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

The Messiah's Divine Confirmation, Part 2
Scripture: Luke 3:21-22
Code: 42-47

Open your Bible to Luke chapter 3, if you will. I honestly have more joy and blessing in my own life in studying the gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, than any other portion of Scripture. And there's a reason for that. It's not so much the single passage for a given week as the accumulative impact of going clear through an entire gospel and having to dig deeply into the glory and the wonder of Jesus Christ on every page because Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are written, of course, about the Lord Jesus Christ and it's really His story. It is so exhilarating, it is so challenging, it is so thrilling to me to be able to do this week after week after week. I would rather be teaching the gospels than any other portion of Scripture, and we the first year or so of ministry here launched into the gospel of John, some years later, we took eight years or so to go through the gospel of Matthew. And now we're back in Luke and it hasn't lost any of its charm for me at all, and I've preached through those things, I've gone back through them again and again, I've gone back to write commentaries on these gospels and gone back to write the study notes for the study Bible and so many times just continually intersecting in the gospel accounts and they constantly radiate to me the wonders and the glories of the person of Jesus Christ. And that is true of the passage we have before us this morning, Luke chapter 3, just two verses but my are these two verses filled with significance...verses 21 and 22 of Luke 3.

Jesus began His public ministry with His first public appearance. His first public appearance was down at the Jordan River when He was baptized by the prophet John. These two verses record that. "Now it came about when all the people were baptized that Jesus also was baptized. And while He was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove and a voice came out of heaven, 'Thou art My beloved Son, in Thee I am well pleased.'"

Now Luke has given us a very brief account. In order to fill in the detail of that account, we go to Matthew, we go to Mark and we go to John because all of those gospel writers give us insight into the event of the baptism of Jesus. While this is sort of our launch point in this passage, we've also gone beyond, as you remember last week, to look at the other passages that fill in some of the things that Luke has left out.

But the focal point here is on the Lord Jesus being baptized, and that is the launch point of His public ministry. As verse 23 tells us, Jesus at this time is about 30 years of age. For 30 years He has been growing in wisdom and stature and favor with God and man and He's been in the obscurity of the little town of Nazareth, working alongside His father and surely His half-brothers in the carpenter business

there. He has had no public ministry. He has done no public teaching. He's made no public appearances, made no public claims to be the Messiah. It has been an obscure 30 years, 30 years of living a perfectly righteous life.

But now it is time to begin the ministry for which He came into the world, the ministry of preaching, teaching, healing, casting out demons, dying on the cross and rising from the dead and ascending back into heaven. That ministry is launched with this event, the baptism of Jesus. What happened on that summer day in 26 A.D. was unmistakable in terms of its important. John the Baptist, the prophet, forerunner, herald of the Messiah baptizes Jesus knowing that He is the sinless Messiah and then a day later identifies Him to the crowd as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. God the Father speaks out of heaven affirming that this is His Son, the Messiah, the Savior, His beloved in whom He is well pleased. And the Holy Spirit comes down in a visible form and lights on and remains on Jesus, indicating again the affirmation of the Spirit of God's involvement in the life and ministry of the anointed one, the Messiah. This is God's personal, public endorsement of the Messiah, from the prophet John, from the Holy Spirit and from the Father Himself, this officially inaugurates Jesus into ministry, the launch point.

Now remember, John had been preaching for about six months. He had been preaching repentance because the people wanted to know how to get ready. John said the Messiah's coming, the Messiah's coming, the question is...how do we get ready for the Messiah's arrival? And John's answer was...you confess your sins, you repent of your sins, you make a public demonstration of that repentance by being baptized. And so John was preaching about the coming of Messiah, preaching about forgiveness, preaching about repentance and baptizing those who desire to repent.

One day six months into this, Jesus shows up at the Jordan River. At first, according to the gospel of John, chapter 1, John the Baptist didn't know who He was. They didn't know each other. John grew up in the wilderness of Judea, chapter 1 verse 80 of Luke tells us that. Jesus grew up in the city of Nazareth, they were quite a ways apart. Maybe they met as little boys because they were related, since Mary and Elizabeth, the two mothers were related. But as far as their adulthood was concerned, they didn't know each other. And so when Jesus came to the Jordan River, according to Matthew chapter 3, He asked John to baptize Him. And He told John who He was and Johns said, "It's not fitting for You to be baptized, You're the sinless Messiah, You should baptize me and I'm just a sinful prophet." But Jesus said no, I must be baptized to fulfill all righteousness. It is true, John affirms the sinlessness of Christ, John doesn't want to baptize Jesus because his is a baptism of repentance and Jesus has nothing to repent of, but it is also true that God commanded this baptism, that John was doing baptisms because God commanded him to do it. So righteous people were being baptized and Jesus would do anything that righteous people did, anything that God commanded. And so even though for Him it was not a baptism of repentance, it was an act of obedience to the God who had instituted this baptism. So Jesus said I must fulfill all righteousness, I must do everything that is right, that's an affirmation of His sinless perfection. And so John said okay,

and that's the way it is, I will go ahead and baptize You.

