

Baptism of Jesus in the Four Gospels

Explanation

Each of the four Gospels gives an account of the baptism of Jesus, and further information is added by the Joseph Smith Translation of Matthew. Most of the details are consistent among these accounts concerning where and how Jesus was baptized. Because of minor differences, however, major questions have arisen. Was the Spirit that descended that of God himself (Matthew) or the Holy Ghost (Luke) or just “the Spirit” (Mark, John)? Did the Spirit perhaps descend only once, or perhaps twice: once before the baptism (John) and again right after? Did the voice from heaven come right after the baptism, or apparently afterward as Jesus was praying (Luke)? Did the voice say to John, “*This is my beloved Son*” (Matthew), with the added words “Hear ye him” (Matthew JST), or did the voice say to Jesus, “*Thou art my beloved Son*” (Mark, Luke), or did only the Baptist testify, “This is the Son of God” (John)?

The purpose of this chart is not to create confusion but to display the source of considerable scholarly inquiry. The solution to these problems may rest in the fact that concurrent recipients of a spiritual experience may each receive a version of that divine manifestation suited to their own vantage point. Thus, John the Baptist could have heard “This is my beloved Son,” at precisely the same time that Jesus heard “Thou art my beloved Son.” Jesus could have been offering up a prayer while John was baptizing him. If God can listen simultaneously to prayers from multiple people, he can also respond to them both simultaneously and individually.

Reference

S. Brent Farley, “The Baptism and Temptations of Jesus,” in *Studies in Scripture Vol. 5: The Gospels*, ed. Kent P. Jackson and Robert L. Millet (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1986), 175–87.

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Matthew 3:13–17

From Galilee
to the Jordan

John forbade him

Suffer it now

Jesus being
immersed

Straightway coming
up out of the water

Heavens opened (to
him)

He saw the Spirit of
God descending
like a dove and
coming upon him

Voice from the
heavens

This is my beloved
Son in whom I am
well pleased

Matthew 3:40–46 JST

John bearing record

John forbade him

Suffer me to be
baptized of thee

Went up straightway
out of the water

And John saw, and
lo, the heavens
were opened unto
him

And he saw the
Spirit of God
descending like a
dove and lighting
upon Jesus

And lo, he heard a
voice from heaven,

This is my beloved
Son, in whom I am
well pleased. Hear
ye him

Mark 1:9–11

From Nazareth
in the Jordan

Jesus was immersed

Straightway coming
up from the water

Heavens split open

He (John) saw the
Spirit descending
like a dove into (or
unto) him

Voice came from
the heavens

Thou art my
beloved Son; in thee
I am well pleased

Luke 3:21–22

Jesus having been
immersed

Jesus was praying
Heaven was opened

Holy Ghost
descended in a
bodily shape like a
dove upon him

Voice came from
heaven

Thou art my
beloved Son; in thee
I am well pleased

John 1:28–34

In Bethabara
beyond Jordan

Behold the lamb of
God, This is he

From heaven

I (John) saw the
Spirit descending
like a dove and it
abode upon him

God had said to
John: Upon whom
thou shalt see the
Spirit descending,
and remaining on
him, the same is he
which baptizeth
with the Holy Ghost

I saw and bear
record: This is the
Son of God