

Beloved,

The last time we heard from God's Word, God had sent one crying in the wilderness to announce the coming Jesus Christ, the Son of God. John the Baptist had been sent to prepare the way of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He had called the people to prepare themselves, for a mighty One was coming, one who would come to lead and to judge the nations. John preached a baptism of repentance unto the remission of sins. The people had to be called to humility, for one without sin was coming.

We can imagine the excitement that was happening in those days. Streams of people came out to hear John's message. Some wondered if this John was not the Messiah himself, but John, fully understanding his office as prophet, brought the Word of the Lord. He announced the coming of the Gospel, the coming of Jesus Christ. John himself, in his humble dress and lifestyle, living in the wilderness, was a sign that prophecy had been fulfilled and pointed to the hope that a greater One was yet to come. John made sure that all knew that One greater was coming. He declared that the coming of the coming one was very near.

And now, the time for the One to come (the Messiah—the anointed as we sang from Psalm 2) had come—the hour and the moment had come. Jesus came to Jordan and was announced to the people of Judea there by the Jordan but unannounced that day to John.

Jesus, we read, came from Nazareth of Galilee. In Luke 3:23, we read that Jesus was about thirty. In Numbers 4, we read that the beginning age for public service in the Tabernacle of Meeting was thirty, and now Jesus was of the age to perform His priestly duties. But Jesus was no Levite. He was not of the priestly tribe, but Psalm 110 prophesies that He was an eternal priest after Melchizedek, who mysteriously appeared in Abraham's time to take Abraham's sacrifice to the Lord. This the book of Hebrew confirms. He had come to be anointed to begin His kingly duties and receive the Spirit to perform His prophetic responsibilities. He came as a man; Jesus had worked with his father, Joseph, as a carpenter, but it was time to leave his father and his tools. He came as true God and prepared to do His heavenly Father's work. It was time for Jesus to undergo His anointing and to take

up His redemptive task as the Son of God and the Son of man. The coming King, whose arrival John had announced, would come and be made ready to fulfill His task. I bring to you God's Word under the theme:

**Jesus Christ is Anointed in Preparation for His Redemptive Ministry:  
1. Son of Man 2. Son of God**

**The Son of Man:** Mark tells us that when John was preaching and baptizing, Jesus came from Nazareth. Nazareth of Galilee was not a city well-known in those days. What it was known for was, well, not much either. Indeed, the leaders of the Jews of Jesus' days said, "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" For the Roman audience of John Mark's Gospel, Nazareth was so small that it would need to be further located by mentioning the area of Galilee—likely then it was a relatively unknown, though now an essential place because Jesus their Lord came from there. That this One who's coming (understood by the Jews that was a reference to the Messiah) was predicted by John should come from so vile a place seemed unlikely to the leaders of Jesus' day. The leaders of the Jews' opinion did not matter that much to the Father, though! That is not, however, the way God moves. Mary sang in Luke 1:52, "He (the Lord) has exalted the lowly."

Another time, it was from such low beginnings that God had called a shepherd boy to be the king of His people. That boy was not even the oldest in the family! His father and brothers thought it highly unlikely that this youngest son would be crowned the king of Israel. But that boy was the man of God's choosing. In front of his father and brothers, Samuel anointed the shepherd boy, David. Samuel's mother, Hannah, sang after Samuel's birth, "The Lord makes poor and makes rich, He brings low and exalts...The Lord will judge the ends of the earth; He will give strength to his king and lift the horn of His anointed." (1 Samuel 2:8a and 10) Who would choose David? Not even his father! Still, the Jewish leaders who loved and taught the stories of David saw not humble beginnings unto glory but wanted glory on their terms.

In the same way, David's family thought about him, the leaders of Jesus' day thought. To them and most, there was nothing about this thirty-year-old man from Nazareth that people would flock to. Right now, at least the biggest show in town is

John the Baptist. But this One was the Son of David, the Son of man, and He comes now to be revealed and anointed.

This man named Jesus came from Nazareth. Now, it is worth noting this. The verb in Greek makes it clear that Jesus came of His own accord. John the Baptist had been sent, as had all other prophets; the priests had been appointed by divine right, and God had made clear by anointing David and his house those sitting on the throne. But Jesus comes of His own accord. Mark mentions very little about Jesus before this. We read nothing of his unique birth, youth, or early manhood. Except for the birth stories given by Luke and Matthew, we know very little about Jesus' first 30 years of life. He was likely a carpenter, taking over his father's work in Nazareth after Joseph died, but other than that, we know very little. I guess the Holy Spirit knew we did not need to know all that. And in those first 30 years, we do not read of Jesus performing miracles or teaching. As per Mark, we read that when John was baptizing, He came.

