

Jesus' Baptism

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Take your Bibles and let's go to the gospel of Mark this morning. If you're visiting or new, we typically are verse by verse, chapter by chapter through books of the Bible but I'm in-between books and we were coming into the holidays and it was helpful for me to wait and get some work done to begin that new series in January when we come back. Things are so just disjointed for us in December, um, but there's a lot to do. We have a lot of work to do on the Pastor's Training Institute. Pray that God will continue to bless that. I have a lot of confidence in the men who have enrolled and, um, if you just think about it, if we were to glean 5, 7, 8, 10 guys a year who will go on and plant churches and be a part of our network, that's a lot. That's a lot of work. That's a lot of responsibility. That's a lot of financial responsibility. So we praise the Lord for how he's blessing that and, um, good stuff coming up. True Church Conference in February, a lot of work to get done on that too.

Mark 1, let's begin in verse 9 and go through verse 13, alright? Mark 1 beginning in verse 9. Now I've got a sinus scratchy thing and I may have to drink a lot of water but that's common for me. Nothing to be concerned about, okay? I battle this stuff all the time. Remember the girl at, uh, King when she was coughing and she looked at me and said, "That's not COVID, it's Marlboro." Well, mine's, mine's hay and grass and sitting in a tree stand and stuff like that in the cold wind.

Verse 9,

9 In those days Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 10 Immediately coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opening, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him; 11 and a voice came out of the heavens: "You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased." 12 Immediately the Spirit impelled Him to go out into the wilderness. 13 And He was in the wilderness forty days being tempted by Satan; and He was with the wild beasts, and the angels were ministering to Him.

I just want to talk about Jesus' baptism and to hold out, first of all, that the Bible doesn't tell us why Jesus was baptized. John's baptism was a baptism of repentance, preparing the way for people to receive the Savior who, of course, is Christ. So here we have the

Christ, the Savior, coming to John for baptism. I believe there's a lot going on here but I believe this was something of a metaphor. Jesus was not only becoming one with man and identifying himself as a man, he was also through his baptismal experience projecting or giving a foreshadowing of his whole salvific ministry. There's a real picture here of all that he's accomplishing for his children in his baptism.

Let's, first of all, talk about this wilderness aspect. We know, the Bible tells us that John the Baptist was a voice crying in the wilderness. He ministered out in the rural areas away from the cities and the towns and the establishments of the day. Jesus, we know, left Nazareth of Galilee and went to the Jordan south of Nazareth where John was baptizing to be baptized by him, and then the Bible says in verse 13 of our text, after he's baptized immediately the Spirit leads Jesus out in the wilderness. There it is again, and there he's to be tempted by Satan and he's literally among the wild beasts and in those days that region of the world would literally have wolves and wild boar and hyena and the jackal and leopards. It was a, a lonely place, the wilderness, a desolate place, isolation and separation and even depression, a dangerous place, the wilderness.

So I'm convinced that as we look at Christ's baptism, we see a foreshadowing, if you will, of his whole saving ministry and the wilderness mentioned in this text and in other biblical texts is also, is, is also a metaphor of this present, fallen, lost, Satan-controlled, sin-filled world. Brothers and sisters, this world is a wilderness. That makes it a lonely place at times. That makes it a depressing place. That makes it a dangerous place. Have you noticed nobody comes into this world and leaves this world alive. A wilderness. The Bible says in Romans 3:23, "the wages of sin is death." The Bible is full of the teaching of the, the great depravity of man and the great need and the great lostness of mankind, so wouldn't it be just like God to send John the Baptist to be the forerunner of Christ and then send Christ to John the Baptist in the wilderness.

Now the Jews after their deliverance from Egyptian bondage, the Bible says they wandered in the wilderness of Sin, that's how the Hebrew word is translated, sin, the wilderness of Sin. It's in Exodus 16. It's a region between Elim and Sinai. God had miraculously delivered them from Egyptian slavery, he brings them out and they begin to wander in the wilderness of Sin and eventually they begin to murmur, they begin to complain about what there was to eat, they begin to question God's choice of Moses as the leader. Now isn't that kind of interesting, here they are in the wilderness of Sin and they're murmuring against God and questioning God's motives. Isn't that pretty much a basic understanding of what sin is, you set yourself up as authority, you question God, and you doubt God's motives. When God drove Adam and Eve out of paradise, he drove them out into the wilderness and that's where we've been ever since.

