

Luke 3:21-23a
August 19, 2018

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Q: When you became a believer and began growing spiritually, did you understand that you had a ministry? [Let people engage]

Q: As you have matured in your faith, what do you understand your ministry to be now? [Let people engage]

Q: Do we have a shared ministry? [Let people engage]

Transition: All of us CAN succeed in our shared ministry of the Great Commission BY following the WAYS the Holy Spirit is known to speak to us. All four Gospels record a rather momentous occasion in the life of Jesus. We will see how Jesus's ministry was accredited by His father. Because Luke's account is condensed compared to the other Gospel writers, we'll also read Matthew's account. Let's start with today's passage, and then let's read Matt 3:13-17.

BOOK (NIV 1984):

V.21:

- When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened

V.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."

V.23:

- Now Jesus himself was about thirty years old when he began his ministry.

Process Observations/Questions:

Q V.21: If John the Baptist is baptizing people for the forgiveness of sins, and Jesus is sinless, why do you think Jesus wanted to be baptized?

- He identified with the sinners that He came to save.
- His baptism was the official start of His ministry (X-Ref Acts 1:21–22; 10:37–38).
- Jesus's words tell us the main reason for His baptism: "for in this way it is fitting for Us to fulfill all righteousness" (X-REF Matt. 3:15)

Q: In Matthew's account, when Jesus says "in this way," what "way" is he talking about? [In the way" is pictured by His baptism in the Jordan. Many Bible scholars agree that New Testament baptism was by immersion, which is a picture of death, burial, and resurrection. Our Lord's baptism in water was a picture of His work of redemption (Matt. 20:22; Luke 12:50). It was through His baptism of suffering on the cross that God "fulfilled all righteousness." (The "Us" in Matthew 3:15 does not mean John and Jesus. It means the Father, the Son, and the Spirit.)]

Q: Only Luke mentions that Jesus was praying. Why do you think Jesus was praying during His baptism? [Jesus depended on His Father to meet His needs.]

Q V.22: What happens while Jesus is praying and coming up from the water? [Heaven opens up and the Holy Spirit descends 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."]

Q V.23: How old is Jesus when He receives His anointing from the Spirit? [30]

Transition: What Jesus (and the crowd) heard from His father is not insignificant. In order to show you why this is so significant, you need to understand how a Jewish man becomes a rabbi. So, I'm going to insert a history lesson that will help us appreciate the public affirmation Jesus received during his baptism.

Let's answer the question: "How does a young boy become a rabbi?"

Beit Sefer (Sepher) (boys age 6-10) "House of the Book"

- A local synagogue Torah teacher would begin teaching these young boys the Torah.
- Honey on slates = sign of God's favor
- Instructed to lick the honey based on Ps 119:103, "May the words of God be sweet to your taste, sweeter than honey to your mouth."
- These Jewish boys would memorize the Torah.

Beit Talmud (boys age 10-14) "House of Learning"

The best of the best students went on to memorize/learn the rest of the Hebrew Scriptures.

- Students memorized the entire Hebrew Scriptures
- Students learned the art of questions and answers (Remember Luke 2:46?)
- Rabbis would call out a passage of Scripture, and the student would have to give the Scripture before and after that passage.

At the end of his study in Beit Talmud, when a Jewish boy was 14 years old, if he was the "best of the best," then he would present himself to a well-known, highly respected rabbi. He would literally say, "Rabbi, I want to become your disciple, your talmudim, your student. Please let me in your Beit Midrash, your house of study." [This might look like a student want to enter a doctoral program] So the rabbi would examine the applicant, ask a lot of questions, and find out if indeed this 14 year old was the best of the best. If yes, the student was admitted to Beit Midrash.

Beit Midrash (boys age 14-30) "House of Study"

Students who make it this far are disciplined by a rabbi until a rabbi transfers authority to their "talmudim" **twice in the public setting to declare him a rabbi at the age of 30**. A rabbi's authority is called his "**smicha**"

Smicha or semikhah (Hebrew: סמיכה, "leaning [of the hands]"), also smichut (סמיכות, "ordination"), smicha lerabbanut (סמיכה לרבנות, "rabbinical ordination"), or smicha lehazzanut

(סמיכה לחזנות), is derived from a Hebrew word which means to "rely on" or "to be authorized."

Prevailing *smicha* generally refers to the [ordination](#) of a [rabbi](#) or [cantor](#) within post-[talmudic Rabbinic Judaism](#), and within all modern [Jewish religious movements](#) from [Reform](#) to [Orthodox](#).^[1] *Smicha lerabbanut* signifies the transmission of rabbinic authority to give advice or judgment in [Jewish law](#).

