

Jesus' Baptism

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[0 : 00] This week I would like us to turn to the verses in Luke chapter 3 verses 21 and 22.

These are two short verses but they're describing to us a very, very important and significant moment in Jesus's ministry. Here Jesus is being baptized.

Now when all the people were baptized and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying the heavens were opened 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. Now here we just have two short verses describing what happened when Jesus was baptized.

But even though it's only two verses here we have an incredibly significant moment in Jesus's life and here we have a huge amount of teaching for us to explore together and it's obviously an event that is really important for us to think about and to learn about it.

[1 : 14] So in order to examine Luke 3, 21 and 22 we're just going to follow a very, very simple structure and we're going to say that we can identify 10 things that we can note in the baptism of Jesus and we'll look at five of them this week and we'll look at five of them next week.

There's not really any particular order in terms of these 10 things but each of them are important and each of them rise out of these two verses. So 10 things that we learn from Jesus is baptism. So number one, the first thing that we see here is that when Jesus was baptized he is identifying himself with us.

When you come to this passage, one of the first questions that springs to your mind is why did Jesus have to be baptized? We were saying last week that John preached a baptism of repentance and as you remember the key point in repentance is the idea of turning round.

The whole emphasis of John's message was that there was something wrong with the people. They were not as they should be therefore they needed to turn, they needed to repent, they needed to change and the washing of water with the baptism symbolised cleansing.

[2 : 41] The fact that the people had turned from their sins and were now going in a new path in their lives. But when it comes to Jesus, he wasn't sinful and he wasn't going down the wrong road and he wasn't contaminated.

There was nothing wrong with him. And so we immediately are left thinking, well why was Jesus baptized? Why did he want to do the very thing that symbolised a change and a turning away from sin?

Well it's a really important question and there's various things that can be said but the main point is that the reason Jesus was baptized was in order to identify himself with the people he came to save.

If you read verse 21 you can picture in your mind what was going on. It says when all the people were baptized and when Jesus also had been baptized. The picture we have in our minds there is of crowds of people being baptized and Jesus is with them.

It doesn't say the people were baptized and then Jesus was baptized on his own afterwards. It's saying that as the people were being baptized so too was Jesus.

[4 : 04] In other words when we picture Jesus being baptized he is surrounded by normal ordinary people.

And that is deliberate on the part of Jesus because he is identifying himself with them. He's not identifying himself as a sinner but he is identifying himself with sinners.

He has come to stand alongside them. And as we were saying John's message was that there was something wrong with humanity. And by being baptized Jesus is saying that he is coming alongside us.

He is taking up our cause. He is ready to help us. He's identifying himself with humanity. He's identifying himself with you.

Now that is a really really important point and it's an incredibly comforting point for us because when we see that Jesus is identifying himself with us it is telling us that Jesus is meeting us where we are and Jesus is meeting us as we are.

[5 : 15] Jesus is meeting you where you are and just as you are. This is so so important to grasp because it's so easy to think that Jesus is out of reach.

It's so easy to think that Jesus is too high for us to reach. He's perfect. We are not. Christians are supposed to be good and I'm not.

People who follow God, people who go to the prayer meeting, people who become members, they are of a certain standard. I'm not. Jesus is out of reach. It's so easy to feel like that. So easy to feel that we can't reach him.

And it's also very easy to feel that he can't reach us. We can feel that Jesus is too high and we can feel that we are too low, that we are too far gone, that we've made too many mistakes and there's too many things wrong with us.

We can think that Jesus is too high. We can think that we are too low. But neither of these things are true. Jesus meets us where we are.

[6 : 17] These people who came to John came to him out of a sense of their sorrow, a sense of failure, a sense of fear, a sense of being very aware that they need to change.

These people came out to John full of problems and Jesus stood right there with them.

Jesus identified himself with sinners. And so that's the first and perhaps the most wonderful lesson of all that we learn from Jesus' baptism.

He is identifying himself with you and that means that whoever you are, wherever you are, whatever you are, no matter what the circumstances of your life, Jesus is coming alongside you.

He is not out of reach. He is never out of reach. Jesus in his baptism is saying to sinners like you and me, I am with you.

