

# OpenTheo

## Baptism of Jesus



### **The Life and Teachings of Christ** - Steve Gregg

In his discussion of the Baptism of Jesus, Steve Gregg presents a detailed comparison of the accounts provided in Matthew and Luke. While some have suggested that Jesus' exceptional abilities come from studying under gurus and masters, the Bible clearly suggests that these abilities were a result of his relationship with the Father. The baptism of Jesus, which was initially objected to by John the Baptist, marked the beginning of his enormous popularity and led to the revelation that he was the Son of God.

### **Transcript**

Okay, let's turn to Matthew chapter 3 and we have just five verses here that we want to look at. They are the natural sequel to the material that goes before them, although they are treated as a separate thing. We were studying in our last class from Luke chapter 3. We're now in Matthew 3. These passages are parallel.

Luke 3 and Matthew 3 both are devoted largely to the baptism of John the Baptist, that is his baptizing ministry, his preaching ministry, and also the fact that he baptized Jesus. It is that latter point, the baptism of Jesus, that we now come to. The reason we have changed over from Luke to Matthew for our examination is that of the earlier ministry of John the Baptist, Luke gives the fullest account, but of the actual baptism of Jesus, Matthew gives the fullest account, and that's our method of covering the life of Christ, to take the gospel, whichever gospel is the most full on the particular subject matter.

In the case of this incident of the baptism of Jesus, Luke passes over it with two brief verses and gives us very little about it, whereas Matthew expands it to five verses and therefore gives us a considerably more detailed account. Matthew 3, 13 through 17 are the verses we're going to be reading. Matthew 3, 13.

Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him, and John tried to prevent him, saying, I have need to be baptized by you, and are you coming to me? But Jesus answered and said to him, Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he allowed him. Then Jesus, when he had been baptized,

came up immediately from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon him.

And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Now, it begins by introducing Jesus coming from Galilee. Chronologically, the last we've heard about Jesus in the Gospels was at the end of Luke chapter 2, when he was 12 years old.

It says that after his parents, having searched for him, found him talking to the teachers in the temple, he went with them back to Nazareth, their hometown, and he was subject to them. It does not specifically say that Jesus spent the rest of his young life in Nazareth, but last we heard of him, he was in Nazareth with his parents at age 12. Now, we know from Luke's version, in Luke 3.23, that Jesus was now about 30 years of age.

The question of whether he had remained in Nazareth all those years, from the time he was 12 until he was 30, is nowhere directly addressed. This silence on the part of the New Testament writers has given occasion for strange heresies to arise, usually within New Age and Hindu circles, suggesting that Jesus spent some of those 18 years, between age 12 and 30, traveling. That he spent his time going down to Egypt, learning some magic down there, going to India and Nepal and other places in Asia where he sat under the great gurus and great masters and learned spiritual things from them.

And that when he returned, now at age 30, where we see him again in Matthew 3.13, he came back armed with tremendous insights that he'd gotten from the Eastern mystics and also magical powers and so forth that he'd learned, and that explains why he was so extraordinary. Of course, the Bible gives other reasons why Jesus was so extraordinary, indicating that Jesus was God in the flesh. Furthermore, as far as his teachings and his works are concerned, Jesus always indicated that those were the proof of his Father working in him.

On many occasions, Jesus mentioned he was incapable of doing anything on his own, but only what the Father showed him to do could he do. In one passage in particular, he makes it clear that both his words and his works are being done by the Father who dwelt in him, which is an entirely different explanation than that given by the New Agers. In John 14, in verse 9, Jesus said to Philip, Have I been so long with you, Philip, and yet you have not known me, Philip? He who has seen me has seen the Father.

How can you say, Show us the Father? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father in me, the words that I speak to you? I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does the works. Now, Jesus makes reference to his words and to his works. He says, Neither are his own, they both come from the Father.

If in fact he had learned magic tricks and philosophy from the gurus of the East, he should have given them the credit, but rather he indicated that the reason he was able

to teach the things he did, extraordinary as they were, and to do the extraordinary things he did was because of his special relationship with the Father, not because of any special initiation or training he had received under other men. Therefore, if Jesus did, as the New Agers say, make any trips to Nepal and India and learn from these men, then he was a deceiver when he came back because he never gave any credit to those people for having informed him or taught him anything, and he indicated that it was his special relationship with the Father that made these things possible. Furthermore, the Bible makes it plain that the residents of Nazareth knew Jesus as a carpenter.

We don't need to turn to the passages that prove this, but in Mark 6, verse 3, for example, when Jesus came to his own hometown to preach, they were amazed and they said, Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this that kid who grew up in this town? Where did he get this wisdom? Where did he get this authority? If Jesus had spent a number of years traveling around being specially educated outside of Nazareth, that would perhaps diminish their astonishment to a certain extent that he came back with new powers and new insights and new authority. But they only knew him as a carpenter. The suggestion is implicit, though not stated outright, that he had spent those years prior to his ministry as a carpenter in their midst, and he seemed to them an ordinary person without any extraordinary ability or training, and that's why it so surprised them that he could speak as he did.

