

The Covenantal Divide: The Anointing of Jesus

Luke 3:21-22

May 22, 2016

Jesus baptism was the context of his anointing by God for the unique role and the special ministry as Israel's Messiah. And I just want to start by reading those two verses, you know, we talked about this last week, but we're going to finish it up here today. We're gonna start by reading those two verses, then I'll make a few comments just by way of review. It says in Luke 3:21, "Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened, and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove, and a voice came from heaven, 'You are my beloved son. With you I am well pleased.'"

As I mentioned last time, Luke has structured the text to emphasize for his readers, this supernatural phenomena. He wants to draw our attention to the divine activity, to this dramatic

invasion, an intrusion of the invisible world, into the visible world. And as you can see here in the text, there's a progression, the heavens opened, the Spirit descended, and a voice came out of heaven. That's a logical progression, but it's also a dramatic progression. Because it's what the father says, at the very end there. That is the climax of the text.

Last week, we covered a first point, there in your outline, the setting, the setting, the ministry of John, should be three outline points printed in your bulletin, the setting, the occasion, the response. Last week, we looked at the setting in verse 21. Now the setting is there, "Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized, and was praying." That's the moment in history when God intervened. It happened when all the people were baptized, after Jesus was baptized, happened while he was praying.

That first phrase we talked about last week, when all the people were baptized, that is, during John's baptism ministry, probably toward the end of it, the final months before his arrest and imprisonment that Luke just recorded in verse 18.

John had been expecting this sign from heaven, the Spirit descending on the Christ, John had looked forward to that. At one level, that's what this is about really, the immediate purpose of the heavenly signs are that God intended to reveal the Messiah to John.

In fact, when you go over to Matthew's account, the voice from heaven, when that voice speaks, it speaks directly to John, not to Jesus, but about Jesus, this, pointing to Jesus, this the voice says, "This is my beloved son, with whom I'm well pleased." Here, the voice speaks directly to Jesus, right? Both things were said. God pointed to Jesus and said to John, "This is my beloved son." And then he also spoke to Jesus, "You are my beloved son." That's how those harmonize. God was telling John, who the Messiah was, God was identifying him to John as the Messiah, the Son of God.

God showed John here, so that he could fulfill his own ministry so he could point to the Messiah, he was sent to direct Israel's attention to Jesus. So John came expecting a sign from heaven. Jesus didn't expect a sign; he didn't come seeking a

sign. He simply came "seeking to fulfill all righteousness," as Matthew 3 says. As we talked about last week, Jesus had judged John to be a true prophet of God. So at the most basic level, Jesus came to obey the command of God's prophet.

That was one aspect of his fulfilling all righteousness, but further, Jesus knew that his time had come. He had studied Scripture. He knew the significance of John's ministry that John was a forerunner to the Messiah. In fact, whenever John was questioned by the inquisitive public, whenever he was interrogated by the religious authorities, he didn't describe himself as the Messiah. He didn't describe himself as the Christ. John described himself as "A voice of one crying in the wilderness." He described himself as one who said, "Prepare the way of the Lord."

John knew his Bible. He knew that Jesus was the Messiah. Jesus knew his Bible as well. He knew the prophecies of Isaiah 40, Malachi 3, Malachi 4. Jesus knew that John's ministry was a signal, that it was a sign to him, that it was time for him to come forward to leave the obscurity of Nazareth, and enter into

public ministry. So Jesus came forward then, in obedience to John as a true prophet of God, he also came forward in anticipation of his own calling, came forward in obedience to his own calling as well.

I didn't point this out last time, but we were really, as we got into this point about Jesus obeying the Prophet, we're really dipping our toes into the second point in your outline, which has to do with the occasion, the occasion the obedience of Jesus, still looking at verse 21, which shows us not just the setting, but also the occasion of this divine phenomenon here, "When all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized, and was praying."

That is to say, when this heavenly phenomena happened, whereas it happened, it happened on the occasion of Jesus' obedience to the father's will, don't want you to miss that. It's very important that we see Jesus is here, obeying. He is here, we might summarize this by saying it happened to Jesus. So this all happened when Jesus, after submitting and while



praying; after submitting, while worshiping, that's what's going on here in the waters of baptism.

As we studied this last week, Jesus discerned the deep theological significance of his own baptism. Jesus had no sin, to be coming forward to a baptism of repentance, right? He didn't come on his own behalf because he had any sin. He had no sin. Jesus came, he knew his baptism represented the wider scope of redemptive history and that's why Jesus encouraged John to go ahead and baptize him.

Even though it didn't fully make sense to John. He said, "Let it be so now for thus it is fitting," or proper or appropriate "for us to fulfill all righteousness." Jesus saw the deeper significance to the simple act of obedience. You may remember how we read from Isaiah 53 last week, verse 4 said, "Surely he has borne our griefs. He carried our sorrows." And verse 5 says, "He was pierced for our transgression, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds, we are healed." You hear all that?