Actually the word here in our text, wilderness, is a word that means desert. Uh, in my mind when I think of wilderness, I think of more of a, a lush jungle setting, but that's not what it is here. It's, it's more of a barren desert area. It's, it's just, it's just desolate. There's nothing there and isn't that a picture of man's spiritual condition, we are desolate, we are barren, we are isolated and separated from God. What a powerful metaphor this is of the condition of man. It speaks of our hopelessness. And then let's remind ourselves the

greatest consequence of being a sinner in this wilderness of Sin is the sure danger from the wrath of God that awaits everyone who does not know Christ. Since sin entered the world, mankind has struggled in this wilderness of Sin. That's why so many live with such fear. That's why so many are wrought with anxiety and insecurities and stress and depression, and then we experience rejection and loss and sickness and separation from loved ones. So many maladies in this life. We are all infected with this soul-consuming disease of sin. You see, sin is in us and sin is all around us and that's where Jesus found us, in this wilderness. That's where he came to us. Is that not part of what the text is trying to show us? Jesus came to the wilderness to be baptized by John. When we could not come to him, he came to us. Hallelujah, what a Savior.

Let me bring out some things from this baptismal narrative. First of all, the text simply says in verse 9 that Jesus came. To me that speaks of Incarnation. Jesus came. He came to us. You see... "Yeah but, pastor, the text says He came from Nazareth of Galilee." Well, that was a, a rural community in the northern region and that's where he grew up, but that's not ultimately where Jesus came from. You see, he came to the Jordan where John was baptizing from Nazareth, and he came to Nazareth from his childhood home, Bethlehem, but he came to Bethlehem from heaven. He's the Incarnate one, God who became man and came to us and became one of us. Now let's be balanced. The historical narrative is important and it is inerrant, but you need to see more than just the fact that Jesus left one geographic region and came to another. When you see those words "Jesus came," it ought to do something to you. You ought to pause right there and think of the glory of that, Jesus came to the Jordan out in the wilderness. He came to us, and remind ourselves that he came to us all the way from heaven.

This baptism of Jesus carries some wonderful truths. One of the things you need to be reminded of is that washing by water was a purification rite of many ancient religions, and God commanded it for the Jews as a part of their ceremonial law. The priests had to regularly wash with water as a part of their purification rite, and so water always had this element of spiritual purification connected to it, and I believe part of what's happening here is Jesus is showing us that he is the true purification from sin. He is the only purification of sin. Water baptism symbolized purification but he will actually obtain the purification for his children. I'm convinced that's part of what's being taught here. But he came, the text says. He left heaven and he came to us.

In John 1:14 the Bible says, "The Word became flesh." His Incarnation. But actually in reality he came to us at conception. The Bible makes it very clear. Isn't it interesting? The Bible doesn't start with Jesus' birth, it starts with his conception. The angel speaks to Joseph and Mary about the child conceived in her womb was of the Holy Spirit, so by the agency of the Holy Spirit he became man as the unborn baby in the womb of a virgin named Mary. When he became man in her womb, he who was fully truly God became fully truly man. As the theologians would say, he was the God-man, 100% God as if he were not man at all, and at the same time 100% man as if he were not God at all, but both at the same time. The only one who's ever done that. There have been many men who would be God, Hitler and Mussolini and Stalin and Lenin and go down the list, many

men would be God but only one God became man. He came to us. He came the text says, it speaks of his Incarnation.

