

The Significance of Jesus' Baptism

Scripture: Mark 1:9–11

Code: 41-3

And now we come to the gospel of Mark in our worship, this morning. Our worship is always richer and better when it is informed by the glorious revelation of God in Scripture. The most important part of our worship is our understanding that informs our praise. And so, as a part of worship service, we always turn to the Word of God. We may have more to praise the Lord for as we offer Him our worship.

We're in Mark chapter 1 and our text this morning is verses 9 through 11. Because this is such a monumental event, we have to take it in one lesson. I'd like to cover more verses but not on this occasion because these three are so significant.

Mark 1:9 through 11, "In those days, Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. Immediately coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opening and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him, and a voice came out of the heavens, 'You are My beloved Son, in You I am well pleased.'"

In the first verse, you will remember that Mark introduces His history. It is the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God. And then from verses 2 through 8 he describes the ministry of John the Baptist who was the forerunner and announcer of the arrival of the Son of God. Now, finally, in verse 9 he begins the actual history of the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. He begins that history not with His ancestry, not with angelic announcements, not with a genealogy, not with the record of His birth...there are no shepherds, no angels, no wise men in Mark. He says nothing about Joseph or Mary, nothing about Jesus' childhood, nothing about his youth, nothing about his adulthood. And as I pointed out last time, there are no Old Testament prophecies in the opening of Mark except one that refers to John the Baptist, none that refer to Jesus Christ. Mark jumps in to the history of Jesus at our Lord's first public event...His first public appearance.

And His first public appearance is His baptism of which I just read. According to Luke 3:23, our Lord is about 30 years of age by this time. So John (meant to say Mark) skips all the previous 30 years and begins his story with the public ministry of the Lord.

By the time the Lord arrived for His baptism, John the Baptist had been preaching for about six months, as best we can discern. Moving up and down the Jordan valley, from the north to the south, baptizing all the people who were flooding out of Judea and Jerusalem to come to him, he was

preaching repentance and the confession of sin for heart cleansing, symbolized in a baptism, in order that people might escape the wrath that was to come upon Messiah's arrival and enter into the blessing of His Kingdom. His message was a message of judgment, a message of wrath, fiery judgment and he warned the people that they had to escape that judgment that Messiah would bring and enter into His Kingdom. And the only way was to repent and confess their sins. So he was preaching repentance and confession for about six months, calling people to prepare for the Messiah and to prepare to go into His Kingdom and not be judged by Him.

One summer day likely, maybe in the year 26 A.D., among the crowds that are pouring out to John, is Jesus. This is the only time in the New Testament we ever see Jesus and John together, the only time. John the Baptist, as I said, has been preaching repentance for six months. He is well known in the land of Israel for this ministry. Everybody knows that his baptism is a baptism for repentance and the confession of sin to escape judgment. When Jesus arrives, at the sixth-month point, John still has six more months to go. It will be another six months that John will be preaching this same message. After the baptism of Jesus, at the end of about a year, he is arrested by Herod, he is incarcerated for a period of a year and then to satiate his wife, Herod has John's head chopped off.

So this is the meeting of the two. This is the only one recorded in the New Testament. Though they contacted each other through their disciples, there is no other indication they had met. But this meeting is monumental. This meeting has significance that is sweeping and far-reaching because on this occasion of their meeting, there is the coronation of the new King. Remember, I told you that in the Gentile world as well as the Jewish world, the word euangelion, the word gospel had to do with the ascent of a king, the accession of a king to his throne. And Mark is writing about God's great King, the new King who is coming, who will declare a new era for the world. This is His coronation.

John himself has been identified to us as John the Baptist. He is John the Baptist in verse 4, given that name...literally John the baptizer because what he is doing is so odd. Among the rituals and ceremonies of Judaism, there were no regular baptisms. There were certain ceremonial hand washings and feet washings, but there were no ceremonial ritual baptisms, immersions into water as such. And that is why he is called the baptizer because that will make him unique, that will set him apart from all other people named John because nobody did this. So he's doing something that is very, very rare and unique and thus he is John the Baptizer.