That is, there's a, he in that passage and an, us. There's a, him and there's an, ours, there's a, we and then there's, him. Reading that chapter of prophecy from Isaiah, Jesus knew he had to be numbered with the transgressors. He knew, though he was sinless himself, yet he would bear the sin of many. It was this identification with sinners in the waters of John's baptism of repentance, by the show of solidarity with sinful men and sinful women. Jesus embraced his role as Isaiah's suffering servant.

Jesus knew he would bear the punishment for the sins of his people, that he would suffer as a substitutionary sacrifice. "He was the very Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." And that's what theologians referred to as the passive obedience of Christ, not just passive in the fact that he didn't have an active role. The word passive is here, the Latin word *passio*, which means suffering, so Jesus embraced the suffering. But Jesus also knew from reading the Old Testament and understanding it's theology, that he would act as the representative head of a new race of people, where the first Adam had failed, leading the entire human race into sin. Jesus knew that he, he was the last Adam, the one who had come to fulfill all righteousness. The one

whose active obedience would be reckoned or imputed or transferred to his people. Where'd Jesus get that idea?

Again, he'd read Isaiah 53:11, which says plainly, "By his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous." Accounted, that's the word reckoned, that's the word imputed. God intended to make "him who knew no sin to be sin." That's the passive, old, obedience idea, so that his people would become in Christ, the very righteousness of God. That's the active obedience part, every act of Christ's obedience, no matter how small, it all mattered, it all mattered for our justification.

"Just as by the one man's disobedience, the many were made sinners," Romans 5:19, "So by the one man's obedience, the many will be made righteous." I am so thankful that Jesus was meticulous about obedience, aren't you? Because that is applied to us, beloved, every act no matter how great, no matter how small, he gave this to us as a gift to all who believe. You ever failed to execute your own obedience to God in a completely perfect way? Yes, you do, you fail to do it exactly perfect way,



we all do. Right? I'm so thankful that he obeyed God, with absolute precision and perfection.

Nothing less than the undiminished glory of God and our salvation was at stake. And listen beloved, that's what we owe to him, don't we? Precision in our thinking, excellence in our obedience. Gary Brotherton coined the expression, "Close enough isn't good enough." I like that. We owe to God excellence in our worship and our praise, excellence. We don't slough our way through life as Christians, certainly not through church life, certainly not through worship. We're not half hearted or lazy, about our Christian life.

Listen, God gave his very best to secure our salvation, his Son. Jesus Christ gave his very best to glorify God and to secure our salvation. And beloved, as we follow God, we give our very best, as an offering of praise as an offering of gratitude that is due to our great God, amen? Now after submitting to God's will for his life, after submitting to this simple act of obedience, Jesus emerges, comes up out of the waters of baptism

and he's praying. That's where we ended last time, right? He's praying.

So what was Jesus praying about here? What's he praying about? What's on his mind? Philip Ryken says, "We really can't know." But then he goes on to suggest a few things Jesus might have been praying about. He's curious too, just as we are, even if he says we can't know and ultimately Ryken is right. We can't read Jesus' mind here. It's not recorded for us. But I believe that we can discern and ascertain what was at least part of the subject of Jesus' prayers.

I think we can learn from the divine response. Prayer is one of the significant themes of Luke's Gospel. It started with the people of God, the faithful praying at the temple in Luke 1:10. While Zachariah was officiating at the hour of incense, it says, "The people were there praying." Anna, she is exemplified here as one of the prayerful believers. A faithful believer. Says in Luke 2:37 that, "She didn't depart from the temple. She stayed there worshipping with fasting and prayer night and day."

She is an exemplary believer, Simeon also, he prayed in a moment of spontaneous joy when he saw the child Jesus at the temple. And Luke records the substance of his prayer in Luke 2:28-32. So Luke is already just in these first couple chapters of introduction, he's already been emphasizing the subject of prayer, which is a mark of genuine faith, true believers, those who have faith are those who pray. They pray, in fact, without ceasing, believers are in a constant attitude of prayer.

And listen, there is no greater demonstration of your spiritual maturity, no greater demonstration of the strength of your faith and with, whether or not you pray, and the substance of your praying as well. Why? Because prayer, unlike almost every other virtue that we exercise in the Christian life, prayer demands that we believe in an invisible God, in a God that we cannot see, that we believe his power to be active and effective, that we believe that his heart is inclined toward us. Prayer requires great faith. And that's why prayer was often the subject of Jesus' teaching.

In fact, it was after observing Jesus in prayer that his disciples asked him Luke 11:1, "Lord teach us to pray." Believers want to know how to pray, and they want to know not just how to pray, but how to pray well, effectively. Jesus is eager to oblige them, teaching them how to pray. Why? Because he loved them. He wanted them to be in communion with his father, just as he is in communion with his father. Jesus knew how vital prayer would be to their spiritual health, to his disciples' spiritual sustenance, to even their protection from sin and temptation.

