

WARNING: What I am about to say may surprise you...

(Here goes!) ... As long as you have faith - you **will** have doubts.

... [P A U S E] ... As long as you have faith - you will have doubts.

(Now) Let me demonstrate what I mean.

I have in my hand (here) a twenty dollar bill. Does anyone believe me? ...

“You do...? ... O.K. Good! ... Now I am going to destroy your faith.” (I will open my hand and display the \$20.00 bill.)

The reason I can say I am destroying your faith is that now you **know** I hold the bill. ... Because you **see the bill** - you don't need faith anymore.

(LISTEN!) Faith is required only **when we don't see**... and **the absence of certainty** means... (if we have intelligence)... that we have **doubts**. Faith is required when we do not know for sure. ... When knowledge comes... faith **is** - no more! (Here is a Bible verse that backs up what I am saying...)

2 Corinthians 5:7 (ESV)

⁷ for we walk by faith, not by sight.

In order for 2 Corinthians to make any sense... we have to understand that **“faith”** and **“sight”** are polar opposites. ... Here is another verse...

1 Corinthians 13:12 (ESV)

¹² For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.

Sometimes a person is tempted to think: *“I must not be a very good Christian because I still have doubts. I battle with unbelief sometimes.”*

That just shows that you are living in the realm of faith. ... As long as you have faith - you will have doubts. ... And here is some MORE good news. God is willing to help us through our seasons of doubt.

In the 9th chapter of Mark's Gospel... a situation is presented where the father of a demon-possessed boy comes to Jesus and asks for help on behalf of his son. "*If you can do anything, then have compassion on us...*" the father tells Jesus. ... Jesus replied: "*If* you can...(?) ... *All things are possible for one who believes...*"

Mark 9:24 (ESV)

²⁴ Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, "I believe; help my unbelief!"

Do you know how many times I have asked the same thing of God? "*Lord... I believe (in part)... Would You please help me in my UNbelief...?*" (I really don't know how often I have prayed like that – but it has been numerous times!) ... And I take heart in the thought that God will answer such a payer. ... One of the reasons I believe God answers us when we pray like that... is the passage of Scripture that we come to today... in our study through Luke's Gospel.

We see God giving John the Baptist strong evidence to help him through his doubts. - And oh yes! Someone as great as John the Baptist DEFINITELY had doubt. (Jesus called John the greatest man born of a woman!)

Let's look ahead a few chapters in Luke's Gospel. Please turn with me to Luke chapter seven.

Luke 7:18-28

(Now) I will have a lot more to say about this passage when we come to it in our study through Luke's Gospel. For now... I (simply) wanted to show you that someone who was as great as John – suffered tremendous doubt. And God helped him through it. We just read what Jesus did in chapter 7... and today we see what the Lord did through the Baptism of Jesus in Luke chapter three. The things that we read (in chapter three)... I believe were very much for John's benefit.

When Herod imprisoned John... in his dark prison... day after day... John waited. ... He must have been tormented by his thoughts. ... What had gone wrong? ... Why was he in prison? ... What kind of a Messiah had he announced anyway? ... Why was He not mobilizing the nation? ... Why did He not smite Herod and Herodias and set him free?

How much worse it would have been for John... if he did not have (etched into his memory) the praying Christ... Heaven opening up... the Holy Spirit descending like a dove... and the Father's voice. ... Without these things... John may have lost all faith that Jesus was the Son of God.

What we come to in Luke chapter three must have been the greatest moment in John's life! It would be a recollection that his mind would return to over and over again. This was not an event that would be quickly forgotten.

It had been a busy day. The line of repentant sinners who were coming to be baptized had been long. Finally... all of them had been immersed. But what was this? There was one more. It was Jesus. Reluctantly... and then obediently... John had baptized his Lord. It was the peak moment in John's

ministry. From now on... he would send his disciples and converts to Jesus. And how could he ever forget the attending sights and sounds?

Jesus was praying after being plunged beneath Jordan's rushing waters. The heaven was thrown open! The Holy Spirit descended from on high (in visible form - the form of a dove.) ... A voice rang out from heaven: "*You are my beloved Son; with You I am well pleased*".

Luke 3:21-22

Last week... we saw in the preceding verses that John the Baptist had been explaining that Jesus' baptism would be much ***greater*** than his... (and now) ***suddenly*** Jesus came to him and asked to be baptized!

We can certainly understand (as Matthew points out) that John felt unqualified. He wanted Jesus to baptize ***him***.

Matthew 3:13-14 (ESV)

¹³ Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. ¹⁴ John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?"

So... here is a fair question we should probably ask: "If John's baptism was the baptism of ***repentance***... why would the Lord Jesus Christ ask John to baptize Him?" Jesus was ***sinless***. There was ***nothing*** for Him to repent of. He ***had to be*** sinless in order to be qualified to be our Savior and be the perfect sacrifice for the sins of the world.