So for John to be doing what he was doing was unique. But beyond that, for John to baptize Jesus was strange. It was even offensive. It was even embarrassing to believers, even after the early writing of the New Testament, people were confused about why John the Baptist would baptize Jesus because John's was a baptism of repentance....repentance. It was embarrassing to some of the early Christians to think of the fact that Jesus might need to repent, that Jesus might have to confess some sins, that Jesus needed somehow to get his life right so he didn't fall under divine judgment.

This is so strange and so bizarre that nobody would have invented it. It really slams the lid down on the higher critics who love to dismiss the deity of Jesus and love to dismiss anything that offends them from the pages of Scripture as if it's some kind of false history. But the critics have a hard time dismissing this record because you would have to be convinced that if it's false, somebody put it in there and they wouldn't put it in there unless somehow it attributed to Christ something that made Him more than He really was. This appears to make Him less than He really is. So the critics have a hard time with this one and it's in all four gospels. Matthew, Mark, Luke explicit...John refers to the baptism of Christ. It's impossible that anybody would invent this, that the Lord Jesus Christ, the holy one, the Son of God was baptized by a Jewish prophet with a baptism related to sin, repentance, confession, forgiveness, that's really hard to explain.

And it isn't just hard for maybe us to understand or Christians in the past to understand, it was really hard for John to understand. Turn to Matthew chapter 3. John had the same problem that anybody would have at first look. Verse 13 of Matthew, "Then Jesus arrived," arrived is *paraginomai*, to make a public appearance. Jesus literally makes His public appearance, first step out into public, out to be declared as the Messiah from the obscurity of 30 years. He arrives from Galilee at the Jordan, coming to John for the purpose of being baptized by him. That's why He came. This is no private audience, folks, all the people are there, the crowds are all there, they're all there from everywhere across Israel. And John really can't handle this. John tried to prevent Him. Imperfect tense, "Continually tried to prevent Him." They got into a stalemate. He didn't want to do this. It didn't make sense to him.

Now did John know about Jesus? Of course he did, they were relatives. We don't know if they ever saw each other as kids, or young people or even adults, the Bible gives us no indication of that. But Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, and Mary, the mother of Jesus, were related. And you remember, they met and they were both miraculously pregnant. And John was born first and then Jesus later. And they each knew the circumstances of each other's pregnancy and birth. So, believe me, whenever there was a family event, or whenever there was a feast in Jerusalem or a Passover, those mothers must have gotten together, certainly did on some occasions. Elizabeth would have full well known that Mary was told that her Son would be the Son of God and would be called a holy child and that she named Him Jesus because the angel told her to name Him Jesus because He would save His people from their sin. The only one who could save people from sin would be one who had no sin. So certainly Elizabeth knew that Jesus, the son of Mary, was the Son of God, the holy child, the sinless one.

And you can imagine the conversation when Elizabeth and Mary got together. No matter how spiritual Mary was, it would be hard not to talk about your perfect child. You can imagine the conversation goes like this, Mary says to Elizabeth, "How's your boy?"

And Elizabeth would say, "Odd, really odd. You know, he's lived his whole life apart from us, he lives in the desert. How's your boy?"

"Perfect." I mean who could resist that, right? I mean, today it's the bumper sticker mentality, you have all kinds of depraved children being celebrated on bumper stickers if they're perfect. There's no question about the fact that John the Baptist knew about Jesus. As to what interaction they personally had, we have no evidence of that. He comes to His relative and He comes to His forerunner, He comes to the greatest of all the Old Testament prophets, and John, according to the New Testament, lived his whole life in the desert and Jesus lived His whole life in Nazareth. And He shows up to be baptized. And, of course, John knows who He is. And He comes to be baptized. That's a Greek construction infinitive with two denoting purpose, He came for that purpose, to be baptized.

This is frankly shocking because John's baptism is a baptism for sinners. Why would Jesus want to be baptized? Well this does pose some questions. Ancient writers had all kinds of crazy suggestions. Very ancient writers suggested that Jesus came to be baptized to please His mother. In some false book called The Gospel According to the Hebrews it says, "Behold, the mother of the Lord and His brethren said to Him, John the Baptist baptizes for the remission of sins, let's go and be baptized by him.' But He said to them, 'What sin have I committed that I should go and be baptized by him, except per chance this very thing that I have said is ignorance?'"