Jesus warned them Luke 22:40, he said, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation." In verse 46, Luke 22, "After finding his disciples sleeping, overcome with sorrow." He didn't just sympathize with their weakness, though he did. He didn't stroke them and say, there, there, that's okay, I realize you're tired. This is tough for you. He rebuked them it says in Luke 22:46, "Why are you sleeping? Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation." Evidently not entering into temptation was more important than sleep.

That exhortation is so profound that it became the key text in John Owen's classic treatise, that treatise is called, this *"Of temptation, the nature and power of it, the danger of entering into it and the means of preventing that danger with a resolution of sundry cases there unto belonging."* I'll readily acknowledge that titling has come a long way since the 17th century.

But those 60 pages have been used mightily of the Lord, to help many believers in the battle against temptation. And is based on that verse, "Rise and pray, watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation." Jesus taught his disciples with a parable in Luke 18:1-8 to the effect that believers ought always to pray and not lose heart, just like a persistent widow, petitioning an unrighteous judge, a judge in the seat of power, a hardened man, no sympathy for the widows' plight, and a weak widow, nothing to commend her, no strength, no power of her own and yet because of her persistence, she overcame the will of this unrighteous judge.

God is not an unrighteous judge. He's a benevolent God who loves, how much more will he answer our prayers. But Jesus ended that parable with a rhetorical question of a warning. And he ended it saying, "Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?" That is, will Jesus find people praying, when he returns? Petitioning God continually, daily, seeking him in earnest, fervent prayer.

Prayer is important beloved, and it's modeled here by Jesus himself, was a key factor in our Savior's life as Luke records him praying throughout the entire Gospel narrative, as it says in Luke 5:16, "That he would often withdraw to a desolate place and pray." The other Gospels show Jesus praying before meals, which is why we pray before meals, right? Praying before feeding the 5,000, before feeding the 4,000, I just feed seven or eight or nine at my table, but feeding the 4,000. Feeding at the Last Supper.

He's praying before a meal with the Emmaus Road disciples. Prayer was Jesus constant habit. It was his way of life. Luke records him praying, especially before big events and

significant decisions, we find that in Luke 6:12, where it says, "In these days, Jesus went to the mountain to pray. And all night he continued in prayer to God." A nightly vigil of prayer, a nighttime to vigil. When day came, he did what? He called his disciples, and he chose from them 12, whom he named apostles.

So the naming of the 12, pretty important decision, right? Pretty significant. Jesus knew the significance of that decision, the far-reaching impact, and so he bathed it in prayer, as it says, "All night, he continued in prayer to God." Later on in Luke 9:18, he was praying in private, he was praying alone. And after praying, he turned to his disciples and he elicited from Peter, he drew out from Peter, what we've come to call, "The Great confession." Which was about Jesus' true identity. Jesus asked, "Who do the people say that I am?" And they had a number of answers. Then he said, "But you, who do you say that I am?" Peter answered, "The Christ of God." Right answer, Peter. That is the mark of a true disciple to know who Jesus is, right? The Christ of God.

Transfiguration occurred in that same chapter and Jesus said, "I tell you truly, there are some standing here, who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God." And then starting in Luke 9:28, it says this, "About eight days after these things, after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain," Again, what? To pray, "To pray, and as he was praying, the appearance of his face was altered, and his clothing became dazzling white."

Transfiguration.

So before choosing the 12, he was praying. Before he revealed his identity as the Messiah he was praying. Before revealing his divine glory, letting his disciples see the coming Kingdom of God and his glory, he was praying. In Luke 22:40-50, when Jesus was in agony, over his impending arrest, his trial, his crucifixion, his betrayal. Guess what? He was praying. Before every major event in his life, every major turning point, Jesus was in prayer. So here at the outset of his messianic ministry, what do you suppose he's praying about? Remember, Jesus had known his true identity at least since he was 12 years of age. He has been waiting in prayerful, studied anticipation for 18 years, he's been living in obscurity, in quiet submission

to his earthly parents. And the more he studied Scripture, the clearer his own life and purpose became.

And now, knowing the prophetic significance of John, the forerunner to the Messiah, what might have been the subject of Jesus' prayers? As he emerged from the waters of baptism? Perhaps it went something like this. Father, is now the time, is it now? When do you plan to anoint me for the ministry to which you've called me? Isaiah had to have been on his mind, one passage in particular, because of its connection here between the Spirit and empowerment for messianic ministry, Isaiah 61:1-3, it says this, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to grant to those who mourn in Zion, to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified."

What a rich text. This time, called the year of the Lord's favor, this good news to the poor, this healing for the brokenhearted, freedom for prison captives, comfort, gladness, praise, righteousness, all of that blessing cascaded out of that first crucial sentence. The indispensable prerequisite is this, the Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has, what? Anointed me. You say, But wasn't the Holy Spirit always with Jesus? Absolutely, you're dead on, that's right. The overshadowing power of the Most High, Luke 1:35 sent the Holy Spirit to cause the supernatural conception. And ever since he was conceived, Jesus had with him the abiding presence of the Spirit.