[7 : 19] I am with you. So that's number one. Jesus identifies himself with us. But the second point shows us that not only is Jesus identifying himself with us, but Jesus himself is being identified.

Second point, God confirms the identity and the office of Jesus. Now, this is really important because at this moment we have a kind of turning point in Jesus's life.

Up until this point, so much of what we've read in Luke is background information. So much of Jesus's life has been very, very private. We know next to nothing about Jesus's childhood because it was all private.

It is only now at this point that Jesus's life becomes public. And this is a huge turning point. He is entering into his public ministry. And at that point, God confirms who Jesus is and why he has come.

When Jesus came up after being baptized and was praying, it tells us that the heavens were opened. God, at this moment, intervenes. Heaven and earth are connected together and God is revealing something vital to the world.

[8 : 43] And when it comes to this revelation, God is opening heaven and so he's revealing something. If you look at verse 22, two things happen. Verse 22 tells us that two things take place.

It says that the spirit descends from heaven and it says that our voice comes from heaven. If you look at verse 22, you see that both of these transmissions, if you like, from heaven have the same destination.

The spirit descends on Jesus and the voice is spoken to Jesus. And the key point is that Jesus is being identified.

Jesus is being focused on. Now, this is a massively important turning point in history. In many ways, when you come to the Bible, you've got the Old Testament and the New Testament and there's a big division between the two in many ways.

But it's easy to think that the New Testament begins at Luke chapter one with Jesus' with John the Baptist's birth. And in many ways, it does.

[9 : 53] But in some ways, this is the beginning of the New Testament. This moment is the real turning point because up until this point, the message was the kingdom of God is coming.

But from this moment, the message is now the kingdom of God has come. John the Baptist, as I've said many times before, is really part of the Old Testament.

He's the last Old Testament prophet. He is the conclusion of the Old Testament era. The change is at this moment, the King has come.

And God is marking this moment, this turning point by opening heaven and saying, here he is. This is it. The King has come.

And John, that was really what John's whole point of John's mission, ministry was. John was the one who came to say he is coming. And John chapter one gives us more detail.

[11:00] One board witness, I saw the spirit descend from heaven like a dove and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but he who sent me, that's God, to baptize with water said to me, he on whom you see the spirit descend and remain.

This is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. And I have seen and borne witness that this is the Son of God. The whole message from God at this point is that's him.

He is here, the moment has come. And we have to almost try and step back into the world of the Jews at this point and step back into John's mind.

And imagine being in that situation. You think of the Jews and you think of the history that they had as God's people throughout all the Old Testament, all the wonderful history that they had, which will look a bit more tonight as we continue our study of the whole Bible.

But imagine that for a moment. Imagine you had all that history, all that heritage, but for 400 years you have heard nothing from God.

[12:09] And the people seem like they are lost. And if you look back, there's all these promises that the Messiah is going to come. But if you look and see your circumstances, it looks like it's never going to happen.

And then at this moment, God says, he is here, the Messiah has come.

And John and all the people must have been full of so much joy and so much relief.

Imagine the relief in the people's hearts when they realized that the Messiah had come. All that anticipation, all that sorrow, all that longing, and at last he is here.

And so if we put ourselves into their shoes, there's a huge amount of relief in their hearts. But the point that I want to make is that we should be feeling exactly the same.

[13:14] We should have exactly the same feeling of relief and joy when we think of the fact that Jesus has come.

Because if you think of everything that you struggle with in life, if you think of everything that makes your heart sink, if you think of everything that causes you tension and stress, everything that worries you, everything that has left you devastated or everything that you are worried about in terms of the future.

You think of every way that sin has ruined your life. And then remember that the Messiah has come.

He has come. The one that you need is here. And when you think of Jesus, you should think in terms of relief because you do not have to wait for someone other to come.

You do not have to wait for something to happen. You don't have to wait for anything in order to know the peace of God because the one that you need is here.

[14:20] And the message that you need is here. And the hope of the gospel is here. It is here for us.

God is confirming the identity and the office of Jesus. So point number one, Jesus identifies himself with us. Point number two, God identifies Jesus and this major turning point takes place.

And then we see that there's a voice from heaven. And that's where I want us to focus for the rest of our time today on what God said. Verse 22 at the end, we see the voice said, you are my beloved Son.