Wow! So this as Jesus saying I don't know any sin but maybe the fact that I don't know this is a sin. So that Jesus is limited in His understanding of who He is Himself. This spurious gospel shows us the early confusion about why Jesus would be coming to be baptized. Why should He be baptized by John?

The Gnostics had a solution. They said that Jesus was purely a man and only a man until His baptism and at His baptism the divine Spirit, the logos, the deity element was infused into Him. But then how do you explain that from His birth He was called Immanuel, God with us? And He was a holy child from the beginning and He was the Son of God?

If He had no sin, if He needed no confession, if He needed no repentance, if He needed no conversion, no transformation, why being baptized by John?

Well John recognizes the same problem. Back to Matthew 3:14, "John tried to prevent Him saying, 'I have need to be baptized by You and do You come to me?'" What he is saying is this, I'm a sinner, I need to be baptized by You, You don't need to be baptized by Me.

All the pronouns there are emphatic in that, in the original...I have need to be baptized by You, You don't need to be baptized by me. John's treatment of Jesus is the very opposite of his treatment of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. If you back up in to Matthew 3:7, when He saw the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, He said to them, "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruit in keeping with repentance." He said, "You need to repent and you need to repent with a genuine honest repentance that manifests itself in the fruit of repentance, you snakes." And Jesus is in a very different category. He refused to baptize the Pharisees and the Sadducees because of their sin and impenitence. He refuses to baptize Jesus because of His sinlessness. Jesus towered above the Pharisees and the Sadducees and John knew it.

In the gospel of John, chapter 1, it is John who says, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." And then in verse 31 he says, "I didn't recognize Him, at first." I think he knew of Jesus and he knew that Jesus, the Son of Mary was the Son of God, the holy child. I think he had full information of that, most likely he knew that. He just didn't know what Jesus looked like, which is an indication that they hadn't been together. He didn't recognize Him. So that He might be manifested to Israel, I came baptizing in water. I came baptizing and announcing the arrival of the Messiah. I knew who He was but I didn't know what He looked like. I couldn't recognize Him.

John testified then verse 32 saying, "I've seen the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven and remained on Him." I didn't recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me....that's God....He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining on Him, this is the one who baptizes in the Holy Spirit. I myself have seen and testified, this is the Son of God."

John had information about his cousin, didn't recognize Him but he knew He was the Son of God. And the confirmation of heaven that this was that Jesus who was the Son of God was the descent of the Spirit and the voice from heaven that occurred at the baptism. The baptism then becomes divine confirmation. The baptism becomes the coronation of the new King.

But it all seemed bizarre. It all seemed somehow wrong. What John is declaring here in his unwillingness to baptize Jesus is foundationally important to the identity of Jesus because John is saying this..."You need no repentance. You need no baptism of repentance, this is a baptism for sinners, You're not in that category."

This is one of the greatest affirmations of the sinlessness of Christ on the pages of the gospels. John is saying Jesus is holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners. Hebrews 4:15, "He may have been tempted in all points like as we are, all through those 30 years, at all chronological points but without sin...without sin." Mark it, the revelation of Scripture is clear in this amazing strange incident which wouldn't have been invented by anybody who wanted to make Jesus look good that John is affirming the sinlessness of Jesus. He doesn't need repentance.

Well why then would He be baptized? Why would He go down into the symbolic river of death as if He needed to die to his old life and come out new? Some say, "Well He was just going through an initiatory life for priests." That's not supportable. Some say, "It was proselyte baptism so He could identify with Gentiles." No indication that that was in His mind. Some say, "He was just letting John do his thing and this would validate John." Some say it was a vicarious act like the cross in which He actually purchased righteousness and pardon for believers." None of those are correct.

I think the best thing to do is let Jesus talk for Himself. So let's go back to Matthew 3 and see what He said. "Jesus answering said to him, 'Permit it at this time...Permit it at this time.'" It's idiomatic. He's saying, "Stop, John, stop hindering Me, yield to Me this time. It is unusual but it is necessary, allow it now," idiomatic. Yield to Me at this time. This is a special time. Stop the hindering. "Permit it at this time, for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." There's the reason right there. It is fitting for us. It is proper for us. It is necessary for us to fulfill all righteousness. When John heard that, it says then he permitted it.

