

Epiphany
Mark 1:1-15
Jesus' Baptism

Sermon

Hobart, Jan 25th, 2015

Devonport, Jan 31st, 2015

Launceston, Feb 1st, 2015

Mark 1:1-15

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“Look, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,
and he will prepare your way.*

³ He is a voice shouting in the wilderness,

‘Prepare the way for the LORD’s coming!

Clear the road for him!’* ”

⁴ This messenger was John the Baptist. He was in the wilderness and preached that people should be baptized to show that they had repented of their sins and turned to God to be forgiven. ⁵ All of Judea, including all the people of Jerusalem, went out to see and hear John. And when they confessed their sins, he baptized them in the Jordan River. ⁶ His clothes were woven from coarse camel hair, and he wore a leather belt around his waist. For food he ate locusts and wild honey.

⁷ John announced: “Someone is coming soon who is greater than I am—so much greater that I’m not even worthy to stoop down like a slave and untie the straps of his sandals. ⁸ I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit!”

The Baptism and Temptation of Jesus

⁹ One day Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee, and John baptized him in the Jordan River. ¹⁰ As Jesus came up out of the water, he saw the heavens splitting apart and the Holy Spirit descending on him like a dove. ¹¹ And a voice from heaven said, “You are my dearly loved Son, and you bring me great joy.”

¹² The Spirit then compelled Jesus to go into the wilderness, ¹³ where he was tempted by Satan for forty days. He was out among the wild animals, and angels took care of him.

¹⁴ Later on, after John was arrested, Jesus went into Galilee, where he preached God’s Good News. ¹⁵ “The time promised by God has come at last!” he announced. “The Kingdom of God is near! Repent of your sins and believe the Good News!”¹

* Mal 3:1.

* Isa 40:3 (Greek version).

¹Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. "Text edition"--Spine. (2nd ed.) (Mk 1:1-15). Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

INTRODUCTION:

A. WE ARE STILL IN THE SEASON OF EPIPHANY

1. Focusing on God's manifestation of himself in the birth and early appearances of Jesus before he began his ministry
2. Today we are focusing on Jesus' baptism by John the Baptist
 - a) And how that helps us understand who Jesus was, and the impact his human life has for us, and for all mankind
3. We are going to see what our baptism really signified
 - a) And along the way, gain some perspective on the various beliefs and practices regarding baptism

B. PRAYER

BODY:

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c. JOHN THE BAPTIST’S ROLE WAS TO PREPARE THE WAY, TO ANNOUNCE AND INTRODUCE JESUS TO THE WORLD

1. Just as there were witnesses to Jesus’ birth, John witnesses to proclaims the beginning of Jesus’ adult life and ministry
2. He prepares the way for God’s manifestation of his Son to the world
3. John calls on people to repent, to change, to prepare their hearts and minds for the Lord’s coming

* Mal 3:1.

* Isa 40:3 (Greek version).

D. WASHINGS AND EVEN BAPTISMS WERE PART OF RELIGIOUS RITUALS OF ISRAEL AND MANY OTHER CULTURES.

1. Water symbolized life, cleansing, revival, a new start, forgiveness.
2. That's what John's baptism pictured, and prepared people for the new life that God was bringing in Jesus
3. He baptized in water, but Jesus would baptize people with the Holy Spirit, with the very life of God

The Baptism and Temptation of Jesus

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E. THIS WAS GOD HIMSELF, WITNESSING TO THE IDENTITY OF HIS SON

1. This was an epiphany, a revelation and manifestation of God to man
2. God wanted to affirm and make plain that this Jesus who was born of Mary in Bethlehem and raised in Nazareth by Mary and Joseph, was Messiah, the Son of God
 - a) And he no doubt wanted to remind Jesus himself, and everyone else, that Jesus was his dearly loved Son who brought him great joy

¹² The Spirit then compelled Jesus to go into the wilderness, ¹³ where he was tempted by Satan for forty days. He was out among the wild animals, and angels took care of him.

F. AND SO JESUS BEGAN THE FIGHT OF LIFE

1. Taking on all that stands against us as humankind and as individuals

* Or toward him, or into him.

- a) He made his stand at the start, and resisted and defeated evil, temptation and sin

¹⁴ Later on, after John was arrested, Jesus went into Galilee, where he preached God's Good News.* ¹⁵ "The time promised by God has come at last!" he announced. "The Kingdom of God is near! Repent of your sins and believe the Good News!"²

G. JESUS THEN WENT ON TO MANIFEST, REVEAL AND PROCLAIM THE GOOD NEWS OF GOD'S KINGDOM

II. SOLIDARITY AND SUBSTITUTION IN JESUS' BAPTISM

A. THERE ARE THREE WORDS THAT HELP US SEE A BIGGER AND DEEPER REALITY AND IMPACT TO JESUS' BAPTISM

1. And in fact to his whole incarnate life

B. THE FIRST IS SOLIDARITY;

1. By being baptized by John, Jesus showed his *solidarity*, his unity and oneness with each and every one of us
2. He showed that God is with us, and for us, by coming to be share in our actual human lives
- a) To live and suffer with us
- b) But more than that, to overcome and defeat all that stands against us, and leads us away from God into sin, separation and suffering
3. Though we walk through 40 days and 40 nights in the wilderness being tempted, Jesus is there with us

* Some manuscripts read *the Good News of the Kingdom of God*.

²Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. "Text edition"--Spine. (2nd ed.) (Mk 1:1-15). Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

C. SUBSTITUTION

1. In his baptism, Jesus was not only baptized with us, he was baptized for us—he was baptized in our place.
2. He stood in for all of us, all of humanity
3. As the creator he came to be us, to do for us all we need to be rescued from our plight, from sin, suffering, separation and the ultimate enemy of death
4. He went into the water of the Jordan in our place
5. The words of the Father spoken to Jesus, “You are my dearly loved Son, and you bring me great joy”, are said to us as we are in Jesus, because he stood in our place
6. And he continued and continues to stand in our place in what is often called the “great exchange”
 - a) Exchanging his life and righteousness, his standing with the Father for our death and unrighteousness, and living apart from God

D. THE THIRD WORD IS “VICARIOUS”

1. We have talked about this before, and it relates to the *substitution* we have just talked about.
2. What does ***vicarious*** mean?
 - a) Being in the place of someone else
3. A dictionary definition is;
 - performed, exercised, received, or suffered in place of another: *vicarious punishment*.
 - taking the place of another person or thing; acting or serving as a substitute.³
4. Jesus lived and acted in our place
 - a) He was baptised in our place
 - b) He pleased God, in our place

³ Dictionary.com, “vicarious”, <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/vicarious>

- c) He went into the wilderness to be tempted and to suffer and resist the devil and overcome, in our place

5. Travis McMaken;

In submitting to John's baptism of repentance... Jesus Christ not only acted with but also as sinful humanity, replacing that humanity and enacting the repentance required of it. He was baptized in our place. But Jesus' baptism was not merely the first step on a road that would lead to a substitutionary work on the cross; rather, it was itself a substitutionary act that with his work on the cross constitutes Jesus Christ's saving history.

Jesus' baptism by John as a vicarious or substitutionary undertaking occurs within the context of the incarnation as a whole.⁴

6. McMaken points out that Jesus' baptism by John in a sense not only stands as the first step in Jesus' life and saving acts, but encapsulates all that he will do as our vicarious saviour.

E. PAUL TALKS OF OUR BEING "IN CHRIST"

1. In Colossians and many other places, his emphasis is in our being in union with and "in Christ"

Colossians 2:9-12

⁹ For in Christ lives all the fullness of God in a human body.* ¹⁰ So you also are complete through your union with Christ, who is the head over every ruler and authority.

F. CHRIST LIVES IN US, CONTINUOUSLY, (NOT PAST TENSE)

1. Our new life comes through his baptism, death and resurrection
- a) He was baptised for us
 - b) He died our death
 - c) We live and participate in his resurrected, ascended life

⁴ Travis McMaken, *The Sign of the Gospel: Toward and Evangelical Doctrine of Infant Baptism after Karl Barth*, Fortress Press, 2013, p. 227

* *Or in him dwells all the completeness of the Godhead bodily.*

¹¹ When you came to Christ, you were “circumcised,” but not by a physical procedure. Christ performed a spiritual circumcision—the cutting away of your sinful nature. ¹² For you were buried with Christ when you were baptized. And with him you were raised to new life because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead.

G. WE WERE BURIED WITH CHRIST WHEN WE WERE BAPTISED

1. Our baptism signifies our participating in Jesus' death and having new life in his resurrection.

2. T.F. Torrance,

Jesus was baptised with the baptism of repentance, not for his own sake, but for ours. ...He received the one baptism meant for sinners.

... When he was born, died and rose again, it was our human nature which was born, died, and rose again in him. For Jesus ... became one with us, taking upon himself our unrighteousness, that his righteousness might become ours.⁵

3. In fact, our baptism reflects all Jesus did as us, vicariously, in solidarity, as our substitute—all of his life on earth, and our continuing communion and life shared with him now, and all that he has for us in the future

Colossians 2:13-15

¹³ You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for he forgave all our sins. ¹⁴ He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵ In this way, he disarmed* the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross.