Well, not only that notice secondly in our text, not only did he come, the Bible says he came and was baptized by John in the Jordan River. His baptism. That speaks of identification. One of the reasons he was baptized is because he was identifying with man. Water, as I said earlier, it was part of a, a religious ritual of the day. It was a symbol and as these priests, for example, in the Jewish heritage would go possibly day after day, week after week, wash again, wash again, wash again, this wasn't to remove dirt from the flesh, this was to remove the defilement of their pollution and sinful impurities, and they would wash and wash. So what did it do? It constantly reminded them that they were impure. They couldn't just wash and be done, they had to wash again, and the next day wash again, and the next day wash again. And this is the false teaching of Roman Catholicism where they teach you have to keep coming to the priest, and keep coming to the priest, and keep coming to the priest, and keep taking the Mass, and keep receiving the Communion because you keep receiving the saving and purifying power of Christ. That's what they were stuck in, if you will, the need of continual washing because they were continually impure. Sin defiled. So it reminded them of their perpetual impurity but it also reminded them of their need for someone outside of themselves to bring that purification to them. It had to remind them, "This can't be enough because we keep having to do it and do it again and do it again. We are impure and one outside of us must cleanse us."

Christ's baptism was the beginning of him becoming identified with those he came to save. He was the sinless one who came to identify with us sinners and that's what the Bible means in 2 Corinthians 5:21 when it reminds us that, "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." Now when he became sin for us, it doesn't mean he committed any sin, it means at that moment on the cross the Father looked at him as if he were a sinner and laid on him the judgment sinners deserve. This was his baptism. This was the real baptism that purifies from sin. That's why the Bible says in Mark 10:38, the context is Peter and John, probably other disciples were saying, "Can we, can we sit beside You on, on the throne when, when You take over the new kingdom?" And Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you're asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism which with I am baptized?" His point is he comes to the Jordan River, he's baptized by John, that was not his work of saving us, that was to foreshadow, that was to picture that he has another baptism coming, another baptism that will indeed fully, finally, forever cease all rituals of water purifying because he will purify his own on that cross.

I mentioned earlier that he's the great purifier from sins and that it is him that washes away all of our impurities. To the woman at the well, Jesus said in John 4:13-14, "Jesus answered and said to her, 'Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again,'" that's the water in the well, "but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life." Now when he says he'll never thirst, often we think maybe too much in

terms of the satisfying nature of having Christ in our lives, and that's very true, he does satisfy but I think much more important is that he brings the final and full purification and we never have to long for any other. We don't go to a priest. We don't participate in a ritual. We don't bathe in holy water. We don't do any of that. We never thirst again. And somebody might say to you, "Dear, dear friend, well, you need to do this and you need to do that and you need to go here and you need to be administered this rite or this ritual in this church or that setting. You didn't say..." Then, wait a minute, time out, I'm not thirsty for any of that. I've drank of the water that purifies me completely and I don't thirst anymore for anything else. Oh, that's why it's so important to have a robust weighty understanding of the great doctrines of salvation so that you will fully on the palate of your soul have drunk in the glory, the sustenance, the deliciousness of the saving power of Jesus Christ.

Jesus came in our wilderness to bring the purification of sin. That's why he had to identify with us as man because only, only as man could he be an acceptable sacrifice before the Father and take the burden of our sins. Jesus came. That speaks of his Incarnation. Jesus was baptized. That speaks of identification. Thirdly, Jesus died. In baptism there's the picture of death and, by the way, the text says he went down into the water and he came up out of the water. He came up, that means immersion baptism. If you're just gonna sprinkle somebody you don't need to go to a river, all you need's a cup and cup of water, you can baptize probably hundreds if not thousands of people. But John was baptizing in the Jordan because it was an immersion and that's what the word baptizo has always mean. No matter who you talk to, whether that scholar be a Presbyterian or, or a Methodist or whoever they may be, they'll tell you the word baptizo in the original Greek means to immerse. Matter of fact, there's ancient documents that give these, the chronicle of ships sinking at sea and they'll say the ship was baptized. It didn't receive a little rainfall on it, it went under.

So it beautifully pictures death. Christ is being baptized by John because he's saying, "I'm going to die." That speaks of substitution. Jesus' death is him being our substitute before the judgment bar of God. Jesus came literally to the depth of our wilderness. The Bible says the wages of sin is death. Ezekiel 18:2 reminds us the person who sins will die. Jesus said in John 8:24, "Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins." The wages of sin is death but to identify us and now as we're speaking of to substitute for us, he must enter the door of death.