What does this mean "to fulfill all righteousness?" To do everything that was righteous. To do absolutely everything that God required. Did John baptize because God required it? Yes. I just read you John 1:33, "He who sent Me to baptize in water said to Me..." He's referring to God. God had given him His message and God had given him this symbolic responsibility. This is God's will. Jesus says, "If this is what God commands, then I as a man must do what God commands, regardless of the fact that I am holy, I will be obedient." And this is one of the most wonderful insights into the absolutely comprehensive and complete obedience of Christ to the will of God. If God said this is to be done, then I will do this. It is that perfect obedience of Christ's that is imputed to you and to me when we put our trust in Him. It's what's called His active righteousness.

I've said this in connection with 2 Corinthians 5:21, "He who knew no sin became sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." Two things are working there. God puts our sin on Him, God puts His righteousness on us. We are covered by the righteousness of Christ. Philippians 3, Paul says, "I have a righteousness not of my own, but the righteousness of God through faith in Christ.

What does that really mean? Well it means simply this, that when Jesus died on the cross, God treated Him as if He had lived your life. He treated Him as if He had lived your life. And He punished Him as if your sin was His sin. Now because of that, He treats you as if you lived Christ's life. So Christ lived a perfect life with perfect obedience to everything God commanded, including baptism, in order that His perfect life could be credited to your account. When God looks at the cross, He sees you bearing the weight of sin. When He looks at you, He sees Christ covering you with his righteousness. He did everything that God said to be done because He was perfectly righteous, perfectly obedient and it is that perfectly righteous life that has been credited to your account as if you

lived it. That's what justification means.

But there's a second aspect of it...a second aspect that I think is pictured here beautifully. There was another way in which Jesus fulfilled all righteousness, not only active by His obedience, but passively by His death. Righteousness required His death, did it not? The righteousness of God demanded the death that Jesus died. Righteousness demands a penalty to be paid. Righteousness upholds the Law, the Law must be satisfied, sin must be punished. And Christ being baptized then symbolically identifies with sinners as He would on the cross.

John...Jesus is saying...let Me be baptized. I have undertaken a solemn resolution to bear the sin and the guilt of sinners for whom I will die. He is indeed the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. He must be baptized to satisfy the requirement of His active righteousness and His passive righteousness as well. And then John baptized Him.

Now let's see what happened, go back to Mark 1. Let's go back to this coronation. Verse 9, "In those days..." What days? The days of the ministry of John the Baptist, delineated in verses 2 through 8, "In those days which John was preaching in the wilderness by the Jordan, Jesus came...came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan."

Now remember, Mark is writing from Rome to Romans, mostly Gentiles who would be the initial readers and hearers of this gospel. So he identifies Galilee. Galilee is Galilee of the Gentiles. I don't know if you know the history of Galilee. It was originally, of course, part of the land conquered by Joshua around the eighth century. I think it was about then invaded by the Assyrians, yes. And when it was invaded by the Assyrians, obviously they deported the Jews and many Gentiles came to live there. In the second century they tried to...they tried to circumcise those Gentiles, that didn't go over real big. They tried to attach them all to Judaism, that didn't go over real big either. So by the time you get to the ministry of John the Baptist, there are just a lot of Gentiles in that area. That's why it's called Galilee of the Gentiles. In fact, it was hated or treated with scorn and disdain by the Jews. One of the things that was said concerning Peter in Mark 14:70 was, "Isn't he a Galilean?" There was nothing but scorn for Galilee. In fact, the further you were from Jerusalem, the more disdain they had for you. And this was a long, long way from Jerusalem.

It was out on the fringes where the unclean people lived.

In John 7 verse 40, "Some of the people said when they heard these words, 'This certainly is the prophet.' Others were saying, 'This is the Christ.' Still others were saying, 'Surely the Christ isn't going to come from Galilee, is He?'" It would be unthinkable for the Messiah to come from Galilee...Galilee of the Gentiles that scorned place.