At that point, John believes that Jesus is the Messiah but he's not necessarily positive because he only has the word of Jesus, whom he doesn't know. But God spoke to John and said, "John, you'll know the Messiah because when He's baptized the Spirit will descend on Him and remain on Him." It tells us that in John's gospel chapter 1. In fact, it mentions it twice there. So John heard from Jesus the claim to be the Messiah, discussed with Him whether His baptism was suitable or not, since He wasn't sinful and John's was a baptism of repentance. He finally gave in to the fact that Jesus wanted to do that because that was a righteous act and He did everything that was righteous. John agreed to do it and wonderful confirmation came because when John baptized Jesus, just exactly what God had told John would happen, happened. "It came about...verse 21 says...when all the people were baptized, Jesus also was baptized. While He was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on Him in bodily form like a dove." And that was the confirmation, that was the fulfillment of the prophecy that was given to John which is recorded also in John's gospel chapter 1.

So the scene is very simple. Jesus has been 30 years in Nazareth. John is about six months older, has been 30 years in the wilderness of Judea. For a number of months John has been telling the people Messiah is coming. Messiah comes out of the obscurity of Nazareth, shows up at the Jordan, is baptized, the Spirit of God comes down, the voice of the Father comes out of heaven confirming to John and to everybody around this indeed is the Messiah. And that is the launch point, the divine confirmation, the divine inauguration of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. This then is a monumental event.

Now in looking at the event, we have looked at it by viewing it from the perspective of each member of the trinity who is present. This is one of those great portions of Scripture where the trinity is indicated here. You have the Son being baptized, the Spirit descending, and the Father speaking out of heaven. They are the three eternal persons of the one eternal God. And so they're all here, this is a great, great text.

First of all, we focused on the Son last week. Just a brief review...verse 21, at a time when everybody else was being baptized in the very busy baptizing work of John, it tells us in Matthew 3 I think it's verse 5 that all Judea, all Jerusalem, and everybody in the regions around there were going out there to be baptized and large crowds were coming to John. They were anxious and excited about Messiah's arrival. They wanted to do what was right. They were at least ostensibly on the surface confessing sin and going through this baptism. And it was at that busy time that Jesus showed up, introduced Himself, had a little dialogue. John finally agreed to baptize Him, even though he didn't think at first it was appropriate and that event sort of puts Jesus in the position of having the opportunity of having heavenly affirmation. In the midst of His righteous act of being baptized, the Spirit comes down, and the Father speaks.

Now we looked at Jesus and His baptism last time. We looked at it in some detail. It is at that point that we leave that aside and go to the second member of the trinity here, the Holy Spirit. And I want to talk to you about that in some theological and biblical detail this morning. Now you're going to have to kind of think along with me, going to challenge you a little bit but I'll tell you this, I have a standard principle in my ministry. If I understand it, anybody can understand it, okay? So what I'm going to tell you this morning I have endeavored to bring down to a place where I understand it. And if I understand it, you can understand it. But I want to show you the significance of the coming down of the Holy Spirit.

The words of the Father out of heaven are self-evident. They don't need a lot of explanation. You're My beloved Son, we understand that. In whom I am well pleased, we understand that. But what is the significance of the Holy Spirit coming down since there is no commentary on that? We have to put that together by an understanding of elements of Scripture that will come clearer as we move through.

The Son is the first member of the trinity here and we looked at His baptism. The Holy Spirit is the second member of the trinity here, and we look at His anointing. Verse 22, the end of verse 21, "Heaven opened," and when heaven opens, two things happen...you have divine appearance and you have divine revelation...you can see that in other parts of the Bible. Heaven opens and divine beings are revealed and divine words are spoken.

In this case, both happened...the divine revelation of the Holy Spirit and the divine voice of God. But first when heaven was opened, the Holy Spirit descended on Him in bodily form like a dove. Now John 1:32 and 33 adds that the Holy Spirit descended and remained on Him. The Holy Spirit came down remaining on Him. Now I want to clarify the theology of this, first of all, and then I'll say a little bit about the text.

