

## Message #15

## Luke 3:21-38

This text in Luke launches us into a very thorough historical study of the most impacting, the most impressive, the most controversial and most righteous Person in all of history, Jesus Christ.

In three short years Jesus Christ said things, did things and accomplished things that are unparalleled and incomparable. His words and works have never been equaled and He has been the focal point of careful study and analysis for the past 2,000 years.

When Jesus Christ was here on earth, **He looked like a man, but He proved He was God.** His words were so simple, and yet they were so deep. His life was so humble, and yet it was gloriously honorable. His impact seemed so temporal and yet it was so eternal. His death seemed too senseless and yet it was priceless.

There has never been nor ever will be another Person like Jesus Christ. We can do our best to mimic His character; to communicate His teachings; to follow His Word; but when all is said and done we are sinners, He was perfect; we are finite, He is Infinite; we are earthly, He was heavenly. Jesus Christ was the most significant Person to ever come into history and He is the most important Person and friend you will ever have in your life.

The relationship we may have with Jesus Christ will turn out to be more important than any other relationship we have ever had in this life. That includes our mother, father, spouse or children. Our relationship with Jesus Christ determines our destiny; it determines our eternity.

As we come to this part of Scripture, we come to Luke's account of the beginning of the ministry of Jesus Christ. Luke was a medical doctor and a meticulous historian. **He tracked down historical data concerning Jesus Christ as a baby, as a twelve-year-old and now as a 30-year-old.**

What Luke does here for Theophilus is to establish that Jesus was God, but He also came from an earthly ancestor pedigree. What we learn here is this:

**JESUS CHRIST IS IDENTIFIED AS THE REAL ETERNAL GOD/MAN BY HIS BAPTISM AND BY HIS LINEAGE.**

We cannot help but see that Luke clearly identifies Jesus Christ as the Son of God by verification of God the Father. But we also see that Luke establishes a careful and credible human lineage. **What you absolutely see about this 30 year old Jesus Christ is that He was a God/man.**

Luke has already carefully established that Jesus Christ was the Son of the Most High God (Luke 1:32). He has already established that Jesus Christ is the promised Messiah (Luke 1:32-33); Jesus Christ is Holy (Luke 1:35); Jesus Christ is God (Luke 1:47); Jesus Christ is the Savior (Luke 1:47), who would bring salvation and redemption to Israel and to all people (Luke 1:68-69; 2:30-32). **Now Luke establishes that this one is not only truly God, but truly a human.**

There are two Christological identifications that Luke is intent on making here:

**CHRISTOLOGICAL IDENTIFICATION #1** – When Jesus Christ began His public ministry, He was publicly identified as God. **3:21-22**

In these two verses, Luke launches us into the official inauguration of the public ministry of Jesus Christ. He begins this by linking Jesus Christ to heaven and the two other Divine members of the Trinity. What happens here at Christ's baptism will never happen to any other person ever. This is a very unique moment. There will never be another like it in all of history.

Now there are six key observations we want to make from Luke's data:

**Observation #1** - Jesus is identified as God, when all sinful people were being baptized. **3:21a**

As Luke begins his account, he begins by establishing that Jesus surfaced when all of the sinful people were being baptized by John. They are all going out in the Jordan admitting that they were sinners, who needed a righteousness they did not have. In Greek there is an article "the" before the noun people, which means they were Jewish people.

It is important to remember that John's baptism was "a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" (3:3). This particular baptism was one in which a Jew admitted he was a sinner and that he needed a Savior and righteousness he did not have to enter the Kingdom.

**So when Christ's ministry begins, it begins by Him associating with sinners.** The amazing grace in all of this is seen at the end of **verse 22** in that this "pleased" God.

Christ could have begun His ministry associating Himself with anyone He wanted. He could have started this off by having dinner with the High Priests—Annas and Caiaphas. That would have been a politically shrewd move because it would have put Him in good standing with them. He could have started this off by doing something miraculous for Tiberius or Pontius Pilate. He could have started this off by debating and impressing the greatest scholars and scribes in Jerusalem. He did not do that. **What He did was to launch off His public ministry by associating Himself when people who admitted they were sinners.** He was at the Jordan where sinful people were acknowledging they needed a Savior.