And yet, did they forget Isaiah 9, “There will be no more gloom for her who was in anguish in earlier times he treated the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali with contempt, but later on He shall make it glorious by the way of the sea on the other side of Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles. The people who walk in darkness will see a great light, the light will shine on them.” That’s the Messianic prophecy that the Messiah would come from Galilee of the Gentiles, Messiah would come from the land of Zebulun and Naphtali. This is Galilee, northern part of Israel. And the town is Nazareth, so obscure it has to be named and it has to be located in to Galilee. If you said Jesus came from Nazareth, nobody would know where it was. Nazareth in Galilee, because Nazareth is not known. There is no place in any existing literature, ancient Jewish literature where Nazareth is ever mentioned. It’s not in Josephus, it’s not in the Talmud, it’s not in the Old Testament, most obscure no place place. And for the Jews, proximity to Jerusalem is everything. The assumption was Messiah would come from Jerusalem, the temple is there, but the head, you know, the core, Jerusalem was corrupt, apostate.

So the prophets said the Messiah would come from the fringes. The Messiah will come from the outskirts. He’ll come far at the remote place from the religious establishment that is apostate. This in itself is a commentary on the corruption of Judaism at the time. And so He came and was baptized by John in the Jordan.

Just a word about the Jordan. You may have idyllic visions of the Jordan River, this mighty river. No. The Jordan River is 105 miles long if you just fly down the Jordan. If you float, it’s 200 miles like that...ten feet deep at the widest, 100 feet across. River is stretching the word. But it was there, away again from Jerusalem in the wilderness, away from civilization because the center was so polluted. But John was baptizing as he had been commanded by God and Jesus came to be baptized. Baptizo means to immerse into water, Jesus was immersed, the symbol of the washing away of the Old and purification that leads to newness, He was baptized. And He was baptized because God had commanded everybody to be baptized, and He was a man and He would fulfill all righteousness.

And He was baptized secondarily because it was symbolic, I think, of going through the river of death, bearing the sins of His people. Immediately, Mark loves that word, eleven times in chapter 1, wants to keep us moving, I’m trying, Mark, I’m trying. Immediately coming up out of the water, Luke adds, Luke 3:21, “While He was praying, Jesus was in communion with the Father the whole time, coming up out of the water which is an indication that He was immersed, it doesn’t mean He walked up on the river bank, it means He came up out of the water. The scene, by the way, is trinitarian, right? Trinitarian, one of the great trinitarian texts in Scripture. And as He comes up out of the water, the coronation takes place. It has two parts, a visual and an audible....a visual and an audible. First the anointing by the Holy Spirit, and secondly, the affirmation by the Father.

Let's look at the anointing by the Holy Spirit. "Immediately coming up out of the water he saw the heavens opened." This is not a vision, by the way, folks, this is not a vision. We know it's not a vision because I just read you John 1:32 and following where John says, "I saw it. I saw it. I saw the Spirit descend, I saw it." And there's no reason to believe that others didn't see it as well. It's not a vision, it's a visible reality. In contrast, for example, to the vision of Ezekiel 1. He saw the heavens opening. This is a signal of God breaking in to time and space. I mean, this is huge.

Now remember, God hasn't spoken in 400 years. Four hundred years of divine silence until an angel comes and talks to Zecharias and Elizabeth. And another angel comes and talks to Joseph and Mary but none of that is public. The heavens have been closed for 400 years. And now they split. He saw the heavens opening, and Mark uses a verb that Matthew and Luke do not use, schizo which means to rip, it's dramatic, the heavens rip open. It's only used one other time in the New Testament, when the veil in the temple at the death of Christ was ripped from top to bottom.

This is so significant because Isaiah has been talking about the coming of Messiah, the coming of Messiah through the 40 chapters and the 50 chapters, and when you come to chapter 64, here's the cry of the people, here's the cry of the prophet's heart, "O that...this is Isaiah 64:1...O that You would rip the heavens and come down." They were waiting for that, that God would rip open the heavens and come down and make His name known. This is anticipation of Messiah. The day is going to come when the silent heavens are going to rip open and God is going to come.