This does not mean that up to this point Jesus did not have the Holy Spirit. That is not the case. In fact there are two ways in which I can explain this to you. There is a sense in which Jesus always was in full communion of the Holy Spirit because Jesus is God, right? He is God, 100 percent God, fully God and He is also 100 percent man, fully man. That is the wonder of the incarnation. But as God, the Son, He is always in full communion with God the Father and God the Spirit. There is no...there is no breach of the essential relationship, it is still one God, eternally manifest in three persons. Those three persons are indivisible. There never is a time from eternity to eternity that the Son is not in full and complete communion with the Spirit, except for some mysterious moment when He says, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" on the cross. But apart from that, there is constant communion between the divine Son and the divine Spirit and the divine Father. That communion is never interrupted, it is never hindered, it is never mitigated, it is never lessened, it is never increased, it is never decreased.

So when the Spirit of God comes down, that is not telling us that up to this point the Son of God was without the Holy Spirit, not at all. This is merely a symbolic act indicating the Spirit's involvement in His life, indicating it publicly so that people will know that His ministry is in the power of the Holy Spirit. But the Holy Spirit is always in perfect communion with the divine nature of Jesus. In fact, the Holy Spirit is called in Romans 8:9 the Spirit of Christ.

Now, the Holy Spirit from the divine side was always involved with the Son of God, always...always the essential nature of God was unbreakable. But on the human side, in the human nature of Jesus, does this signify that some at this point the Holy Spirit comes in someway on the human Jesus that was not true prior to this? I don't think so. I don't believe that. I believe that the Holy Spirit was operative in the human Jesus from the conception of Jesus because, you remember, God said in Luke 1:15 that Mary would conceive and it would be a conception energized, 1:35 rather, energized by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you and you'll conceive. So from the very conception you have no human father, so you have the Spirit of God operative in creating the seed that is implanted in Mary, therefore the Holy Spirit overshadowing, the Holy Spirit fully involved in the human nature of the God/Man Jesus Christ.

Now Jesus was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit. Luke 1:15 does say that John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb. If that is true of John, the human prophet, that would certainly be true of Jesus, the divine Son. So I'm convinced that even as a growing embryo and a growing fetus and then a child in the womb of Mary, this life was being controlled by the Holy Spirit of God, that the Holy Spirit was superintending the physical development of that life so that that child, the Son of God, was also filled with the Holy Spirit from His mother's womb.

In fact, I think we can even go beyond that. Turn, for a moment, to John chapter 3 and I'll show you a very fascinating scripture. John chapter 3 and I want to just draw your attention to verses 34 and 35 as we come to an understanding of the nature of Christ. In John 3:34 we read this, "For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God," this is John the Baptist giving testimony to Jesus, "He has been sent by God, He speaks the words of God for He gives the Spirit without measure." That is a very significant statement, the only statement of its kind in the New Testament. He gives the Spirit without limit, without limitation. And then he reiterates that in verse 35, "Because the Father loves the Son, He's given all things into His hand."

Now what is this saying? Well throughout salvation history, Old Testament and even on into the New Testament, throughout salvation history God spoke and He spoke through gifted and accredited preachers and prophets, teachers, the prophets of the Old Testament, the apostles of the New Testament. God chooses His men, His spokesmen and speaks through them. Chooses His writers of Scripture and writes, as it were, through them. Each of those prophets, preachers, teachers, writers of Scripture, were given a measure of the Spirit, a measure of the Spirit that was suited for

their ministry. Sometimes you read in the Old Testament the Spirit of God came upon so-and-so and he prophesied. The Spirit of God came upon so-and-so and he went here and did this. The Spirit of God came upon Samson and he did this and he did that. The measure of the Spirit came suitable for the purpose of God in that life so that the long list of prophets, which includes John the Baptist which was filled with the Spirit from his mother's womb and may well have had a greater measure of the Spirit than anybody else before him, and that's why he was the greatest man that ever lived according to the words of Jesus in Matthew 11:11, but everybody in that prophetic line, everybody who was a spokesman for God, everybody who was a writer of Scripture was given a measure of the Spirit empowering them to do the duty they were called to do.

But Jesus was given the Spirit without measure. In other words, without any limit. He was given the Spirit in fullness. From the beginning of His life at conception until the resurrection, His life was under the control of the Holy Spirit. That's why John says He was given the Spirit without measure, without limit or God because He loved Him gave all things to Him. He gave Him everything He needed for a work, listen now, that was far greater than any work would ever be done by anybody else, far greater than any work done by a prophet, far greater than the work done by the greatest prophet, John, far greater than any work that would ever be done by an apostle, or anybody who was a pastor, teacher, evangelist or anyone else. What Jesus was called to do was infinitely greater than any work ever to be done by any human, by any person and therefore He was given the Spirit without measure. It wasn't measured out or dosed out consistent with the limits of His work because this work was so profound and so far-reaching the Spirit was given without limit or without measure.