2 Corinthians 5:21 (ESV)

²¹ For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

1 John 3:5 (ESV)

⁵ You know that he appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin.

Jesus' choice to be baptized by John was probably for multiple reasons. I have already suggested one of those reasons. Jesus wanted to encourage John. He knew that John would face difficult times and this event would strongly impress upon John who He was – to help him in his future seasons of doubt.

In having John baptize Him... Jesus was (also) endorsing John's ministry and message. When the Lord was baptized by John... He was identifying with God's people (those who were yielding to the Lord and had made matters right with God - instead of the critical Pharisees who were watching on the sidelines.) ... Jesus links His cause to John's.

The baptism of the Lord Jesus demonstrated He was identifying with the humanity of sinful men and women... without implying that He (Himself) was a sinner. ... (In next week's passage we will see another example of Jesus' identification with sinners - without committing sin - as the devil takes Jesus into the wilderness and tempts Him.) In His baptism and in His temptation – Jesus identifies with sinful man.

Another reason why Jesus needed to be baptized... was to mark that He was starting His public ministry. Luke will (later) define this baptism as the beginning... in Acts chapter one.

Acts 1:21-22 (ESV)

²¹ So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, ²² beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection.”

There is some significance of Jesus' baptism being the starting point of His public ministry... which is found in the **Older** Testament. (You see) just prior to entering the most holy place on the Day of Atonement... the high priest was ceremonially purified by the washing of water... consecrating himself for that special service before God (Lev. 16:4). ... Jesus (our great High Priest) may have undergone a similar symbolic washing of baptism to publicly consecrate Himself for His Own ministry. ... [P A U S E] ...

Luke uniquely notes that Jesus was praying when the voice came out of heaven. (STOP and REALIZE something with me) ... Did you know that Jesus was in prayer before every single major event in His ministry?

In addition to what we see in our passage here... Jesus praying at the start of His public ministry... we (also) see it when crowds started following Him...

Luke 5:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ *But he would withdraw to desolate places and pray.*

Just before calling His disciples...

Luke 6:12 (ESV)

¹² *In these days he went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God.*

Just before He revealed the plan of the Church...

Luke 9:18 (ESV)

¹⁸ *Now it happened that as he was praying alone, the disciples were with him. And he asked them, "Who do the crowds say that I am?"*

Before the transfiguration...

Luke 9:28 (ESV)

²⁸ *Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray.*

Just before His arrest... trials... and death on the cross...

Luke 22:41 (ESV)

⁴¹ And he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and knelt down and prayed,

When I first saw this several years ago... this was my take-away:

MINISTRY is the overflow of prayer. That is what we see in Jesus' life. But so often we treat prayer as a part of ministry... when it should be the other-way-around. Ministry is a part of prayer. Ministry is to be the overflow from prayer. ... Don't make prayer into something that you quickly do in ministry. Instead make ministry what you do – as the result of prayer. (We tend to focus on MINISTRY ...and minimize prayer... as a tag-on.)

The beginning of Christ's public ministry... included a divine endorsement. John witnessed two elements of God's endorsement of Jesus – a divine word from heaven... and the anointing of the Holy Spirit on Jesus. (Let's talk about these now... and how impressive they would have been to John.)

“Heaven was opened.” It is virtually impossible to explain what this means. I cannot begin to imagine what onlookers must have seen that day. Nevertheless, it was an answer to Isaiah's ancient prayer: “Oh, that You would rend the heavens and come down” (Isa. 64:1). The phrase commonly refers to an extraordinarily special moment in time when God was breaking into human history with a revelation. The prophet Ezekiel used that expression... as did *the Apostle* John... in Revelation 19:11.

Luke 3:22

Here are Warren Wiersbe's comments on this verse:

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.

All three persons of the Trinity are named as present and active in the baptism of Jesus. The doctrine of the Trinity... which was developed much later in church history... teaches that God is three persons and yet... one in essence. The baptism of Jesus confirms the doctrine of the Trinity. God the Father... God the Son... and God the Holy Spirit are NOT the same person Who (merely) takes on ONE of these three forms - as needed. No. They are separate persons... because all three are present – at the same time.

- * *God the Father spoke from Heaven.*
- * *God the Son was baptized.*
- * *God the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus.*

“*You are My beloved Son; with You I am well pleased*”: The **voice** from heaven left no doubt. This wasn’t just another sinner being baptized; this was the sinless... Eternal Son of God... pleasing the Father by His identification with sinful man. John (no doubt) recognized the Old Testament passages this came from... and how it confirmed Jesus’ identity.

- **You are My beloved Son** is an echo of Psalm 2:7, a glorious Messianic Psalm.
- **In You I am well pleased** is an echo of Isaiah 42:7, marking Jesus as the suffering Servant spoken of in that broader passage.

The Holy Spirit took a physical (visible) form. ... What was visible was **not** a dove... but rather... what was seen ... is compared to a dove. Luke’s manner of writing this (in the Greek) makes this clear (hos) “**like** a dove.”