The text of Isaiah 64 is a cry for God to do just that, break into history. And the Jews saw that text as evidences that Messiah would come and heaven would split open and down would come God.

There's an interesting document from 250 B.C., two hundred and fifty years before Christ called The Testimony of Levee, listen to what it says. It sounds like He was...He was watching the baptism of Christ, two hundred and fifty years before that, at least. He says, "The heavens will be opened and from the temple of glory with a fatherly voice, the glory of the Most High will burst forth upon Him."

Wow! That sounds like a preview of the baptism. The heavens opened and a voice, heaven bursts, falls on Him. The drama of the moment, as I said, is intensified by the verb schizo which is to tear open, to rip open. God is about to come down and He does in the form of the Holy Spirit, I love this, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him. Heaven rips open and you might think of something violent happening, something crashing down. But the Spirit like a dove descends upon Him.

Now first of all, folks, this isn't saying the Holy Spirit is a dove. I know there are doves all over Bible covers, and all over paraphernalia and holy hardware and all that, symbolizing the Holy Spirit. But the Holy Spirit is not a dove...the Holy Spirit is not a dove. That's not what it's saying. It simply says the Holy Spirit descended visibly...visibly. Luke says, I think it's chapter 3 maybe verse 21 or so, "In bodily form, in some visible form, He descended like a dove." The question is not...why is He a dove? The question is, How does a dove descend? You understand the difference. A dove doesn't come

crashing down. The dove is the gentlest, according to one text of Scripture, the gentlest of the birds. It comes down lightly, delicately, and rests in its place. That's how the Holy Spirit came. That's all it's saying. It isn't saying the Holy Spirit is a dove. The Holy Spirit is nowhere pictured as a dove. You don't have to connect it with the dove that Noah sent out of the ark, like many commentators try to do which is impossible. A dove is a very gentle, beautiful, delicate bird and the Spirit came down in some visible form with the same kind of gentleness and beauty which is displayed when a little dove lands softly.

This is important because Isaiah made it very clear that when the Messiah comes He will be empowered by the Holy Spirit. So this is confirmation that Jesus is the Messiah because here comes the Spirit. Listen to Isaiah 11:1, "A shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse," that's the father of David, out of David's line, "A branch from his roots will bear fruit." That's the Messiah coming through Jesse's line through David. "The Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him." Messianic prophecy. Thirty-second chapter of Isaiah and the fifteenth verse, "Until the Spirit is poured out upon us from on high." They know that when the Messianic glory arrives, it will be with the full power of the Holy Spirit.

Listen to 42:1, Isaiah 42:1, "Behold My servant, whom I uphold, My chosen one whom My soul delights I have put My Spirit upon Him." Those are prophecies. The Messiah would have the full presence power of the Holy Spirit. In John 3:34 it says this, "That God gave Jesus the Spirit...this is the key phrase...without measure...without measure, without limit." That's not true of everybody else. Everybody else has the Spirit in measure. And the New Testament says that even those of us living in the age of the Holy Spirit receive a measure of the Spirit, but He received the Spirit without measure, the full presence, the full power of the Holy Spirit came down and rested on Him. The infinite presence and power of the Spirit so that the whole life of Jesus was controlled by the Holy Spirit. His whole life was controlled by the Spirit.

At the risk of over-simplifying something that is profoundly mysterious and beyond the grasp of all of us, let me see if I can give you a way to understand it. You have the Man/Jesus here, you have the Son of God, eternal deity here and that which is deity is conveyed to the man which is humanity through the means of the Holy Spirit. As it says He grew in wisdom and stature and favor with God and man, it was the Holy Spirit dispensing to the man Jesus the developing realities of truth that matured Him. That's how you have to understand it. The Holy Spirit is the mediator between deity and humanity. John Owen makes the point that His divine nature did not directly communicate anything at all to the human Jesus. His divine nature did not communicate anything directly to the human Jesus, it all went through the mediation of the Holy Spirit, part of His self-emptying. Through the Holy Spirit, divine power came, understanding came, enlightenment came, revelation came so that His human nature was under the full control of the Holy Spirit so that everything He did He did in the power of the Spirit.