But Jesus also recognized the need for the anointing of the spirit, the activating of the spirit, to send him into service. And that had to be on his mind at this moment. That I believe, folks is what Jesus was praying about. And God answered that prayer. And he answered emphatically, didn't he? So after submitting, while praying, God responded.

God responded, that's the third point in our text, by the way, this is the climax, the response, the affirmation of God. Jesus came to John's baptism as a sincere, obedient Israelite, worshiping God in this act, this baptism of repentance and while he was in that frame of mind, while praying, notice that the end of verse 21, "The heavens are open, and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove, and a voice came from heaven. 'You are my beloved son, with you I'm well pleased.'"

We noted last week, when we introduced this section, that this section in Scripture represents a covenantal divide. This is a covenantal divide, Luke closed out John's ministry in the previous section, verses 18-20. And when he did, when Luke did that, he turned the page from the Old Testament to the New, he turned from looking at the last Old Testament prophet, one who pointed to the Christ, and he turned to listen to the first New Testament Prophet, who is Jesus. This is the climax folks of this section, not just of the scene, but of the first three chapters.

This is where Luke has been taking us the entire time, and he wants to drive home the point, he wants us to hear from God to consider God's, not his opinion, but his judgment about Jesus. This is God's judgment. And that's what we're going to consider for the rest of our time this morning. Three affirmations here, three affirmations from God. And as we go through each point, we're going to consider the sign and the significance of the sign. We're going to consider the sign and what is signified, okay?

First affirmation, first affirmation, the ESV translates the end of verse 21, with that phrase, "The heavens were opened." Now that word, Heavens, that's plural, right? Well, it's not plural in the Greek. It's the singular, it's heaven. And also, it's definite in the Greek. It's not just Heaven, but it's *The* Heaven, referring to a very specific, a very particular Heaven. To the Greek way of thinking and we kind of think this way, too, there are three heavens, the first heaven refers to the Earth's atmosphere, where the clouds are, where the birds fly, and all of that. The second heaven, that refers to the location of the planets and the stars, what we call outer space. David referred to this second heaven in Psalm 8:3 as "Your

heavens," I love this, "The work of your fingers," the work of your fingers, "the moon, and the stars, which you've set in place."

But the third Heaven, that refers to the hidden spiritual realm, this is the abode of the holy angels, the home of glorified saints, it's the very throne room of God. Third Heaven is what God showed Paul, 2 Corinthians 12:2-4, what he describes as a paradise, where "He heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter," a very special place. It's in the third Heaven, that God exists, that God dwells, that the holy angels' dwell, that all of us are spirits, when we leave our body we'll go there to be with God. It's that third Heaven, that opened to Jesus that day, while he's praying, because out of that place came the visible presence of the Holy Spirit, out of that place came the audible voice of God the Father. So what is the significance of this opened heaven?

Here's the message. Jesus has free, unfettered, and full access to Heaven. He is the one for whom Heaven is open wide. You remember that account of Philip, bringing Nathaniel to Jesus

over in John 1? Turn over there really quickly to John 1:45.

We'll read just a little bit from there. But that's often used as a great passage for how to do evangelism. You know, we don't argue with the unbeliever we just tell them come and see Jesus.

And that's true, that's really good. But there's something else here that we don't want to miss in that account. Very important. Philip, when he told Nathaniel, John 1:45, he said, "We have found him of whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

So they had evidently been studying, they'd evidently been searching for themselves. And they found him, "The one of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets wrote." And guess who it is? It's Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. Remember how Nathaniel responded there? He said, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" That is, Nazareth, right? Philip answered wisely, right? Every Sunday school kid knows this. He's a model for us. Philip didn't confront Nathaniel's prejudice against small towns. He didn't try to prove the merits of country living or

extol the virtues of humble, hardworking people in Nazareth, he simply said, "Come and see." Come see for yourself.

Look at Jesus and see, if there's any doubt in your mind. So Nathaniel followed Philip to go see Jesus. He was intrigued even if he was at first a bit skeptical, look at verse 47. "Jesus saw Nathaniel coming toward him, and said of him, 'Behold, an Israelite indeed in whom there is no deceit.'" Or in whom there is no guile. Jesus commended Nathaniel as a guileless man, not prone to flattery. That is, you can trust Nathaniel's word to be a true reflection of what Nathaniel really thinks.

He's never going to try to deceive you with flattery, even if his judgment is wrong at times, but he's never going to deceive you about what's in there, what's in his heart. People like that are rare, even if they are refreshingly honest, they're rare. Nathaniel knew Jesus had him pegged. He knew Jesus had his number. And so he asked, perhaps still with an air of suspicion, but he says, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree. I saw you."

Some presume, here that Jesus, though not physically present, supernaturally he had seen Nathaniel at a significant moment, like at a time of prayer, under the cool shade of a fig tree. And whether that's true or not, Nathaniel was immediately convinced of Jesus' supernatural knowledge about himself. And so Nathaniel answered him here, he's stunned. "Rabbi, you are the Son of God, you are the King of Israel." So he identified him truly, for who he truly is, Son of God, Messiah.

