

Learning More with  
**Stories of the Master**

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~ **The Voice from Heaven** ~

You can learn much more about this story by doing these three things:

1. Read the story in God’s Word.
2. Discover key cultural and historical insights.
3. Answer the reflective questions.

**1. Read the story in God’s Word.**

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<b>Matthew 3:13-17</b>	<b>Mark 1:9-11</b>	<b>Luke 3:21-22</b>
<p><sup>13</sup> Then Jesus went from Galilee to the Jordan River to be baptized by John. <sup>14</sup> But John tried to talk him out of it. “I am the one who needs to be baptized by you,” he said, “so why are you coming to me?”</p> <p><sup>15</sup> But Jesus said, “It should be done, for we must carry out all that God requires.” So John agreed to baptize him.</p> <p><sup>16</sup> After his baptism, as Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and settling on him. <sup>17</sup> And a voice from heaven said, “This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy.”</p>	<p><sup>9</sup> One day Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee, and John baptized him in the Jordan River. <sup>10</sup> As Jesus came up out of the water, he saw the heavens splitting apart and the Holy Spirit descending on him like a dove. <sup>11</sup> And a voice from heaven said, “You are my dearly loved Son, and you bring me great joy.”</p>	<p><sup>21</sup> One day when the crowds were being baptized, Jesus himself was baptized. As he was praying, the heavens opened, <sup>22</sup> and the Holy Spirit, in bodily form, descended on him like a dove. And a voice from heaven said, “You are my dearly loved Son, and you bring me great joy.”</p>
<b>John 1:19-28</b>		
<p><sup>19</sup> This was John’s testimony when the Jewish leaders sent priests and Temple assistants from Jerusalem to ask John, “Who are you?” <sup>20</sup> He came right out and said, “I am not the Messiah.”</p> <p><sup>21</sup> “Well then, who are you?” they asked. “Are you Elijah?”</p> <p>“No,” he replied.</p> <p>“Are you the Prophet we are expecting?”</p> <p>“No.”</p> <p><sup>22</sup> “Then who are you? We need an answer for those who sent us. What do you have to say about yourself?”</p> <p><sup>23</sup> John replied in the words of the prophet Isaiah: “I am a voice shouting in the wilderness, ‘Clear the way for the LORD’s coming!’”</p>		

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<sup>24</sup> Then the Pharisees who had been sent <sup>25</sup> asked him, “If you aren’t the Messiah or Elijah or the Prophet, what right do you have to baptize?”

<sup>26</sup> John told them, “I baptize with water, but right here in the crowd is someone you do not recognize. <sup>27</sup> Though his ministry follows mine, I’m not even worthy to be his slave and untie the straps of his sandal.”

<sup>28</sup> This encounter took place in Bethany, an area east of the Jordan River, where John was baptizing.

## 2. Discover key cultural and historical insights.

- For the Father to honor the Son with the voice from heaven was like a public declaration in which a patron/father acknowledged a client’s dedication and such an event was of utmost importance in honor-shame societies such as the one in which Jesus lived.
- Designating Jesus as Son of God is an honor declaration of the highest sort, a status repeatedly stressed throughout the infancy narrative and programmatically stated in the summary of that narrative in Luke 2:52. Since the culture expected people to act in accord with their birth status, little would have been expected of Jesus as the son of Joseph (although the reader knows of Mary’s altered-state-of-consciousness experience in Luke 1:26-38 that suggested otherwise). Nor would he have had legitimacy (authority) to speak and act in public. However, if his true status is that of a holy man, an Israelite son of God, his public statements and actions are fully legitimated. Note also that public declarations in which a father acknowledged paternity were of utmost importance in honor-shame societies. Here many are present to witness the event.

These insights are from *A Social Science Commentary of the Synoptic Gospels* by Bruce J. Malina, 35-36.

- The prophet, like Moses, was based on Moses’ words in Deuteronomy 18:15-18 in which he said God would raise up another prophet like him to speak to the people. Peter used this in his preaching in Acts 3:22-23 and Stephen in his preaching in Acts 7:37.
- The voice crying in the wilderness is taken from Isaiah 40:35
- This is my Beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased is based on Psalm 2:7 and Isaiah 42:1.

## 3. Answer these reflective questions.

Why do you think John told Jesus that he needed Jesus to baptize him?

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Jesus was sinless and did not need to be baptized, yet He insisted that John baptize Him. According to the story why did Jesus want to be baptized?

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The Voice from Heaven called Jesus the Son of God (King) and the One in whom He was pleased (Servant). The combining of these two titles comes from these verses:

“This is My Beloved Son”

from Psalm 2:7

Kingship Theme

“In whom I am well-pleased”

from Isaiah 42:1

Servant Theme

In what ways did Jesus show kingship in His life?

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In what ways did Jesus show servanthood in His life?

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In what ways does Jesus show kingship and servanthood to us?

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