

# The Baptism of Jesus

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Date: 15 February 2026

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[ 0 : 00 ] Thank you, thank you, thank you.

All right, let me read the passage for us. John 3, 13 through 17, the word of the Lord says, Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him, but John tried to stop him, saying, I need to be baptized by you, and yet you come to me?

And Jesus answered him, Allow it for now, because this is the way for us to fulfill all righteousness. Then John allowed him to be baptized. When Jesus was baptized, he went up immediately from the water.

The heavens suddenly opened for him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming down on him. A voice from heaven said, This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.

Let's pray together again. Lord, we pray now that you would meet with us again. God, we pray that you would help us to understand your word. Help us to see the beauty of Jesus in this passage.

[ 1 : 27 ] We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. The baptism of Jesus. This is a passage that I think for many of us kind of sparked some questions.

In fact, I was leading a class. I teach a class on Wednesday nights called Foundations of the Faith, and what we're going through is just the kind of basics of Christianity. And here recently we did a week on baptism, and one of the questions that I got asked was, Well, why did Jesus need to be baptized?

It's a totally fair question. Why did Jesus need to be baptized? Because John made his purpose in baptism pretty clear. Matthew 3, verse 2, John's message was repent because the kingdom of heaven has come near.

And then in verse 6, And they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins. This was a baptism of repentance. People came to confess their sins and to be baptized.

In other words, their baptism was them publicly denouncing their way of life that was walking away from God, and instead was a turn to walking with God, to open their eyes, to open their minds, to be willing to receive what God was about to do in terms of his kingdom.

[ 2 : 45 ] John came to prepare the way for Jesus, who was inaugurating the kingdom of God. So why in the world then would Jesus need to be baptized?

Why would he submit to the baptism of John? What I hope you see in this passage is that as the fulfillment of John's ministry, Jesus' baptism shows us our need to repent of our sin and trust in Jesus and trust in him for forgiveness and entrance into his kingdom.

In other words, Jesus didn't come to take advantage of John's baptism, to use it for some vault into the public sphere or anything like that. Jesus didn't come to take the credit of the glory away from John.

Instead, what Jesus came to do was fulfill John's ministry, John's baptizing ministry, and in doing so, show that his ministry, Jesus' ministry, the kingdom that he was coming to inaugurate, was built on the same kingdom principles of repentance and forgiveness of sins.

That's what Jesus came to do in this baptism scene. And so there's a few things that I want us to look at today, and I'll confess this will probably be a shorter sermon than normal if you're used to my sermons.

[ 4 : 03 ] So you're welcome, I think. Sunday school teachers, you're welcome. I know you guys prepare every week. So, and I'm sorry I take away from your time when I go long, but this will be a little bit shorter.

But I want us to look at three different things from this passage, and I want us to think about them a little bit in some detail here. First, the first thing that we'll look at is John's humility. John's humility.

And we talked about the humility of John last week, we did, but I want you to see it here again in this passage.

It says in verse 13 and 14, Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. Let me stop there for a second and explain. We don't know how long this was between the beginning of John's ministry and the time that Jesus came.

All we get is this somewhat temporal marker, then, meaning at this time. So, at this point in time, Jesus came from Galilee to be baptized by John in the Jordan.

A couple other things here. We know from John's gospel that John was baptizing in the Jordan near Bethany. And so, Jesus traveling from Galilee to Bethany to the Jordan means that Jesus had traveled about 70 or more than 70 miles to participate in this baptism by John.

[ 5 : 18 ] That tells us a couple things. Number one, it tells us that John's baptism, word of John's baptism, had spread beyond just the lower portion of Jerusalem, Judea, and all of those areas around, up to the north also.

The word had spread across all of Israel to say, There is a prophet. The prophet, the forerunner, he's here. Someone who is coming before the chosen one, before the Messiah, the anointed one. That person is here, and he is baptizing down there at the Jordan. And so, John's, word of John's ministry had spread. Secondly, it shows us that Jesus was intentional in going to John to receive this baptism.

