



*The unfolding of your words gives light.*

## To Seek and to Save

### *An Exposition of the Gospel of Luke*

<sup>21</sup>Now when all the people were baptized, Jesus was also baptized<sup>a</sup>, and while He was praying, heaven was opened<sup>b</sup>, <sup>22</sup>and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove<sup>c</sup>, and a voice came out of heaven, “You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased<sup>d</sup>.”<sup>na</sup>

<sup>a</sup> 3:21 **Now when all the people were baptized, Jesus was also baptized.** You can see Jesus waiting in line as you read this. Matthew records John’s surprise at seeing Jesus among the sinners (see Matthew 3). Here was no viper. Here was the One Who would crush the serpent’s head.

Some argue that this baptism is the same as the baptism later commanded for all Christian disciples. Others take strong exception claiming this baptism was unique to John. Certainly Jesus was not demonstrating repentance like John required of the other candidates. No matter how you identify John’s baptism it had to take on a different meaning when it was applied to Jesus.

Another way to look at this is to remember that priests in Israel entered service at age of thirty (Numbers 4:3) and that their ordination included a ceremonial washing (Exodus 29:4). Jesus was around thirty when these events took place (see Luke 3:23). He perfectly kept the law but was a priest of a different—and a better—kind (Hebrews 7).

However you view this baptism, the lesson is that the Lord Jesus was identifying with His people. Why would His people refuse to identify with Him in this rite?

<sup>b</sup> 3:21 **while He was praying, heaven was opened.** Only Luke mentions this prayer which was evidently after the baptism. The ceaseless prayer of the Lord Jesus was certainly not an acknowledgment of personal sin but it certainly was an acknowledgement of His need to trust the Father to sustain Him while He carried on His earthly ministry. Commentator William Burkitt (*William Burkitt’s Expository Notes*) detailed the prayer life of our Lord:

Christ, when he was baptized, he prayed. When he was tempted, he prayed. When he brake bread, he prayed. When he wrought miracles, he prayed. In his agony in the garden, he prayed. When he suffered on the cross, he prayed.

Are we of a stronger spirit than the Son of God that we would dare go through any day thinking we do not depend on our heavenly Father for our very breath?

The word “opened” is used frequently in the New Testament of the opening of doors, eyes, mouths and the sky. Here the opening of the sky drew attention to the blessed Holy Spirit.

<sup>c</sup> 3:22 **the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove.** This was different type of incarnation that illustrated the work of the Holy Spirit. Doves picture purity, gentleness and restoration (Genesis 8:8-12). Consider this the partial fulfillment of Isaiah 42:1:

Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one in whom My soul delights I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations.

The Lord Jesus was undergoing a Divine ordination which far surpassed that of any earthly priest. See also Isaiah 61:1 quoted in Luke 4:18-19.

<sup>d</sup> 3:22 **a voice came out of heaven, “You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased.”** Matthew (3:17) phrased this heavenly utterance differently, directing it toward those listening: “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.” Certainly the words were for the Lord as well as those listening.

Luke recorded another affirmation from the Father when Jesus was transfigured and the Father said, “This is My Son, My Chosen One; listen to Him!” (Luke 9:35). Compare this to Matthew’s account of the Father’s affirmation at the Transfiguration. On the mountain, Peter, James and John also heard, “This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!” (Matthew 17:5).

The Gospel of Luke  
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<sup>a</sup> 3:21-22 Some groups have a hard time expounding this text because their founders have tampered with the biblical doctrine of the Trinity. Some of them deny the personality of the Holy Spirit and others the deity of Christ. Still others—modalists—deny that God exists as three persons and claim that God merely manifests Himself at various times as three persons. Is that what you see here?

This may be the reason Jesus called the Church to baptize disciples in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. When the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit opens your eyes and you are set free from sin, you too begin a ministry. Having seen the pattern John set for service, we now see the one Jesus set.

1. If Jesus identified with His people through baptism, so should you. Whether you call this a “sign of the covenant” like circumcision or not, this covenant is one we enter by faith like father Abraham. It is a conscious identification for believers.
2. If Jesus needed to pray, so do you. Prayer is the language of the Church both publically and privately.
3. If Jesus relied on the power of the Holy Spirit for ministry, so should you. How much of what we claim to do for God is done in the flesh?

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