Transition: So now I want to draw your attention back to our storyline in Luke 3:21-22.

Here's the parallel: **Jesus became a rabbi at age 30**. So, who gave Him "authority" or "**smicha**?" (X-Ref Acts 2:22 "Jesus of Nazareth was a man **accredited by God**. Many Pharisees challenged him on this and wanted to know which rabbi gave Him their "**smicha**") God does this publicly two different times:

1. Luke 3:22: When John the Baptist baptized Jesus, a dove from heaven comes down, and you audibly hear God say, "This is my Son, whom I love, with Him I am well pleased." (**smicha** #1!)
2. Mark 9:2-8 (X-Ref): At the Transfiguration with Peter and others, God says the same message. (**smicha** #2!)

God Himself gave His "**smicha**" to Jesus following the traditions of rabbinical schools. He used their "system" to transfer his authority to Jesus. Jesus was "accredited by God" as we just read in Acts 2:22. God did his first public affirmation to anoint the beginning of Jesus's ministry, and then does the last public affirmation AFTER Jesus is raised from the dead! It's like bookends of his ministry.

But here's what is amazing. It gets so much better. Soon after he was resurrected from the dead, an angel appeared before Mary Magdalene and the other Mary who were looking for him in the tomb. The angel told them that He was going ahead of them to Galilee. So, the women are running to Galilee, and Jesus meets the ladies! They not only see Him, they clasped his feet and worshiped Him. He instructs them to tell the disciples to meet him in Galilee.

X-Ref Matt 28:16-20: Then Jesus gives His "**smicha**" in [Matt 28: 18](#) when He says, "**All AUTHORITY in heaven and on earth has been given to me.** (I now "**smicha**" you!) "Go and make disciples ..."

Q: Do you see now see the significance Jesus giving us his **smicha** to fulfill the Great Commission? Do you see that upon your profession of faith in Christ, you were anointed/sealed by the Holy Spirit to be empowered to do this? [Let people engage]

Q: Do you see you have been spared of having to go to seminary or spend your formative years from age 6-30 memorizing the Hebrew Scriptures? [Hold up the Bible – God gave us His Word. God wants us to be a learner by simply reading His Word, knowing it's sweeter than honey, and sharpening your learning by being in studies like this.]

LOOK:

Jesus gave us His **smicha**, now it is up to us to be faithful to share the good news with others.

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Vol. 1, pp. 181–182). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

The Father and the Spirit (Luke 3:21–23a)

One day, after all the others had been baptized, Jesus presented Himself for baptism at the Jordan; and John at first refused to comply (Matt. 3:13–15). He knew that Jesus of Nazareth was the perfect Son of God who had no need to repent of sin. Why then was the sinless Son of God baptized?

To begin with, in His baptism He identified with the sinners that He came to save. Also, His baptism was the official start of His ministry (Acts 1:21–22; 10:37–38). He was “about thirty years of age” (Luke 3:23), and the Jewish Levites began their work at age thirty (see Num. 4:3, 35). But our Lord’s words tell us the main reason for His baptism: “for in this way it is fitting for Us to fulfill all righteousness” (Matt. 3:15). In what way? In the way pictured by His baptism in the Jordan. Many Bible scholars agree that New Testament baptism was by immersion, which is a picture of death, burial, and resurrection. *Our Lord’s baptism in water was a picture of His work of redemption* (Matt. 20:22; Luke 12:50). It was through His baptism of suffering on the cross that God “fulfilled all righteousness.” (The “Us” in Matthew 3:15 does not mean John and Jesus. It means the Father, the Son, and the Spirit.)

When our Lord came up from the water, the Father spoke from heaven and identified Him as the beloved Son of God, and the Spirit visibly came upon Jesus in the form of a dove. Those who deny the Trinity have a difficult time explaining this event.

This is the first of three recorded occasions when the Father spoke from heaven. The second was when Jesus was transfigured (Luke 9:28–36), and the third was during His last week before the cross (John 12:28).

Only Luke mentions that Jesus was praying, and this was only one of many occasions (Luke 5:16; 6:12; 9:18, 28–29; 11:1; 23:34, 46). As the perfect Son of man, Jesus depended on His Father to meet His needs, and that was why He prayed.