And I believe that's what's being symbolized at the baptism as the Spirit descends. John, in the gospel of John, John the Baptist says I saw the Spirit come down. And I'm sure people saw the Spirit come down because the Spirit took on some visible form to convey the reality of what was happening.

Now it was important that the Jewish people see this because according to Isaiah 42:1, which is a messianic prophecy, the Lord was going to send His servant, the Messiah. But in Isaiah 42:1 God said, "I'm going to send My servant, I will put My Spirit upon Him." That's Isaiah 42:1. "You will know the Messiah because I'm going to put My Spirit upon Him." And here He was for all to see, the evidence of that as God symbolically in the view of these people on the day that Jesus is inaugurated into His ministry sends the Holy Spirit who comes upon Him in a form that is visible to all.

It is also true in Isaiah 61:1 that the Messiah says, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me because the Lord has anointed Me to bring the gospel, or the good news." So you have Isaiah 42:1, you have Isaiah 61:1, both say the Messiah when He comes, the servant of the Lord when He comes will have the Holy Spirit upon Him. And that is exactly what happens, and it's critical that it happened to fulfill messianic prophecy.

So you have the testimony of the Old Testament prophets fulfilled indicating this is the Messiah. You have the testimony of John who says this is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. You have the testimony of the Holy Spirit and you have the testimony of God the Father affirming the messiahship of Jesus. This is clear and complete testimony.

So, what we understand then is this, that this is not the Holy Spirit's first coming on Jesus, rather as God He was always in perfect communion with the Spirit, as man the Holy Spirit was always operative in His life from the point of conception right on through His life to the very end. You see this in the flow. If you're in Luke chapter 3, go to chapter 4 for a moment. You see this in the flow of His life. Luke chapter 4 verse 1, here is the first sort of launch point of Jesus into ministry and it starts with His temptation and it says, "Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan," etc., etc. That...that indicates that the Spirit of God is empowering Jesus.

Go down to verse 14. "Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit." That...that's the way it is in His life. He is empowered by the Holy Spirit. In Acts chapter 10, a verse that I mentioned last time but it needs to be mentioned in this connection, verse 38, "You know of Jesus of Nazareth how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power." God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power.

So, the Holy Spirit was operative in the life of Jesus. On the divine side there was always perfect communion because that was characteristic of the essential nature of the trinity. On the human side from His conception on, the Holy Spirit had been involved in His human life.

Now let me kind of sort that out for you a little bit and explain it to you in detail. It will help you to understand the nature of Christ, this is mysterious. The God/Man idea is mysterious, as we all agree. But let me see if I can take a little mystery out of it.

When you look at Jesus' life and you see wondrous things, you see a wondrous conception, you see a wondrous childhood, a sinless childhood in which He grows in wisdom and stature and favor with God and man. You see a sinless life. You see miraculous healings. You see miraculous casting out of demons. You hear Him speak divine words from God. All of these things, He goes to the cross, He dies a substitute for sin, He rises from the dead, all of these miraculous events, now listen carefully, all of these miraculous powers, all of these miraculous expressions, who did those? Where did they come from?

Think of it this way. Out of His deity, Jesus would not do them. I'll say that again. OUt of His deity, Jesus would not do divine works and He would not say divine words. You say, "What do you mean by that?" Just what I said. When Jesus came down into the world, when He condescended, when He thought it not something to hold onto to be equal with God, when He set that aside in the words of Philippians 2, when He humiliated Himself and came all the way down to be a man, He set

aside...listen...the independent use of His power. He didn't stop being God. He didn't get rid of His power because He couldn't become...He couldn't un-God Himself, but He set aside the use of His deity and He submitted Himself to the will of the Father. He could have called legions of angels, but He didn't. He could have functioned in the divine power that was His by virtue of His nature but He did not. So I say it this way, out of His deity Jesus would not do divine works and would not say divine words in His incarnation. He would not.

Now listen to the next statement. Out of His humanity He could not. Out of His humanity Jesus could not do divine works and He could not say divine words because that's not possible for flesh and blood, for humanity. Humanity, by definition, is natural. And so, Jesus out of his deity would not do these things because He had submitted Himself to the Father, because He had set aside the independent use of His divine attributes and out of His humanity He could not do those things, the question then is when Jesus did those things and said those things, who was doing it? It was the Holy Spirit acting on His humanity. That is a great distinction to make. It is the Holy Spirit acting on His humanity. Jesus willingly emptied Himself of the independent use of His divine power to do only what the Father willed and only what the Spirit empowered.