As the Son of God, Jesus, from eternity, knew what His task was to be. He came willingly to earth as a child born of a woman. As we sing at Christmas born, he was that man no more may die. He was born to die. He came to save us! He comes willingly to Jordan, and by doing this, He accepts the office and duties that from all time have been given to Him. Again, there are questions that we cannot answer. When did Jesus come to know His redemptive task? When did he become aware of His office? The Lord sent Samuel to get David and anoint him, but Jesus, already self-aware, goes to be baptized by John. He does not simply come to the wilderness to be recognized by His cousin John, who already knew that Jesus was the Messiah and of his preparatory task, but more, Jesus comes to be baptized.

And then the question comes, doesn't it? Why did Jesus have to be baptized? John was baptizing unto a remission of sins, but Jesus had no sins to confess. Moreover, John's baptism, in and of itself, could not bring the remission of sins but was a preparatory baptism. This sign directed the people's attention to the One coming who would baptize with water and the Spirit. So then, for what purpose was Jesus baptized?

Remember that Mark wrote a gospel that clearly describes Jesus' humanity for the people while never letting us forget that Jesus was the Son of God. The baptism of Jesus Christ must be seen in two respects. First, we must see it in terms of His humanity, and second, we must see it in terms of His office.

When Jesus goes to John, we read that He was baptized in the Jordan. The Jordan River was, of course, well-known in Israelite history. It was the last natural barrier that stood between the wilderness and the Promised Land. It was at the Jordan that Moses took leave of the Israelites, and it was through the Jordan that Joshua took the people in His first act of leadership. It was near the Jordan that Elijah went to heaven, and now, John the Baptist, the fulfillment of Elijah points to the fulfillment of Joshua! Now, this new Joshua (we recall that Jesus is the Greek form of the name Joshua) would walk into the Jordan not only to take His place before the people but also to take his place beside the people. It is as if the King is taking the position of one of the subjects. And this is precisely what He is doing. He subjects Himself to His Father's will. When John asked Jesus why he needed to be baptized, John initially refused to do it, stating that he, John, needed to be baptized by Jesus. Jesus does not enter into a long conversation with John but commands His servant that this had to be done so that all righteousness would be fulfilled, as we read in Mathew 3:15.

Jesus is baptized willingly by John. He identifies Himself with His people in this way. He is the Son of Man, and though Jesus was indeed sinless, it is also true that He, in His humanity, bore the sin of the people. Our Saviour, as the catechism puts it this way, "What kind of mediator and Deliverer should we look for?" and the answer is, "One who is truly human and truly righteous." (Heidelberg Catechism QA15) In that way, all things had to be fulfilled so that the people's sins could be removed from the sight of God.

We must remember that Jesus is in the stages of His humiliation. On the one hand, there is great joy and excitement; the King has come. But on the other hand, so too has come the Priest. Jesus has come as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, as John the Baptist names Jesus in John 1:29. When Jesus is baptized, He is preparing for His task to fight sin and to be sacrificed for sin that all

of God's children might know of their salvation. As the King, He would conquer that sin; as the Priest, he would die for that sin; and as the Prophet, He would preach the Word; that is, He would testify of Himself and bring the good news of the Kingdom of God. Jesus came as a human not only to redeem humans but to baptize with the Holy Spirit as John preached that sinners saved by grace through that same spirit might be anointed to become prophets, priests, and kings, which is what it means to be called Christians.

But Jesus was also baptized as a human being so He might be anointed. Indeed, all the kings of Israel were anointed. The High Priests, too, were anointed for their tasks. There is another sense in which all things would be fulfilled (think of Psalm 110). We now see the coming king receiving his anointing by an office bearer of God. As Samuel anoints David, the man of God's choosing, it is to John that the anointing of Jesus, the man of God's choosing, is given. God commanded Elijah to anoint Elisha as a prophet as we read 1 King 19:16. There is a marked difference in this anointing of Jesus Christ- the Messiah, which means "anointed."

First, we see that Jesus is not anointed with holy or anointing oil (Exodus 30:22) but is baptized according to the ceremonial cleansings and washings that the High Priests were to undergo. Then, we again see that Christ is the King who needs no priest.

