

## Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

### A Voice From Heaven

Scripture: Matthew 3

Code: BQ042314

**and behold, a voice out of the heavens, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.”** (3:17)

All the Trinity participated in Jesus’ baptism. The Son had confirmed His own kingship by saying, “It is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness” (v. 15), and the Spirit had confirmed His right of messiahship by resting on Him (v. 16). The final aspect of Jesus’ coronation, or commissioning, was the Father’s confirming word. For a sacrifice to be acceptable to God it must be pure, spotless, without blemish (Ex. 12:5; Lev. 1:3; Deut. 17:1; etc.). Of this One who willingly identified Himself with sinners by His baptism and who was marked by the Holy Spirit as the dove of sacrifice, the Father now said, **This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.**

No Old Testament sacrifice, no matter how carefully selected, had ever been truly pleasing to God. It was not possible to find an animal that did not have some blemish, some imperfection. Not only that, but the blood of those animals was at best only symbolic, “for it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins” (Heb. 10:4; cf. 9:12). But the sacrifice Jesus would make on the cross would be “with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ” (1 Pet. 1:19). Thus God could say He was **well-pleased** with the perfection of Jesus Christ (cf. Matt. 17:5; John 12:28, where God repeats this superlative commendation).

**Beloved** (*agaptos*) connotes a deep, rich, and profound relationship. It is used here of the Father’s great love for His **Son**, but it is also used elsewhere of His love for believers (Rom. 1:7) and for what believers’ love toward each other should be (1 Cor. 4:14). Jesus is the Father’s **beloved** above all those He loves, the beloved apart from whom no other could ever be beloved (cf. Eph. 1:6). Only in His Son could the Father ever be fully **well-pleased** (*eudoke*). God had examined, as it were, His **beloved Son**, who would offer Himself as a sacrifice for the sins of those with whom He was willing to identify Himself. No imperfection could be found in Him, and God was delighted.

As believers, we too are a delight to the Father, because we are now in the Son. Because the Father finds no imperfection in His Son, He now by His grace finds no imperfection in those who trust in Him (cf. Rom 3:26; 5:17, 21; Gal. 2:20; 3:27; Eph. 1:3–6; etc.).

The fact that Jesus Christ is the Son of God is central to the gospel. In no passage is that made more clear than in Hebrews 1:1–8:

God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high; having become as much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they. For to which of the angels did He ever say, “Thou art My Son, today I have begotten Thee”? And again, “I will be a Father to Him, and He shall be a Son to Me”? And when He again brings the first-born into the world, He says, “And let all the angels of God worship Him.” And of the angels He says, “Who makes His angels winds, and His ministers a flame of fire.” But of the Son He says, “Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever, and the righteous scepter is the scepter of His kingdom.”

Jesus Christ is the fullest expression of God, superior to and exalted above everything and everyone else. He is the beginning of all things, Creator; the middle of all things, Sustainer and Purifier; and the end of all things, Heir (see also Rom. 11:36; Col. 1:16).

The Son is the manifestation of God, the radiance of God’s personal glory, the image of God (2 Cor. 4:4). In Him all deity dwells (Col. 1:15–19; 2:9). Because of His deity, He is superior to the angels who worship Him. (For a fuller explanation of Jesus’ sonship, see the author’s *Hebrews* [Chicago: Moody Press, 1983], pp. 27–29.)

Even God’s title as Father is a reference to His essential relationship to Jesus Christ. God is presented in the New Testament more as the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ (Matt. 11:27; John 5:17–18; 10:29–33; 14:6–11; 17:1–5; Rom. 15:6; 2 Cor. 1:3; Eph. 1:3, 17; Phil. 2:9–11; 1 Pet. 1:3; 2 John 3) than as the Father of believers (Matt. 6:9).

When Jesus called God “Father,” He was not emphasizing primarily submission or generation but sameness of essence—that is, deity. John 5:23 sums it up by demanding “that all may honor the Son, even as they honor the Father.” No one can worship God unless he worships Him as the God who is one with King Jesus—“the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

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