



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond V27 N38 September 21, 2025

CROSSWALK

"Baptism and Mission"

Luke 3:21-22

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Jesus Christ

I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners, and rose from the dead.

"The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven."

Hebrews 1:3



Q?

What happened when Jesus was baptized by John?



Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist, who was "preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" (Lk 3:3). When he was baptized, Jesus was also "anointed" with the Holy Spirit in preparation for his ministry. One commentator explains: "With his anointing Jesus is prepared to face the hardships and challenges of his ministry . . . an anointing which is both *symbolic* (like a coronation) and *enabling*" (Craig A. Evans, *Luke* NIBC, 54, 60, italics added).

It's not surprising that Jesus' baptism by John has raised a couple of thorny questions. *First*, was Jesus' baptism *Christian* baptism? The answer generally given to that question: "No, it was not." The significance of Jesus' baptism is very different from Christian baptism. Believers are not baptized because Jesus was. The *second* question is harder to answer. Why was Jesus baptized by John despite being without sin? — note John's reluctance to baptize Jesus (Mt 3:13-14). The Bible gives no definitive answer. Here, however, are some answers to that question offered by evangelical scholars.

First, many emphasize that Jesus' baptism signified his identification with sinful humanity. Though he had no sin of his own to repent of, he entered into solidarity with those he came to save. Evangelical interpreters often point to Isaiah's servant songs, where the Servant bears the sins of others (Isa 53). In baptism, Jesus publicly aligned himself with the people of Israel, identifying with them in anticipation of bearing their sins on the cross. His baptism thus foreshadows his substitutionary death.

Second, some scholars stress that Jesus' baptism marked the inauguration of his public ministry and the visible approval of the Father. The Synoptic Gospels record that at his baptism the heavens opened, the Spirit descended, and the Father's voice declared, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." (Mt 3:17). Evangelicals often stress that this event is less about Jesus' need for repentance and more about his commissioning. The baptism was the moment when he was public-

ly anointed by the Spirit as Messiah, confirmed by the Father's declaration. In this sense, baptism was the divine commissioning of Jesus into his redemptive mission.

Third, some evangelical theologians highlight Jesus' baptism as an act of obedience. By submitting to baptism, Jesus fulfilled all righteousness (Mt 3:15). Evangelical commentators generally interpret this phrase as meaning that Jesus was obedient to the will of God in every respect, including obedience to the divine plan that required him to identify with sinners. His baptism demonstrates his willingness to submit to God's saving purposes, even when it meant sharing in a rite associated with guilt and repentance.

Fourth, and least likely, evangelical interpreters often see in Jesus' baptism a pattern for Christian baptism. While believers' baptism looks back to the cleansing from sin achieved through Christ's death and resurrection, Jesus' baptism looks forward to that same work. In being baptized, he sanctified the waters of baptism, so to speak, setting the pattern for his followers who would later undergo baptism in his name.

Finally, some scholars stress the connection between Jesus' baptism and his role as the representative Israelite. John's baptism echoed Israel's call to repentance and renewal, and Jesus, as the true Israel and obedient Son, underwent baptism as part of his representative role. In this way, he embodied the story of Israel, succeeding where the nation had failed.

In summary, evangelical scholarship generally agrees that Jesus was not baptized for repentance of his own sins, and although there is no consensus, some suggest it was to identify with sinners, inaugurate his ministry, fulfill all righteousness, and prefigure his redemptive work, or some combination of these — we do not know for sure (see Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, NAC, 139). Certainly, his baptism was both an act of humble solidarity and a divine commissioning, marking the beginning of his mission as Savior.

Read Luke 3:21-22

21 When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened 22 and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

[23 Now Jesus himself was about thirty years old when he began his ministry.]

Read another translation

21 Now when all the people were baptized, Jesus also was baptized. And while he was praying, the heavens opened, 22 and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my one dear Son; in you I take great delight." (NET)

Read Luke 3:7-18 also

7 John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? 8 Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. 9 The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire."

10 "What should we do then?" the crowd asked.

11 John answered, "Anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same."

12 Even tax collectors came to be baptized. "Teacher," they asked, "what should we do?"

13 "Don't collect any more than you are required to," he told them.

14 Then some soldiers asked him, "And what should we do?"

He replied, "Don't extort money and don't accuse people falsely – be content with your pay."

15 The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Messiah. 16 John answered them all, "I baptize you with water. But one who is more powerful than I will come, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 17 His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." 18 And with many other words John exhorted the people and proclaimed the good news to them.