Furthermore, it tells us right here in Matthew 3, verse 13, that Jesus came from Galilee to John. And in the parallel in Mark 1, verse 9, it's even more explicit. It says he came from Nazareth of Galilee, which means that when we last heard of him in Luke chapter 2, he was in Nazareth of Galilee, and when he came to John, he came from Nazareth of Galilee.

Of course, this doesn't render impossible the suggestion that he had made all his travels sometime during those 18 years and then had returned to Nazareth. But certainly, in the absence of information about those 18 years, the information that is given strongly hints that he had spent the entire time in Nazareth. At age 12, we last saw him in Nazareth.

When he reappears, he's coming from Nazareth. By the way, it was the desire of the gospel writers to record the most significant things about Jesus. And it would seem, for instance, that his teaching the teachers in the temple at age 12 would be nowhere near as significant a fact as him sitting under the great mystics and gurus of the East, had he been there ever.

And it would seem like the gospel writers would not have left that entire period of his life a matter of silence had there been some significant formative experiences in his life taking place. I mean, so important, in fact, that they colored his entire ministry afterwards. Obviously, the gospels know nothing of Jesus making these journeys.

Furthermore, it should be pointed out that when Jesus taught, he didn't teach anything agreeable with Eastern philosophy. He didn't believe in reincarnation. He believed in

resurrection from the dead, a totally different concept.

He didn't believe in karma. He believed it was possible to suffer for righteousness' sake. The idea of karma suggests you never suffer for righteousness' sake.

You only suffer because you did something wrong, either in this life or a previous one. But Jesus said there are those who suffer for righteousness' sake. That certainly goes against the teaching of karma.

He didn't believe in God as an impersonal force, or in many gods. He believed in the Jewish God, and he called him his father and definitely talked about him as if he was a personal being. There's really nothing in Jesus' teaching that resembles New Age teaching.

But it's an interesting thing how the New Agers are so eager to try to get Jesus in their camp. Have you ever noticed that about religions? The Muslims speak well of Jesus, too. They consider him a great prophet.

Even some Jews consider that he was a holy man. They just reject him as the Messiah. And most cults, which we would not regard as Christian, nonetheless do all they can to try to show that Jesus was one of them, that his teachings were agreeable to theirs, and they often like to quote him in order to prove that point.

It's amazing, really, when you think of how all the other religions want to speak well and think well of Jesus, but he didn't think very well of them. In John chapter 10, Jesus said, All that came before me were thieves and robbers, and imposters, and so forth. He's the only door to the sheepfold.

He didn't have any room for the leaders of other religious systems. He was the only one. No one comes to the Father but by me, he said.

So he was very intolerant of alternative religious systems to that which he recommended. And yet all the other religions are very much like him, but they have to alter his teachings, they have to misread his teachings, in order to try to presume that somehow he was in agreement with what they were saying. And, of course, it is the standard New Age thing to try to prove that he traveled to the East and that his views really were New Age beliefs.

He certainly doesn't agree with the record. He came, as Mark tells us in Mark 1.9, from Nazareth of Galilee to be baptized. That's where we last saw him when he was a child.

No doubt we are to assume that that's where he has spent the bulk of his time during the silent years. Now, the word then, in verse 13, is amplified a little in Luke. Luke 3.21 says, Now when all the people were baptized, Jesus came also to be baptized.

Matthew just says then, but Luke says it happened when all the people were baptized. Now that statement is a bit ambiguous. Does it mean while all the people were coming to John, while the crowds were still there, and while they were being baptized, Jesus came to be baptized, so that he was just kind of melding in with the crowd? Just an obscure person, one of thousands that appeared, and John simply noticed that he was different.

Somehow he stood out. Is that what when all the people were baptized means? Or does it mean when all the people were finished being baptized? As if it was speaking of a time when John's ministry was beginning to diminish a bit. Most of the people had already come and gone, had been baptized, and had gone back to their business, and the crowds were dispersing, and Jesus waited until there was a little bit more privacy, and came to John more in a private setting.

We don't know, but we do know that there's a supernatural vision and an apparition that appeared, and a voice from heaven that spoke out loud when Jesus was baptized. And if there was a crowd watching, it seems that that would make a tremendous impact on the people who heard it. And yet we don't see any evidence of people having been impacted in Judea by such a thing, because Jesus remained fairly obscure for almost a year, although he wandered around in that region, even in Jerusalem for the following year.

It seems probable that not many people witnessed the baptism of Jesus, or if they did, they did not see and hear the things that John and Jesus saw and heard there when Jesus was baptized. But he went down to John at the Jordan to be baptized by John, and John tried to prevent him, saying, I need to be baptized by you, and are you coming to me? Now, John the Baptist had the same objection that all of us probably have when we think, wait a minute, why was Jesus baptized? The Bible says that John's baptism was a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. If there's anything about Jesus that is taught clearly and unequivocally in the Scripture, it is that Jesus was not a sinner.

He never sinned. He was tempted in all points like we are, the Bible says in Hebrews chapter 2, but without sin. Or is it Hebrews 4? In Hebrews 2 and in Hebrews 4, there's a similar statement.

Let me grab the one I'm looking for here. I believe it's actually chapter 4 that has the statement I'm talking about here. Yeah, Hebrews 4.15. It says that Jesus was in all points tempted as we are yet without sin.