4. We trust Jesus' life, death, resurrection and ascension as being in our place, on our behalf

⁵ Travis McMaken, *The Sign of the Gospel: Toward an Evangelical Doctrine of Infant Baptism after Karl Barth*, Fortress Press, 2013

* Or *he stripped off*.

a) We were dead, but now God has made us alive with, Christ, alive in Christ

b) Our sins of living apart from God are forgiven

c) Jesus made the complete and perfect offering and sacrifice in our place

(1) He overcame and defeated all the powers that are against us, and seek to lead us away from God and his way of love and justice, peace and harmony

5. In his ascension as one of us, as us; he continues to live our lives, to be in solidarity with us, supporting us, encouraging us, empowering us

a) As the perfect human being, and our substitute, and High Priest—he takes and perfects our prayer, our worship, our love, our deeds, in purified and holy worship and prayer and praise—before the throne of God

H. SO JESUS' BAPTISM BY JOHN, AS WITH ALL HE DID,

1. Was done *vicariously*, as not only an act of *solidarity* with mankind, but in our place, as our substitute

2. Finally let's look at what baptism really means to each of us in this light

III. LIVING THE BAPTISED LIFE

A. BAPTISM AND SALVATION

1. Baptism as a rite, doesn't save us
 - a) Our salvation, our standing with God does not depend on the act of baptism
2. So what does baptism do?
 - a) What does it have to do with our salvation, our being Christians?

B. THERE ARE TWO WORDS FOR BAPTISM IN GREEK;

1. *Baptismos* and *baptisma*
 - a) *Baptismos* meant the common outward ritual of baptism for ceremonial cleansing
 - b) The NT writers use the less common *baptisma*, which refers not to the physical event or rite of baptism
2. The New Testament writers don't spend time describing the repeatable physical rite of baptism, the who, how, when and what,
 - a) They focus on what the event signified—Jesus and his vicarious saving life and deeds.
 - b) They aren't focused on whether we have infant or adult baptism, or what form it takes, such as immersion or sprinkling or pouring
 - c) They are concerned with the objective reality behind the ritual more than the rite itself.
 - (1) Torrance says they are focused on the "objective ground and reality, Christ clothed with the saving truth of his vicarious life, death and resurrection."
 - (2) He points out that *baptisma* isn't just focused on the baptism event of the individual, but beyond that to the underlying spiritual realities

"the baptism with which Jesus Christ himself was baptised for our sakes in the whole course of his redemptive life from his birth to his resurrection, the one baptism which he continues by his Spirit to apply to us in our baptism

into him, thereby making himself both its material content and its active agent.

All this helps to make it clear that while baptism is both the act of Christ and the act of the Church in his Name, it is to be understood finally not in terms of what the Church does but in terms of what God in Christ has done, does do and will do for us in his Spirit.

Its meaning does not lie in the rite itself and its performance, nor in the attitude of the baptised and his obedience of faith—even the secondary reference of baptism, by its nature as a passive act, in which we receive baptism and do not administer it to ourselves, directs us to find its meaning in the living Christ who cannot be separated from his finished work and who makes himself present to us in the power of his own Reality.⁶

3. In other words, baptism is a passive physical rite, one that we have performed upon us

a) This points to the reality, that what Jesus did in his baptism—and in his life, death and resurrection—are also not just one time acts.

b) The acts of Jesus cannot be separated from who he is—God the Son made flesh—who has acted and continues to act and to be for us, and with us, and one of us

4. He is always God with us, and always will be

a) He is always our saving elder brother, and always will be

b) He will never leave us or forsake us

c) We should never go back to relying on rituals—including baptism—as ways to salvation or righteousness

C. THIS IS PRECISELY THE POINT PAUL MADE TO THE COLOSSIANS;

1. Let's read on from here and see how Paul builds on this point and reminds us of the new life we have because of what our baptism points to and reflects

⁶ Quoted in Martin M. Davis, Ph.D., Blog article; T.F. Torrance: The Vicarious Humanity of Jesus Christ, pt. 10: <http://martinmdavis.blogspot.com.au/2011/10/tf-torrance-vicarious-humanity-of-jesus.html>

2. And let us not forget that our baptism points away from religious rules and human spiritualities and formulas

Colossians 2:16-3:11

¹⁶ So don't let anyone condemn you for what you eat or drink, or for not celebrating certain holy days or new moon ceremonies or Sabbaths. ¹⁷ For these rules are only shadows of the reality yet to come. And Christ himself is that reality. ¹⁸ Don't let anyone condemn you by insisting on pious self-denial or the worship of angels,* saying they have had visions about these things. Their sinful minds have made them proud, ¹⁹ and they are not connected to Christ, the head of the body. For he holds the whole body together with its joints and ligaments, and it grows as God nourishes it.

²⁰ You have died with Christ, and he has set you free from the spiritual powers of this world. So why do you keep on following the rules of the world, such as, ²¹ "Don't handle! Don't taste! Don't touch!"? ²² Such rules are mere human teachings about things that deteriorate as we use them. ²³ These rules may seem wise because they require strong devotion, pious self-denial, and severe bodily discipline. But they provide no help in conquering a person's evil desires.