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Box "When" indicating *temporal* setting in v. 21.
- Underline "all the people" in v. 21.
- Circle "baptized" (2x) in v. 21.
- Bracket "heaven was opened" in v. 21.
- Highlight "in bodily form" in v. 22.
- Box "like" indicating *comparison* in v. 22.
- Bracket "whom I love" in v. 22.
- Circle "well pleased" in v. 22.

What one word would you use to describe the **TONE** of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What one thing do you not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the **THEME** of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about _____."



DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. **The setting:** *who* is being baptized (cf. vv. 7-14), by *whom* (cf. vv. 7, 15-18) and *where* (cf. v. 3) when Jesus is baptized?
 2. **The atmosphere:** an air of excitement and expectation surround Jesus' baptism (cf. vv. 7-18). How so?
 3. Luke's *omissions* in his account of Jesus' baptism (cf. Mt 3:13-16a; Mk 1:9-10a) suggest he is more interested in the events accompanying Jesus' baptism than the baptism itself. *What* think you, and *why*?
 4. Only Luke mentions that Jesus is praying—apparently as he comes out of the water after he is baptized (v. 21; cf. Mt 3:16; Mk 1:10). What do you make of that?
 5. Explain the *significance* of heaven *opening*.
 6. The Holy Spirit descends upon Jesus following his baptism (v. 22). *Why*? Draw your inference from the context (v. 23; cf. 1Sa 10:1-10).
 7. In his Gospel, John testifies, "I saw the Spirit come down from heaven *as a dove*" —cf. "in bodily form like a dove" (Lk 3:22)—"and remain on him" (Jn 1:32). What do you think John saw?
 8. Did Luke believe that Jesus *became* God's Son at his baptism? Explain.
 9. Regarding the "voice from heaven," *whose* voice was it and *what* was its significance?
 10. **Discussion:** Talk about what Luke wants his readers to believe about Jesus.
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Commentary On The Text

Jesus' baptism is described in the other Synoptic Gospels (Mt 3:13-17; Mk 1:9-11) and alluded to in John's Gospel (Jn 1:29-34). One commentator writes: "Luke's account of this significant event is shorter than the parallel passages in the other Gospels. At His baptism Jesus received the anointing of the Holy Spirit for His ministry. It was also the occasion at which His heavenly Father authenticated Jesus as His Son. Luke stressed these two features and did not describe Jesus' actual baptism fully, though he recorded some information that the other evangelists omitted" (Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on Luke," 2025 ed., 97, soniclight.com/tcon/notes/pdf/luke/pdf).

Jesus' baptism is recorded in Luke 3:21-22. All narratives have a setting (e.g., historical, geographical, etc.), characters, and a plot. In other words, in every narrative something happens (i.e., the plot), to someone (i.e., the characters), somewhere (i.e., the setting). As far as the *setting* of Luke's narrative is concerned, John the Baptist is "preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" in "all the country around the Jordan" (3:3). His fiery sermons are attracting the attention of crowds (v. 7) of people (v. 21) from Jerusalem and the Judean countryside (cf. Mk 1:5), which "even" included "tax collectors" (v. 12), as well as "some soldiers" (v. 14). His message, "the kingdom of God has come near" (Mt 3:1), makes preparation for its arrival and the arrival of Messiah of utmost importance. According to one commentator: "John is a sentry keeping watch over God's plan and blowing a trumpet to announce preparation for the Messiah's arrival. When it comes, all humanity will see the salvation of God (v. 6). The possibility of salvation also implies the approach of judgment. Thus, opportunity will become tragedy if one does not respond" (Darrell L. Bock, *The NIV Application Commentary: Luke*, 110). The preparation about which John spoke involved believing his message and turning to God for forgiveness.

As far as the *characters* are concerned, John, Jesus, and crowds of people (although some may have departed by the time Jesus is baptized) are present at Jesus' baptism, but more importantly, so are the Holy Spirit and the Heavenly Father on whom Luke focuses his narrative.

As far as the *plot* is concerned, Luke is not concerned as much with Jesus' *actual* baptism as he is with its attendant circumstances: the coming of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus to equip him for his messianic

ministry, and the voice of the Heavenly Father to affirm that Jesus is his Beloved sinless Son—both marking the beginning of his ministry (v. 23).

