

CONFIRMATION FROM HEAVEN

Christ's baptism was essentially all about IDENTIFYING HIM FOR WHO HE WAS as the coming Messiah. This is seen by confirmation from heaven on this very point, as seen in Matthew 3:16-17.

Matthew 3:16 (NKJV)

16 When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him.

Jesus coming "***up...from the water***" is consistent with the word "baptize" meaning "to immerse".

This has MESSIAH written all over it! We have John's testimony that God sent him to baptize and that in this context he would see this supernatural SPIRIT phenomenon related to this superior One coming after him (see John 1:33). But beyond that, we have Messianic prophecy in the OT that the Messiah would be uniquely anointed with the Holy Spirit.

Isaiah 61:1–2 (NKJV)

1 "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, Because the Lord has anointed Me To preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives, And the opening of the prison to those who are bound;

2 To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord,...

The baptism of Jesus was in effect His official inauguration into public ministry.

Shortly after Christ's baptism, Luke 4:14 says Jesus returned "***in the power of the Spirit to Galilee***". Jesus went back to His hometown of Nazareth, went into the synagogue, and opened the scroll up to this very passage in Isaiah 61 and then precisely read verses 1 and 2a (see Lk. 4:18-19). When He had finished reading, He said, "***Today, this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.***" (Lk. 4:21). Jesus was saying that this Messianic passage applied to Him and was being fulfilled in Him. That was astounding and left the audience marveling!

Isaiah 11:1–2 (NKJV)

1 There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, And a Branch shall grow out of his roots.

2 The **Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him**, The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, The Spirit of counsel and might, The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.

The point is that the Messiah would be uniquely anointed with the Spirit, and this happened to Jesus in perfect fulfillment of Isaiah's Messianic prophecy in conjunction with John the Baptist's ministry.

In the OT, prophets, priests, and kings were anointed, indicating they were uniquely chosen and appointed by God to this role. These anointings prefigured the ultimate ANOINTED ONE who would perfectly fulfill all the offices of prophet, priest, and king in ONE person. Thus, He would be uniquely anointed with the Holy Spirit for this role.

The very meaning of **Messiah** (Hebrew) or **Christ** (Greek) is "**Anointed One**". "Jesus the Christ" means "**Jesus the Anointed One**". He was uniquely chosen and empowered by God. He was uniquely anointed with the Spirit in His earthly ministry in fulfillment of prophecy. As John 3:34 says, Jesus was given "the Spirit without measure." In other words, Jesus, in His humbled state of the incarnation, was fully endowed with the Spirit.

Acts 10:37–38 (NKJV)

37 that word you know, which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, and **began from Galilee after the baptism** which John preached:

38 how **God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power**, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.

Jesus is eternal God. He was always God, and in coming to earth, He did not cease in any way to be fully God. He merely added humanity to His eternal deity. But in that state of humility, He set aside the independent use of His divine attributes. As the great representative of humanity, He functioned in the power of the Holy Spirit each step of the way. He is our great example – the perfect example- of what it means to live a life completely yielded to the Spirit. His obedience and His empowerment were PERFECT!

The point is that as the Messiah, He was uniquely anointed with the Spirit and God the Father gave John the Baptist (and Christ Himself) a visible manifestation of "the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove" and remaining upon Jesus (cf. Mt. 3:16; John 1:32-33).

The imagery of a “dove” is fitting for the Spirit because the dove is a symbol of innocence, gentleness, peace, and purity (cf. Mt. 10:16; Gen. 1:2; 8:6-12).

“This anointing [of the Spirit at Christ’s baptism] was a divine mark of God’s appointment of Jesus to His Messianic work.” – ***Stanley Toussaint***

Thus, the baptism of Jesus identified Jesus as the Messiah whom John had prepared the people to receive.