You will not find Jesus Christ ever hanging around and trying to impress the proud and arrogant and high and mighty. You will always find Jesus Christ present with those who are broken down, hurting and sinful.

Many years ago, a friend of mine asked if I would go with him to purchase a new puppy. He knew of a litter of pups that had been born in the type of breed he wanted. When we got there, he was the first so he got the pick of the litter. The pups were feisty and lively, pushing and shoving their way to the top of the box. My friend carefully looked them over. In the back of the box was the runt of the litter. Most of the other pups didn't have much to do with him.

He was usually the last one to be fed and had to wait until the others were done. He looked undernourished, unlively and unhappy. My friend looked them over and then said, "I'll take the runt." I was surprised and so was the owner. When we were driving away, I asked him why he chose that dog. He said because the runt usually makes the most loyal pet of all. Of all of the options he had, he chose the one you would never expect.

That is the way it was with Jesus Christ. He could have started this ministry associating with the cream of the crop of humanity. He had the pick of the litter of humanity. His choice was to associate with sinners. We don't know their names, but He knew them. This is still what He is doing today. You won't find Christ spending time with the proud and arrogant; you find him with the sinners. That is how His ministry began.

**Observation #2** - Jesus is identified as God when being baptized with the sinful people. **3:21b**

I doubt we will ever grasp the humility of this moment. When Jesus Christ allowed Himself to be baptized by John in the Jordan, He was identifying Himself with the sin of the people and allowing Himself to be baptized by a sinful person.

We need to remember three very important facts here:

**Fact #1** - Jesus Christ is sinless;

**Fact #2** - Jesus Christ does not need to repent of anything;

**Fact #3** - Jesus Christ does not need the forgiveness for anything.

One question that must be asked is why did Jesus Christ allow Himself to be baptized by a sinner who was performing a "repentance baptism for sin," when He is the pure, perfect, Son of God?

There are three Biblical answers to that question:

**(Biblical Answer #1)** - Christ allowed Himself to be baptized to fulfill all righteousness.  
**Matt. 3:13-15**

The O.T. law required that a priestly ministry begin by ritualistic washing of the priest (Ex. 29:4). This was part of the legal O.T. ordination ceremony for the O.T. priest. It was critical that Jesus Christ fulfill every part of the law so He could nail it to His cross (Col. 2:14).

**(Biblical Answer #2)** - Christ allowed Himself to be baptized to manifest Himself to Israel.  
**John 1:29-31; Acts 10:37-38**

This baptism in the Jordan by John, shows Jesus Christ is Israel's Messiah and Savior. This baptism officially introduced Him to Israel as just that.

**(Biblical Answer #3)** - Christ allowed Himself to be baptized to show He can remove sin from sinners. **John 1:29; II Cor. 5:21**

Jesus Christ actually became sin for us. He literally identified Himself with sinful people so He could take that sin and nail it to His cross. The fact that Jesus did this literally did please God the Father.

**Observation #3** - Jesus is identified as God while He was praying. **3:21c**

Luke is the only one who identifies what Jesus Christ was doing when the heaven opened. He was praying.

Most people who are about to launch off into some new public ministry spend a lot of time primping themselves or polishing their speech but not too many begin by praying, but that is how Christ began.

We can do all the public stuff we want, but without prayer, the ministry will lack power and will not please God.

One of the old Swiss Protestant Greek scholars of the 1800's was Frederic Godet. He said the Greek grammar shows that this prayer was closely connected to: 1) The opening of heaven; 2) The descent of the Holy Spirit; 3) The audible message of God the Father.

The point is prayer is a very important part of ministry and life. It certainly was for Jesus Christ.

**Observation #4** - Jesus is identified as God by the opening of heaven. **3:21d**

Now I am convinced that Dr. Luke is getting this data from John's disciples in Ephesus. They were there and they saw every bit of this (Acts 19:1-6). They literally saw "heaven opened." Luke uses a similar construction when Stephen was being stoned in Acts 7:56. In both instances, there is an article "the" before the noun "heaven." So this is the specific throne of God heaven.

