

Jesus the spirit baptizer: christology in light of pentecost



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Introduction

There has been much widely regarded literature surrounding the events of Christ. Whole books have been dedicated to individual issues such as His deity, His humanity, His incarnation, His death and resurrection, and the works that He performed in-between. Offering a new perspective to the Christological literature, Frank Macchia's book *"Jesus the Spirit Baptizer: Christology in the Light of Pentecost"* argues that the culmination of Jesus' life, death, and ministry occurs not in the resurrection, but in His return at the point of Pentecost. The idea that Jesus' ministry culminated at Pentecost goes along with the timeline laid out by most literature, which in part states that the culmination of Jesus' life occurred instead at the resurrection.

In this paper, I will be examining chapter four, "The Jordan and the Life of Jesus," out of the second part of the book entitled, "Christ's Incarnation and Anointing."

Part 2: Christ's Incarnation and Anointing

Chapter Four: The Jordan and the Life of Jesus

I really like this chapter of the book because it has to do with Christ being anointed. This event took place at Jesus' baptism in the Jordan River by John the Baptist. According to the literature, this is one of the most significant and pivotal moments for Jesus' ministry and life. During this event, the Holy Spirit descends and rests upon Jesus. "Jesus' reception of the spirit at the Jordan is thus a pivotal salvation-historical event because Jesus' entire mission was fulfilled in and through the Spirit. Jesus' reception of the Spirit after his

baptism and the life that follows is enormously significant to salvation history.”[1]It is at this pivotal moment that Jesus’ ministry starts as He takes up His God-given mission. Professor Macchia offers an explanation of the significance and magnitude of this event through several of the impacts. Some of the impacts it has included the impacts on the people of Israel, the coming of God, the Temple, the understanding of prayer, the justice of the Kingdom, the Law, table fellowship (relationship between people), healings being done, and the fire-baptism of Christ.

First, Macchia notes the importance of the Spirit-baptized Christ and His incarnation and the coming Pentecost. As noted in chapter three, Christ’s body was of the same human flesh like ours. As a body prepared by God for the purpose of reconciliation and renewal, “ the incarnation has its penultimate purpose in the Jordan experience.”[2]Both the incarnation and Jesus’ baptism at the Jordan are necessary events to each other. “ The resurrection itself is the ultimate baptism in the spirit (Romans 1: 4)! Therefore, the Jordan River as the place where Jesus rises from the waters baptized in the Spirit to share God’s favor with the many anticipates the resurrection where Jesus rises from the dead to baptize others in the Spirit.”[3]It is only through the Spirit being imparted to Jesus as the incarnated Son that we can have any hope of reconciliation following this event, for Christ imparts the Spirit to us at Pentecost. However, he could not have done so without the Spirit first resting upon Him. So, what does this mean for the people of Israel?

The next point that Macchia makes has to do with the significance that the Spirit-baptized Christ plays in regard to Israel. Jesus embodied the signifying
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event that the people of Israel had been hoping and praying for. In that, “ It is important to note that Jesus’ reception of the Spirit as the favored Son of the heavenly Father sets in motion the renewal of Israel, which includes the fulfillment of Israel’s mission to bless all nations.”[4]Not only that but Jesus came to right the wrongs set into motion in the garden of Eden, from which the nation of Israel eventually came. “ Jesus relived Israel’s drama as the faithful Son. Where Israel failed, he will succeed.”[5]Jesus steps into the path laid out for him by God and the warnings of John the Baptist. In doing so, Jesus seeks to fulfill the mission that God set forth to the Israelite people at their inception: to bless all the nations and the hallow the name of the Lord. Furthermore, “ The Jordan’s location was significant for this prophetic drama of hope, because that river was historically important to Israel’s crossing into the promised land. It seems that John’s baptism was a drama of a new Israel leaving its sin behind and reemerging from the Jordan a renewed people.”[6]