Now that is not to say that Jesus is not God. He is fully God. He chose not to use His divine powers. And He couldn't do what He did, say what He said from the human side because humanity is flesh and blood. If He would not use His divine power, if He could not use His human power, then by what did He accomplish these things? By the power of the Holy Spirit. This is the wonder of the kenosis. This is the wonder of the condescension. When Jesus came down He really did set aside His glory.

He really did. He really did humble Himself. And He operated with the Holy Spirit as a bridge between His deity and His humanity. He chose not as a man to draw on His own powers, but rather yielded to the Father's will and allowed the Holy Spirit to empower Him as a man. It wasn't that He wasn't God, He was, He just willingly chose not to use His deity. It's a wondrous thing to consider, but the life of Jesus was the life of a man who was fully God but who didn't use His divine power but His human power, His human ability was energized, empowered, guided, controlled by the Holy Spirit.

This is true of His incarnation. It was the Holy Spirit who moved on Mary. I believe this was true of His early childhood when He grew in wisdom and stature and favor with God and man. I think the Holy Spirit was basically the power of His development. I think it was the Holy Spirit was growing Jesus up. There was no area, I don't think, of the human nature of the divine Son which was not molded and developed and conditioned and guided by the Holy Spirit. It was the Father who sent the Son into the world. It was the Spirit who empowered the Son and assisted Him in every step of His development.

Now if that sounds like something I might have invented, I'm happy to quote John Owen, no less a theologian and that great seventeenth century Puritan theologian wrote this...if you don't get this statement, don't worry about it, but somewhere on a tape somewhere someone will...John Owen said this, "The only singular immediate act of the person of the Son on His human nature was the assumption of it into subsistence with Himself," end quote. Did you get it? What Owen was saying there is the only thing that the divine Son did with His human nature was bring it together with Himself, that's all He did. And what Owen is trying to say is after that, everything was the Holy Spirit.

Owen goes on, "The Holy Spirit is the immediate, peculiar, efficient cause of all external divine operations and hence, He is the immediate operator of all divine acts of the Son Himself, even on His own human nature. Whatever the Son of God wrought in by or upon the human nature, He did it by the Holy Spirit." That's a great statement. Whatever the Son of God wrought in by or upon the human nature, He did it by the Holy Spirit. So He had the divine nature and He doesn't use it. You have the human nature here empowered by the Holy Spirit so that everything He does, the Spirit does. And, of course, the Spirit's in perfect agreement. I can't explain all the details, taking you that far is as far as you probably ought to go. That's as far as theologians go.

But the point is this. From His birth...from His conception to His resurrection, everything that goes on in His life, everything, His development, His sinlessness, His triumph over temptation, His perfection, His preaching, teaching, healing, casting out demons, dying on a cross and rising from the dead is all energized by the Holy Spirit. And I showed you that in Luke 4:1, full of the Holy Spirit He goes into temptation with Satan and is victorious. In verse 14 He goes back to Galilee in the power of the Spirit and He starts preaching and teaching. And further down in the fourth chapter He starts healing and casting out demons. And it's all in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Peter Lewis in whose church I've preached, in whose home I've stayed, wrote a book called The Glory of Christ and in it he has this statement, "We must realize that although the baby in Egypt and at Nazareth was the eternal logos, the Word of God, the divine Son in human nature, yet that human mind was not aware of all of which the divine person was aware." The point he's making is when Jesus was three, He didn't know everything that the mind of God the Son knew, obviously, or He wouldn't have been able to grow in wisdom. Lewis goes on, "The Son did not live in and through His created human nature in such a way that the human became divine. There was the divine and the human unmixed, bridged by the Holy Spirit. What was infinite...says Lewis...did not become...what was finite did not become infinite, what was conditioned by age and circumstances, time and culture did not become at any point totally unconditioned by anything outside itself as the divine nature is totally unaffected by anything outside itself."

He goes on to say, "Here is real incarnation, a true and full entry into our humanity, a profound humiliation in which the creator becomes a creature. Here in Bethlehem we have a baby. There in Nazareth we have a little boy growing up. Not God pretending to be a little boy growing up, but God

becoming a little boy growing up. God experiencing through assumed humanity dependence, growth and discovery and the perplexities of ignorance and the joy of learning," end quote.

It is God through the Spirit informing that human nature as it develops. His human nature then was under the full control of the Holy Spirit while He was growing up. And John Owen makes again the point that His divine nature didn't directly communicate anything at all to the human mind of Jesus, everything communicated to the human mind of Jesus came from the Holy Spirit.

Another great theologian, George Smeeton(??) nineteenth century Scottish theologian, writes in his Doctrine of the Holy Spirit, "We must ascribe to the Spirit all the progress in Christ's mental and spiritual development, all His advancement in knowledge and holiness. The Spirit was given to Him in consequence of the personal union in a measure which no mere man could possess, constituting...here's the key...the link between deity and humanity, perpetually imparting the full consciousness of His personality and making Him inwardly aware of the divine Sonship at all times."