With you I am well pleased. So again, that's a really, really short sentence, but it's really important.

And our next three points, points three, four and five are all going to arise out of this statement.

The first thing that this tells us, which is point number three, that's getting confusing, but this is the third thing we're saying about the baptism. We see how precious Jesus is to his Father.

[15:33] These words are pointing us backwards and they're pointing us backwards to the relationship that exists between God the Father and God the Son.

And these words are emphasizing how precious Jesus is. God describes Jesus as my beloved Son. Jesus is God's Son. And we should be able to relate to everything that that means, the fact that they have this Father-Son relationship.

The Father looks at Jesus and he says, he is mine, my beloved Son. That spirit that every parent here can understand, that spirit of possession, of protection, of connection, of loyalty, of love is what God has towards his Son.

Jesus is his Son. And there is this unique and amazing bond between them. He is his beloved Son. [16:36] Jesus is loved utterly by his Father. So we see this amazing relationship, God's love for his Son that is indescribable and beyond any form of measurement.

Now, when I say that, I'm sure you all know what I'm talking about and I'm sure it's something that you are well, well aware of. God the Father loves God the Son beyond anything that I could ever, ever describe.

He is his beloved Son. But what I want you to notice is where these words were spoken.

Because when God said, you are my beloved Son, God is speaking from heaven and Jesus is standing in a river, in the wilderness, in the Middle East.

In other words, God has sent his Son. God has not withheld his Son. God is not keeping his Son close to him, but he has sent him to be our Savior.

[17:51] Now, it's so important that we grasp the magnitude of that because as the beloved Son, Jesus belongs with the Father. He is everything to the Father.

He is His. He is the Father's precious child. Imagine just all the protectiveness of a father or a mother towards their child, just that ultimate level of love and loyalty and protection.

But here in the baptism of Jesus, we are being shown that that precious, precious child has come to be one of us.

He has come to save us. And that's what Paul is talking about in Romans 8 when he says, he who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all.

Now, those words are easy to say, but we must, must grasp what they are saying. God has a precious Son, but he did not spare Him.

[19:02] And he did that for you. And so here we see the magnitude of what God is doing for us.

God is sending His precious, precious Son. And he sent Him for a purpose. And this is the fourth thing that we see from these verses.

Jesus came for a purpose. If we go back to verse 15, we see that the people were wondering about John as to whether he was the Messiah. But John's response is very clear.

He says, I am not the Messiah, but he says, I know who is. Jesus is the Messiah. And so here at this point, Jesus' identity as the Messiah is being revealed.

Remember now, up to this point, Jesus has lived for 30 years. He's been a carpenter in Nazareth. Many people have known who he is. Many people have known him. Luke's told us that he increased in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and with man.

[20:00] A lot of people knew who Jesus was. But really, they didn't know who he was. Because it is only now that his identity as the Messiah is being revealed.

Now, Messiah is a really important word. It's a Hebrew word that means anointed one. And the Greek equivalent, as I'm sure you know, is Christ. Jesus is the Messiah.

Jesus is the Christ. Christ Messiah, same word. Jesus is the anointed one. Now, when you hear that word, Messiah, or the word Christ, you should be thinking of three things.

You should be thinking of prophet, priest and king. And the reason you should be thinking of those three things is because back in the Old Testament, these three offices, these three positions, were all the ones that God anointed people to undertake.

Gods were anointed, priests were anointed, kings were anointed. And the Messiah is the anointed one because he perfectly fulfills the role as God's anointed prophet, God's anointed priest and God's anointed king.

[21:11] So whenever you hear the word Messiah, think of these three things, prophet, priest and king. And these three things summarise why Jesus came. He came as a prophet, he came as a priest, he came as a king.

And if we look closely, we can see that all three of these things are being pointed towards in Jesus's baptism. First of all, we are told that we can see that Jesus came as a prophet.

When heaven was opened, the spirit descended on Jesus. And we're going to look at that in a little bit more detail next week. But the point to emphasise just now is that here, God is revealing himself. And the point is that Jesus is being used by God as a means of revelation. God is revealing himself through Jesus Christ.

In fact, Jesus is the ultimate revelation of God. That was what we were reading about in Hebrews at the very start. He is the exact imprint of the nature of God.