In other references to heaven being opened, the common denominator seems to be that those on earth are interested in what they are seeing in heaven (Acts 7:56; Rev. 4-5). **The peculiar feature of this event is that all of heaven is interested in the One on earth.**

**Observation #5** - Jesus is identified as God by a visible display of the Holy Spirit. **3:22a**

The Spirit of God visibly descended upon Christ in a graceful, peaceful, smooth manner like a dove. There are at least two stated Biblical reasons for this:

**(Biblical Reason #1)** - This was a visible sign to John that Jesus was the Messiah. **John 1:33**

**(Biblical Reason #2)** - This was a special Messianic anointing and enablement for the Messiah.  
**Is. 61:1; Luke 4:1, 14**

Jesus was fully God while in His mother's womb. He was fully the God Savior (1:47).

But we cannot begin to grasp the Satanic hostility that God's only Son would encounter while here on earth. Jesus Christ is on earth and He is the Son of God; He is Israel's Messiah and He is the world's Savior. He would perform many miracles and He would die on a cross and be raised from the dead. The third member of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, was with Him every step of the way.

**Observation #6** - Jesus is identified as God by the voice of God the Father. **3:22b**

God the Father is verbally and audibly identifying Jesus Christ as His only beloved Son with whom He was well-pleased. **Think about this, the Holy Righteous God is specifically identifying Jesus Christ as the only One who could please Him while being identified with sin.**

There are actually three statements made by God the Father:

- 1) You are My Son.
- 2) You are My beloved Son.
- 3) You are My well-pleasing Son.

No other person will ever hear this audible announcement concerning them. No other person is righteous. All the rest of us like sheep have gone astray, but not His beloved Son. He was well-pleasing to God the Father.

In fact, Paul, who taught much to Luke, described all the rest of us in Romans 3:10-12. He said none of us are righteous, none of us understands and seeks God, we have all gone astray and are useless and not even one of us is good.

What a contrast to that of Jesus Christ. He was the beloved Son of God and He was "well-pleasing" to God.

**CHRISTOLOGICAL IDENTIFICATION #2** – When Jesus Christ began His public ministry, He was ancestrally identified as a real Human and as real God. **3:23-38**

Jesus Christ was truly and really God's Son, but He was also truly and really a human with a lineage to prove it. We certainly want to see from **verse 23** that Luke is careful to point out that Jesus was "supposedly" the son of Joseph. Luke knew and so do we know that Jesus is the Son of God.

There are two major passages of Scripture that record the genealogy records of Jesus Christ:

- 1) Matthew 1; 2) Luke 3. Both lists are similar and different and it is the differences that cause the debate:

- 1) Some suggest that both genealogies are the lineage of Joseph—Matthew records the legal descendants of David (to show that Jesus had the legal right to the Davidic Throne) and Luke records the more specific lineage of Joseph, tracing him back to Adam.
- 2) Some suggest that both genealogies are different lists—Matthew presents Joseph’s genealogy and Luke presents Mary’s genealogy. It was quite common to list a woman’s genealogy in connection with her husband and that would explain why Joseph is named in **verse 23**.

What we do know with certainty from this lineage are three facts:

**Lineage Fact #1** - Jesus Christ did have a real human lineage.

**Lineage Fact #2** - Jesus Christ did have many unknown people in His lineage.

**Lineage Fact #3** - Jesus Christ had a lineage that may be traced back to Adam.

This is very important because He will be the second Adam who can undo all disasters of the first Adam (Romans 5:12-21).

What we see here is that Jesus Christ was fully man. He was not some emanation or angelic appearance. He was not some Spirit-being. He was really a man.

He was also fully God, and God the Father announced that and was pleased with Him.

One of the most moving statements you will ever read in the Bible is made by the prophet Isaiah in Isaiah 53:10. Isaiah says that “the LORD was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief; if He would render Himself as a guilt offering.”

Jesus Christ rendered Himself as a guilt offering and was crushed for you and me. Will you believe in Him? Will you love Him? Will you live for Him? If you are willing to do that, you will please God.