Now that's as far as I can go, folks, but that's pretty amazing. So that all that Jesus said, all that Jesus did was not done by His deity, could not be done by His humanity, but was done by the Holy Spirit's power energizing through His humanity. Jesus' words and Jesus' works were from the Holy Spirit.

To show you this a little further, Matthew 12, and I'm not going to take a lot of time with this, I don't have a lot of time. But I do want to make a comment. In Matthew 12, the Jewish leaders had heard Jesus and they had seen Him and they watched His miracles and particularly had an interest in the casting out demons. So in verse 22, "There's a demon-possessed man, apparently because of the demons he was blind and dumb. Jesus healed him and so he spoke and saw." Well this is pretty clear power, power over physical problems, but power over the kingdom of darkness that's behind the physical problems. So in verse 24 the Pharisees say, "This man casts out demons by Beelzebul," that's an old word for the devil, Satan, "the ruler of the demons."

So this is their conclusion. Jesus does what He does by the power of Satan...by the power of Satan. After all, they're looking at Jesus, they're saying He's just a man, He's just a man and He's doing this. We see it, we saw it, the man who couldn't see and the man who couldn't speak can now see and he can now speak and you can't argue with that. He's got supernatural power but it's the devil. So they see a man but they see a man empowered.

How did Jesus answer their accusation? After a little bit of a dialogue, you come down to verse 31, "And Jesus says, 'Therefore I say to you, any sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven men, but blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven.'"

Now listen to this. Jesus doesn't say you blasphemed Me. He says you blasphemed whom? The Spirit. You didn't blaspheme Me, this is not My deity in action, this is the Spirit, you blasphemed the Spirit. In fact, verse 32, "Whoever shall speak a word against the Son of Man," I mean, you can criticize My humanness, you could say...You know, He's not a very good communicator, we don't like His personality. You could say anything you want. You could accuse Me as a man of anything and that could be forgiven. But when you speak against the Holy Spirit, that will not be forgiven, not in this age...time...or in the ages to come...eternity." We'll get in to that passage later on, just enough to say here, when the Jews attacked the works of Jesus and the words of Jesus, they attacked not Him, but whom? The Spirit. That's how He viewed it and that's because that's the truth of it.

Now Jesus then was conceived by the power of the Spirit. I believe He was indwelt, as it were, by the power of the Spirit in His mother's womb like John, and certainly He would be as important as John is important to the Kingdom and far more. I believe the childhood of Jesus was superintended by the Holy Spirit and that's why He grew in wisdom and favor with God and man. It wasn't...He wasn't God pretending to be a little boy, He was a real little boy whose humanity was being informed by the Spirit of God who was bridging the deity to that humanity. I believe when Jesus began His ministry to be tempted, He was strengthened through that temptation by the Spirit of God. When He began to teach, He taught by the power of the Spirit, He was full of the Spirit and taught. He healed by the power of the Spirit. He cast out demons by the power of the Spirit. Everything He did was by the power of the Spirit. And if you said it was by anything other than the power of the Spirit, you blasphemed.

Now all the way down to the cross, when you think about the cross you think...Well, Jesus is on the cross, He's bearing sin, we know the human suffering with the crown of thorns, the nails, the agony, the pain, all of those kinds of things are going on from the human side. What sustained Jesus? Well, you say, He was sustained because He was God. He could...He could go through that and not, you know, wonder why God allowed this, He did for a moment say, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" There was a great moment there of separation, but there was always the commitment, "Nevertheless not My will, but Yours be done." And there was always the sense that He did exactly what the Father wanted Him to do and please the Father. The question is...How could He go through that? How could He go through the garden and say, "Nevertheless not My will but Thine be done," how could He do that? Well, you say, He was sustained because He was God.

Well, the fact of the matter is He was actually sustained by the Holy Spirit because He wasn't using His own independent deity for that sustaining. And I'll show that to you. Turn to Hebrews 9, Hebrews 9, this is a really interesting passage, and we're kind of coming down to the wire here. Hebrews 9 verse 14, he's talking about the blood of Christ, the cross, how much more? A lot more than the blood of bulls and goats, the blood of bulls and goats can't take away sin on the inside, they can just do some things that are external. But verse 14, "How much more will the blood of Christ," now we're at the cross, "the blood of Christ who through...look at this...the eternal Spirit offered Himself without

blemish to God?" It was the eternal Spirit that kept Him without blemish. It was the eternal Spirit who gave Him the strength to be offered as a sacrifice to God. It was the Spirit's power that let Him bear sin and not reject it and run from it. It was the power of the Holy Spirit operating on His humanity that kept Him willing to die, that kept Him on the cross, that caused Him to have the power to be able to offer Himself as a sacrifice to God.