Now death itself is a part of the curse of sin, however, there's more in that. In his actual dying and death, he also endured the retribution of his Father against sinners and he did it in their place. He died and suffered for us. He became our substitute. Theologians call it a vicarious atonement, in our place, for our benefit. Sometimes it's called a penal substitution. The penalty that should have been laid on us was laid on him. Jesus begins his ministry, he's baptized by John and whatever else he may be portraying at, he's saying this, "This is what I'm going to do. I'm going to die." Went down in the water as your substitute before the wrath of God.

In his death for our sin the Father, the Bible teaches us, is well-pleased. Matter of fact, after the powerful image that in message, if you will, that's portrayed of his baptism, verse 11 of our text, "and a voice came out of the heaven saying," or rather came out of heaven, "You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased." I think there are two thoughts here as, as the Father says this about Jesus. 1. He's pleased in Jesus' person. "You are righteous. You are sinless. You are holy. You're acceptable to Me. I'm pleased." But also it implies that the Father is well-pleased in Jesus' execution of the office of Savior. You see, Christ is not Jesus' last name, it's the office he holds. It's Jesus who holds the office or the title of Christ, just like President is not a name, So-and-so is President, it's the office he holds. And the Father is saying, "You've committed to this baptism and I know You're going to perfectly execute the office I have given You and the work I have given You to perform." The Father sent him to save us and this required him to be that substitute for us, and this included suffering and death which he is identifying through baptism.

So Jesus came the text tells us. That speaks to us of Incarnation. Jesus was baptized. That speaks of us of identification. Then Jesus died, that's pictured in baptism. That speaks of his substitution at the judgment bar of God for us. Now number 4, what else does baptism picture? Then the Bible says he came up out of the water, he comes back from death. It speaks of regeneration. You could say resurrection, but I like to emphasize the truth that's a part of the resurrected life and that is the regeneration. You see, as baptism pictures death and burial and resurrection and as, as he was baptized and will be baptized for us at the cross taking our sin, so he is coming to that place where he is going to die and he's going to live forevermore that he might impart life to those who believe on him. Jesus lives that he might give us life.

John 5:25, "Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live." Have you received that life? Didn't ask you did you join a church. Have you received that life? I didn't ask you were you baptized with the ordinance of baptism. Have you received that life? I'm not asking you have you cleaned up your life, stopped some bad habits. That makes you a better neighbor but it doesn't mean you have life. Jesus said, "I'm going to be buried in death," he came up out of the baptismal waters, "and I'm going to be alive again to impart life to those who are Mine." He arose to prove our justification and he lives to give us eternal life or new life. John 10:10, Jesus said, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy and I came that they may have life, and might have it abundantly."

So this speaks of two things: a, a new life, a new quality of life and a never-ending life. Someone said Jesus is our life source, he is our life force, and he is our life's course. Our source, our force, and our course. A quality of life now and a continuum of life that never ever ends. Brothers and sisters, had he not risen, he could not impart life. He, the living one, can give you eternal life and it's only in Jesus Christ.

John 5:24, "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My words, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment," it's, it's never gonna end. There's not gonna be a time when God says, "Time out, let Me check you out." If you

"Well, pastor, what's that mean for me at the judgment?" It means you'd better go to the judgment in Jesus. You'd better be in Christ. You fail the Lord. You disappoint the Lord. Let me back up and bring a balancing notion. Certainly as Christians when we're walking in obedience and consecration with the right God-centered motives, we're pleasing the Lord. That is a true statement to make. But as far as your standing before God, the establishment of your righteous or just welcome before this holy God, God's not pleased. He's only pleased in his Son Jesus.

This will be on your screen. Romans 3:9-19 and before we read Romans 3:9-19, a familiar passage for most of you, one of the things the writer is trying to get across is this: from the sole of your feet to the top of your head, you are fully and wholly corrupted by sin. There's no good part of yourself. You can draw up and say, "Well, at least I've got this part that God will be pleased with." The writer is saying, "No, that's impossible."

Verse 9, "What then? Are we better than they?" That is, are, are, are we, we, we Jews better, are we better than the, the Jews? "Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin." Now the Jews had a great advantage, they had the law, they had the prophets, they had the Psalmists, they had great teachings but they failed to see Christ so they're no better.

