

Luke 3:21-4:13

Luke 3:21,22 When all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also was baptized; and while He prayed, the heaven was opened. And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, "You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased."

Jesus' baptism by John was an act of Jesus meant to convey a message or make a statement. Luke's description makes several points. "All the people" were baptized and then Jesus was baptized by John. Luke was not saying that every Israelite was baptized but that of the people who came to see John in the desert, many were baptized, so much so that it might have seemed as though "everyone" is doing it. Jesus is clearly not just one of the people but He is the one whose shoes John said that he was not worthy to unloose. If John's baptism was of repentance then the question of why was Jesus baptized begs for an answer. The context of the baptism was that the people were being baptized and Jesus was also baptized. Jesus' baptism is connected to the movement of repentance and spiritual renewal initiated by John's ministry.

The circumstance of Jesus' baptism is that Jesus prayed (before? during? immediately after? all of the above?) and in response to Jesus' prayer and or baptism the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon

Him and a voice come from heaven which said, "You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased." John's baptisms were public events. Those who repented from sin, resolving to live differently, did so publicly. The only thing that makes sense was that Jesus' baptism was also public. Until the baptism, Jesus was an anonymous figure but afterwards He started preaching and soon drew larger crowds than John. The descent of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus initiated His ministry. This was an internal transition. But the public descent of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus and the voice of approval from heaven was a heavenly coronation of the Messiah that was witnessed by many. The testimony of these witnesses should have been that they had gone to the desert to see John thinking that he might be the Messiah and they had found the Messiah who was not John but Jesus.

The genealogy that follows begins with Jesus and goes back to Adam. It admits that it is a legal rather than actual genealogy (being as was supposed, the son of Joseph). In this way Jesus is linked with Adam who was God's son (by means of creation) while Jesus was God's Son (by means of virgin birth). This leads naturally into the story of the temptation again linking Adam and Jesus.

We might compare and contrast the two temptation stories. Jesus was in the wilderness, Adam was in the garden. The environment of Jesus' temptation was the

harsh and parched desert while Adam was in the lush and bounteous garden. Jesus fasted for 40 days while Adam ate from all the trees and plants of the garden that he desired with the exception of the one forbidden tree in the middle of the garden. Jesus was alone and Adam had Eve as his companion. Jesus was tempted for 40 days but Eve gave in to the tempter in a single day.

The two temptations follow the same pattern. The devil seeks to arouse a sense of deprivation. He presents the forbidden with deceitful embellishment. He narrows the options of the subject down to just two. He creates an illusion of secrecy and isolation. He plays to the human gift of rationalization.

It is a good exercise to notice how each of these factors show up first in the garden and then in the wilderness. Eve is the negative example and shows how vulnerable we all are to Satan's deceptions. Jesus is the positive example and demonstrates the path to victory over the devil.

Notice that Jesus' motive was to do the Father's will rather than to satisfy the urges or desires of the flesh. He was grounded in the Scriptures and looked to them for direction and guidance. They defined what was good and true. He was also completely confident that God is good that His will represents the best choice and opportunity available to us.