George Smeeten(?), a nineteenth century Scottish theologian says, "We must ascribe to the Spirit all the progress in Christ's mental and spiritual development, all His advancement and knowledge and holiness the Spirit was given to Him in consequence of the personal union in a measure which no man could possess, constituting the link between deity and humanity, perpetually imparting the full consciousness of His personality and making Him inwardly aware of His divine Sonship at all times. This is great mystery that always must be considered.

All Jesus' works, all His words were mediated by means of the Holy Spirit from His deity to His humanity, so that in Matthew 12 when the Jews said, "You do what You do and say what You say by the power of Satan," remember that? By the power of Beelzebub. Jesus said, "You have blasphemed the Holy Spirit." If that's your conclusion, that all that I say and all that I do is from Satan, you have just blasphemed the Holy Spirit because it is by the Holy Spirit that I do all these things. The Holy Spirit is the means of everything, all knowledge, all action in the ministry of Jesus. It was the Holy Spirit who led Him to preach, right? Empowered Him to preach, the gospel writers tell us. It was the Holy Spirit who led Him into the wilderness to be tempted.

I love Hebrews 9:13 and this again touches the same beautiful relationship. It says this, "How much more...verse 14, Hebrews 9:14...how much more will the blood of Christ who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God?"

How did Jesus get to the cross? Through the power and will of the Holy Spirit, through the eternal Spirit He offered Himself to God as a sacrifice on the cross. In the Garden He says, "Father, let this cup pass from Me, is there any way around this? What overpowered His humanity was the Holy Spirit. Through the eternal Spirit He went all the way to the cross, through the power of the Spirit He went to the cross through the eternal Spirit.

When He came out of the grave, Romans 1 says, "He was declared to be the Son of God, verse 4, with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness." It was the Spirit that gave Him life, He was conceived in the womb of Mary by the Holy Spirit. It was the Holy Spirit who ministered to Him so that He grew in wisdom and favor with God and man. It was the Holy Spirit who came upon Him at His baptism, signaling that everything in His ministry would pass from deity to humanity through the agency of the Holy Spirit.

So this is divine affirmation, visual. The Old Testament says the Spirit will be on Him and visibly it was so. Secondly, you have audible affirmation from the Father. Verse 11, "And a voice came out of the heavens, 'You are My beloved Son in You I am well-pleased.'" And heaven was split open and God came down in the form of the Spirit and in the voice of the Father, John 8:18, Jesus said, "The Father bears witness of Me."

There were many who bears witness of Me, He says. But the Father's witness is the most important of all. And what is the Father's testimony? "You are My beloved Son, You are indeed the Son of God, in You I am well-pleased. You are the holy child." No prophet ever heard that. The prophet was called friend of God like Abraham. Prophets were called Man of God, they were called servants of God. No prophet was ever called a Son of God. Taken from Psalm 2 verse 7 which the Jews acknowledged universally to be a Messianic Psalm. The Messiah will be the Son of God. This is at the very center of the reality of the person of Jesus Christ and over 50 times in the gospels He's called Son of God.

What does it mean? It means that He's one in essence with God, that He has the same nature as God. That's what it means to be a Son. It pertains to His being co-equal, co-eternal. He is, in the language of Hebrews 1, beautiful language, the radiance of God's glory, the exact representation of God's nature. And thus all the angels of God worship Him. Not only is He God, but He's beloved of God, agapetos, you are the Son of My love, the Son of My love and that carries out the connotation of the only Son. You know, when you've got a lot of sons and a lot of children, you have to spread the love. But you remember, if you go back to Genesis 22 and the story of Abraham and Isaac, Abraham was commanded by God to sacrifice his son and God kept saying this to him, three times in Genesis 22 verse 2, I think verse 11, verse 16, God says, "Your son, your only son...your son, your only son...your son, your only son." This is the only son Abraham ever produced...this, therefore, is the son of his love, undivided. It's that that's behind the imagery here, He is My Son, He is the only one who bears that eternal privilege, therefore He is the Son of My love which is shared with no other like Him.