So very clearly Jesus never sinned. And why would he be baptized? A baptism that was, the Scripture says, was for repentance from sin and for remission of sins. This has stumbled people for a long time.

And we can see that John himself saw the strangeness of it, the incomprehensibility of it. He knew that Jesus didn't need to be baptized. If anything, John should have been

baptized by Jesus.

Now, several things are raised here that we should consider. One is, how did John know it was Jesus? That was special. It certainly looks like John immediately before baptizing Jesus, recognized Jesus as the one that he was coming to announce.

However, if you look over at John 1, one gets the impression that John didn't, at this point, recognize Jesus. Look at John 1.29. The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. By the way, the setting of this portion of John is after the temptation of Jesus.

So we won't really study this chapter until several sessions hence. But after Jesus was tempted, he came back to where John was and John saw him and said, Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. And he continues, This is He of whom I said, after me comes a man who is preferred before me for he was before me.

Notice verse 31. John says, I did not know him, but I knew that he should be revealed to Israel. Therefore I came baptizing with water.

And John bore witness, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon him. I did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, Upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God.

Now, you can see immediately that as John retells the story of his baptizing Jesus, he indicates he didn't know who Jesus was until after he baptized him and saw the Spirit come down in the form of a dove. And that's what was the signal that the Holy Spirit had given John. When you see the Spirit come and descend on someone like a dove, you'll know that this is the one.

And so John says, And therefore I can testify that He is the Son of God. Now, that doesn't seem to agree with what Matthew tells us. Because Matthew says that when Jesus came before he was baptized, and obviously, therefore, before the dove came down, John knew something about him anyway, recognized a specialness about him, and even objected that it was more proper for Jesus to baptize John than the reverse.

How do we reconcile this? I believe that when Jesus appeared here to be baptized, John did know who Jesus was. He indicates recognition immediately. How much he knew about Jesus, we don't know.

Whether they had even ever seen each other before, we don't know. They were relatives. Their mothers were relatives of some sort and some description.

And the similar events that took place around their births would seem as if it would draw

some interest, at least on the parents' part, if not on the sons' parts, to put these guys together. I mean, whether there were family gatherings when they were children where John and Jesus happened to meet each other, or whether even in their adult life they'd made any effort to meet each other, we don't know. We get the impression from what John said in John chapter 1 that he didn't know much about Jesus before Jesus came to be baptized.

But it's quite clear that somehow, either by revelation or by prior acquaintance, John knew who Jesus was even before he baptized him. He knew that he was the one, the Messiah. He knew something about him.

At least he knew that Jesus was his superior. That's the only thing that's really indicated in Matthew, is that he knew that Jesus was in some sense superior to himself. However, what happened when the dove came down on Jesus? Matthew tells us that there's also a voice from heaven in verse 17, and the voice said, This is my beloved Son in whom I'm well pleased.

It is possible that John did not realize until that point that Jesus was the Son of God. He probably knew he was the Messiah. And he certainly knew he was his superior.

But not all Jews knew, and maybe John didn't fully understand until this point, that the Messiah was deity also. That the Messiah was not just going to be a great man like David, one of David's kin, that would come and do great things like David did and save his people, but that he'd be of divine origin. He would be the Son of God.

If John didn't understand that prior to this, it would have been made known to him when the voice spoke from heaven and said, This is my Son in whom I'm well pleased. And John would thereafter be sure that this was the Son of God. Now notice the wording in John that we read in John chapter 1. After he describes his experience of seeing the dove come down on Jesus, his last words that we read in John 1.34 are, And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God.

I am of the opinion that the best way to reconcile the two stories is this, that John knew that Jesus was the Messiah. He knew something about Jesus. Might have even had a prior acquaintance with him as children or something.

We don't know. At any rate, he recognized Jesus to be who he was, but he didn't know that he was the Son of God until the Holy Spirit came down and a voice from heaven said, This is my beloved Son. And in retrospect, John says, I didn't know that.

I didn't know him as I now know him to be the Son of God until the Holy Spirit came down on him. And now I can testify that he is the Son of God. That's how his testimony ends.

I have seen and I testify that he is the Son of God. It is probably Jesus as Son of God that

was the new revelation that John got when the dove came down and the voice spoke from heaven. John knew something of Jesus before, but he didn't know he was the Son of God.

And that would probably be the way to reconcile the two accounts. Certainly John was aware of Matthew's account and wouldn't have written his gospel in such a way as to try to contradict Matthew. He was rather supplementing it.

And so there is a way to harmonize them. Now, okay, we've discussed the question of how John recognized Jesus. It might have been by revelation.

It might have been by prior acquaintance. We don't know. In any case, his recognition of Jesus inclined him to say, hey, it seems kind of strange for me to baptize you.

And it does. I admit it. It does seem strange for Jesus to be baptized with John's baptism, which was for repentance.

I mean, if nothing else, just think of the wrong impression it could give people. Even though Jesus was not a sinner, if he went into the water to be baptized with a baptism that was manifestly declared to be for sinners repenting, and he gave no explanation to the crowd or whoever may have been a witness of it, it would give people the wrong impression, at the very least, that he was a sinner like they were. Jesus didn't seem to be too much guarding his reputation along those lines, didn't seem to care.