The way that a dove *gently* circles and flutters downward to land... is how the Holy Spirit was seen to land on Jesus. ... There had never been anything like this in biblical history — **never!** ... (Also) never before had a dove been used to symbolize the Holy Spirit.

Why a dove? Though Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire (i.e., with purging and judgment)... the gentleness of a dove suited the temper of Jesus' actual ministry of reconciliation. ... Thomas

Goodwin... (a Puritan theologian)... explained:

All apparitions that God at any time made of Himself, were not so much made to show to men what God is in Himself, as to show us how He is affected toward us, and to declare what effects he will work in us.... For a dove, you know, is the most meek and the most innocent of all birds; without gall, without talons, having no fierceness in it, expressing nothing but love and friendship to its mate in all its carriages, and mourning over its mate in all its distresses. And accordingly, a dove was a most fit emblem of the Spirit that was poured out upon our Saviour when He was just about to enter on the work of our salvation. For as sweetly as doves do converse with doves, so may every sinner and Christ converse together.

(And) once again... John was treated through this demonstration to another affirmation (he most likely recognized) from the Old Testament.

Isaiah 42:1 (ESV)

¹ Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations.

There is something deeply comforting in all this. It demonstrates how powerfully God works for our redemption and also the mutual work of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. All three Persons are equally concerned for the deliverance of our souls.

No person is too low for God to deliver. Someone may feel that his personal moral (or immoral) life is so bizarre that there is no hope. But the Holy Trinity disagrees. A man or woman (perhaps you) may be in such a relational quagmire... that he or she feels utterly beyond understanding and grace. ... Well...He or she is wrong! ... The Trinity delights to save the “unsaveable.”

Luke 3:23

He was “about thirty years of age,” (and do you know what?) ... The Jewish Levites began their work at age thirty (which is what Num. 4:3, 35 declares). Thirty years of age was the appropriate time to start ministry.

Now... Luke continues to give us background information on the Lord Jesus Christ... by recording the family tree of the Lord. I was tempted to read the next 14 verses... which is a list of “funny sounding names” to our ears. ... But instead of making you listen to me mis-pronounce all these names... I would (instead) like to point out several things about this genealogy.

Matthew also goes into Jesus’ genealogy... but his list is different than Luke’s. The reason why is obvious. They wrote their Gospel’s for different purposes. ... Matthew began with Abraham and moved forward all the way to Jesus. (Matthew’s original audience was primarily Jewish. He wanted to show that Jesus was the possession of the Jews.)

Luke’s record began with Jesus and moved backward in time all the way to Adam. He wrote to a Gentile audience. So Luke’s genealogy doesn’t stop with Abraham. In order to show that Jesus is the possession of all

humanity... Luke takes it all the way to the founder of the human race. Jesus is the Messiah for all mankind.

The two records are different in another way. Matthew gives us a record of Joseph, the foster-father of Jesus, while Luke's record is of Mary. Since Joseph and Mary were both in David's line, these genealogies prove that Jesus of Nazareth has the legal right to the throne of David.

The two sections of our text today (the baptism of Jesus and the genealogy of Jesus) flow together... by centering on the confirmation of Jesus by the **heavenly** witness of God... and the **earthly** witness of ancestry. Jesus is shown to be the Messiah... and also Son of God... by heavenly and earthly witnesses.

But perhaps the biggest take-away (for me – personally) with Matthew and Luke's genealogies would be this. (I hope that it encourages you – as well.)

Throughout the history of the kings of Judah... we see Satan seeking to corrupt and destroy the royal seed... so there could be no Messiah. ... So often (it seemed) he was winning. For example... he seduced Solomon into hundreds of pagan marriages and turned him into an idolatrous and foolish old man.

Then Solomon's oppressions eventually brought about a massive revolt by the ten northern tribes against the Davidic throne. The Kingdom was divided and often at war with each other.

Jehoshaphat (one of the few good kings that Satan didn't completely corrupt) played the fool by marrying his son to the evil Athaliah (the

infamous daughter of Ahab and Jezebel.) ... Athaliah almost succeeded in wiping out the royal line of David. ... Manasseh's long and evil reign plunged Judah into excesses of wickedness... from which it never recovered. ... Jehoiachin so infuriated God that Jeremiah was told to pronounce a curse on him (to the effect that no descendant of his should ever sit on the throne of David.) You can read about it in 1 Chron. 3 and Jer. 22.

But Luke and Matthew's genealogies show that it was all in vain! ... While Satan was so zealously seeking the overthrow of the royal line to Christ... all the time God had another line (almost totally ignored) through David's other son (Nathan)! The whole time it was winding its way down the bypaths of history to Mary! ... And Satan was completely foiled.

God is sovereign Folks! He can be trusted.

Yes... we might battle with some doubt. But God is willing to help us with that... and it is OK to ask that He would. He knows our struggle and He leaves us with evidence for our time of need. He did that with John the Baptist – and He will do it for us.