Jesus answered him, "Because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree do you believe?'" Hmm, small stuff, "'You will see greater things than these.' He said to him, 'Truly, truly I say to you, you will see Heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.'" That last verse may provide insight into the subject of Nathaniel's meditation and prayer that day, he may have been meditating on Genesis 28:12, which says that, "Jacob dreamed, and behold, there was a ladder setup on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven. And behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it."

Whether or not Nathaniel was thinking about that is beside the point, I think he was. But Jesus clearly alluded to that account. But notice when he quoted it, notice that Jesus made a change. He made a significant change. Jesus replaced the ladder, this inanimate object, he replaced that ladder, with the Son of Man, himself, the conduit, the pathway that connects Heaven to Earth, and Earth to Heaven is no longer an undefined, inanimate ladder. Jesus says, it's me.

Evidently, Jesus had done some thinking since Heaven opened to him at his baptism. You can go ahead and turn back to Luke 3:22. The sign of heaven opened signifies the access that Jesus has to God. It's free, unfettered, full access, he is the ladder, the pathway, the conduit of God's blessing to man, and of man's access to God. And that's why John 14:1-6, when Jesus told his disciples that "He's going away to prepare a place for them," he said in verse 4, "You know the way where I'm going." When Thomas protested, Jesus answered with one of our favorite memory verses, right? John 14:6, "I am the Way and the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

That's the first affirmation, here, coming out of heaven. Jesus has free, unhindered access to Heaven, Heaven is wide open to him. Second affirmation, beginning in verse 22, "The heavens were opened," and then secondly, "The Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove," like a dove. Put it simply and plainly here, this is the anointing of Jesus, by the Holy Spirit, to be the Messiah. The Greek literally says here, "He descended, the spirit, the holy." Luke is drawing our attention to the holy, set apart character of the anointing spirit. A holy set apart spirit is poured out on a holy set apart Messiah. Just like that Levitical anointing oil. It's a holy, set apart oil for a holy set apart anointing. That's this Holy Spirit.

As we said before, this is exactly what God told John the Baptist to look for. John 1:33, "He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.'" John said, I saw it, I was there and "I can testify that this is the Christ, the Son of God." Like Jesus, John also knew his scriptures. He knew the prophecies of Isaiah that pertain to Christ.

Isaiah said in Isaiah 11:2, "And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord." Isaiah 42:1, God here, speaking in the first person says this, "Behold, my servant, whom I uphold my chosen and whom my soul delights." That shows up at the end, right? "In whom my soul delights, I have put my spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations." Not just his people, by the way, not just Israel, the nations.

There's another passage in Isaiah, which we already referred to. This one comes from the Messiah's perspective. This is Christ speaking. Isaiah 61:1-3, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me." That's Christ speaking. Anointing, it's this idea of setting someone apart for service, for special service for unique role. That's what God's doing here. He's setting Jesus apart for a special calling for this unique role as Messiah, king of Israel. This is what Gabriel told his mother Mary back in Luke 1:32-33 "The Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, he will reign

over the house of Jacob forever and of his kingdom there will be no end."

This fulfills Genesis 49:10, "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, or the ruler staff from between his feet until tribute comes to him and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples." Jesus is Numbers 24:17 "The star who shall come out of Jacob, and the scepter who shall rise out of Israel; and he will exercise universal dominion." This is what Hannah prayed. The humble Hannah, barren Hannah giving birth to Samuel even before Israel had a king. She prayed this Spirit inspired prayer. 1 Samuel 2:10, "The Lord will judge the ends of the earth, he will give strength to his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed."

The word anointed by the way, it's the Hebrew word *masiah*. Or we translate that as Messiah, right? *Masiah* translated into Greek as Christ. Christ simply means "One who is anointed." *Christus*. This refers back originally to David of the tribe of Judah, he was the anointed king of Israel. Hannah's son Samuel anointed David as king with literal anointing oil, prepared according to Levitical prescription.

God told Samuel in 1 Samuel 16, "Arise, anoint him for this is he. So Samuel took that flask, this horn of oil, anointed him in the midst of his brothers, and the spirit of the Lord rushed upon David, from that day forward." But it's David's Son, Jesus, who is the greater *masiah*, he is what the Hebrew Christians now called the *mahamasiah*, the anointed one. This is the one whom God promised David in 2 Samuel 7:12 and following in the Davidic Covenant, he said, "I will raise up your offspring after you who shall come from your body, I will establish his kingdom, he shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son."

That was just a brief bit of biblical background, I realized that was very brief. I just wanted you to get enough of a picture to make this one point. With that background, can you tell me in your memory, when did anyone, a priest, a prophet, when did anyone, a man, even a woman, come to anoint Jesus with anointing oil? No human being anointed Jesus with anointing oil. And that's because God stepped in at this point. And he said, I will take care of anointing this one. I will anoint this one.



God himself promised Isaiah 11:2, Isaiah 42:1, Isaiah 61:1, I will anoint this one with the Holy Spirit, right?