Jesus went out of his way, quite literally, to be baptized by John. He walked 70 miles. Now, some people won't even walk the aisle. Okay, all right, anyway. That was just a bad joke.

I'm sorry. Jesus walked 70 miles to be baptized by John at the Jordan. Now, we know that that means that Jesus had a very specific purpose in going. And we'll talk about that.

[ 6 : 20 ] But I want you to see here, though, the humility of John. Because even though Jesus walked all of this way, he traveled 70 miles to be baptized, look at John's response. But John tried to stop him, saying, I need to be baptized by you, and yet you come to me?

How can this be? You see the humility of John in this statement. And there's a few things that you can point to in John's humility.

Number one is that John recognized his baptism. In other words, John knew that his baptism was a baptism of repentance, a baptism to repent from sin, to publicly say, I am cleansing myself of this sin, or I'm being cleansed of this sin, and I am aligning myself with the kingdom of God.

And here's the thing. John knew enough about Jesus to know that he did not need to repent. We don't know exactly what that means, because in John's gospel, the gospel of John, the evangelist, not John the Baptist.

I explained that last week, but that's important to remind you of. In John's gospel, where I read today, what you see is that John did not know him, did not know Jesus before Jesus came to be baptized.

[ 7 : 32 ] This probably doesn't mean that he didn't know Jesus personally, because Jesus was his cousin, right? So probably he personally knew Jesus. But what John is more likely saying is that he did not know or recognize that Jesus was certainly the Messiah, the anointed one.

He didn't definitely know that before he baptized Jesus. So what does it mean that he didn't know him? But still here in verse 14, we see that he wanted to stop Jesus because he saw that Jesus didn't need to repent.

Well, I think it means a couple things. I think we can understand John's position when we think back to his mother's experience, Elizabeth. Remember Elizabeth, John's mother, was pregnant.

You know, the angel prophesied to Zechariah that Elizabeth in her old age would have a child. So she's pregnant with a son. And then she has this visit from Mary.

Mary, when Mary was newly pregnant with the Lord Jesus Christ. And when Mary walked into the room, remember what happened? What did the baby John do in the womb?

[ 8 : 36 ] Anybody remember? He leaped in the womb. He did a front flip. Yeah. He was excited, right? He was, I mean like, and here's the thing. What that showed us was the fulfillment of that prophecy from the angel to Zechariah that the baby would be filled with the Holy Spirit in his mother's womb.

John was filled with the Holy Spirit. And so being filled with the Spirit, he recognized the presence of Jesus. Jesus, even in utero, it's a powerful, again, a powerful statement on the sanctity of human life, right, from the moment of conception.

But John there in the womb, he leapt. And then Elizabeth's response when she recognized this, do you remember what she told Mary? She said, who am I that the mother of the Lord would visit me, right?

The mother of my Lord. So Elizabeth recognized who Mary was pregnant with, all right? And now I can only assume that as a mother who today is convinced of Jesus Christ being the Lord of all, would tell their child about Jesus Christ, I can only assume that Elizabeth then would do the same. If she was convinced that Jesus, that the son of Mary was the Lord, then she would pass that on to her son, right? In the same way her father, or his father, Zechariah, was a priest.

[ 9 : 49 ] Zechariah had prophesied about the birth of John and about the mission of John. And presumably had taught John how he would be this forerunner, right? We can only assume that he taught him from the book of Isaiah about this forerunning ministry of going before Jesus.

And so while he didn't know for sure that Jesus was the Messiah, I think that John had a pretty good idea. And also, if he had heard anything about his news from his cousin, then he would know that his cousin was perfect, right?

It's never fun to be compared to someone who's better than you, you know what I mean? It's like, Elizabeth, I just got this letter from Mary. Why can't you be more like your cousin Jesus, you know? Like, can you imagine?

John was pretty good, though. He wasn't perfect, but he was pretty good. So John, he knew enough about Jesus to, I think, rightly assume or rightly think that Jesus might be the one who was greater than he, right?

He might be the one who would come and baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire. And so while he didn't know for certain, according to John's gospel, I think he had a pretty good idea.

