

The Holy Spirit Significance of Jesus' Baptism

“‘I did not know Him, but for this reason I came baptizing with water: so that He might be revealed to Israel.’ Then John bore witness, saying, ‘I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on Him. I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, “The One on whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.” I have seen and have borne witness that He is the Son of God’” (John 1:31-34).

We know very little about Jesus' life during His teens and twenties, but all that changes at His baptism. The baptism of Jesus Christ is so significant that it appears in all four of the New Testament Gospels.

This event was not Jesus receiving the Holy Spirit for the first time. In the previous chapters Luke clearly tells us that the Holy Spirit was intimately involved in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ from the womb. Mary, His mother, conceived Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, at every moment of His journey into human history through the womb of Mary, the Spirit was present in power with Jesus.

Jesus' baptism was not where He received the Spirit, but rather it was a public event where the Father “revealed” to the crowd what Jesus already knew—that He lived in loving and constant relationship with God the Father and God the Spirit (John 1:31).

Since there is no authority higher than God the Father, His public validation was the highest validation possible to launch Jesus' public ministry following His baptism. The presence of the Spirit like a dove reminds us of the days of

Noah. In that day salvation from God's wrath came through deliverance via a wooden boat carrying God's people, and in Jesus' day salvation from God's wrath would come via a wooden cross carried by God Himself.

One of the primary purposes of Jesus' baptism was to publicly announce that Jesus' entire ministry— including preaching, healing, and delivering—would be accomplished by the power of the Holy Spirit.

In John 1:32–33 John the Baptizer says, “I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on 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.’” The language of the Spirit “coming to rest” and “remain” on Jesus reveals an ongoing, abiding, and relational presence where everything in Jesus' life will be under the control and by the power of the Spirit. {eoa}

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