It was the one anointed by the Spirit that God told John the Baptist, "This is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit." This is he who comes to baptize with a baptism greater than any baptism, the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Jesus is sent here to immerse his people in God's Holy Spirit. It's a profound Ministry of amazing, amazing grace. And by the way, that ministry of grace is ministry of mercy to his people, that is pictured in the very way that the Spirit descended upon him. I told you last week, that the visible, bodily descent of the Spirit, remember that it resembled the way a dove comes out of flight, comes out of flight and lights upon a branch or on the ground.

This Spirit resembled a dove like that coming out of flight, descending upon Jesus, energetic, fervent. That's part of the picture, but there's more. And I wanted to save this the best part, I think, for this week, the way the Spirit descended on Christ like a dove, it implies something of the Spirit's

presence upon Christ, something about the nature of his messianic mission. The picture of the dove is a picture of harmlessness, of gentleness and not only is the dove not at all a threatening creature, it is the very picture of a victim used in sacrifice.

Luke has already told us in Luke 2:24, that the humble couple, Mary and Joseph, only had enough money to purchase for a sacrifice, a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons. Remember that? The dove is the sacrifice of those with very little means. The dove is the sacrifice of the poor. Listen, Jesus came in the ministry of a sacrifice for the poor, which is why he could say, without any qualification, Luke 6:20, "Blessed are you who are poor. Yours is the kingdom of God."

Jesus' ministry would be characterized by gentleness, by his concern for the poor and the needy, by his mercy to enslaved sinners, as Isaiah 42:2-3 says, "He will not cry out, he will not lift up his voice, he will not make it heard in the street, a bruised reed, he will not break and a faintly burning wick, he will not quench." He is the very picture of tenderness, of

meekness. With that in mind, I want you to turn ahead a page or two to Luke 4:16.

Luke 4:16, Jesus has come out of the first thing that the Spirit took them into, which is his testing, his temptation in the wilderness. And he returned, it says in verse 14, "In the power of the Spirit to Galilee, report went out, he taught in their synagogues being glorified by all," and it says there in verse 16, "He came to Nazareth," where he'd been brought up, here's his hometown, hometown Prophet come to preach, as was his custom.

"He went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives, and recovering of the sight to the blind, to set at liberty, those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.' And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. And the

eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, 'Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.' And all spoke well of him and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth."

You recognize that? We read that earlier, that's Isaiah 61:1-2. But when Jesus read that portion, as it says there directly from the scroll of Isaiah, he intentionally left something out of Isaiah 61:2. Remember what it is? That verse says, Isaiah 61:2, "To proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God." Jesus stopped reading after that first section, "To proclaim the year the Lord's favor." And then he rolled up the scroll. He's done reading. He gave it back to the attendant, he sat down, he told the people, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing," very precise. It's him, it's Jesus.

I don't recommend that any of you pick and choose which parts of the Bible you want to read, okay? That's for Jesus to do as Messiah, he's the son of God, he has all authority to tell us not only what happened, but when it's going to happen, okay?

We read all passages in their context, full context. We understand what he did here. Jesus has come as a gentle Savior, a meek Messiah, and God has anointed him with this visible manifestation of the Holy Spirit, this dove like picture. Because he's here telegraphing the character of his ministry. Jesus, in this first advent is coming as a gentle victim. He's coming as a tender Messiah. He comes to call people to salvation because he himself is the victim of sacrifice, just like a harmless little dove. But, put in parentheses in your mind. He's coming again, right? Second Coming, "The year of vengeance of our God."

Well this is the first affirmation and the second affirmation. First affirmation, heavens wide open to Jesus. Second affirmation, Jesus is the Messiah, he's the Anointed One, not by man, but by the Spirit. It's a holy, set apart spirit with the character of a gentle dove. One who comes as a substitutionary sacrifice for the poor, the very least of these, that is quite the preview of the nature of our Lord and Savior, isn't it?

Well, one more affirmation. "A voice came from heaven, you are my beloved son with you I am well pleased." With that voice, heard from the open heaven. All three persons of the Trinity were on the scene at one time. And notice all three persons of the Trinity have joined the incarnate, visible son, as physical phenomena. John the Baptist was privileged to witness all of this; John touched the physical body of the Son as he baptized him in the Jordan River. John saw the physical presence of the Spirit as he descended from heaven and rested on Jesus. John heard with his physical ears, physical sound waves reverberating off of his eardrums, as he understood the words spoken from the father, to his beloved son.

There are only two other times that God spoke from heaven in this way, affirming his son, once in Matthew 17:3, at Jesus' transfiguration, and once in John 12:28, in response to Jesus' prayer requests, that the father glorify his name. But here at his baptism, this is the only time that I know of, when all three persons of the Trinity are manifest in some form of physical phenomena here. Just that simple observation, observation here tells us something important. Jesus is the one who makes the invisible God, visible. As John 1:18 tells us, "No

one has ever seen God, the only God who is at the father's side, he has made him known."

