

Jesus' Baptism: Part 2

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[0 : 0 0] Well, for the last two weeks, this last week and this week, our focus is the words of Luke chapter 3, verses 21 and 22, where we read in just two short verses about Jesus's baptism.

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, these are just two verses, but within them there's a lot of rich teaching and a lot, a lot for us to learn. And in order to study these verses, we've been following a very simple structure where we basically said that we can see 10 things in these two verses, 10 things that we learn from the baptism of Jesus, and we looked at five of these last week and we're going to look at five of them today. Now, if you weren't here last week, don't worry at all because we'll just recap quickly the things that we learned. We first of all saw that Jesus identifies himself with us at his baptism. When he was baptized, it was along with everybody else, along with normal people just like you, and Jesus, by being baptized, was identifying himself with us. He was coming alongside us. That was the first thing we saw. Secondly, we saw that the Father confirms the identity and office of Jesus.

In other words, in this baptism, God is seeing who Jesus is and why Jesus has come. And in particular, we saw that Jesus is God's son and that God is pleased with him, as the words at the end of the verse say so. So God confirms the identity and office of Jesus. Then we are also seeing how precious Jesus is. God says, you are my beloved son. The preciousness of Jesus is emphasized. Then the Father highlights the purpose for which Jesus came. In particular, we said that this is summed up by the word Messiah or Christ. It's the same word that Jesus has come as prophet, priest and king. He's fulfilled what the Old Testament is promising and he is going to perform this role, fulfill this purpose. And then finally, we saw how pleased Jesus the Father is with his son and how in particular that points us back to the

Old Testament and the fact that Jesus is God's servant. Jesus has come to do what the Father wants and the Father is pleased with his son. Jesus is God's servant. In particular, he is the suffering servant because in order to serve, he is going to have to suffer. So these five things we saw last week, Jesus identifies himself with us. The Father identifies Jesus. The Father says, oh precious Jesus is the Father highlights the purpose Jesus came for. The Father says, how pleased he is with his son. Now, they are all statements about Jesus and in many ways they are all really focused on the statement at the end of verse 22 where the Father says, you are my beloved son with you. I am well pleased.

But in many ways we've kind of missed out a big chunk of the verses because we haven't really said anything about what happened to Jesus. We've said a lot about Jesus but we haven't said anything about what actually happened to him and in particular we haven't really looked at what it means when it says that the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus. After the baptism, the heavens were opened and the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus in bodily form like a dove. That's what happened to Jesus and it's got much to teach us. So we're going to go on to our next five things. So it's a bit strange I'm going to start my sermon with point number six which is continuing on from last week. We're going to carry on with these ten things. So the Holy Spirit is descending on Jesus. What is happening to Jesus here? That's really the question we're trying to answer today. Well, the first thing we see which is point one for today and point six over our four or two weeks is that

[4 : 30] Jesus was empowered by the Holy Spirit. When I say the phrase Holy Spirit, when I mention the Holy Spirit, what do you think of? What's the first thing that comes into your mind when we say Holy Spirit? Well, there's many, many things that we could say. You could say miracles or fire or prophecy or blessing or revival or all these different things that we associate with the Holy Spirit and that's all true and valid. But one of the key things that should come into your mind whenever we mention the Holy Spirit is power. When we say Holy Spirit, you should be thinking power because if you look back to the Old Testament, you consistently see that the Holy Spirit is revealed in terms of power. For example, that creation it says at the very beginning, the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. That's at the very beginning, the Spirit is mentioned and then we see this awesome display of God's power in creation. And then as you carry on into the Old Testament, you see that very often the Spirit of God gives people power in order to do things. A great book for seeing that is the book of Judges. We have the example of Othniel here in Judges 3. The Spirit of the Lord was upon him, upon Othniel, and he judged his tail and he went out to war and the Lord gave him Cushan Rishatayim, King of Mesopotamia and so on.

The key point is the Spirit came upon him and he then was empowered to do something. Same with the other judges like Gideon, Jephtha and Sampson, who's mentioned in Judges 14.

The Spirit of the Lord rushed upon him and although he had nothing in his hand, he tore the line in pieces as one tears a young goat. And so this link between the Spirit and power is very clear and it's summed up by the parallelism in Micah chapter 3 verse 8. As for me, I am filled with power with the Spirit of the Lord. If you look at that sentence, it's basically saying the same thing twice. I'm filled with power and filled with the Spirit of the Lord.

God's Spirit is the means by which he gives us power. The Holy Spirit is powerful. So when we see the Holy Spirit coming upon Jesus after his baptism, he is empowering Jesus.