So much unlike most of us. There are times when I've almost felt, in a church service, when the altar call was given, just like going forward and praying at the altar, but I thought, well, people might think something different than is really true. They might think that I've been backslidden this past week and I need to go and repent of my sins and I don't want to give that impression, so I'll just stay here in my seat.

What a prideful, self-centered thing that is. I mean, in a sense, it's reasoning, maybe correctly, that people could get the wrong impression. They might think that my going forward to the altar to pray would be an admission of something that I'm not really intending to admit at all because there's nothing to admit.

But that's exactly parallel to what Jesus faced and the possibility of going into the water and getting baptized. People might think he's a sinner. And he isn't.

He didn't seem to care. He didn't stand up and say, now everyone, let me explain here. Although I am being baptized, I have nothing to repent of.

You know, I mean, he just went in there and as far as we know, said nothing by way of disclaimer, no explanation of why he was going to do it, except that he said, we just need to do what things fulfill all righteousness. And even that answer is sort of an enigma. He said, in verse 15, Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all



righteousness.

How does he mean that? How was it that by Jesus being baptized, he was fulfilling all righteousness? Let me give you three suggestions that have been made. It's probable that not all three of them are the real reason, although it's possible that they are all the reason. I don't know.

I'm not going to give you one as superior to the others. I'll just give you three reasons that have been suggested and might all be part of the truth of why Jesus was baptized, although he was not a sinner and did not need to repent. Some have suggested that as when we are baptized, we are identifying with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection, as the New Testament teaches in Romans 6 and Colossians 2, that when we go into the water and come up, we're identifying with the burial and resurrection of Christ by way of retrospect.

That perhaps when he was baptized, he was doing so in anticipation of his death, burial, and resurrection to prefigure it symbolically. If indeed immersion was the method that John used, this would possibly be an explanation that would make some sense. By going under the water and coming up again, he would be prefiguring his own future death, burial, and resurrection just as we, in going through the same ritual, look back on his death, burial, and resurrection and our resurrection in him.

That has been suggested. Although if that is his rationale, it's not the reason he gave. He said that he did it to fulfill all righteousness.

Another suggestion that has been made, a second possibility of why Jesus was baptized, would be that he wanted to identify with John. It would not be long after this that he would be, through his disciples, baptizing people as well. And in John chapter 3, we find that there was a certain amount of jealousy on the part of John's disciples when they found out that Jesus, through his disciples, was baptizing even more people than John was.

Eventually, John's popularity was waning, and Jesus' popularity was on the increase. And, of course, we find John not in the least jealous over the matter. He says, well, that's how it should be.

I must decrease, and he must increase. All this is in John chapter 3. But, perhaps because Jesus was going to become more popular, more important, more visible than John, he came to John's baptism just to show that he wasn't a competitor, more or less affirming John's ministry, saying, yeah, I'm going to participate in this too. I'm going to connect with John here.

I'm going to submit to baptism so that, as it were, people can see that I am not standing aloof as a competitor of John, starting a rival movement. But, actually, John is himself

launching me. John is the one who came to run ahead of me and to prepare the way for me and to prepare me for the way, perhaps.

I don't know, but very possibly, Jesus did this to affirm John, to affirm his support of John, to show that he was not John's competitor, but was on the same team with John. And that is a possibility, but to me it doesn't seem like it could be the whole reason. I think, I don't know what the real reason is.

There's a third suggestion that might be better than the other two. And that is that he did it not so much to associate or identify with John, but that he might associate and identify with us. That's why he became a human being in the first place, you know.

That he might be tempted in all points like we are. That he might be a merciful high priest. That he might live and go through the things we go through.

And by the way, his answer, so it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness, could be interpreted to mean it's fitting for me to do everything that is required of sinners to do for righteousness. That Jesus wasn't coming to stand aloof of God's requirements for man, but to actually submit to all of them, including the ones that were not particularly necessary for his own condition. Yet, because God was calling all men to repent, Jesus was a man.

He had nothing to repent of, but that he might identify with sinners. That he might leave no step of righteousness untaken by himself. Since all of the human beings that were hearing John preach were required to come and be baptized, that could be said to be a general requirement for righteousness.

And Jesus, though he didn't need it, yet wanted to go through all the steps, just like he was circumcised. And basically he had to jump through the hoops. He had to basically be able to say he had done everything that God was requiring men to do.

Even if there's no special, particular, personal reason why he had to do that, it was more that he could look back at the end of his life and say, I've done everything that you've required men to do. I've left nothing undone. That is how I kind of understand his statement.

It's fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness. That is, to fulfill the whole complement of activities that God requires for righteousness for men. And Jesus was already righteous, but no one else was.

And since everybody else had to go through baptism, he did it to identify with us, to, again, set an example for us, since we should walk in his steps. Clearly he wants us to be baptized, as the later scriptures indicate. He told his disciples to go and make disciples and baptize them.

And therefore, it might not be said that he requires us to do anything that he hasn't undergone himself. He went ahead and went through the motions of baptism. He's not a tyrant who sits above his people and commands them to do things that he's not willing to do himself.

He's a shepherd who goes ahead of the sheep and goes through all the steps that he expects his people to follow through. And since he expects us to follow him through baptism, he had to go through it himself as well in order for us to be required to take that path. That is, very possibly, of the three reasons that might be the more likely, the most likely, I don't know.