Living the New Life

3 Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits in the place of honor at God's right hand. ² Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth. ³ For you died to this life, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ And when Christ, who is your* life, is revealed to the whole world, you will share in all his glory.

⁵ So put to death the sinful, earthly things lurking within you. Have nothing to do with sexual immorality, impurity, lust, and evil desires. Don't be greedy, for a greedy person is an idolater, worshiping the things of this world. ⁶ Because of these sins, the anger of God is coming.* ⁷ You used to do these things when your life was still part of this world. ⁸ But now is the time to get rid of anger, rage, malicious behavior, slander, and dirty language. ⁹ Don't lie to each other, for you have stripped off your old sinful nature and all its wicked deeds. ¹⁰ Put on your new nature, and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like him. ¹¹ In this new life, it doesn't matter if

* Or *or worshiping with angels*.

* Some manuscripts read *our*.

* Some manuscripts read *is coming on all who disobey him*.

you are a Jew or a Gentile,* circumcised or uncircumcised, barbaric, uncivilized,* slave, or free. Christ is all that matters, and he lives in all of us.

D. THE REALITY BEHIND BAPTISM AND COMMUNION IS CHRIST HIMSELF, AND ALL HE HAS AND IS ACCOMPLISHING ON OUR BEHALF, AND THE NEW LIFE HE GIVES US

1. So how we are baptized, or when—or how we take communion or how often—are not the point

a) Just as what other religious rituals we or others may observe, are also not the point.

2. Martin Davis;

...when the significance of baptism is found in the objective Reality underlying the rite, rather than in the rite itself, questions as to the manner of baptism (immersion, sprinkling, pouring) or the age of the baptisand (infant, believing adolescent) become far less important and divisive.⁷

E. BAPTISM AND COMMUNION ARE THE ONLY TWO CHRISTIAN RITES OR RITUALS THAT ARE FOCUSED ON IN THE NT

1. And they both are to be powerful reminders of who Jesus is for us, yesterday, today and forever

a) Torrance tells us that the baptism of individuals is our “initiation” into the one *baptisma* of Jesus Christ through which we are sanctified in him as members of his body. Torrance continues:

Through his birth they have a new birth and are made members of the new humanity. Through his obedient life and death as the incarnate Son their sins are forgiven and they are clothed with a new righteousness. Through his resurrection and triumph over the powers of darkness they are freed from the dominion of evil. Through his ascension to the Father the Kingdom of Heaven is opened for them, and they wait for his coming again to fulfil in

* Greek *a Greek*.

* Greek *Barbarian, Scythian*.

⁷ Davis

them the new creation. Through sharing in his Spirit they are made members of his Body and are initiated into the communion of the Holy Trinity.⁸

F. DAVIS SUMS IT UP;

As an ordinance, then, baptism sets forth not what the Church or the individual believer does but what God has already done in Christ and continues to do through his Spirit. Thus, it is appropriate that we “are baptised.”

By his Spirit, Christ acts upon us in terms of his “atoning and sanctifying incorporation of himself into our humanity” in such a way that it effects our “ingrafting” into Christ and our “adoption” into the family of God.

Our understanding of the ordinance of baptism, therefore, cannot be separated from what Christ has done in his birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension.

1. As Torrance writes

It is precisely that union or inseparable relation which is the very meaning of the sacrament in which we are baptised into Christ's baptism, and why the sacrament is spoken of [in the New Testament], not as *baptismos*, but as *baptisma*.”

⁸ Torrance quoted in Davis

CONCLUSION:

G. OUR BAPTISM

1. The rite of baptism, isn't a standalone act of ours, in which we individually act to prove our commitment to God and to do the right religious act to qualify and be accepted as a Christian.

2. Baptism as Torrance tells us, is a

...participation in the one all-inclusive baptism common to Christ and his Church, wrought out vicariously in Christ alone but into which he has assimilated the Church through the baptism of the one Spirit, and which he applies to each of us through the same Spirit. Hence, it is *baptisma* in the Name of the Triune God" (Torrance, 1976a:87, 88).

3. As Paul wrote in I Corinthians 1:30

³⁰ God has united you with Christ Jesus. For our benefit God made him to be wisdom itself. Christ made us right with God; he made us pure and holy, and he freed us from sin. ³¹ Therefore, as the Scriptures say, "If you want to boast, boast only about the LORD."*

H. OUR BAPTISM REFLECTS THIS REALITY

1. It reflects our acceptance and participation and faith in Jesus' baptism, and all he did for our benefit.

2. We therefore are reminded that if we want to be confident or to boast, we should base it all in what Jesus Christ has done in our place.

3. And in our inclusion in Jesus' baptism and life, we can also have the joy and confidence of knowing, that we are God's dearly loved children, who bring him great joy

I. PRAYER

* Jer 9:24.