Isn't that an amazing statement? It was by the power of the eternal Spirit that He did it. The Holy Spirit, the eternal Spirit was the intermediate divine agent by whom Christ offered Himself as a redemptive sacrifice for our sins. John Wolvord comments in his book on the Holy Spirit, "The work of the Holy Spirit in relation to the sufferings of Christ on the cross consisted then in sustaining the human nature in its love of God, in submission to the will of God and in obedience to His commands and in encouraging and strengthening Christ in the path of duty which led Him to the cross." It was the Holy Spirit who sustained Him all the way to the cross, on the cross and through the cross. The Father didn't die there, the Father didn't die there. The Holy Spirit didn't die there. The Son died there. But having set aside the independent use of His attributes, He had to depend on the Spirit to sustain Him. That is the depth of His condescension and submission.

I'll take it a step further. Look at Romans chapter 1. You come to the resurrection. You say, "Well, Christ rose from the dead because He's God, He's God the Son, He has the power." But I want you to notice Romans 1:4, it says, "The Son of God was declared with power by the resurrection from the dead according to the Spirit of holiness...according to the Spirit of holiness." It was the Spirit, the Holy Spirit.

Now you say, "Well, isn't that a controversial reference to the Holy Spirit?" Well it might be but Romans 8:11 certainly isn't. "But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you..." Here is a title for the Holy Spirit, He's the Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead. He's the Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead.

Folks, listen, if you're talking about the conception of Jesus, the Holy Spirit did it. If you're talking about Jesus being preserved in the womb of Mary and the virgin birth, Jesus is energized in all of that by the Spirit. If you're talking about His development as a child, His sinless perfection, being protected from...from any sin or iniquities, it is by the power of the Spirit that He grows in wisdom, stature, favor with God and man. You talk about the power to conquer Satan, you talk about the victory in His temptation, His preaching, His teaching, His healing, His casting out demons, His death on the cross, His resurrection, Scripture says all of that is energized by the Holy Spirit. It's all energized by the Holy Spirit.

And, of course, the Jewish people knew if they knew their Old Testament that the Messiah would have the Holy Spirit upon Him. And here they are standing there at the Jordan River, here comes this man in the middle of the all the other people being baptized and all of a sudden while He's being

baptized heaven opens and down comes the Holy Spirit and settles on Him in a form that everybody can see. This...this is what was promised. Then comes the voice of God out of heaven, "This is My beloved Son," or "Thou art My beloved Son, in Thee I am well pleased." This is...this is divine inauguration of Jesus into His ministry.

Go back to Luke 3 for a minute. Now let me just kind of straighten you out a little bit on the dove thing. I know a lot of you have got doves on stuff. I just want to say that the Holy Spirit is not a bird, okay? The Holy Spirit didn't come down looking like a bird. The essence of what it's saying here is the Spirit descended in some form, some soma. We don't know what soma. But it descended like a dove. Do you understand that? The dove is not so much the shape as the movement. You remember on the day of Pentecost when it says, "The Spirit of God came down and appeared as if it was cloven tongues of fire," remember that? It looked like flames, there was some manifestation of the Holy Spirit, some shape of the Holy Spirit. There would be no way to know that the Spirit of God was on Jesus unless there was some symbol, some visible symbol, and so God created some soma, that's the word for "form," or "body," some visible form for the otherwise invisible Spirit. And that form, whatever that form was, it may have had...I don't know what the shape was, but it came down and settled on Him the way a dove would flutter down and settle. A dove is the gentleness of all birds. Just...it must have...it was intended to convey that there was this very gentle, lovely sort of fluttering down of this soma, this form, whatever it was, and it just landed on Him like a dove might land on its perch.

Somebody was telling me about one of their children who asked them about the duck that came down. And he said, "What do you mean, a duck? You must have seen some Groucho Marx reruns, or something. What do you mean a duck came down?" Well he was talking about the dove. Well, we don't want to have the illusion in our mind that an actual dove came down, but rather that the Spirit in a visible soma, a visible form came down wafting gently and settling and remaining on Jesus. That's the indication of the Spirit's involvement in His life.