What the Holy Spirit is empowering Jesus. Now, this makes perfect sense when we look at Jesus' life because it is from this point onwards that Jesus began to do amazing things. It is from here that Jesus starts to perform miracles, that Jesus starts to cast out demons, that Jesus starts to preach, that Jesus starts to teach. Prior to this point, Jesus' life was a normal human life. He didn't do miracles. He didn't cast out demons. He wasn't out preaching and teaching. Nothing is recorded of any note in terms of Jesus' life for us.

[7 : 47] The only thing we are told is that he was learning and growing. And the key point is that Jesus grew up in exactly the same way as you and I grew up. Jesus grew up in a normal way. He wasn't a normal human in that he never sinned, but his growth, his development was normal. And although he is God himself, God the Son, he chose to take up human flesh to become one of us and he grew up as a human. And humans are limited. And so was Jesus.

He couldn't fly. He couldn't survive without water or food. He couldn't survive without sleep and rest. In other words, he was just like you and me. Now Jesus is still God, but he has chosen that path of limitation. Up to this point, Jesus was normal and cautious when I use that word, but he was normal in terms of human life. He couldn't do any of these things because he had chosen to be limited as a human being. Now this is really important for two reasons. First of all, it reminds us of the wonderful, wonderful truth that Jesus knows what it is like to be you. And that's really, really important for us to remember.

Jesus knows what it's like to be you. It's so easy to think, oh, well, for Jesus it must have been different. For Jesus it must have been, it can't have been as hard. Jesus won't understand. Jesus won't know what it's like. How can I come to Jesus? It's so easy to think like that, but it's not true. Jesus knows exactly what it's like to be you. If you feel tired today, Jesus knows what that is like. If you feel worried today, Jesus knows what that is like. If you feel scared of anything, Jesus knows what that is like. If you feel sad about anything, Jesus knows what that is like. Jesus knows what it's like to be you, and that's why he tells us to come to him. No matter how weary or heavy laden we are, we can come to him because he knows what it's like. And in fact, that's what Jesus has just demonstrated in his baptism, that he is one of us, that he knows what it's like to be us. So that's the first key point in this regard. Jesus knows what it's like to be us. But secondly, this helps to explain why the Holy Spirit descended on him. Why did the Spirit have to go on to Jesus? He's just been baptized. He's the Son of God. But why does the Spirit have to come? And well, the reason the Spirit has to come on him is because Jesus has chosen to be limited as a human. And so he needs to be empowered by the Spirit as he begins his ministry. How is it that Jesus goes from 30 years of no miracles to then performing all these miracles? How did the change take place? It's because the Spirit has come upon him and empowered him. And the Bible makes that very clear. Because if you look at Luke chapter four, Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee. And a report about him went through all the surrounding country. Do you see? I hope that's making sense. It's in the power of the Spirit that Jesus was able to do all of these things. Jesus has been prepared for what he's going to do. He is being empowered. And now he can go and preach and teach and perform miracles and cast out demons and do all these incredible things through the Spirit working through him and empowering him. So that's the first thing.

The Holy Spirit empowers Jesus. And so Jesus has been prepared for what he is going to do. But he is also being prepared for what is going to be done to him. And this takes us to our next point that we see that the Spirit coming upon him tells us that Jesus is being prepared for conflict. This is point number seven over our two weeks, point number two today. Jesus is being prepared for conflict. Again, if you go back to the Old Testament, you see this is true again and again and again. The Holy Spirit empowered people and very often that was in preparation for conflict. We see that in the story of David. The Holy Spirit came upon David and in the next chapter he goes out and defeats Goliath. And the exactly same principle is true here with Jesus. The only difference is that with Jesus, the opposition is far greater. Jesus is entering into conflict with the whole kingdom of evil. And the reality of that instantly manifests itself. Because if you look at Jesus' life story, from this point, he instantly faces opposition. What's the next thing that happens to Jesus? He goes out into the wilderness and is tempted by the devil. And then when he comes back, he is instantly opposed by demons. We read of that here. He went down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee. He was teaching them on the Sabbath. They were astonished at his teaching. For his word possessed authority. And in the synagogue, there was a man who had the spirit of an unclean demon. And he cried out with a loud voice, Ha, what have you come to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God.

So after Jesus is empowered by the spirit, he instantly enters into conflict. He is instantly opposed by Satan, by demons, and by all the kingdom of evil. And Jesus has been prepared for conflict because his story from now on, his life from now on, is going to be a battle. And it all culminates on the cross. And Jesus himself recognizes that.