You remember Isaiah 42:1 that we read a moment ago? "My chosen one in whom My soul delights," and that's what is intended by the final words, "In You I am well pleased." That is the ultimate testimony to the sinless, holy, perfection of the Messiah, the Son of God. You have testimony of John the Baptist of His perfection. You have tacit testimony from the Holy Spirit of His perfection. And then you have verbal testimony from the Father of His sinless perfection. So you have been to the coronation. You have been to the divine inauguration of the new King, God's sinless Son anointed and powered by the Holy Spirit, God's beloved and divine Son who came to save sinners and establish His Kingdom. This is His official coronation.

In closing, to understand its importance, I want you to turn to Mark 11...Mark 11. Way into the life of Christ, closing in on His final days, the leaders of Israel find Him in the temple in verse 27, chief priests, scribes, elders, and they came to Him in verse 28, Mark 11, began saying to Him, "By what authority are You doing these things? Or who gave You this authority to do these things?" What are you talking about, what things? "Healing, casting out demons, raising the dead, teaching with singular authority? Who gave You this authority? Who told You You would do this?"

“Jesus said to them, ‘I’ll ask you one question, you answer Me then I’ll tell you by what authority I do these things.’” And what does He do? He takes them right back to what event? His baptism. “Was the baptism of John from heaven or from men? Answer me.” Wow, it was at the baptism, wasn’t it, where His authority was established. It was there that the Spirit of God came anointing Him. It was there that the Father affirmed Him verbally. It was there that He received full authority to act, authority to forgive sins, authority to heal the sick, authority to raise the dead, authority over demons, authority to determine truth and destiny. So you tell Me, was the baptism of John from heaven or from men? That occasion when that occurred, believe Me, that was talked about a lot. Was it legitimate?

“They began reasoning among themselves saying, ‘If we say from heaven, He’ll say then why didn’t you believe it?’” They’re in trouble. But verse 32, “Shall we say from men? They were afraid of the people, for everyone considered John to be a real prophet. Answering Jesus, they said, ‘We do not know.’ Jesus said to them, ‘Nor by what authority I do these things. If you don’t recognize My coronation, if you don’t recognize the significance of My baptism, the discussion is over, I have nothing else to say to you. If you will not admit that John was a prophet of God, if you will not acknowledge that what happened at His baptism, the descent of the Spirit of God and the voice of God from heaven affirming Me, if you will not acknowledge that, there is no other thing I can say about where My authority comes from.’” That’s how critical the baptism is. It started there.

His authority was tested very soon by Satan. That’s for next week. Let’s bow in prayer.

Father, we thank You again this morning for the wonder of the Word as we were thinking about it and we were praying at the beginning of the service, the Word is so wonderful, the book is so astounding to us. How wondrous it is that everything that happened in the life of Christ confirmed His claim to be Your Son, to be the Savior, the Messiah, the One promised, the One prophesied. Thank You for heavenly testimony at His coronation. Who can reject that? Who can deny that? Who is foolish enough to do so? I pray, Lord, right now for those who are here who have never embraced Christ as Lord and Savior, perhaps it’s just dawning on them who He is...the Lamb of God, says John, who takes away the sin of the world and there is no other Lamb, there is no other one, there is no salvation in any other. Lord, I pray that You will save sinners today, that You will open their minds, that You will awaken their understanding, that You will give life to their dead hearts and that they would see the glory of Christ and come to Him to repent of sin, embrace Him as the one who gave His life for them...the only hope of forgiveness and heaven. Work Your work, Lord, for Your own honor and Your own glory in every heart. We thank You for all that You’re doing in our church. We pray that You’ll move on the hearts of Christians who have been disobedient or unfaithful or living in some sins and becoming more and more comfortable with those things, Lord, that You break them loose from that and may we all live to the honor of Christ, the One who gave Himself for us...the One who, as it were, went into the river of death on our behalf, as if He were a sinner that we might be treated as if we were not.

We embrace this truth, it just comes with such power to our hearts. We thank You for the consistency of Scripture and the wonder of it and may it find a place not only in us but through us, may we declare this one whom You declared to be Your beloved Son as our beloved Savior. May we do that with boldness and joy, we pray in His name. Amen.

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