[22 : 12] He is the radiance of the glory of God. If we want to see God, we look at Jesus. And as part of that, Jesus is God's messenger.

In other words, a prophet. And as Jesus himself says in chapter 4 of Luke, the spirit of the Lord is upon me. Remember, spirit of the Lord came upon him at his baptism because he's anointed me, anointed to proclaim good news to the poor.

In fact, we've got the worship here. Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he's anointed me. That's pointing us to his messiahship to proclaim good news to the poor. He has come as a prophet.

In other words, Jesus has come to tell us what we need to hear. And so we see that being emphasised here. Secondly, we see that Jesus came as a priest.

Now, this is not immediately obvious, but if you go back to the Old Testament and read Numbers chapter 4, you will see that a priest began his work at the age of 30.

[23 : 10] And you'll also see in Exodus 29 that when Aaron and his sons became priests, they were washed with water. And in Luke chapter 3, we are told in verse 23 that he was about 30 years of age, and as he came to be baptised, he was being washed.

And so it seems that Jesus' baptism is highlighting the fact that Jesus has come as a great priest. And I think that this is confirmed in Hebrews chapter 5, which we have here.

So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him, you are my son. That's the same word as what we've just been reading in Luke.

Today, I have begotten you. Jesus has come as our priest. And of course, the role of a priest is to act on our behalf so that we can have access to God.

In other words, if you want to get to God, you go through the priest. Hebrews 9 speaks about that. When Christ appeared as a high priest, so the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent, not made with hands, that is not of this creation, he ended once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves, but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.

[24 : 30] Jesus came as a priest, but instead of offering a sacrifice of an animal like the Old Testament, the Old Testament priests said, he gave himself.

He shed his own blood. And so Jesus, this is pointing us towards, we've been pointed towards this at the baptism. And then thirdly, we see that Jesus came as king.

Now, the words of God in Luke 23, 22, where he says, you are my beloved son, are pointing us back to two passages in the Old Testament. And the first one of these is Sam 2.

That's the whole of Sam 2 up there. I won't read it all, but it's a Sam that speaks about God's king. And right in the middle, you have this statement. The Lord said to me, you are my son.

Today I have begotten you. The key point is that God's king is being described as God's son. And so when God makes this statement, you are my beloved son.

[25 : 28] Yes, he is describing the relationship that they have, but he's also emphasizing that Jesus is God's appointed king.

Back in the Old Testament, 2 Samuel chapter 7, God said that he would establish his throne and he said, I will be to him a father and he shall be to me a son.

Jesus has come as God's king. And that, of course, is why Jesus's message when he began preaching very shortly after this event was the kingdom of God has come.

And what I hope you can see is that it's all fitting together perfectly. God has sent the Messiah, the prophet who tells us what we need to hear, the priest who acts on our behalf and the king who has come to rule and defend us has come.

And so these are the things we want to be learning. We want to learn and we want to understand that Jesus is prophet, that he is priest, that he is king in order to understand how the whole gospel message fits together.

[26 : 38] It's something that we want to learn and something that we want to know about. But even more so, we want to realize that Jesus has come to be these things for us.

He's come to be a prophet to us, to speak to us. He's come to be the priest to act on our behalf and he has come to bring you and me into his kingdom.

Jesus has come for that purpose. So that's the fourth thing. Jesus came for that purpose. He's the Messiah, prophet, priest and king. The last thing we're going to look at today very briefly is that this

verse in Jesus' baptism also highlights the fact of how pleased God is with Jesus. You are my beloved son with you. I am well pleased. Now a moment ago I said that this statement points us to two Old Testament passages. The first one is Psalm 2. Second one is Isaiah 42 verse 1. Now if we read that, I hope you can see the connection. Isaiah 42:1 says, Behold my servant whom I uphold, my chosen in whom my soul delights. [27:49] I have put my spirit upon him. He will bring forth justice to the nations. Now the link is in the phrase, In whom my soul delights. With you I am well pleased.

It's basically saying the same thing, the same language is being used. God is saying, You are my beloved son with you.

I am well pleased. Now when God says that, He is saying more than just Jesus makes me happy. He is deliberately referring back to the promises that he made in the Old Testament. And in particular he is referring to the passages in Isaiah known as the Servant Songs.