[14 : 08] We see that in Luke 22, where he says, when I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me, but this is you and I were under power of darkness. The cross was where the power of darkness had its way with Jesus, where Jesus faced immense conflict.

And as we said last week, when God says with you, I am well pleased, he is pointing us back to the Old Testament, telling us that Jesus is this suffering servant who was prophesied in the Old Testament in Isaiah. And Jesus, when he is baptized, he is stepping onto this path of guaranteed suffering. And the Holy Spirit is preparing him for conflict. He's getting him ready for this opposition. So we see that Jesus has been empowered by the Spirit for his work. He's been prepared by the Spirit for conflict. And so we are at a crucial moment in Jesus's life. This is a big turning point. This is really when it all begins in terms of Jesus's ministry. And so the Holy Spirit is coming to help Jesus with all that lies ahead. And this is where it's really important to notice when it was that the Holy Spirit came. And we have to look closely at the verse, look closely at verse 21. It's easy for us to say that the Holy Spirit came on Jesus when he was baptized.

It's easy to say that, but if you look closely at verse 21, you see that that's not actually true. It is not while Jesus was being baptized. When was it? It was when he was praying. That's what it says. When all the people were baptized, when Jesus was also baptized, that's past tense, and was praying, that's present tense, the heavens were opened and the Holy Spirit came upon him. So it was when Jesus was praying. Now that raises an interesting question.

What was that prayer? What was Jesus praying at that moment? Well, we don't know for sure, but you are a human and so was Jesus. And so you can imagine yourself in Jesus's situation right now. Imagine you were Jesus. You are about to enter a very public ministry. You are exposing yourself to severe opposition. You are undertaking a work that is the most important task that the world has ever known. And you are stepping onto a path whereby you know that this is going to lead in a horrible, horrible death. Imagine you are about to start on that path. What would your prayer be? Well, surely your prayer would be, help me. Help me. And I think it is very likely that that was Jesus's prayer. And the reason I think that that's Jesus's prayer is because the answer that he gets fits a cry for help. Jesus is at a crucial moment. And if you look at the rest of the Gospels, Jesus prayed to God for help at crucial moments in his life. And here we see that God gives Jesus a message of reassurance. And this takes us to the next point in our list of 10, point number eight.

Jesus is assured of his father's love, his father's help and his father's presence. Jesus comes up from his baptism and he prays. And in response, heaven opens, the spirit descends and the father reassures the son that he loves him and that he will help him. And this is one of the very interesting verses where you see the work of the trinity together. You see God, the father, God, the son and God, the spirit working together. And we see that in harmony, they are going to accomplish their purposes. The father has sent the son and has never stopped caring for his son. The son has come and has never stopped, has never forgotten his father. And the spirit is with the father and with the son working in perfect unison to accomplish this great work. In the son's time of need, the spirit comes upon him and the father speaks a word of reassurance. And I think this is one of the reasons why the spirit comes down as a dove. It's a very interesting question. The spirit comes down, why did it come down as a dove? Well, there's probably one or two reasons for that. One of them, I think, is in regards to the point that we're making. Because if you look back into the Old Testament, the image of a dove is often used to express preciousness. For example, in the Song of Solomon, chapter 6, verse 9 says, my dove, my perfect one is the only one, the only one of her mother, pure to her, who bore her. The Song of Solomon pictures the love of a man and a woman together. And this language of a dove is used to express preciousness. And Jesus here is not embarking on his mission, on his own strength. He's not saying to himself, I can do it. He's doing it in beautiful dependence on the God who has sent him. God is reassuring him, helping him and comforting him. And I think that is what we see here, God the Father reassuring and encouraging God the Son. So the spirit empowers Jesus. The spirit prepares Jesus for conflict. The spirit's descent in the

[20 : 22] Father's words reassure Jesus. And all of this is telling us that we are at a crucial moment in history. And this is point number nine, our fourth point of the day, that we are seeing a new stage in history beginning. We mentioned this a wee bit last week, but we're going to say it again. This is a big turning point. And in many, many ways, this is the start of the New Testament. Although the New Testament begins with the background information of John's birth and Jesus' birth, in many ways this is the start because John, as we said before, was an Old Testament prophet. He was the last Old Testament prophet. And all the way up to John, the message was the kingdom of God is coming. But now, from this point, the message is no longer God's kingdom is coming, the message is God's kingdom has come. And so we have a new beginning here. Jesus is beginning his work and God's, by his spirit, is preparing him and equipping him for all that lies ahead. And again, this is another reason why I think it's a dove, why reason why the spirit is a dove in the form of a dove. Because again, if you go back to the Old Testament, a dove is mentioned at crucial moments, particularly at the flood. At the end of the flood, Noah sent out a dove.