Martin, J. A. (1985). Isaiah. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 212)

B. The baptism of Jesus (3:21–22) (Matt. 3:13–17; Mark 1:9–11; John 1:29–34)

All four Gospels record this momentous occasion in the life of Jesus which signaled the beginning of His public ministry. Luke condensed the account more than the other Gospel writers. The purpose of the baptism was to anoint Jesus with the Spirit and to authenticate Him by the Father for beginning His ministry. Each Person of the Godhead was involved in the activity of the Son on earth, including His baptism. The Son was baptized, the Holy Spirit descended on Him, and the Father spoke approvingly of Jesus. In His baptism Jesus identified Himself with sinners though He was not a sinner.

3:21. Only Luke stated that at Jesus' baptism **He was praying**. Luke presented Jesus as praying in or before many occasions in His life (v. 21; 5:16; 6:12; 9:18, 29; 22:32, 40–44; 23:46). When Luke recorded that **heaven was opened**, he was conveying the idea that God was breaking into human history with revelation—sovereignly declaring that Jesus is His Son.

3:22. Since the dove was a symbol of peace or freedom from judgment (Gen. 8:8–12), the Holy Spirit's presence **like a dove** signified that Jesus would bring salvation to those who turn to Him. The **voice** of God authenticated Jesus by alluding to Psalm 2:7 and Isaiah 42:1.

Cabal, T., Brand, C. O., Clendenen, E. R., Copan, P., Moreland, J. P., & Powell, D. (2007). *The Apologetics Study Bible: Real Questions, Straight Answers, Stronger Faith* (pp. 1517–1518). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

3:22 For more on the Father's affirmation of Jesus at His baptism see note on Mk 1:11.

3:23–38 Luke and Matthew differed considerably in their recording of Jesus' genealogy. Some have suggested that Luke gave Jesus' descent through Mary, but this solution has not been accepted by the majority of scholars. Perhaps Matthew gave the legal line of descent, while Luke gave the physical line of descent (i.e., of Joseph, but not literally of Jesus—see note on vv. 23–24), both with allowances for adoptions, levirate marriages, or transference of inheritance rights from one parallel line to another in the absence of children. Though all harmonizing solutions are conjectural, they demonstrate that the two genealogies are not inherently incompatible.

3:23–24 Though Jesus was not the physical descendant of Joseph, He was the legal heir through adoption. Luke lists Heli as the father of Joseph, but Mt 1:16 lists Jacob. Jacob and Heli may have been near relatives, with Heli's son Joseph becoming Jacob's heir when the latter died childless.

Or, if Heli was the father of Mary and if she was his sole heir, then Joseph, his son-in-law, could have been considered his heir.

3:23 The dates of Jesus' birth and initial ministry are disputed. They depend on the date of Herod the Great's death (1:5; Mt 2:1) and the date of the fifteenth year of Tiberius (Lk 3:1). Herod's death is accepted by most as 4 B.C., but some evidence may better fit a date in 1 B.C. Similarly, on a normal Roman reckoning, the fifteenth year of Tiberius was A.D. 28–29. It is possible, however, to date his fifteenth year as early as A.D. 26. The various alternatives allow that Jesus was anywhere from 27 to 33 years old, within range of Luke's "about 30 years old."

Stein, R. H. (1992). Luke (Vol. 24, pp. 138-140). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

Context for Luke 3:21-38

In this section Luke reaffirmed the description of Jesus given in 1:31–35; 2:11. He did this in two ways. The first involved Jesus' baptism. In 3:21–22 Jesus' divine sonship was affirmed by a voice from heaven; and his role as the Christ, or Anointed One, is seen by the Spirit's descent upon him. In the following genealogy Luke demonstrated that Jesus' lineage stemmed not only from David, from whom the Christ was to come, but also from Abraham and from Adam. Thus, Jesus is the fulfillment not only of Jewish hopes and aspirations but of the hopes of the entire world. Like Adam, who was described as the son of God because of his unique relationship to God, so Jesus also is understood as possessing a unique relationship to God. The theme of Jesus' sonship unites these two parts of this section (3:22, 38) with the following one (4:3, 9) as do the references to the Spirit (3:22; 4:1; cf. also 4:18). The section is united to what precedes it by the references to baptism (3:3, 7, 12, 16, 21).