Maybe all three reasons were somehow involved. Jesus gives no explanation of it, nor does the Bible, other than this somewhat enigmatic statement. It is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.

So, John just said, OK, I guess I can take no for an answer, and he went ahead and baptized him. Now, in verse 16 it says, Then Jesus, when he had been baptized, came up immediately from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him. Now, before we finish that sentence, I'd want to say that Luke gives us one bit of detail that neither Matthew nor Mark do about this.

Luke says in Luke 3.21, When he was baptized, and while he prayed, the heaven was opened. And, you know, the dove came down. The detail that Luke tells us in Luke 3.21 that is not found in the other Gospels is that Jesus happened to be praying at the time when the Spirit came down upon him.

Luke mentions the prayer life of Jesus more than the other Gospels do. Luke mentions, as the other Gospels do not, that on the Mount of Transfiguration, when Moses and Elijah appeared to Jesus and when he was transformed before them, that he was praying at the time as well. Luke tells us that in Luke 9, though the other Gospels tell him the same story.

Don't mention that detail. Luke, in a number of places, emphasizes Jesus' prayer life. And he alone tells us here that when Jesus was baptized, he apparently came up out of the water and was praying.

And while he prayed, the heavens were opened. Now, on this occasion, the heavens were opened to send down the Holy Spirit upon him. But the opening of heaven is what prayer is all about.

It is that God might answer from heaven. That God might open the doors of heaven and pour out a blessing. And that, of course, would be relevant to all things that we might pray for.

That God might intervene. That God might reach down from heaven or send down from

heaven the thing for which we pray. What was Jesus praying? We don't know.

Luke simply says he was praying. He doesn't tell us what he was praying. I think it fair to suggest that he was praying for the Holy Spirit to come upon him, since that's what happened.

And he later said, if you earthly fathers know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly father give his Holy Spirit to those who ask him? Which suggests that in order to receive the Holy Spirit, it is necessary to ask. To pray. And that prayer is the means by which the Holy Spirit is given.

Where did he say that? I think it's in Luke 11 that that particular statement of Jesus is recorded. I don't have the verse number here. I can probably find it though.

Verse 13 or chapter 13? Luke 11, 13. Jesus said, if you then being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him? Jesus no doubt knew this from experience as well as by revelation that he had prayed in the water and he received the Holy Spirit. Now, when the Holy Spirit came down upon him, he did so in the form of a dove.

We are inclined to think of a dove as a symbol of peace, although I'm not sure that in biblical times there was that established association of a dove with peace. I think it's in the years since then, in more modern history, that the dove has become a recognized symbol of peace. And therefore, I don't know that we should say that the reason the Holy Spirit came in the form of a dove is to be an emblem of God's peace or whatever.

We know that the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, and peace, and other things. But I think that biblically, a dove would have more the connotation of purity and gentleness and so forth. And it's clear the Holy Spirit didn't knock Jesus down.

He wasn't slain in the Spirit, for example. The Holy Spirit didn't swoop down on him like an eagle or fall on him like an elephant. But He came and lit upon him like a dove.

Perhaps speaking of the purity of the Holy Spirit, although it doesn't specifically say it was a white dove, which would seem to convey that notion, but a dove was a sacrificial animal. It was one of the birds that was frequently commanded to be offered in sacrifice. Therefore, it was a clean animal, a pure animal.

And again, there's no reference to the dove as a symbol of peace. I don't believe in the Bible. But we think, of course, of the doves that Noah sent out after the flood.

But there's hardly any way that we can make a clear connection between the emblem of a dove here and the stories of the doves in Noah's story. It's tempting to try to find some rationale elsewhere in Scripture for the Holy Spirit to have taken this particular form on this occasion. And I must say, I don't know of any particular cross-reference that would

explain to us why He did.

As I said, I think that a dove being a pure, clean bird and a very gentle bird, Jesus said later, be as wise as serpents and harmless as doves. Speaking of the gentleness of a dove, no doubt that more than anything would be given as a reason for the Holy Spirit to be in the form of a dove. That it was a gentle thing.

No one had their hands on His head shaking Him and saying, Speak it out, brother. The Holy Spirit came gently upon Him. Speak it out.

Speak it out. Repeat after me. Apart from that small observation, I don't have any insights about the dove.

But we do know this, that what is described as having happened to Jesus was the Holy Spirit came upon Him. And on other occasions, when we were talking about the baptism of the Holy Spirit, we have pointed out that the expression the Holy Spirit coming upon a person is equivalent to the baptism of the Holy Spirit. For example, in Acts 1.8 and 1.5, in Acts chapter 1, both verses 5 and 8 are talking about the same phenomenon.

Whereas in Acts 1.5, Jesus says to His disciples, You will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hereafter. Acts 1.8. He used the expression baptized with the Holy Spirit. Three verses later, He says, You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you.