Jesus makes the invisible God visible. Now, while it's very important to note the fact that the father spoke here, let's not fail to hear what the father spoke about. Let's understand what he said. He said, "You are my beloved son." He's speaking second person, singular, to the Son, you, you. This is father speaking to son, "You are my beloved son, with you I am well pleased." Literally, God said here, "You are the son of me, the beloved." The closer I've looked at those words, the more profound I find them to be.

Just 10 words in the Greek, but they provide us with the highest Christology. The strongest, Trinitarian affirmation possible, and it comes directly from the mouth of God the Father. And in this affirmation of Trinitarian theology, we also find an affirmation of close, loving relationship. Not only that, but we also find an affirmation of Jesus utter uniqueness.

So let's break it down. We'll go section by section starting with first, an affirmation of Trinitarian theology. God said, "You are the son," mine, or of me. It's an affirmation of divine paternity. God the father is taking ownership of this son, paternity, therefore eternal sonship. This man standing in the waters of the Jordan River praying, he is more than just a man. He is fully God. He is the second person of the Trinity. He is the very son of God and by distinguishing him here as, *The son*, that immediately sets this voice apart as the voice of, *The father*, right?

Two persons of the Godhead in one simple statement. The father speaking to the son, the son hearing from the father, two distinct persons. This refutes by the way, the heresy of Sabellianism or Modalism, as it's commonly known today, which says that the three persons of the Trinity are simply three modes of divine manifestation.

For example, I don't know if you've ever heard of this, but when someone uses the analogy of water to explain the

Trinity, it is the Trinity is like the substance H₂O, which can be found in its solid form, ice, or its liquid form, water or its gas form, vapor, that's Modalism. Don't use that. While the H₂O is in solid form, it is not at the same time in liquid and gas form, and vice versa. That analogy describes God falsely as one substance in three different modes, taking three different forms, that is not Trinitarian theology.

And if you believe that about God, as T.D. Jakes does, you've confessed an ancient heresy. That's not Christian theology. What God actually said in verse 22, those words represent the divine being, as being of one substance, and yet existing in three equal yet distinct persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And there's an even more profound point of Trinitarian theology here, which we are not going to take time to develop. But when God called Jesus, mine, my son, it's a possessive pronoun in the Greek, literally, "You are the son of me." And for the father, to say, you are of me, he's saying, you are of the same substance of me.

Theologians refer to this doctrine as the doctrine of the eternal generation of the son. It's actually the Christology of the Nicene Creed, which was in part written to guard against Sabellianism. And the Creed says, "I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God." That word begotten, showing up, that's talking about this issue of eternal generation of the Son. "The only begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made."

All those phrases of the Nicene Creed on its Christology there, they're supported by this one statement from the voice out of heaven, you are the son of me, the beloved. As I said, we'll resist the temptation to unpack the doctrine of the eternal generation of the son of God from the father at this time, but I do want to connect this to an Old Testament text. It's one you're familiar with. Psalm 2:7 says, in the words of the Son, "I will tell of the decree." It's an eternal decree, "I will tell of the decree, the Lord said to me, 'You are my son; today I have begotten you.'"

That doctrine of eternal sonship, the eternal generation of the Son, that is the consistent teaching of scripture. But next, second, notice the affirmation here of a close, loving relationship. God said, you are the son of me; the beloved. The beloved, nearness, closeness, familiarity, intimacy, that's indicated by this father/son relationship and that possessive pronoun again translated, mine, in the ESV or as we said, of me, in the literal Greek, that possessive idea indicates, your mine. There's a jealousy that the father has for the son.

There is a jealous love that he has for his son's glory, his son's honor. He's zealous for that affection. He's protective of that rep, reputation and that honor, that's love. Most clearly, the loving relationship comes across in that term, "Beloved, you are my son." The Beloved, the emphasis in the Greek is on that last word. Beloved, is the word *agapetos*, which comes from word many of us recognize *agape*.

The son is dearly, highly loved by the father, jealously loved, zealously loved. As Jesus would say, John 3:35, "The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into his hand."

John 5:20, "The Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing." Jesus was always assured of his father, and his love for him. Never a doubt, never ever a doubt. So we see affirmations of Trinitarian theology, we see affirmation of a close loving relationship between father and son.

Third, there's an affirmation here of utter uniqueness. Utter uniqueness. Interesting note, or fact about that word beloved. When it's used to speak of an only child, as it is here, it refers to someone who is absolutely unique, a one of a kind. As Greek students know this is the *monogenes*, the one of a kind, the only one, the only begotten of the father, *monogenes*. Several passages in John's Gospel, he often uses this term *monogenes*, but it will be sufficient to remind all of you, you're familiar with these passages, "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. We have seen his glory, glory as of," the *monogenes*, "the only Son, that is only begotten Son from the father, full of grace and truth."

There's an uniqueness to him, there is an onliness to him and exclusivity. No one has ever seen God, John 1:18, the only

God, the *monogenes*, "God who was at the father's side, he has made him known. John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that he gave his," *monogenes*, his one and only, his begotten, "only begotten son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. John 3:18, "Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of," the *monogenes*, "the only begotten Son of God."