You may have heard of these in Isaiah. We've got four passages in chapter 42, chapter 49, chapter 50, chapter 52, and 53 are what we call the Servant Songs.

[28:44] And God is referring to these deliberately at this point. These passages in Isaiah describe God's Servant, the one who is fulfilling God's purposes.

And at one level that was the nation of Israel, but at a greater level these passages were pointing to the one who was to come, to the Messiah. He is the Servant who is going to establish God's kingdom and who is going to bring salvation.

And that's why God is pleased with his son because he is coming to fulfill God's purposes. He is coming to put everything right.

He is, as we said, prophet, priest and king, God's perfect servant. And that's what God is saying here. When He says with you, I am well pleased, He is saying I am pleased with you because you are fulfilling everything that I have promised in the Old Testament.

You are my servant. But if you go back to Isaiah, you discover that in order for the servant to accomplish his work, his work, he's going to have to suffer.

[30:00] And Isaiah 53 is the passage that emphasizes that so powerfully, out of the anguish of his soul, he shall see and be satisfied. By his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.

Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with a transgressor.

Yet he bore the sin of many and makes intercession for the transgressor. God is deliberately linking us to Isaiah to highlight the fact that Jesus is the suffering servant.

Jesus has to suffer in order to serve. And it's very interesting, later on in Luke, Jesus says, I have a baptism to be baptised with, and how great is my distress until it is accomplished.

Now what Jesus is talking about there, he's talking about his death. He describes his death as a baptism.

[31:10] And I think one of the reasons he does that is because from the very beginning, back at his baptism here with John, he knew that by identifying with sinners, he was stepping onto a path that led to guaranteed suffering, it led to certain death.

Now this is really, really significant to notice, because here we see that the Son has to suffer, and the Son knows that he has to suffer.

But when we go into chapter 4, and we read about the temptations which will come to all be well in two or three weeks time, the devil is saying to Jesus, if you are the Son, you don't need to suffer.

If you're the Son, don't go hungry. Turn this bread into stones. If you are the Son, don't face opposition. Just I'll give you all the kingdoms of the world.

If you are the Son, nothing will harm you. If you fall from this pinnacle, nothing will hurt you. If you are the Son, surely you are not meant to suffer.

[32:22] The devil is trying to derail Jesus from his ministry from the word go. And that's why at the very moment Jesus begins his public ministry, God assures him and highlights the fact that as the Son, he is here to suffer.

Jesus knew he was the Son, but he also knew that he has to suffer. And the amazing thing in all of this is that this willingness to suffer is what pleases the Father.

The Father says, with you I am well pleased because this Son is willing to suffer. In fact, it's the desire to please the Father that takes Jesus down this path.

It's the desire to do the Father's will that takes Jesus through Gethsemane. He has come to do the will of him who sent me.

And what this is telling us is that God is pleased when his Son suffers.

[33 : 36] God is pleased when his Son publicly identifies himself with Siddhish when he says, I am with them. God is pleased when his Son commits himself to going down this path.

God is pleased when his own Son gives up his life on the cross. It's why Isaiah said it was the will of the Lord to crush him.

God is pleased when his Son suffers. And that is telling us something incredibly important.

It's telling us that when God says to Jesus, you are my beloved Son, with you I am well pleased. He is not just making a statement about Jesus, he is making a statement about you because all that suffering, all that pain is all in order to save you.

God is pleased when his Son suffers, his beloved Son, because he wants to save you and me.

[34 : 59] And that's where we see that the baptism of Jesus, yes it teaches us a lot about what God thinks of his Son, but it amazingly teaches us about what God thinks of you.

All of this is for your salvation. Back in the Old Testament you have an amazing illustration of this with Abraham and Isaac.

Isaac was taken up onto the mountain and there God had commanded Abraham to sacrifice his Son and at the last moment a substitute came in his place.

And when we look at Abraham we see amazing obedience, the fact that he was willing to give up his Son.

And so you look at Abraham and you think wow, see how much he loved God.

[36 : 13] He was willing to give up his own Son. But when we come to God's Son and to the fact that God does not spare his own Son, we don't say wow, see how much he loved God.

We say wow, see how much he loves me. All of this is for us.

Amen. Let us pray. Amen.