[ 10 : 57 ] And he also, again, recognizing his baptism and the perfection of Jesus, right? The sinlessness of Jesus. He was very much perplexed at the idea of Jesus submitting or receiving this baptism.

He's like, it doesn't make any sense. John's statement here in verse 14, he tried to stop him. I need to be baptized by you, and yet you come to me. What that shows us is that John recognized his own sin in the presence of Jesus.

He recognized his need to receive Jesus's baptism, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the baptism of fire that Jesus would bring. John recognized that.

And so he said, no, no, no, no, I can't baptize you. You need to baptize me. He recognized his need. And what I want you to see here in this picture of John and this humility is that it's a good thing for us to recognize our insufficiency in the presence of Jesus Christ.

In other words, when we look at Jesus, when we stand before Jesus, there should be no other response in our minds other than, I am unworthy.

[ 12 : 03 ] I am unworthy. John said in John's gospel, in John chapter 1, he said, I'm not even worthy to untie his sandals, let alone to baptize him. Right?

That's a picture of humility. And it's the picture of humility that's required to accept the love of Jesus, to accept the grace of Jesus, to repent of your sin and trust in Jesus by faith.

The picture of humility in John is that we have to be humble enough to recognize our insufficiency, to stand before Jesus and say, I need you. I need you. You don't need me.

I need you. There's this kind of story that's going around this week. There's an actor who passed away. And there's a video that went around that he shared about how he came to realize that he was worthy of God's love.

And here's the thing. I just want to make clear, if you saw that video, if you know what I'm talking about, that somebody is worthy of God's love. On our own, we are not worthy of God's love.

[ 13 : 06 ] On our own, we're sinful. On our own, we're separated from God. On our own, we're not prepared for the kingdom of God. But by the grace of God and the person of Jesus Christ, and by placing our faith in him, we get to receive the love of God.

We have the opportunity to receive the love of God so that we can be counted worthy, not because of what we've done, but because of what Christ did. When we look at Jesus, when we look at God, we have to stand in a place of humility and say, we are insufficient.

We are unworthy. And it's only by the presence and power of Jesus Christ that we have any worth of due us. So that's John's humility.

Now, next I want to point to Jesus' purpose. Jesus' purpose. And what I mean by that is, why did Jesus come to be baptized? Again, that's a question that gets asked quite a bit.

This is what Jesus answered in verse 15. Now, in verse 14, the way that John tried to stop him, there's an infinitive there in the Greek, which means that there was multiple attempts by John to stop Jesus, to prevent Jesus from being baptized.

[14:26] John was kind of standing in the way. No, I'm not going to do it. I won't do it. You don't need to be baptized by me. I need to be baptized by you. But then Jesus convinced him because Jesus explained his purpose.

Jesus explained his purpose. In his baptism, Jesus did a few things. One, he endorsed John's ministry. He endorsed John's ministry. So, in other words, what Jesus did by submitting to the baptism of John was he said, this baptism of repentance is valid.

In other words, if you want to prepare for the kingdom of God or if you want to enter the kingdom of God, which is now available for entrance, by the way, if you want to enter the kingdom of God, the way to do so is to repent of your sin.

That is, to turn from your sin and to, instead of living in sin, live for God, right? Live under the rule and reign of Christ. To trust Jesus. Jesus endorsed John's ministry.

He showed that John had been sent of God and that John was right. People needed to prepare for what was coming. Now, there's an end times perspective to John's baptism.

[15:40] This kingdom mindset that the kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven has come near. There is an end times perspective here. In other words, if you don't prepare for the kingdom, if you don't enter the kingdom, then what awaits is judgment, right?

There's this, you know, at the end of all things, there's two roads, so to speak. One is to the kingdom of God and one is to judgment, separated from God. And that's why John explained, remember, to the Pharisees and the scribes who came that they needed to produce fruit consistent with repentance.

Because the ax was already at the root of the tree and that everything that was cut down would be thrown into the fire and that it would be burned away. That Jesus stands with his winnowing shovel in his hand and he'll clear the threshing floor.

