

The Baptism of the Lord

Leviticus 16:20-22 Isaiah 42:1-9 Matt 3:13-17 John 1:29-34

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The Baptism of Jesus was a big deal!

At first, though, it did not look like much of anything. Jesus probably had to stand in line, and wait his turn, for John the Baptist to baptize Him in the Jordan River. The Bible says that people were flocking to John to be baptized; and Jesus would have appeared as just another Israelite man waiting his turn. Even John did not know who Jesus was before the Baptism.

But all that changed when it was Jesus' turn to be baptized. ***What would happen next had never happened in the history of the world!*** As Jesus was baptized, God the Father spoke from heaven, "***This is My Beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.***" God the Father was introducing His Son to the world! God the Father was identifying Jesus as the long awaited Messiah and the Savior of all people! In addition, God the Holy Spirit appeared in the form of a dove and landed on Jesus! It was a dramatic and visual representation of what the word "anointed" means --> it means being chosen and given the Holy Spirit for a specific office. The Holy Spirit anointed Jesus to His Office of Messiah¹: He is beginning His work as the Savior of the world! ***This was a public Trinitarian event*** – there is no other recorded event like this in the history of the world!

- ⇒ **God the Father** speaks and introduces His Son!
- ⇒ **God the Holy Spirit** anoints Jesus for His office as Messiah!
- ⇒ And **God the Son**, Jesus, stands in the Jordan River, baptized, and now officially beginning His work as the Savior of the world!

¹ Messiah (Hebrew) = Christ (Greek) = Anointed (English)

Today we might call this His **commissioning** day; or His **installation**, or His **Ordination**. Jesus is the Messiah, and He is now officially and publicly designated as the Savior of the World!

This *one-of-a-kind, public Trinitarian event* demands that we understand it; **the Baptism of Jesus was a big deal!**

John the Baptist summarizes the significance of Jesus' Baptism with the familiar verse: "***Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!***"

In order to understand this metaphor of the "***Lamb of God***", you need to go deep into the Old Testament and remember the **Day of Atonement**. This was the most sacred and holy day of the Israelites. On that Day, two goats² were brought forth, one was sacrificed and its blood was sprinkled on the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies. The blood of that sacrifice made *atonement* for the sins of the people: it *covered over* their sins and made peace between them and God. That sacrifice taught the people about the coming Messiah and Savior, that He too would shed His blood, *once and for all*, to make *atonement* for the sins of the world. Jesus, of course, is this "Lamb of God" who shed His blood on a cross so that your sins are *covered over* – never to be seen again. Because of Jesus' *atoning sacrifice*, you have **peace with God**.

But there was a *second sacrifice* on the **Day of Atonement**. And that second sacrifice most properly describes Jesus as the ***Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world***³! That second sacrifice was called the *scapegoat*; and this

² Jesus is the "Lamb", but goats were used on the Day of Atonement. In the New Testament, all the sacrifices of the Old Testament converge and are fulfilled in Jesus, the once and for all sacrifice. The language of sacrifice is fluid in the NT. The "Lamb" is most properly referencing to the Passover Lamb; and the phrase "take away the sins of the world" is most properly referencing the scapegoat of the Day of Atonement. But they all come together in Jesus; they all point to Him, and are fulfilled in Him. Thus the language is that of sacrifice, not the specific kind of animal.

³ You may be thinking that the "Lamb" refers to the Passover Lamb, and you would certainly be right. The nuance, however, with the "Passover Lamb" is that "death passes over" the people, thus saving them and

goat is not killed, but lives. We heard the story today from Leviticus 16. The High Priest lays his hands on the scapegoat, the sins of the people are transferred to the substitute. The scapegoat, with all the sins of the people on it, is led into the desert --> never to be seen again. In this way, the sins of the people are “*taken away*.” This scapegoat foreshadowed the work of Christ on your behalf.

Jesus now takes away your sins. In His Baptism, your sins and everything that goes with them, is placed on Jesus. He is the substitute that God provided for you! God the Father has placed your sins on Him and Jesus carries them out to the desert of Calvary⁴, never to be seen again.

Jesus’ Baptism is pictured as the *scapegoat sacrifice*. God the Father lays your sins on His Son, and the Holy Spirit leads Him to the desert of the cross so that your sins are taken away! You are now free! You have a new life to live! You have peace with God! You are forgiven and all the blessings of salvation are given to you!

John the Baptist helps us understand the significance of Jesus’ Baptism by pointing to Jesus and saying, *Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!*

Another thing to keep in mind about Jesus’ Baptism is that it is a dramatic visual representation of what happened in your Baptism.

When you were baptized, you were united to Jesus and His death, burial, and resurrection. It’s like you were standing in the Jordan River that day and Jesus

giving them new life. Since John used the phrase “takes away”, the scapegoat of the Day of Atonement is more in view than the Passover Lamb.

⁴ **Calvary** (*Latin*), **Golgotha** (*Greek*), **Skull** (*Hebrew*) are synonyms, and all refer to the place outside Jerusalem where Jesus was crucified and died. They all reflect the word “skull”, presumably because it was the gruesome place of crucifixion and death.

took all your sins away from you. All the blessings of salvation that Jesus earned for you are given to you in your Baptism!

When you were baptized, God the Father declared you to be His son or daughter; it is as if He was introducing you to the world and saying “*This is My son or daughter, with whom I am well pleased!*” In Holy Baptism, you were brought into the Kingdom of God; God put His Name on you, and you are part of His Family. He is well pleased with you through faith in His Son Jesus Christ.

When you were baptized, God the Holy Spirit came to you and remains with you throughout your life. Each day, you are filled with the Holy Spirit, and led day by day as the Spirit guides and directs you. The Holy Spirit remains with you so that you can grow in faith and be strengthened in your love for others.

What happened in Jesus' Baptism was a dramatic visual representation of what happened in your Baptism. Your Baptism was a Trinitarian event, like Jesus' Baptism. You were united to Jesus, you are declared to be God the Father's son or daughter, and you are filled with God the Holy Spirit! Not only was Jesus' Baptism a big deal, but so was yours!

If you or your family have not been Baptized, then let's talk and make it happen. Baptism is a big deal – Jesus commands it because it brings so many blessings into your life!

Your Baptism gives you a new identity! You are a baptized disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ! Baptism publicly identifies you as a Christian. This is who God has made you to be! This changes everything about you! Because your sins and everything about them are taken away from you, placed on the “scapegoat” of Jesus and taken to desert of the cross, you are free to live your baptized life in Christ! You hear and respond to God's Holy Word! You love and serve your neighbor! You glorifying and praise the Lord God Almighty with your thoughts , words, and deeds! Your Baptism changes everything! **You are a baptized disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ!**

That day in the Jordan River, when Jesus was baptized, it was a big deal! It is the *only recorded public Trinitarian event in all of history!* Jesus officially begins

His work as the Savior of the world! And His Baptism makes your baptism invaluable!

You have been Baptized! Your sins have been *taken away* by the Lamb of God! Live your life as a Baptized disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ! Amen!