Third, Macchia notes Christ’s significance to the coming of God. We know that Christ’s deity is affirmed in his being the mediator of the Spirit. In that, it seems clear that “ The Spirit Baptizer will impart the Spirit of the heavenly Father because he is to be identified with God.”[7]In doing so, Christ reaffirms his being necessary to the Father, and the Father’s coming reign. For as “ The Spirit fills Jesus at the Jordan as the divine glory filled the tabernacle of Israel (Exodus 40: 34-35). The coming kingdom or reign of God is the coming of God to reign, and this coming will bring widespread restoration and judgment.”[8]This is important, as we just read that Christ takes on the Spirit to fulfill the mission of Israel (to bless all nations), which

will further the reach and kingdom of God, making the coming of God all that much closer.

Fourth, Macchia touches on the significance that Christ's baptism played on the Temple. In those days, the Temple of Jerusalem was considered a place of high political and religious power. It was (and is) and cultural focal point. In that, Jesus' cleansing of the temple was indicative of the coming judgement upon all people. " The Temple was to be a place from which the life and a light of God's presence was to shine outward to all people through countless lives that were wholly given over to the kingdom of God in the world." [9] Instead, it had become a corrupt environment of robbers, scammer, and fakes. " Jesus had the authority to announce judgment on the Temple because, as the future Messiah and King, *he* was the new center of God's presence and reign; *he* would bear the Spirit to give the Spirit; *he* would be the new locus of prayer - not only for Israel, but also ' for all nations.'" [10] This is what makes Jesus' role as the Spirit Baptizer so significant regarding the Temple: the fact that he came to change everything.

Fifth, there is the notion of the role Christ plays as the Spirit Baptizer in regard to prayer. Now, Christ participated in prayer frequently during his life and ministry. In that, Jesus used the familiar term of *Abba* , or father, to reference God in prayer. " However, it was not just the prominence of Jesus' *Abba* addressing of God that is noteworthy; more importantly, the sense in Jesus that all others address God this way *only because of him*. " [11] Jesus brought this form of address to us as a unique and different way to understand God and to bless others, still fulfilling Israel's call. Furthermore, <https://assignbuster.com/jesus-the-spirit-baptizer-christology-in-light-of-pentecost/>

Macchia breaks down what is commonly referred to as the Lord's Prayer, indicating that we live first through the call to hallow the Father's name before we dare ask for something as simple and necessary as daily bread. Ultimately, we express gratitude at the redemption that is brought to us through the trials that Christ suffered.[12]

Sixth, there is the matter of justice that arises in the kingdom of God. " Jesus calls sinners to repentance but not without challenging the unjust and exclusionary practices that degraded the poor and the outcast." [13] Jesus calls everyone to repent in the way that matches their need. That is, the justice that comes to the oppressed also is granted to the oppressor, as they are also now free from their actions. " The Spirit Baptizer will incorporate us into a community, a just and mutually edifying community governed by liberating love." [14] From repentance we have a just righteousness that can only be found through the power of the Spirit in the Son and Father. In that, Jesus doesn't go about bringing righteousness and justice in an easy way; " Instead, he will enter into human despair in order to offer grace and new beginnings through the Spirit of life, breaking the hold that it has on the human psyche and on human communities." [15] Ultimately, the redemption that Christ brings to the world will be rooted in kingdom justice and redemptive love.

Seventh, Macchia brings up how the Law is affected by the Spirit-baptized Christ. The Law would have been a significant tool for guiding moral and religious behavior throughout the church. However, when the Law becomes the only thing that people are adhering to (not out of their own want or will), then a problem arises. " Jesus does not demand perfection, but he does <https://assignbuster.com/jesus-the-spirit-baptizer-christology-in-light-of-pentecost/>

assume a life orientation that yearns for God and for the accomplishment of God's will on earth." [16] He wants us to be living our lives well, and loving God and others well too. We can't do that without knowing the Law, but we also can't do it with the Law. " Ultimately, the witness of the law to the love of God and neighbor is fulfilled at the cross." [17]