You know, this eschatological language, this end times language. Jesus showed that John was right, that there is an urgency to repenting and believing and entering the kingdom.

There's a certain urgency to this message. Now, Jesus also obeyed the Father's will. It says, Jesus said, allow it for now because this is the way for us to fulfill all righteousness.

[16:53] In the gospel of Matthew, that word righteousness has a pretty specific meaning. It generally, it means alignment or right following of the law.

Okay, so when someone follows the law to perfection, that would be righteous. And so Jesus is saying that this is the way for us to fulfill all righteousness.

What he means is, God has ordained this baptism. And in order for me to fulfill what I have come to fulfill, which is the righteousness that I'm going to be able to impute, to give to those who trust in me, I have to fulfill all things that the Father has said.

I have to obey all things that the Father has sent me to do. One of the things the Father sent Jesus to do was to be baptized by John. And so he obeyed the Father's will. You see the humility in Christ in his submission to the Father's will.

This is, by the way, a secondary endorsement of John's baptism. And the third thing is that Jesus identified with the sinners he came to save. Again, Jesus did not need to be baptized to repent of his own sin because Jesus was sinless.

[18:05] Hebrews 4.15 says, We have such a great high priest who can sympathize with our weakness because he was like us in every way, yet without sin.

Jesus was tempted like us in every single way, yet without sin. So we know the sinlessness of Jesus. So why did he have to be baptized? Why did he have to be baptized by John who was baptizing sinners?

What does that even mean? Well, because he, in his baptism, identified with the sinners that he came to save. There's a really good sermon on this passage by John MacArthur. And he explained, he explains really, really powerfully how Jesus identifies with the sinners that he came to save. MacArthur's point is that in baptism, you see a picture of Jesus' death and resurrection, the same way that we see it when we baptize here today. And also, you see that Jesus went underwater,

under the same water that the sinners were going under.

In other words, Jesus fully aligned himself, identified himself with sinful man who he came to save. Those who came to be washed for repentance, he came to be washed alongside them.

[ 19 : 10 ] Those who would die, Jesus came to die for them. Jesus, in his ministry, identified with sinners so that, 2 Corinthians 5.21, he could, on the cross, become sin so that we might become the righteousness of God in him.

In other words, Jesus identified with sinners so that we could be identified with him. Does that make sense? Trying to be a little bit clear on this. I don't know, it's hard to explain sometimes when you're up here.

You know what I mean? Sometimes when you're preaching, it's like people are looking at you and it's like, I don't know that this is landing. You know? So is that, are we good? Anybody need further explanation today?

Okay. I'll trust you. Jesus receives our baptism of repentance so we can receive his baptism of the Spirit. That's kind of a succinct way of saying this.

Jesus received our baptism of repentance so that we can receive his baptism of the Spirit. Again, this is not the final time that Jesus would align with sinners. He did so most prominently in his death and in his resurrection.

[ 20 : 20 ] The third thing I want us to see in this passage is the Trinitarian affirmation. The triune God on display in the baptism of Jesus.

Verses 16 and 17 said, So, in this baptism of Jesus, you see the Trinitarian affirmation of Jesus' ministry.

First, you see it in the obedience of the Son, which I've already mentioned. The obedience of the Son. The baptism of Jesus is a great example of his submission and obedience to the will of the Father.

The Son of God submitted himself to the baptism of John, even though he wasn't sinful. And I want you to see that the humility required in this is nothing short of remarkable. That Jesus would identify himself publicly, even in an almost humiliating way, with sinners.

Because he was not a sinful person. I also want you to see that in this, there's a really neat picture of the honesty of the early church. This is not a story that the gospel writers would make up.

[ 21 : 37 ] And yet, all four of the gospel writers include a testimony of Jesus being baptized by John. They wouldn't make this up because of the potential confusion of Jesus having been sinful.

And in need of a baptism of repentance. They wouldn't make that up because that would be too risky. So this is a legitimate story from the life of Christ from the beginning of his gospel ministry. That he came in obedience and submitted himself humbly to this baptism of repentance. I want to read from Philippians chapter 2, just as a reminder of the humility of Christ.