Comments

3:21 This verse and the next one consists of a single sentence in Greek, and in these two verses we encounter a classical problem that has plagued interpreters. Why did Jesus submit to a baptism of "repentance"? This problem is evident not only in Matt 3:14–15 but in a number of early church writings (cf. *The Gospel of the Nazareans* 2 quoted in Jerome, *Against Pelagius* 3.2). In *The Gospel of the Nazareans* Jesus, upon being asked by his mother and brothers about going with them to be baptized by John the Baptist, replied: "Wherein have I sinned that I should go and be baptized by him? Unless what I have said is ignorance?" (a sin of ignorance). Various answers have been given about why Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist. (1) Jesus was repenting (cf., however, John 8:46; 2 Cor 5:21; Heb 4:15; 7:26; 9:14). (2) Jesus was affirming John the Baptist's ministry as being from God (cf. Luke 20:4–7). (3) Jesus was fulfilling all righteousness (cf. Matt 3:15; what this means, however, is far from clear). (4) Jesus was originally a disciple of John the Baptist and was baptized by him, and this fact remained part of the Jesus tradition (apart from the issue of whether this was true, this was certainly not Luke's understanding). (5) Jesus submitted to baptism as a symbolic anticipation of his passion and death (cf. Luke 12:50; Isa 53:12; Mark 10:38–39). (6) We simply do not know. This difficulty of explaining why Jesus experienced a baptism of repentance is a guarantee of its historicity. In our present account Luke did not tell us why Jesus submitted to a baptism of "repentance." Nevertheless, the announcement of the voice from heaven that God was well pleased with Jesus probably indicates that the theory that Jesus was here

experiencing repentance was far removed from Luke's thinking. Jesus' baptism was important for Luke, even more important than for the other Evangelists, but that Jesus' baptism was a baptism of "repentance" seems not to have entered into his mind.

When all the people were being baptized. That is, the people of 3:7. "Were being baptized" is literally *had been baptized*.

Jesus was baptized too. Luke saw Jesus' baptism as the climax and culmination of John's ministry of baptism. Luke (cf. John 1:31–33) did not directly state that Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist (cf. Mark 1:9; Matt 3:13). It is unclear why Luke omitted this. Perhaps it is that a reference to John baptizing Jesus might seem anachronistic in light of Luke 3:19–20.

And as he was praying. For Luke prayer was frequently a time of revelation and direction from God. Indeed Luke often added to narratives references to Jesus at prayer (6:12; 9:18, 28–29; 11:1; cf. 22:40–41). The Holy Spirit, furthermore, often comes in response to prayer. Jesus serves here as a model for Christians in their prayer lives. See Introduction 8 (7).

Heaven was opened. The opening of heaven is a frequent apocalyptic motif found in the giving of revelation as is a voice from heaven.

3:22 The Holy Spirit descended on him. Before Jesus began his ministry, he was anointed by the Spirit. The importance of this for Luke is evident from 4:1, 14 and especially vv. 18–21 (cf. also Acts 4:26–27; 10:37–38). For Luke, Jesus then was "anointed" for his ministry as the "Anointed-Messiah-Christ." There is a clear allusion here to Isa 61:1, which Luke would develop in 4:18–19 (cf. Acts 10:38). Even as Jesus received this divine equipping for his ministry, so the disciples also would be equipped in the future (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4–8). Luke, unlike the other Gospel writers, added the term "Holy" due probably to Luke 3:16 and the fact that in Luke "spirit" can be used to describe an evil spirit (cf. 4:33; 8:29; 9:39, 42; 11:24; 13:11). The Spirit's descent upon Jesus should not be confused with the "baptism of the Spirit" spoken of by John the Baptist (3:16), for the baptism of the Spirit was something Jesus himself did for his followers, whereas the descent of the Spirit was something that happened to Jesus.

Descended on him in bodily form like a dove. The analogy of the Spirit's descent "like a dove" is found also in Mark 1:10, but Luke alone added "in bodily form" and thus intensified the reality of the Spirit's coming upon Jesus. This indicates that, for Luke, Jesus' sonship and anointing go hand in hand (cf. 4:41; 22:67, 70; Acts 9:20, 22). Like Matthew, Luke also had the Spirit coming "upon" Jesus rather than "into" him (cf. 4:18). "Like a dove" is a simile and does not mean that the Spirit actually took the form of a dove to descend upon Jesus.

And a voice came from heaven. This *bath qol* (divine voice) was clearly God's voice.

You are my Son, whom I love. It is unclear whether this is an allusion to Ps 2:7, although a few Western manuscripts (Codex Beza and the Itala) make this explicit by adding "this day I have begotten you." The latter, however, is a scribal addition. The voice from heaven clearly reveals a unique relationship between Jesus and God and refers to Jesus' past as well as present status with God. The voice did not confer upon Jesus a new status, so we should not see here some kind of adoptionist Christology. Rather, the voice confirmed what the readers read already in Luke 1:32–35 and 2:49, i.e., that Jesus was the Son of God before his baptism.

In light of 20:13 "whom I love," i.e., *beloved*, may mean *only*.

With you I am well pleased. This is a possible allusion to Isa 42:1.