Obviously talking about the same thing. And then when Acts 2.4 describes the fulfillment of this promise, it says they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. These three terms are used synonymously.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit, Acts 1.8. The Holy Spirit coming upon you, in Acts 1.5. And being filled with the Holy Spirit, Acts 2.4. They are all talking about the same event using those different languages. If you look over at Luke 4, just for a moment, Luke 4.1 says, Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan, that is where He was baptized, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness. And then a little later, after Jesus was tempted in the wilderness, in Luke 4.14, it says, Then Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee.

Notice the emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit in His life after His baptism. The baptism of Jesus is mentioned in Luke 3, verses 21 and 22. And He mentions this Spirit coming down upon Him.

Then Luke takes a break to give the genealogy of Jesus. And the next chronological thing is the temptation of Jesus. But the way that Luke describes the beginning of the temptation of Jesus is that when Jesus left the water, when Jesus left His baptism in Luke 4.1, He went, being filled with the Holy Spirit, He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted.

And after His temptation, He left in the power of the Spirit. So being led by the Spirit, being in the power of the Spirit, being filled with the Holy Spirit, this is how Jesus is described after His baptism. So when the Holy Spirit came upon Him, He was filled with the Holy Spirit.

This is equivalent to being baptized in the Holy Spirit. Now, it's probably important to note a couple of things about this. One is that Jesus did nothing miraculous prior to this time.

But afterward, He began to do miraculous things all the time. When we read of the miracles of Jesus, if we're not that familiar with the Gospels, we might just assume wrongly that Jesus did all His miracles because He was divine, because He was God, and that because He was God, He just acted in His own power to do the things He did. However, Jesus gave indications in His teaching that He didn't do these things by His own power.

Not more than a few minutes ago, we looked at John 14.10, where Jesus said, My Father in Me does these works. Elsewhere, in Matthew 12, Jesus indicated that He cast out demons by the power of the Spirit of God. That's in Matthew 12.28. Jesus said, If I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you.

In Acts 1.1, we're told that when Jesus taught, He taught by the Spirit of God. It says in Acts 1.1, actually in verse 2, it has to be included, The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach until the day in which He was taken up, after He, through the Holy Spirit, had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen. The commandments Jesus gave to the disciples, to the apostles, He gave them through the Holy Spirit.

His teaching was through the Spirit. His casting out demons was through the Spirit. His mighty works were done by the working of the Father in Him.

In fact, I believe that if we would understand Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 12 correctly, when he talks about the gifts of the Holy Spirit, he is suggesting that each of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is simply another manifestation of the Spirit in the body of Christ, which is now the Church, in some of the same ways that the Holy Spirit manifested Himself in the body of Christ when that was simply confined to Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus, in His lifetime, was the entire body of Christ. Since His ascension, He is just the head.

We are the members. But the Holy Spirit in Jesus worked miraculously and powerfully. He came back to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, it says in Luke 4.14. And therefore, that's actually how the apostles operated too, and how we are supposed to operate.

When we see the gift of prophecy, or the gift of healing, or the gift of miracles, or the gift

of word of knowledge, or word of wisdom, what we're really seeing is part of the same ministry that the Holy Spirit did in Jesus when He was here. He's just still doing it through the present body of Jesus, which has Jesus of Nazareth as its head, and the rest of us as the fingers and toes and cells and parts, and so forth. And really, the work of God is the work of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus operated in the power of the Holy Spirit, and then He sent His Spirit to us after He had sent it so that we'd operate in the same means. And Jesus did all His miraculous things, simply, I think, the Bible would teach, as manifestation of the gifts of the Spirit. He possessed them all.

The gifts of the Spirit are aspects of the ministry of the body of Christ. Jesus was alone the body of Christ, and had all the gifts. Since Jesus has gone up, none of us is the body of Christ in its entirety.

We're only parts, and therefore we only have a few of the gifts each, or maybe only one each. But Jesus had them all. And so when Jesus healed, when He did miracles, when He prophesied, He was operating in the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

And that didn't begin until He was baptized in the Holy Spirit. Now, someone raised a question, I think after our session was finished last time, as to whether Jesus was filled with the Spirit before this time. And I said, I think He probably must have been, in some sense, because John the Baptist was from his mother's womb.

Although it's not all that clear. The Bible is somewhat ambiguous in the information it gives on this. It nowhere says that Jesus was filled with the Spirit before this.

And even when it says John was filled with the Spirit from his mother's womb, it might not mean to suggest that from his mother's womb on through his entire life he was filled with the Holy Spirit. But rather, it might simply be a reference to the fact that the Holy Spirit made him leap for joy in the womb that one time. And whether the Holy Spirit resided upon him in a prophetic manner every day of his life from his birth or not, that might not be suggested.

I don't know. We're left without information on some of the things that we might ask questions about. But one thing we can say is we see very clearly the Holy Spirit coming upon Jesus to anoint Him for ministry and apparently at this time to give Him gifts of the Holy Spirit because He began at this time and not prior to this to do and to teach through the Spirit and to do things that were superhuman.

The only remarkable thing Jesus did prior to this that's on record is that He amazed the teachers in the temple with His wisdom. But we're not given any impression that He was getting revelations at that time and that's how He astounded them. He increased in wisdom and in stature like anyone else.

He just happened to be the ideal man. He probably had the best brain on the planet in terms of His natural self. He wasn't tainted by sin.