It says, starting in verse 5, Adopt the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus, who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be exploited. Instead, he emptied himself by assuming the form of a servant, taking on the likeness of humanity.

And when he had come as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even to death on a cross. You see the humility of Christ. The humble example of Jesus to submit himself to the will of the Father in obedience in everything.

[ 22 : 46 ] We would do well to mimic the obedience of Christ in our life. You also see the anointing of the Spirit. So when Jesus was baptized, he went up immediately from the water.

By the way, that's a really good argument for baptism by immersion. Jesus had to be under the water to come up out of the water. Amen? Okay. When he came up out of the water, the heavens suddenly opened for him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming down on him.

So the Spirit of God comes down like a dove. Why a dove? Well, I think that's really less important than the fact that the Spirit of God publicly demonstrated that he was anointing Jesus Christ as the Son.

You see what I'm saying? It's like, why a dove? Well, there's a few reasons. MacArthur thinks it's because the dove is a picture of sacrifice. It would have been the most well-known sacrificial offering that a Jew could have offered because for poor people, that's what they gave.

They didn't have the lambs to sacrifice. They gave doves. Other people think that the dove is a symbol of purity. Other people think that the dove is a symbol of things like the newness, like in

Genesis, whenever Noah sent out doves, and there was like, okay, now a newness on the land that they can go and live.

[ 24 : 04 ] But look, I think that it's really less important as to why it was a dove and more important that the Son of God was anointed by the Spirit of God. In other words, this was the inauguration of his ministry.

And we know that Jesus, even though he's the Son of God who has divine power, we know that he emptied himself to leave heaven. And we also know that some of the things that Jesus did on earth were by the power of the Holy Spirit.

He sent out demons by the power of the Holy Spirit. He healed people by the power of the Holy Spirit. He perceived thoughts by the power of the Holy Spirit. He preached by the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus was empowered for ministry by the Spirit of God.

And so you see in his baptism at the beginning of his public ministry, this anointing where the Spirit of God came and rested on him. In other words, publicly showing that what he would do, he would do in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Which, by the way, fulfills some Old Testament prophecies like Isaiah chapter 42. That the Messiah would have the Spirit of God who would rest upon him. Thirdly, you see that this affirmation in the word from the Father.

[ 25 : 16 ] And a voice came from heaven saying, This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased. You know, there's a simple truth here that we have to take right now in full view.

And that is that no matter what anyone else says about who Jesus is, no matter what anyone else tries to prove about Jesus based on historical research, or based on personal experience, or anything of the like, no matter what we want to conjure up in our mind as what we think about Jesus, the simple truth is, what the Father says about Jesus has the final word.

And the Father declared Jesus as his Son, whom he loves, whom he is well pleased with. Jesus, the Son of God, is sent out into ministry by the power of the Holy Spirit, and in the affirmation of the Father.

There is a powerful affirmation here, and I want you to see that Jesus is confirmed as the Son of God here. Right? He's confirmed as the Son of God here. But then if you go to Matthew chapter 17, and you see at this scene, this is later in Jesus' ministry, this is at the mountain of transfiguration, when Jesus is transfigured in front of three disciples, Peter, James, and John, that this is what happens.

It says in Matthew chapter 17, starting in verse 1, after six days, Jesus took Peter, James, and his brother John, and led them up on a high mountain by themselves. He was transfigured in front of them, and his face shone like the sun.

[ 26 : 49 ] His clothes became white as light, and suddenly Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with him. Then Peter said to Jesus, Lord, it's good for us to be here. If you want, I will set up three shelters here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.

I love this scene, by the way, in the Gospel of Mark, because the Gospel of Mark tells us that Peter, not knowing what to say, just shouted that it's a good thing for us to be here.

We'll build three shelters. In other words, Peter was one of those people that just like, you know, he felt like he had to say something. You know what I mean? And sometimes he said the wrong thing. This is an example of that. So anyways, verse 5, while he was still speaking, while Peter was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said, this is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased.