And that was in many ways a moment of recreation. The flood was going away and the earth was being renewed. And it was a crucial moment in history. And a dove was used by Noah. And if you go all the way back to Genesis one, although a dove is not mentioned, it says as we saw in Genesis one to the spirit of God was hovering over the face of the water.

And again, I think that we can legitimately say that that the spirit is there been pictured for us like a bird hovering over the waters. And the point is that at these crucial, pivotal moments in history, we see the image of a dove. Jesus is starting a new era. God's great work of restoration is underway. The Messiah has come. So we can recap everything we have here. We've done nine points. And let's just recap what we have. I've got the points here on the screen. Jesus, he's come to be like us. So you're starting at the bottom left, by the way. I'll explain why in a minute. He's come to be like us. The Messiah has come.

God identifies him. God says how precious he is. He's going to perform a purpose as the Messiah, prophet, priest and king. He is the suffering servant with whom God is pleased.

He's been prepared for conflict. He's been empowered by the spirit. He's been assured by the Father. And this new age has begun. These are the nine things that we've identified.

[23 : 23] And we can put them in pairs, which is what I've done here. And I hope you can see how this fits together. Jesus has come to be the suffering servant. And so he is prepared for conflict. Jesus has come as the Messiah to be prophet, priest and king. And therefore he is empowered by the spirit. My apologies, that should say empowered, not empowered.

Jesus is the precious beloved Son. And he is assured of that by his Father. The Messiah has come. And new age has begun. I hope you can see how that all fits together in a way they're like pairs. But that leaves the question, what is point number 10? What is point number 10? Well, as you can see, I hope you can see how the pairs work. Who Jesus is, is paired with what the Spirit does for him. And new age is beginning. A great work is being done.

And in many ways, all eight of those at the top, first four pairs there, all refer to Jesus. But what about the one that refers to us? What about the one that refers to us?

Well, if you go back to John the Baptist and ask him the question, why has Jesus come? What does Jesus here to do? If you ask John the Baptist that question, what would he say?

What would John's reply be? Well, if you go back to verse 16, we see he says that the reason Jesus came is that he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. So John would say the reason Jesus is coming is to baptize you with the Holy Spirit. And in many ways, one of the reasons why Jesus is filled with the Spirit is so that he can fill us as well, so that we can be baptized. Jesus filled with the Spirit so that we can be baptized with the Spirit as well. And that's what happens to us when you become a Christian, the Holy Spirit comes and dwells in you. We call that baptism in the Holy Spirit, the Bible calls it baptism in the Holy Spirit. So I hope you see what's happening here. Jesus has the Holy Spirit descend upon him. And one of the key reasons for that is that he is going to put the Holy Spirit into us as well. So you see a chain. Jesus is baptized with the Spirit so that we can be baptized with the Spirit. And the key question to ask is what is the Holy Spirit going to do to us when we are baptized with it? In other words, when you're converted. What is the Holy Spirit going to do to you? And the amazing answer is that the Holy Spirit is going to do to you exactly what it did for Jesus. If you look here, we see what the Holy Spirit did for Jesus. And what I'm going to say and what

[26 : 36] I hope we're making clear is that the Holy Spirit will do exactly the same for us. And let's just go through it bit by bit to see. The Holy Spirit empowered Jesus to do God's work, didn't he? That was what we were saying. Jesus came and the Holy Spirit empowered him.

That was why he could do these miracles. That was why he could preach. That's why he could teach. That's why he could do all these amazing things. The Holy Spirit empowered Jesus to do God's work. And the Holy Spirit does exactly the same for you. The Holy Spirit will do exactly the same for you. That's why in the New Testament, the early Christians could do miracles just like Jesus did. And that's why we can preach just like Jesus did. That's why we can teach just like Jesus did. And that's why the church is continuing the mission and the work that Jesus began. The Holy Spirit empowered Jesus to do God's work and the Holy Spirit does exactly the same thing for us. And so that means that if you are a Christian, you have been empowered by the Holy Spirit to do God's work. And that's a wonderful, wonderful biblical truth. And it's reminded, it's emphasized by Paul in 1 Corinthians 12. There's a variety of gifts, but the same spirit and there are varieties of service but the same Lord, there's variety of activities, but the same God who empowers them all in everyone to each is given the manifestation of the spirit for the common good. Now that's really amazing because it's telling us that you as a Christian have been empowered by the spirit to do God's work. Now we don't all do the same work. We don't all have the same gifts. And Paul is saying that there's a variety of gifts, but we have all been given the manifestation of the spirit for the common good, as Paul says there. Now you might not feel like that. And probably very often you don't. But it's true. God's spirit is in you working to do his work. Now this is really, really important because it's so often to think so easy to think to yourself, well, I want to do something for God, but, but I can't, but I'm too weak or but I don't know enough or but I find it too hard and we all feel like that. I feel like that all the time. But what we are being told here is that the thing you need the most, the Holy Spirit, the thing you need the most is something you already have. If you are a Christian, you already have it. God's spirit is in you. And that's what Paul says. All these are empowered by one and the same spirit who are portions to each one individually as he will. That's such an encouragement for us. We all feel like we are weak. We all feel like we don't know enough. We all feel like we can't contribute anything to the church or to God's cause. We all feel like in a way that we should just keep ourselves back in case we make a mistake. But God is saying, my spirit is in you and