Jesus having been baptized and having prayed (biblehub.com/interlinear/lk/3-21.htm), "heaven was opened" (v. 21) in anticipation of the giving of divine revelation. "In Luke-Acts times of prayer and worship are frequently the occasions for divine revelations to characters in the story. This is true of Zechariah (Luke 1:9-11), Anna (2:37-38), Cornelius (Acts 10:2-6), Peter (10:9-16), Paul (9:11-12; 22:17-21), and the prophets and teachers of the church in Antioch (13:2). This is true also of Jesus. Jesus' choice of the twelve is preceded by prayer, indeed, prayer through the whole night (dif. Matthew, Mark), in which Jesus is evidently seeking divine guidance for the choice (6:12). The transfiguration also takes place while Jesus is praying (dif. Matthew, Mark) . . . In 22:40-46 also, if vv. 43-44 are an original part of the text, Jesus prays concerning his mission and receives a response through a vision of a strengthening angel" (Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke – Acts*, vol. 1, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 56, 57).

The revelation from heaven includes two things: the descent of the Holy Spirit to equip Jesus for his messianic ministry—as Peter attests in Acts 10:38 (cf. Lk 4:14)—and the voice of the Heavenly Father to confirm that Jesus is his sinless Son, one fit for his messianic mission. Luke records these words of Peter: "You know what has happened throughout the province of Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached—how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him."

"The primary application of this text comes in its Christology. Many in our culture respect Jesus, regarding him as a religious teacher of great significance and even placing him among the top religious teachers of all time. Others even acknowledge him as a prophet, giving him a seat in a rather limited club of divine revealers. But as high as these notes of respect are, they pale in comparison to the biblical portrait" (Bock, 119-20).

Word Studies/Notes

v. 21 *When* Lit., “It came to pass now in having been baptized all the people and Jesus having been baptized” (biblehub.com/interlinear/luke/3-21.htm). “Luke does not say that all the people were baptized before Jesus came or were baptized at the same time. It is merely a general statement that Jesus was baptized in connexion [*sic*] with or at the time of the baptizing of the people as a whole” (A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, vol 2, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 43).

v. 21 *all the people* I.e., “the crowds coming out to be baptized by him” (3:7). “Ministering in the desert in fulfillment of the pattern of salvation indicated by Isaiah, John preaches ‘a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.’ His ministry in the Jordan River region is designed to get people ready for the arrival of God’s salvation by having hearts open to respond to the coming Messiah (1:15-17; 76-77) . . . Judaism knew of repeated baptisms for temporary cleansing, but this was a call to prepare for the arrival of salvation, a one-time baptism in honor of the arrival of the eschatological era of salvation” (Darrell L. Bock, *The NIV Application Commentary: Luke*, 109).

v. 21 *baptized* Cf. “a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins” (3:3). “A baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins was a call for preparation for the arrival of the Lord’s salvation. To participate in this baptism was a recognition of the need for God’s forgiveness with a sense that one needed to live differently as a response to it (Luke 3:10-14)” (*The NET Bible*, 12sn on Lk 3:3). “John’s baptism was associated with repentance, that is, it outwardly pictured an inner change of heart. The word ‘for’ (*eis*) refers back to the whole ‘baptism of repentance.’ The baptism did not save anyone, as is clear from what follows (vv. 7-14). Repentance was ‘unto’ (lit. rendering of *eis*; cf. comments on Acts 2:38) or resulted in sins forgiven” (John A. Martin, “Luke,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, 210-11).

v. 21 *heaven was opened* Cf. Eze 1:1; Jn 1:51; Ac 7:56; 10:11; Re 19:11. “The opening of heaven is a frequent apocalyptic motif found in the giving of revelation as is a voice from heaven” (Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, NAC, 139).

v. 22 *in bodily form* Only in Luke; cf. “Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove” (Mk 1:10). The “bodily form” or “physical form” the Spirit took is ambiguous. Did the Spirit *descend* like a dove, or did the Spirit like a dove descend? “‘Like a dove’ is a simile and does not mean that the Spirit actually took the form of a dove to descend upon Jesus” (Stein, 140). It seems clear that whatever “bodily form” the Spirit took, John saw him “come down from heaven and remain on him” (Jn 1:32). “All three synoptic evangelists compared God’s appearance to a dove. Matthew recorded that Jesus saw the Spirit descending and settling on Him (Matt. 3:16). Later John the Baptist said that he too saw the Spirit descending and remaining on Jesus (John 1:32-33). A dove did not descend on Jesus, like some paintings portray, but God’s Spirit descended on Him ‘in bodily form.’ Only Luke wrote that the Spirit came down ‘in bodily form,’ thereby giving the theophany more substance. God’s Spirit descended like a dove on Jesus. We do not know what the bodily form of God’s Spirit that descended on Jesus looked like” (Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on Luke,” 2025 ed., 98-99, soniclight.com/tcon/notes/pdf/luke.pdf).