All these affirmations, affirmations of Trinitarian theology, of close loving relationship, of absolute uniqueness. All this kind of comes together in a passage in Hebrews chapter 11, verse 17, it says there in Hebrews 11:17, "By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises, was in the act of offering up," his *monogenes*, his only son." That word translated, only son, it's the word *monogenes*, and it reminds us of that heart wrenching passage in Genesis 22.

When God called Abraham to sacrifice his son, Isaac. And in that great chapter, Genesis 22, verse 2, verse 12, verse 16, God

said to Abraham, "take your only son," your son, your only son, "Isaac, whom you love. You have not," verse 12, "withheld your son, your only son, from me." Verse 16, "Because you've done this and have not withheld your son, your only son." Over and over, it's your son, it's your only son, it's the son whom you love. It's, let's name him, Isaac.

Knowing the end of that story, how it turned out, God stayed Abraham's hand, wouldn't let him sacrifice his son, turned his attention to the ram caught in the thicket, right? By his horns; indicating that God himself would provide a lamb for sacrifice. It's abundantly clear to us now that God spoke those words to Abraham with the utmost empathy. In Genesis 22, God is not speaking cold and heartless words, things that he has not himself felt and thought through.

These things are absolutely gut wrenching. Filled with *pathos* as God calls Abraham to do what he would one day do with his own son, his own son, his only son, his beloved son, his only son, Jesus. That's what our salvation cost beloved. It is a free gift to be sure. But that free gift let's not forget was so

costly. Those three precise affirmations of Trinitarian theology, loving relationship, absolute uniqueness, they show us here that there is no one like him. No one like him.

There's a final statement from the voice out of heaven. And it seals the divine affirmation with unqualified approval. It's that last phrase in you or, "with you, I am well pleased." That is as emphatic an affirmation of approval as can be put into language. And it harkens back to what we read earlier in Isaiah 42:1, "Behold, my servant whom I uphold my chosen, in whom my soul delights, I have put my spirit upon him."

God stamps his punctuation of approval emphatically on Jesus, the Son of God, the Messiah, his beloved Son, and the tense and the mood of the verb in the Greek infinitive, indicates here, a timeless approval, looking backward in time and forward in time, all of it taken in a glance of sovereign gaze and says, well pleasing. Jesus' entire life here is under the scrutiny of an all seeing God and all is declared well pleasing to the holy, penetrating gaze of God.

I love the way G. Campbell Morgan puts this. He says this phrase, "In you I'm well pleased," he says "First of all, it flashes light backwards upon the 30 years, God's approval of the 30 years, 30 years in which there had been no deflection from the straight path of obedience to the will of God. 30 years, nothing in the life, nothing in thought, nothing in speech, nothing in deed, nothing in work that had not filled the heart of God with satisfaction. In thee I have found delight, but there's something more."

G. Campbell Morgan goes on. "It was also the accepting of the three and a half years to come, the direction and purpose of which had been indicated by the baptism of this man in the Jordan, 'Thou art the Son of me, the beloved, in thee I have found my delight.' Thus has Luke set before us, the person of the Word made flesh, in that person, all human history, is reborn. This is God's new starting point for the human race." End quote.

This is why I've called these verses the covenantal divide. It's a watershed text folks, because after this, everything changes, everything has changed. As we look back, we know it's all changed since the cross. Nothing is the same because of Jesus Christ who has been approved and commissioned by the Father. Heaven is wide open to him. And thus it's wide open to us.

He has come in the spirit of the dove, gentle and as a victim as our substitutionary sacrifice. Take all of our sins away. He's the one who makes the invisible God visible. He's the one who teaches us who God is, makes him known to us. So we can learn who he is and what he's like. He is the one who's approved by God, his full life of righteousness given to us as a gift. And now you will know why the Bible is emphatic, absolutely emphatic about the exclusivity of salvation, in and through Jesus Christ and in and through Jesus Christ alone.

As Paul told Timothy, 1 Timothy 2:5, "For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." Beloved, that is why we worship and praise him. Amen.

Acts 4:12, "There is salvation and no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men, by which we must be saved." Let's bow and praise him together.

Lord Jesus, we pause for a moment to pray directly to you. Thanking, we just want to thank you for saving us. Thank you for your perfect, meticulous, obedience of all the father's will. With every single one of us, your beloved, your people, every single one of us on your mind. We're so grateful that at, on the cross you thought of us, you died for us. There's no merit in us; there's only merit in you. And we're so grateful that you live the way you lived and died the way you died, that you might bring us to God.

We're so thankful for your life and your death sacrificed for us and your life that's raised from the dead by the resurrection, with resurrection power that you now give to all of us. We're thankful that you dwell bodily by the father's right hand, and you intercede for us, praying for us constantly. You've sent the Holy Spirit to us, baptizing each one of us, your people, by the Holy Spirit, by that same anointing. We're

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so grateful that we are before you, in him in, in you in, in the spirit and that we also benefit of the spirit's intercessory prayer for us. Thank you for your tender care for us.