I will work through you. God's spirit empowers us to do God's work. And so just as God empowered Jesus by his spirit, so too he empowers us. We also saw that the Holy Spirit prepares Jesus for conflict and for everything that lay ahead. And Jesus and this Holy Spirit does exactly the same for you and for me. That's why Jesus said in John 14, I will ask the Father and he will give you another helper to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees nor knows him, you know him for he dwells with you and will be in you. Jesus is saying, I will prepare you for everything that lies ahead by sending my spirit upon you. And again, that's such a comfort for us because we feel weak and we feel frail and we constantly struggle. And we all face a battle with sin. We all face a battle against our fallen nature, against the evil forces in the world and against the devil himself. But God, the Holy Spirit knows that and God, the Holy Spirit helps us as Romans 8 says likewise, the spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words, even if you are left lost for words, because you are struggling so much and because you feel like such a failure. The Holy Spirit intercedes for you, prays for you and knows exactly how you feel. We are being prepared for all that lies ahead. And in particular, the spirit prepares us for conflict because the Christian life can be a battle. But Ephesians 6 reminds us that we are being prepared by

God the Spirit. In all circumstances, take up the shield of faith with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints. Paul is telling us that the Spirit is preparing us for conflict. And so if this week ahead is a struggle for you, and if it is a worry, and if it is difficult, and if you face battles, remember God the Holy Spirit, there to equip you, there to help you, there to protect you in all of these circumstances. And so the Holy Spirit empowered Jesus, he empowered us. The Holy Spirit prepared Jesus, he prepared us. The Holy Spirit assured Jesus of his father's love. The Holy Spirit assured Jesus that he was the beloved son.

In many ways, it's a spirit of sonship, a spirit that assures Jesus that he is God's son. The Holy Spirit assured Jesus of the father's love, and the Holy Spirit does exactly the same for you. That's what we read at the very beginning in Romans 8, chapter 8 verse 15, you do not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you receive the spirit of adoption as sons by whom we cry, Abba, Father, the Spirit himself, bear witness with our spirit that we are children of God. Do you see what that is saying? Here we have Jesus at his baptism, the beloved son of God, the beloved precious child of God, he is filled with the spirit, and then as the one filled with the spirit, he fills us with the spirit, and through God's spirit coming to dwell in us, we too become God's precious beloved children. At his baptism, God looked at Jesus and said, my beloved child, through Jesus's work in us, God looks at you and says, my beloved child. And that's why Jesus told us to call God our Father. We are his children too. So if we go back to our list of points, we have 10 points, we see how they all fit together. Jesus is the suffering servant, he's prepared for that by God. Jesus is the Messiah, he's empowered to do that. Jesus is precious and beloved, he is assured of that by the Father, and this great new age has begun. The last point is perhaps the most remarkable of all. Jesus, as we said at the very beginning last week, has become like us, and the whole purpose of that is so that we become like him. So that we too become the precious children of God. So that we too are helped and protected and encouraged by the Holy Spirit. And so that we continue the great mission that Jesus has begun, living as God's children, serving him and glorifying him. And so at Jesus's baptism, he is saying to all of us, I have become like you, because

[36 : 23] I'm going to make you like me. And that just shows how privileged we are as Christians.

As we were saying to the children, every single Christian has got the gold medal. Every single Christian has got the most precious possession that you could ever imagine, because by faith in Jesus Christ, you are brought into his family. And I want you to imagine one day being in heaven. And as you entered into heaven, Jesus is not miles away. Jesus is putting his arms around you saying, you are one of us. You are my brothers and my sisters. You are part of this family. Jesus became like us, so that we could be like him. That's the amazing promise of the gospel. And that promise will be yours if you put your faith and trust in him. Amen. Let us pray.