



Matthew 3:16–17

16 As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. 17 And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”

I want you to imagine the scene. Picture Jesus, the prophet Isaiah said he had ‘no beauty or

majesty to attract us to him,' just a normal looking man, nothing in particular to recommend him, dusty, road weary, having walked about 110 kilometres to the Jordan valley. Given the success of John's ministry it's likely Jesus has been in a queue for many hours, waiting his turn to be baptised by John. John's been at it for most of the day, preaching and baptising. Jews and even foreigners, hundreds of them, are cut to the heart by his preaching and lining up to be baptised by him. Finally it's Jesus turn, and instantly there's look of recognition in John's eyes, the Holy Spirit wells up inside of him, John's shocked, this man is so normal – and yet it is him. The Messiah. 'And what, he wants me to baptise him? I'm not even worthy to, I don't know, untie the dusty sandals on his feet, and he wants me to baptise him?' Yet the Holy Spirit insists, this is the one, and the man insists, such authority in his voice, and so

John relents and plunges Jesus into the water. Yet in John's heart there's still this huge sense of disappointment and confusion. How is he the one? He doesn't look like a king. Where's his army? Where are his followers? Why does he want me to baptise him? What about all the prophecies about coming of the great and mighty one of the Lord. And so shocked and disappointed at such an anti-climax John plunges Jesus down into the water...

And then Jesus comes up and the heavens are torn open, and the Holy Spirit descends in the form of a dove and God the Father, the Almighty One of the Old Testament thunders 'This is my son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.' Can you imagine God's voice, people in the Old Testament would sooner be struck dead than hear it, they'd melt in fear at its power and authority. And the Spirit, blinding,

descending on Jesus, landing on him, entering him, anointing him. A nobody becomes the One – publically and beyond a shadow of a doubt. He's here, he's finally here. God the Father, God the Spirit, God the Son testifying that the Messiah is finally amongst us. Poor John, this isn't for the faint hearted but as we've seen John didn't have a faint heart.

Can you imagine being there? The day God publically commissions Jesus for his ministry? The day Jesus is anointed by the Holy Spirit and empowered by the Holy Spirit for his ministry on earth? The day God reveals conclusively and to the whole world that the Messiah, the one who would go on and die for the sins of the world was in fact his one and only son? Can you imagine being there in this, one of the most important moments in all of human history?

And if that's not enough, I'm not sure there's a passage in the whole of the bible that strains more under the weight of Old Testament allusion. If you were a Jew, or someone who knew the Old Testament, in addition to the awe of beholding the Trinitarian God break into human history for the very first time, these words would have absolutely flawed you. They would have been like all the pieces of an impossible puzzle coming together to form a picture more beautiful and more filled with hope than you could have ever imagined.

'This is my son' comes from Psalm 2, one of the most important Psalms. It contains the promise of a coming king, an Israelite, God's son, coming to rule with an iron sceptre, to take back the earth and rule over all the nations on behalf of God.

‘With whom I am well pleased’ collides together all the prophecies in Isaiah about the Servant of the Lord, the one on whom God would pour out his Spirit, Israel reduced to one, the one who will die for the sins of the world.’

The dove recalls the flood in Noah’s day, the world judged, found wanting, destroyed, but for a remnant, and remade. A new era is beginning with the coming of Jesus.

Coming up out of the river Jordan, soon to be tested in the wilderness, a new exodus, Israel reduced to one, only this Israel will not fail when tested in the wilderness and this Israel will go on to fulfil God’s promise made to Abraham that all nations would be blessed through him.

And that is to name just a few things that would have been rushing through the minds of Jewish people familiar with their Old Testament.

All this would have left them reeling. The heavens torn open, the Triune God publically endorsing the Messiah, the Spirit descending, God speaking, all of the messianic prophetic strands combined into one and placed on this man Jesus by the testimony of God himself who also reveals that Jesus is his son. This would have left them reeling. This should leave us reeling. In the person of Jesus do you have any idea who is before you? The distractions of modern life often seems to shrink his significance down. That's why we need reminders like today and passages and like the one I'm about to read. This is who we are dealing

with, Colossians 1:15–20, we could all do to read it every day, this is Jesus:

15 The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. 17 He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. 18 And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. 19 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

That's who comes up out of the water in Matthew 3:16, and passages like these are why we're spending a whole year with Jesus – why we can never look too closely at him, why we'll never be done admiring him, why we'll never be done praising him, why we'll never be done growing closer to him, and why the best things we'll ever do in this life is serve him.

Live in this moment for a few minutes this morning – this vision of Jesus in all his glory. God the Father, God the Spirit and God the Son breaking into human history to save the world they created and love so much. The baton passed from shell-shocked John, to the supremely glorified humble Jesus, a crowd of hundreds looking on in astounded silence. Look on with them in astounded silence at this beginning of three years that represent the climax and most important period in all of

human history.

And then pray. Pray to God and thank him for Jesus. Pray to Jesus and worship him. Pray to the Holy Spirit and ask him to fill you today as you go about Jesus' work in your life.

Tomorrow, we step down from these heights into the ugliness and reality of sin and temptation. But Jesus is here and he's come to deal with all that. So I hope you can join me.