

Beloved Child (Luke 3:15-22)

(15) As the people were in expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Christ, (16) John answered them all, saying, "I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. (17) His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire." (18) So with many other exhortations he preached good news to the people. (19) But Herod the tetrarch, who had been reproved by him for Herodias, his brother's wife, and for all the evil things that Herod had done, (20) added this to them all, that he locked up John in prison. (21) Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened, (22) and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

(13) For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body--Jews or Greeks, slaves or free--and all were made to drink of one Spirit. (1Cor 12:13)

(16) Rejoice always, (17) pray without ceasing, (18) give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. (19) Do not quench the Spirit. (20) Do not despise prophecies, (21) but test everything; hold fast what is good. (22) Abstain from every form of evil. (23) Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. (24) He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it. (1Thess 5:16-24)

(1) And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. (2) For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. (3) And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, (4) and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, (5) so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. (6) Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. (7) But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. (8) None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. (9) But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him"-- (10) these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. (11) For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. (12) Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. (13) And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. (14) The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. (15) The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. (16) "For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ. (1Cor 2:1-16)

(18) "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, (19) to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." (Lk 4:18-19)

1. Christian, you are dearly loved by God, your heavenly Father, and because you are "in Christ" He is well pleased with you. You bring Him pleasure, joy, and delight.
2. We as people are filled with expectations. Only God's provision in and through Jesus Christ can meet our valid expectations. All people will come up short in some way, but Jesus, if trusted, will not only meet our expectations, but even exceed them forever and ever in ways you could never imagine.
3. We as people are full of heartfelt questions. Only God, through Jesus Christ, can answer all our heart questions. John the Baptist came into the world, not as the ultimate fulfiller of our expectations and ultimate answer to our questions, but instead as the one who would point us to Him, Jesus Christ.
4. John was not the Christ, and no other person can meet the true needs and expectations of your heart and life. We all look for a promised one, a hope, a love. But all people can do, even the best ones, is only point us to the true One, true Hope, and true Love, Jesus Christ. The nation of Israel and the nations of the world were waiting of the Messiah/Christ/Anointed One, and now He had come.
5. Even the best Christian leaders can't give a person salvation, but can only point to the One who can. Water baptism does not save a person, but only points to what has happened in the heart of those who have truly turned from sin in repentance, and put their trust in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Only Jesus can save us and baptize us with the Holy Spirit and fire. We all need to be immersed in the Holy Spirit, He needs to come live inside of us, we need to experience a Spiritual birth, we need to be born again. Jesus alone has all might, all power, and the authority to give us true life, eternal life. Some think the baptism with fire is another reference to what the Holy Spirit will do in our hearts when we are made spiritually alive. Like fire, the Holy Spirit cleanses, purifies, and refines. Like fire, the Holy Spirit is powerful, hot, and effective. The Holy Spirit in us gives us new power to grow in holiness and to minister with power according to the gifts God gives us. Other's think the fire here refers to the fire of judgement that will come upon those who reject God's great salvation. In the next verse after this reference (vs. 17) there is a clear reference to God's judgement upon the unrepentant unbelievers. Ultimately both ideas are truth. The Holy Spirit gives us power for holy living and power for ministry, and Jesus Christ will judge those who reject Him and resist the Holy Spirit with unquenchable fire.
6. When we truly recognize who Jesus is we will gladly humble ourselves before Him in submission and service. Our greatest finite strengths are seen as weakness in the light of His infinite might. Like John, we are not worthy to even kneel down like slaves before Him and untie His sandal straps. Our worth as human beings is actually derived from Jesus. We are valuable because we are made in God's image and because of the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. Jesus demonstrated the worth that He gives to His disciples by untieing their sandals and washing

- their feet (John 13). This foot washing was a symbol of the washing He was about to do for them/us on the cross. Now we are to humbly serve Jesus, His body (church), our family, our friends, and the people of the world. Humility is the mark of a genuine follower of Jesus.
7. Jesus Christ will judge those who reject Him, even those who pretend. He knows those who are truly His, those who are truly repentant, fruitful, and who have been made Spiritually alive through the new birth (Holy Spirit). Jesus knows the difference between the wheat and the tares, even when we may not. The wheat will spend both now and forever with Him in His “barn,” His house. Jesus will gather them, love them, provide for them, protect them, forever and ever. The chaff (the hollow husk with no seed, no fruit, no life) will be burned forever and ever in the eternal and unquenchable flames of the lake of fire. If you recognize you are “chaff” then repent, put your trust in Jesus Christ, become His follower (disciple/student/servant) today. He will love you and take you in both now and forever. He will give you what you need to follow Him and grow in obedience to Him.
 8. True and faithful preachers who are called by God love Jesus and love people so much that they speak the truth in love with boldness. True and faithful preachers exhort people with a gospel focus and centrality. True and faithful preachers proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ to people. True and faithful preachers are courageous and sometimes reprovably call the sin and evil of people out publically. John the Baptist called Herod Antipas out for His sexual immorality, in order to call him to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. Herod Antipas had stolen his brother Philip’s wife (Herodias). He broke up their marriage, family, and lives because he wanted her to be his wife. Herodias left her husband for a man with more money, power, and prestige. John called something that has become acceptable in many places in our culture evil. John knew that Jesus died for evil, and that Herod and Herodias should repent so that they would be saved and forgiven, but instead they grew all the more evil and hard-hearted. In his lust, pride, greed, covetousness, and outright evil, Herod had John the Baptist put in prison and eventually murdered by beheading. John was a Christian martyr who died for His love for Jesus and people, for his faithful preaching and leadership. We should praise God for the freedom of speech that we have in this country. We should pray for and serve our persecuted brothers and sisters in Christ who are all over the world. We should work toward preserving this freedom in the United States through our voice and our voting, even as we work toward greater freedom, justice, peace, and righteousness for others in our world. We should beware of the evil of pride, lust, sexual immorality, adultery, greed, drunkenness, and murder.
 9. Jesus was a man of prayer and dependance on God the Father and the Holy Spirit. We too need to be men and women, boys and girls of prayer and dependance on God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. We need the power and presence of God in every area of our lives. We can never do what God has called us to do as Christians apart from His power and presence. We need the anointing and unction of the Holy Spirit. We need the smile of God, the gaze of God, His full blessing for everything.
 10. The Holy Spirit of God came upon Jesus like a dove. A dove is a peaceful bird that has no talons for fighting or killing. A dove is white, which symbolizes purity. A dove is gentle compared to other birds. The Holy Spirit is our comforter, friend, empowerer, revealer, remembrance, wise counselor, intercessor, and more.
 11. God the Father loves His Son Jesus. The Father testifies to who Jesus really was and is. God the Father is well pleased with Jesus’ life, death, resurrection, and all that He is, has done, and will do. When we are “in Christ,” united with Him through faith, then we too are loved by God the Father, He is well pleased with us, and He gives us access to the Holy Spirit as well. There is no love that you can ever experience like the love of God the Father. There is no greater relationship in the world better than knowing God as Father. There is no greater peace than knowing that God takes pleasure in you and you are His dearly loved child. When you realize that it’s only through Jesus that this comes you will love Jesus with all your heart, and you will not be ashamed to publicly profess Him, live for Him, and tell others about Him. You are God beloved child, in you He is well pleased.
 12. Jesus is the Son of God, the Christ, the only One through whom a person can be saved (know God personally). This is the testimony of Luke, Zacharias, Elizabeth, Mary, Joseph, Gabriel, John the Baptist, Simeon, Anna, the shepherds, Jesus Himself, the Holy Spirit, and God the Father. What other evidence do you need?