



The Baptism of Jesus

By Shannon Ford on April 17, 2024

TODAY'S READING: Matthew 3

Jesus' first official public appearance happened at the Jordan River. Jesus entered the public eye in an unexpected way, by entering the water. Jesus joined John at the Jordan to be baptized. Even though John the Baptist was Jesus' older cousin, John felt unqualified and objected, saying he needed to be baptized by Jesus. Jesus insisted and John the Baptist obeyed. Jesus' baptism did not involve repentance, for He had nothing of which to repent. His baptism signified the entrance of a new covenant and the recognition that Jesus was the Messiah.

John baptized (immersed) Jesus, and when Jesus came up, three amazing things happened. First, the heavens were opened. Here the word *heavens* refer to the visible sky as if a doorway between our world and heaven opened. Next, the Holy Spirit descended as a dove and settled on Jesus. Then came a voice from heaven: "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17). In this passage, we see a clear revelation of the Trinity. J. Oswald Sanders writes, "Jesus, the incarnate Son, stands in the waters of the Jordan, identifying Himself with sinful humanity. The Father opens heaven to voice His approval of His Son, whom He had selected for this task. The Spirit descends from heaven to empower the Son to fulfill the purpose of the Father."

It is interesting that the symbol for the Holy Spirit in Jesus' baptism is a "dove," instead of the usual symbol of "fire" or "flame." The dove was one of the sacrificial animals used by the poor. The symbol of the dove reminds us that Jesus will become our sacrifice. In addition, the symbolism of the "dove" is appropriate for the purity of the One on whom it rested. In a quiet act of humility and meekness, Jesus launched His public ministry empowered by the Holy Spirit.

PRAYER: God, give me such oneness with the Father that His will would be my will; that His words would be my words; and that the desire of my life would be to please Him. Amen.

TOMORROW'S READING: Matthew 4

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