Listen to him. You see, the Father has confirmed that Jesus is the Son at the beginning of his ministry, and now affirmed that Jesus is the Son in the middle of his ministry, and then how does the Father most prominently vindicate or prove or confirm the Sonship of Christ?

By raising him from the dead. So Jesus, at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of his ministry, is proven time and again by the word of the Father and by the work of the Father that he is the Son of God who came with a specific purpose.

[ 28 : 16 ] And in this scene here in Matthew chapter 17, you see that not only is this his beloved Son with whom he is well pleased, there's also an important reminder to listen to him. In other words, Jesus has important words.

Jesus has an important message, and his message is for eternal life. So with his baptism, Jesus is commissioned and empowered to begin his earthly ministry and bring many to repentance.

So I want you to see that the humility of John, the purpose of Jesus, the Trinitarian affirmation here in the baptism of Christ, but I want you to mostly understand that in this baptism, in the baptism of Jesus, we see that he is the king who's coming to inaugurate his kingdom, and that the only response for us who hear the word of the Father, and all of us who read this word today hear the word of the Father, is to receive him as the Son of God.

Receive Jesus as the Son of God. We need to receive him as the Son of God, and as we receive Jesus, that means that we believe him at his word, that means we trust him for the forgiveness of our sins, and that means we obey him in what he commands.

So what is the response? What's the response to the baptism of Jesus? Take him at his word, repent of sin, and trust Jesus.

[ 29 : 41 ] John came preaching that the kingdom of heaven had come near. Jesus came to establish, to inaugurate his kingdom on earth. An entrance to his kingdom is available to you, and it's available to me, today, by faith in the Son of God.

Jesus Christ is truly the Son of God. He's also truly a man. He is truly the one that is able to save us from our sin.

John was able to prepare people. Jesus is able to save people. So if you have not repented of your sin and trusted in Jesus, then I have bad news for you.

It's that apart from that, the only hope that you have is a hope of separation, a hope of judgment, a hope of eternal separation from God. But by repenting of your sin and trusting in Jesus for the forgiveness of your sin, you can have eternal life.

That's available to you today. I would also suggest that you see in Jesus the example of obedience and that if you have received Jesus Christ, if you have trusted in Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, then the next step is to obey him and follow in baptism.

[ 31 : 00 ] So if you have believed in Jesus, you have confessed Jesus Christ as Lord, a private confession, right? That you've believed that Jesus Christ is Lord, you've trusted him, you've repented of your sin, and you've turned to him, then the next step is to publicly profess your faith in Jesus through believer's baptism.

Jesus gives us an example not only of his repentance that he offers and entrance into the kingdom, but also of obedience that we would follow in his word, follow his commands, and we would trust him in everything.

So that's the challenge, that's the call for you today. If you have not repented of your sins and believed in Jesus, then let today be that day. And if you have repented of your sins and trusted in Jesus, then follow him obediently in believer's baptism.

Let me pray for us, and John, I think you're gonna lead us in a closing song, right? I don't know if we plan that far out. You are? Oh, praise the Lord. Okay, John's gonna lead us in a song. All right? Let me pray for us, and you respond as the Lord leads.

Lord Jesus, we thank you for who you are. We thank you for your word. We thank you for your power. Jesus, I thank you for the example that you've given us of submission and obedience to the will of the Father.

[ 32 : 14 ] Thank you also that you aligned with sinners, that you were not ashamed of us, but that you came to save us. Because, Lord, we are all sinful. We all have a great need for you.

So, Lord, I pray for everyone in this room who has heard this word, that you would sink it deep in their hearts. And, Lord, I pray that the response would be spirit-led, that people would obey as you call, that if you have laid it on someone's heart to obey you and trust in you and repent of their sins for salvation, then, God, I pray that they would do that now.

If you've laid it on someone's heart to obey you and follow you in believer's baptism, then, Lord, I pray that you would quicken them to do such a thing. Lord, I pray all of these things in Jesus' name and I thank you for your presence and your power and it's in your name that we pray.

Amen. Amen.