And that brings us to the end, the words of the Father which is really the culmination of the whole event. Out of heaven comes the voice of God, "Thou art My beloved Son, in Thee I am well pleased." The Son, it was baptism. The Spirit, it was anointing. The Father, it was testimony. And the Father loved to give testimony to the Son. Jesus said in John 8:18 and John 5:37 that, "My Father...the Father bears witness of Me." The Father is the greatest witness of the Son. At His transfiguration, you remember, the Father spoke out of heaven, "And this is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, hear Him." The Father gave open testimony to the Son. And here is that open, public, verbal testimony that this is My beloved Son. And I'm not going to go back into what that means because we went into that in tremendous detail at the end of chapter 2, that the Son of God is of the same essence as God. It's to say He's equal with God, He's one with God, He's the same essence and the same nature, just as a son is the same nature, carries the same genetics of his father, so the same nature is conveyed when Jesus is identified as the Son.

The Jews knew this because the Jews said, when He called Himself the Son of God, You're a blasphemer, You're making Yourself equal with God. That's what they said to Him. They knew what that meant. You can find that in John 5:18 and John 10:32. So the Father is saying yes, this is God the Son, yes this is one who is equal to Me, yes this is My beloved Son. By the way, that is taken from Psalm 2:7. In Psalm 2 you have a great messianic Psalm about the Messiah, the Son of God who will come and rule the nations with a rod of iron, etc., etc., and it will be God's Son, God's beloved Son that will come and God is saying Psalm 2:7 is fulfilled right now, this is My Son. This is God the Son. This is the one who is equal to Me.

So You have His humanity being noted in the working of the Holy Spirit. You have His deity being affirmed by the Father. So here you have the full picture of God the Son who is both human and His humanity cannot function on its own, but is energized by the third person of the trinity, the Spirit, and He is the Son of God, He is full deity, even though He has willfully set aside the independent use of that.

He is nonetheless the essential nature of God the Son. He is called the Son of God over...well about fifty times, over 40, about 50 times in the gospels by apostles, by people, by Satan, by demons and Son of God always is a title referring to His essential deity and equality with God. It pertains to His eternal nature and attributes as God. He is to the Father not only a Son, but a beloved Son. And the Father loves the Son with a perfect love, read John 17 where, I think it's down in verses 23, 24, 25, the Son celebrates the love that the Father has to Him and now the fact that the Father's love for Him and His love for the Father can be shared with us. There is a supernatural, divine love between the members of the trinity that is celebrated here. And according to Ephesians 1, we are accepted in the beloved One.

So this is God's Son, this is God's beloved Son affirming that God loves Him with a perfect love. And this is God's Son whom God loves and with whom God is pleased. He says He is pleased with Him, well pleased with Him. That means simply that He's perfect. That is what we call a timeless aorist. It is a way of stating things that there never was a time when I am not pleased, from eternity to eternity in a constant state of being pleased. So we now know this is God in human flesh who bears the very nature of God as Son, this is the one whom God loves, this is the beloved of God and this is the sinless one with whom God has never found anything to be displeased.

So here is the testimony of God as to the nature of Christ, as to the affection He has for Him, and as to His perfection as the sinless one. Boy, what an inauguration this is, huh? What an event. The ultimate testimony launches Jesus into His ministry. And, you know, John saw it, John heard it, the people saw it, the people heard it, they should have known. It should have been clear. I mean, what more to you need than a visible representation of the Spirit of God, the testimony of the forerunner and the very word of God Himself booming out of heaven attesting to His Son. That should be

enough to launch Jesus on a ministry that people responded to. The sad fact of the matter is that's not the way it worked out. This was, however, at this point the official inauguration of the Messiah, God's sinless Son, the Anointed One empowered by the Holy Spirit, God's beloved, the One who shared His very nature, the One who was perfect so that never was God displeased with Him. He had come into the world to save sinners and establish God's Kingdom.

Here He is, and now He begins His ministry. It's because of Him that we have salvation. Amen? Amen...let's pray.

The glories of the Son are unfathomable in one sense, and yet we thank You, Father, that You have allowed us to go as deeply as You have to grasp the wonder of His person. What a real true condescension it was to set aside the prerogatives of His deity and submit Himself to being human and then doing Your will empowered by Your Spirit. We think of His words in John 17 when He said, "Father, restore to Me the glory I had with You before the world began." He longed in the midst of this willing submission to be restored to that full equality that He enjoyed with You from eternity. But, Lord, we're so glad that He humbled Himself and took upon Him the form of a servant, became...found in fashion as a man, became obedient to death even the death of the cross because it's that condescension and that death as our substitute that provides for us salvation. And it's that perfect righteous life that He lived that can be credited to our account. We thank You for Him, for His holy life and His substitutionary death. We rejoice in the wonder of the God/Man, our Savior Jesus Christ and we express our love to Him. Help us to love Him more, to love Him with all our heart, soul, mind and strength for He is worthy. We pray in His name. Amen.

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