He was clear thinking. Obviously, it's important for us to understand God didn't cause His Son to be born with an inferior brain. Exactly how, since some humans are smarter than others, since Jesus was not the stupidest, it's hard to know whether He was the smartest man on earth prior to receiving revelations and so forth from God.

But in any case, the Bible does not tell us that the intelligence of Jesus or His insightfulness when He was age 12 was one of the miraculous elements of His ministry. And the first sign He gave was the turning of water into wine at Cana in Galilee after this time. What I'm saying is that Jesus Himself never really began to minister until He was empowered by the Spirit to do so.

He also told the apostles not to do so. In Luke chapter 24, Jesus told the disciples to tarry in Jerusalem. Luke chapter 24, verse 49, this is just before Jesus ascended, He said, Behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you, but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.

Now, here's guys who just spent three years in the most important seminary under the feet of Jesus directly, had three years graduate training, and had even some ministry experience as their mentor. And yet, He did not consider that they should go out and try to start a ministry until they've been endued with power from on high. Jesus Himself didn't attempt it.

Nor did He authorize His disciples to. What I find astonishing is how many modern preachers think that they're able to go out and start a ministry or enter into ministry without being endued with power from on high for no better reason but that they've jumped through the hoops of going through a seminary course and gotten a degree. To me, I mean, I guess when I was younger I didn't think that was strange because I was raised in a denomination where that's the way it was done.

I actually figured when I was younger that's what I would have to do to go into the ministry. But looking back, it's such a foreign concept to me. I can hardly relate with how I could have ever thought it.

How I could think that simply going through certain educational requirements would somehow qualify a person for spiritual ministry and spiritual leadership. Jesus Himself and the apostles themselves were not released to do anything in ministry until the Spirit came upon them and they were empowered from on high. And yet, many denominations that don't know anything about this power from on high don't seem to think it's very important at all.

Just teach these guys, get them a graduate degree and then put them in charge of a



church or a ministry. And it's a shame. An awful lot of ministry is done in the flesh because people have not tarried in Jerusalem until they've been endowed with power from on high and then gone out and done the things they should do.

Jesus tarried for 30 years, mostly in Nazareth, before He was endued with power from on high. And now He begins a powered ministry, empowered by the Holy Spirit. Now, when Jesus was baptized in water, He received the baptism of the Spirit at the same time.

When Peter preached on the day of Pentecost in Acts chapter 2, and people asked what they must do in response to his sermon, he said in Acts 2.38, Repent and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Now, Jesus indicated that if they would repent and be water baptized, that they would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. That would seem to agree with Jesus' own experience, except He never repented.

He didn't have to. But He was water baptized and at the same time He received the gift of the Holy Spirit. This would seem to be put forward biblically as something that's normative.

We know that in Acts chapter 19, the Apostle Paul encountered these twelve men in Ephesus who had known previously only the baptism of John and had received it, but had not known much about Jesus. And so John said to them in Acts 19.4, John indeed baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after Him, that is, on Jesus Christ. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them. Now, here again, they get baptized in water upon coming to faith in Christ, and they receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit also by the laying on of hands from Paul. So it would seem that this was the regular procedure.

Just like Jesus, on the occasion of His water baptism, also was baptized in the Spirit. Peter, on the day of Pentecost, indicated that that's what people should expect. And we see it practiced by Paul in this particular case.

Yet we have seen in previous studies in the book of Acts that some people were baptized in water and didn't receive the Holy Spirit at the same time. That was the case in Samaria. In Acts chapter 8, when Philip had evangelized the town, many people were believed and were baptized in water.

But they were not baptized in the Spirit immediately upon conversion. They were baptized in the Spirit later when Peter and John came down and ministered to them. That's in Acts chapter 8. Now, when Paul was converted, he was not immediately baptized in water.

It was three days later that he was baptized in water, but he did receive the Spirit at the same time that he was baptized in water. We have this in Acts chapter 9. In verse 17, when Saul had just been converted three days earlier, it says, Ananias went his way and entered the house and laying his hands on Saul, said to him, Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road as you came has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit. Immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he received his sight at once, and he arose and was baptized.

Now, here he received healing from his blindness, water baptism, and the Holy Spirit, apparently all kind of at the same time. But it was three days after his conversion. Yet, water baptism and the baptism of the Spirit seem to have come at the same time.

So we have in the book of Acts, as well as in Jesus' own experience, apparently a norm set that people should expect to and normally would be baptized in the Holy Spirit when they are water baptized. But we also have cases like that in Acts chapter 8 in which people were not baptized in the Spirit when they were water baptized. Why they were not, we're never told.

But one thing we can see is that baptism in water and baptism in the Holy Spirit are two separate things, even if they happen together, or in rapid succession, or whatever. They are different things, and they can be separated from each other by a greater distance than a day or a few minutes, as in Acts chapter 8 we see. In Jesus' case, though, we see him setting sort of the pattern that came to be expected to be normative, and that is when people were baptized in water, normally they were baptized in the Holy Spirit.