Verse 10, "as it is written, 'There is none righteous, not even one.' Not even one. Not even one. In their minds they're so corrupted and polluted they can't understand their own need and God's own provision. In their own hearts and devotions, 'there are none who seeks for God. All have turned aside.' Now we, we go our own way and turn aside and we'd like to take God with us but God doesn't go with you, you go with God.

Then he says, "together they have become useless; there is no one who does good, not even one. Their throat," what's coming out of their heart, "Their throat is an open grave, and with their tongues they keep deceiving, and the poison of asps is under their lips." He said, "Listen to your fellow man, do you not hear the vilest, dirtiest, meanest, most hateful, jealous, vicious stuff coming out of people's lips? It's because there's corruption and impurity and defilement in the hearts."

Verse 14, "whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness." Then what do they do? "Their feet are swift to shed blood." "Well, I've never murdered anybody, pastor." Yes, but you've hated in your heart and the Bible says you're just as guilty before God with hate in your heart as if you'd murdered.

Verse 16, "Destruction and misery are in their paths, and the path of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes." Some of you can come in here and hear this sermon and yawn and go home and then live and go to hell and it won't bother you until you get to hell. No fear of God. No fear of God.

Verse 19, "Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed." God says, "Shut your mouth." That's what

he's saying. All your excuses, all your explanations, all the things you might bring to God to say, "Well, isn't this okay?" God says, "Shut up. I don't want to hear a word out of you. I know what you are. I know what you are. You're guilty." "And all the world," last part of verse 19, "may become accountable to God."

God is not pleased with you. He is only pleased with his Son Jesus Christ. Are you in him? Do you know him? Have you looked exclusively and only to him? Not him plus baptism. Not him plus church membership. Not him plus anything. Just him. If you're going to sit under my ministry, you, you need to get used to the onliness of Jesus. That's all I'm gonna give you. I will not give you a religious hoop jump. You'll trust in the hoop jump and put Jesus on the shelf. I want you to know him.

As Jesus began his ministry, he laid out in powerful illustration the entirety of his salvific ministry. "I've become one of you. I'm identifying with man and I'm going to be your substitute and take your penalty and die. I'm going to rise again that I might impart life to all who believe." Have you believed? Are you in Christ?

I couldn't help but as I was meditating on this, this week, but think about the story I heard 40 years ago. The angels in heaven were looking down on the earth and the angels found the person that they thought was the best person on the earth. I mean, the angels said, "This person, this man works harder than anyone at being righteous than anybody on the earth. So let's take this person to heaven and let them enjoy the glories and the pleasures of God for a day." So the angel went and told the man that, "Hey, you're gonna get to go to heaven for a day." The man was excited. He takes him by the hand and they went up through the atmospheric heavens and through the celestial heavens to the very heaven of heavens where God dwells, and as they got outside the gates of heaven, the man grabbed the angel and said, "Stop." And the angel said, "What's wrong?" And the man was just fastening his gaze upon God and flowing out of God on his throne was holiness and righteousness and purity and love and peace and wholesome pleasures and goodness, and on and on. The man said, "I see God and I could never deserve to be in His presence. I don't qualify." And the man put his head down and wept outside of heaven and while he was weeping, Jesus Christ walked over to him and put his arm around him and looked up at God the Father and said, "Father, this one is Mine." And then he rushed into heaven and enjoyed the holy glory, joy, peace and fullness of fellowshiping with God.

I was driving through Columbia, Tennessee when I heard that story on the radio, a preacher was sharing it, and I was born again. That night in my car, I grasped something of my great need and something of the greatness of Christ for my need and I cast my all on Jesus Christ. I could not have explained it but I was changed. Have you been changed? The only ones the Father will receive, the only ones that are pleasing to him are those who are with his Son Jesus. You go in Jesus. You don't go in the church. You don't go through a human priest. You don't go through works or ritual or sacrament. You go through Christ and Christ alone.

I'm satisfied with him, how about you? "Well, you need to do this, you need to do that, you need to..." I know, you don't understand, I'm not thirsty for any of that anymore. I've

drunk of his water. I've tasted of his bread. I thirst and hunger for nothing more than him.
If you have him, you're pleasing to the Father.