iii. How a **dove** represents the work of the Holy Spirit:

- Like a dove, the work of the Holy Spirit can be swift.
- Like a dove, the work of the Holy Spirit can be soft and gentle.
- Like a dove, the work of the Holy Spirit brings peace.
- Like a dove, the work of the Holy Spirit is harmless.
- Like a dove, the work of the Holy Spirit speaks of love.

c. **This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased:** When this voice of God the Father spoke from heaven, everyone knew that Jesus was not just another man being baptized. They knew Jesus was the perfect (**in whom I am well pleased**) Son of God, identifying with sinful man. By this, everyone knew that Jesus was different. Jesus was baptized so to be identified *with* sinful man, but He was also baptized to be identified *to* sinful man.

i. [Luke 3:21](#) tells us that the heavens were opened while Jesus prayed. "As he was praying; for prayer is the key of heaven, wherewith we may take out of God's treasury plentiful mercy for ourselves and others." (Trapp)

ii. In this God the Father also expressed His approval of Jesus' life up to this point. "By the divine proclamation at the baptism God announced the presence of the King, and set the seal of His approval on the years already

lived.” (Morgan)

d. **The Spirit of God descending... My beloved Son:** We should not miss the obvious point: *God the Father loves God the Son, and communicated that love by God the Holy Spirit.* Here we see the love relationship and cooperation between the Persons of the Trinity, in one occasion when the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit were all manifested at the same time.

i. “God so loved his Son, that he gave him all the world for his possession, [Psalm 2](#); but he so loved the world, that he gave Son and all for its redemption.” (Trapp)

ii. There is no suggestion that Jesus *became* the Son of God with this experience. “We need not assume that Jesus had no previous experience of the Spirit; the vision symbolizes his commissioning for his Messianic work, not a new spiritual status.” (France)