So it was with Jesus. Happened to him at the same time. Now, in verse 17, Matthew 3, 17, it says, And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

Now, the main observation about this that's somewhat extraordinary, is that in Matthew it says, the voice said, This is my beloved Son, whereas both Mark and Luke render the statement as, You are my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Mark and Luke both have the voice saying, You are my beloved Son, obviously speaking to Jesus, whereas Matthew has it, This is my beloved Son, which sounds like perhaps what God either said to John or to other onlookers about Jesus. The difference is obvious, that Matthew tells us what others heard, and Mark and Luke tell us what Jesus heard.

Now, if we only had Mark and Luke, we might think that this was a private experience that only Jesus witnessed. You are my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. One might even be left to wonder whether John actually heard the voice or not, or whether that's just something that Jesus heard, it was spoken just to him.

But in Matthew's version, which says, This is my beloved Son, it's clear that the utterance was made for the benefit of others also, for the ears of others, at least for John

the Baptist, which is why he could later say, I testify that he's the Son of God, because I've seen it, and I've testified to this. But as far as who else may have heard it, we do not know. It seems to me, if there was a large crowd around hearing this, that that would have been the beginning of Jesus' fame, and that would have been the beginning of Jesus' enormous popularity.

But his popularity did not begin at this time, nor for many months afterwards. And for that reason, I suspect that no one but John, or maybe very few onlookers, may have been witness to this event. In any case, what God does at the very beginning here is to affirm Jesus' Sonship.

Now, Jesus knew this, but no doubt it was encouraging to him to hear it. You know, I mean, a voice from heaven. He knew at age 12, and maybe before, that God was his Father.

But as far as we know, he'd never heard a voice, the voice of God, from heaven prior to this. Hard to say. We don't have any record of it.

There's only three times, really, in the Gospels that Jesus is recorded as having heard as an audible voice God speaking from heaven. There was this occasion. There's also the Mount of Transfiguration, which is recorded in Matthew chapter 17, and it's paralleled in Mark and Luke, Mark 9 and Luke 9. God spoke from heaven then and said essentially the same thing.

This is my beloved Son in whom I'm well pleased. Hear Him. And then there was one other time recorded in John chapter 12.

And Jesus was praying, and He said, Father, glorify Your name. And a voice from heaven said, I have glorified it, and I will do so again. That's John 12, verse 27 and following.

Jesus said, Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour, but for this purpose I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your name. Then a voice came from heaven saying, I have both glorified it, and I will glorify it again.

Verse 29 says, Therefore the people who stood by and heard it said that it thundered. Others said an angel had spoken to him. But everyone heard it.

Some people didn't quite hear the words and thought it was just a thunderclap. Others recognized that it was a voice speaking, but attributed it to an angel. In any case, it represents a third time that a voice from heaven spoke to Jesus.

Whether God ever spoke audibly to Jesus at any other time than these, we don't know. It's possible that these three occasions are only recorded because men were present who heard them and therefore could bear witness. There might have been many private occasions between Jesus and His Father where there was audible conversation, but we

don't have any record of it.

In any case, the affirmation that God gives to Jesus here, You are my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, has the sound of being the first time God has spoken any such thing to Him and affirming Him as the one that God is pleased to use and the one that God is pleased with His conduct and His behavior. And He did so after Jesus was baptized, that Jesus would be humble enough to identify Himself with sinners, although He was not a sinner, to make Himself of no reputation, to identify with John who was His inferior and submit under His hand to the ministry, to do only those things because His Father would be pleased with it. God initially affirms that He is pleased.

He says, You are my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. Now, this affirmation had to be challenged by the devil. And after the baptism, the next thing that Jesus did was go into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

And interestingly, the devil's words to Him, his first words to Him in Matthew 4, 3, are, If you are the Son of God, which is interesting, because Jesus had just been told that He is the Son of God. God said, You are my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. And it would seem like the devil came to challenge that.

Say, Well, if you really are, prove it. And we'll talk on another occasion about the details of the temptation of Jesus. We'll have to wait until the next time for that.

But, no doubt, Satan's challenge, If you really are the Son of God, is reflecting back on the fact that Jesus had heard this voice say, You are the Son of God. And Satan says, Oh, yeah? If that's true, prove it by doing this. And, again, trying to appeal to Jesus' human ego, His male ego, and try to get Him to prove something about Himself.

No doubt, Jesus' humility is seen also in the fact that He didn't bother to try to prove it either then. Though He must have been very encouraged by the voice from Heaven, He didn't feel compelled to prove Himself to be whom God said He was by miracles done at the behest of Satan. In any case, the temptation is what follows next.

And Luke tells us that Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness and was filled with the Spirit. That is, no doubt, the sequel to the Spirit having come upon Him. When the Holy Spirit came upon Him, the Holy Spirit stayed upon Him and never departed from Him.

There are those, I think I've mentioned before, the Gnostics and some who have, in modern times, followed the Gnostic teaching who have said that Jesus became the Christ at His baptism. But I sought to refute that in an earlier lecture. The Bible doesn't say He became the Christ.

This certainly was a turning point when the Holy Spirit came upon Him. That did change the character of His life and ministry, but it did not make Him the Christ. He was the

Christ when He was born, as the angels declared, unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour who is Christ, the Lord.

So it is a heresy that would suggest that Jesus became the Christ at this point. But it is true to suggest that at this point He was empowered and commissioned to go into His messianic ministry. And so, we'll stop there.

Even though that's a bit early, that's okay, I'm sure with you.