

# Baptism of Jesus in the Four Gospels

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

# Baptism of Jesus in the Four Gospels

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## 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.

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## 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.