Next, there is the concept of table fellowship. Jesus extended his table fellowship not only to the poor and the enslaved, but also to the tax collectors and the enslavers. He brought all forms of people together, eating side by side with him, which was cause for rabble from the residing religious leaders. In order to demonstrate this effectively, Macchia analyzes the parable of the prodigal son. When the elder brother of the tale complains about the feast the father is throwing upon his younger brother's return, the father notes that everything he owns belongs to his sons. " No amount of extravagance displayed at a celebration can match that. It is rather about a deeper sense of justice that is merciful and seeks the restoration of lost bonds of love and mutual regard." [18] Being part of the table fellowship of Christ means having mercy and forgiveness for those seated on either side of the table. For, " As the Spirit Baptizer, Jesus incorporates others into himself in order to open up the Father's banquet to them all." [19] Here, Jesus plays the role of the elder brother from the parable, for " the only way for the older brother to find grace is to grant it to the younger one - to whom God has made him accountable." [20]

Following the discussion of table fellowship, Macchia turns the conversation to the topic of healing and what role the Spirit-baptized Christ plays in it. "

Though the healing ministry of Jesus is not just a social issue, the social
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dimension of healing cannot be ignored.”[21]In healing people, Christ demonstrated the power of the Spirit flooding through him. Literally, the Spirit could not be contained seeing as people who touched Jesus’ robe as he walked by were healed. From that, “ eschatologically speaking, the healing ministry of Jesus showed his authority over the demonic realm as well as over the powers of nature.”[22]Though these miraculous signs were shown and pointed directly back to the Father, they were ironically taken as reasons for which to kill him.

Finally, Macchia broaches the topic of the *fire* -baptized Christ. That is, Christ would participate both in a baptism of Spirit, and also in a baptism of fire (though they occur in the same physical baptism in the waters of the Jordan River). His fire-baptized nature is necessary to his being Spirit-baptized, in that it is the Spirit who will both bring restoration and judgement upon all. “ The River of the spirit mediated by the Messiah will bring the spirits restoration to those who repent and the fire of judgment to those who oppose this flourishing of life.”[23]If the Spirit is involved in both restoration and judgement, and the Spirit is resting on Christ, then it follows logically that Christ would also suffer a baptism in fire in addition to the baptism of the Spirit. Therefore, “ Jesus’ baptism by fire did not begin at the cross; it culminated there. Jesus moved in the direction of this baptism already at the Jordan River.”[24]

Altogether, “ Jesus’ anointing by the Spirit at the Jordan is an utterly unique moment in the history of salvation. How unique? John 3: 34 tells us that the Spirit rests on Jesus *without limit* , and 1: 33 indicates that the Spirit rests on Jesus *permanently* .”[25]Having the Spirit resting on Jesus permanently,
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without limit, for his discretion is so unfathomable and amazing that it certainly must be true, otherwise no one would ever have conceived of it. In that, while Pentecost might be the culmination of Jesus' life and ministry, there is no way it could have been so without first the events at the Jordan. " The Spirit rests on Christ in order to rest on us through him. In resting on us through Christ, the Spirit enables us to participate in Christ's life and destiny." [26]

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[1]Macchia, Frank D. *Jesus the Spirit Baptizer: Christology in Light of Pentecost*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2018.), 184.

[2]Ibid., 187.

[3]Ibid., 188.

[4]Ibid., 196-197.

[5]Ibid., 200.

[6]Ibid., 199-200.

[7]Ibid., 201.

[8]Ibid., 203.

[9]Ibid., 206.

[10]Ibid., 207.

[11]Ibid., 208.

[12]Ibid., 211.

[13]Ibid., 212.

[14]Ibid., 213.

[15]Ibid., 217.

[16]Ibid., 223.

[17]Ibid., 223.

[18]Ibid., 226-227.

[19]Ibid., 227.

[20]Ibid., 227.

[21]Ibid., 228.

[22]Ibid., 228.

[23]Ibid., 231.

[24]Ibid., 232.

[25]Ibid., 185.

[26]Ibid., 185.