v. 22 *whom I love* Cf. “You are my beloved Son” (ESV); “You are my one dear Son” (NET); “You are my dearly loved Son” (NLT); perhaps an allusion to Isa 2:7. “*Grk* ‘my beloved Son,’ or ‘my Son, the beloved [one].’ The force of (*agaphtos*) is often ‘pertaining to one who is the only one of his or her class, but at the same time is particularly loved and cherished’ (L&N 58.53; cf. also BDAG 7 s.v. 1)” (*The NET Bible*, 64tn on Lk 3:22). “When the Spirit descended and the voice spoke, Jesus did not at that moment *become* God’s Son. For Luke, Jesus was God’s Son from his very conception (see 1:35)” (Evans, 60).

v. 22 *well pleased* Cf. “with you I am well pleased” (ESV); “in you I take great delight” (NET); “you bring me great joy” (NLT); perhaps an allusion to Isa 42:1. “The voice from (out of) heaven identified Jesus as God the Father’s ‘beloved Son’ (cf. 1:32; Exod. 20:1; Ps. 2:7; Isa. 42:1). God was announcing that His favor rested on Jesus, not that He as the Father felt delight in His Son, though that was undoubtedly true too” (Constable, 99).



APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THIS PASSAGE

At his baptism, Jesus Christ was revealed to be the Father's dearly loved, sinless Son, empowered by the Holy Spirit to accomplish his mission of bringing salvation to the world.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The "Living Questions" are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?

2. What does this passage teach me about myself?

3. What does this passage lead me to do?



PARENT CONNECTION

I trusted Christ when I was 26 years old. I had been attending church with my good friend, Mary Alice, for several weeks when I felt the Holy Spirit's nudge to give my life to the Lord. Several weeks later, a pastor who worked with my mom encouraged me to get baptized. I didn't understand what baptism was all about, so I asked him to explain it to me. He launched into a deep theological explanation, and things were clear as mud, so I asked him to explain it again. I felt like he was speaking Greek, so I asked him to explain it one more time. After the third explanation, I still didn't get it, but I did understand it was something I needed to do, so I signed up. I invited family and a few close friends to join me as I celebrated this ceremony of obedience to God's command. Now I know that baptism is a celebration of life change. It's a way to share the good news of trusting Christ with your fellow church members. It's also a tool to invite people that might never step foot in a church to come and witness what Christ does in a person's life. Have you ever been baptized? If you've never made the decision to step out in obedience to Jesus' command by getting baptized, please consider doing so this Sunday. Email baptism@wearecentral.org and we'll walk you through the process. (I promise we'll make it simple!) Sundays are for celebrating and there's no better celebration than life change!

What Does The Bible Say?

Read Luke 3:21-22.

1. What opened during Jesus' baptism?
2. During Jesus' baptism, who came down and in what form?
3. What did the voice from heaven say to Jesus?

What Do You Think?

Why was Jesus baptized?

What Do You Do?

If you've already been baptized, share your baptism story with a friend or relative and invite them to church this Sunday. If you've not been baptized yet, talk to your parents about baptism.

CORE COMPETENCY: Jesus Christ

I believe Jesus Christ is fully God, perfectly man, and died for my sins.

MEMORY VERSE: Psalm 103:8

"The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love"

KidPIX COUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRAL Kids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: kids@wearecentral.org

- ☐ I completed my Bible Study
- ☐ I memorized this week's verse
- ☐ I brought my Bible to church
- ☐ I brought a friend



CHILD'S NAME

GRADE

PARENT SIGNATURE

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

Authority of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Eternity (John 14:1-4)

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)

I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)

I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)

I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Salvation by Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Joy (John 15:11)

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace (Philippians 4:6-7)

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others

Faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3-4)

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Grace (Colossians 3:13)

I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)

I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)

I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)

I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Biblical Community (Acts 2:44-47)

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)

I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)

I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)

I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)

I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20)

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-Mindedness (Matthew 6:33)

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12:4-6)

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

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Stephanie Thomas (B.B.A University of Texas at Arlington). Stephanie is married to James and they have five children: Elijah, Levi, Bo, Ella and Simon. Stephanie has attended Central Bible Church for more than 20 years, has been on staff since 2014, and now serves as Children's Minister.

The Scrolls Bible Study is a spiritual growth resource of Central Bible Church, Fort Worth, Texas.

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**CENTRAL
BIBLE CHURCH**

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OUR MISSION

Making God known by making disciples who are changed by God to change their world.