As Jesus exits the water, we read that the Holy Spirit descends upon Him. We can even read that to mean the Spirit descends *into* Him. We must understand that Christ, as the Son of God, was one with the Spirit, but as the son of man, as human, is now to be enabled as the Spirit. Now He is commissioned to baptize with the Spirit. Elisha was led through the Jordan by Elijah. There, he asked for a double portion of Elijah's spirit. After seeing Elijah taken into the heavens, Elisha received what Elijah had said, which was tricky. Now Christ stands at the Jordan, with the one who reminded the people of Elijah, John the Baptist, and Christ is anointed with the Holy Spirit.

Now, John's ministry is ending. That water baptism, of course, was symbolic, but the baptism by the Spirit was genuine. Now the King would need no prophet, the Priest, no Prophet for the King, the one coming, is shown for who he is. As a

human being, as the son of man, Jesus is the one who bears all three offices: prophet, priest, and king. As the Son of man, the son of Adam, He is the second and the last Adam, revealed and prepared for the redemptive task given and willingly accepted by Him. But it is a task in which He had to be a genuinely righteous man yet more than a mere man who showed his solidarity with his people. He also had to be indeed God. This anointed Son of Man is Jesus Christ, the Son of God. This is His Gospel, and this is the good news. Jesus had to be truly righteous and human to die the righteous for the unrighteous. Jesus bears our sins, and He will die as a curse on the cross so that whoever believes in Him, the last Adam who rose from the dead, will be saved! Yes, the Kingdom had come, and we declare that Kingdom today by preaching, baptism, and the Lord's Supper. Repent and believe in the Kingdom of God, which is at hand.

What kind of mediator and deliverer should we look for? We look for the One who is a truly righteous man yet more powerful than all creatures; that is, he must also be true God."

**The Son of God:** "Immediately, coming out of the water, He saw the heavens parting and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove." Here, we have the first of some over 40 "immediately" of the gospel of Mark. Jesus came out of the water after His baptism, and we read that immediately, he saw the heavens parting being torn open, ripped into two. We can't know exactly what Jesus saw. It was probably the same as what Ezekiel or Stephen saw as they looked into heaven. But there is something miraculous happening here. Indeed, the glory of heaven was too much for any human being to bear. From the gospel of John, we learn that not only Jesus but certainly John the Baptist saw these things, and we can assume others did as well (John 1:32-34). When Jesus comes out of the water, it is as if a little window is opened, letting all get a glimpse of the tremendous glory of heaven and God.

Here, God reveals Himself in all His glory. He publicly reveals himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit so that all may acknowledge who Christ was and for what purpose He had come.

We read that the Spirit descended like a dove. The Spirit, of course, is not a dove, and as a Spirit cannot be seen, but He comes down in a way that all could see. Why like a dove? He came down as a dove because such was God's pleasure. But the dove, throughout the scriptures, is a bird that represents peace and quietness. The dove also was the poor man's sacrifice. It seems fitting that if Christ was the lamb who takes away the world's sin, then God the Spirit should appear in a way that also symbolizes gentleness and peace rather than fire or smoke as the Holy Spirit does in other places of the Scriptures (Mounts Sinai, the temple in Solomon's day and Isaiah's vision and Pentecost too).

We have already made the point that Jesus, in His humanity, was to be empowered by this baptism of the Holy Spirit. But this anointing with God's Spirit also tells us something about Jesus, the Son of God! He comes in peace, with the Spirit of peace. Where so many other kings come with armies, violence and might, not so Christ! The might of Jesus is that He, as God, assumes the flesh of those lower than Him. He comes not by force or coercion; He comes not to instill fear but with gentleness, and the Spirit of God works consistently with that. Christ would indeed judge the nations we read in Isaiah 11 because He has the Spirit of righteousness and wisdom. And He has that Spirit we learn from His ministry; He will impart that counsellor—another name for the Holy Spirit that all His subjects might be converted, come to the Father by confessing Christ, and acknowledge the one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. The Son and the Spirit work together for the good of those who, through Christ, love the Father. The Spirit given to Jesus would, in turn, be given to us through the baptism of the Holy Spirit, as John preached and prophesied.

But the Father also is revealed. The Father speaks. Jesus hears a voice from heaven— “This is my Beloved Son with whom I am well pleased.” The church sings these words, which the Father speaks in the Psalm of the Saviour and His Kingdom, Psalm 2:7, “You are My Son, today I have begotten you.” Isaiah 42:1 reads, “Behold my servant whom I uphold; my elect (chosen) one in whom my soul delights. I have put my spirit upon Him, and he will bring justice to the Gentiles.”

Do you hear these beautiful words, people of Christ? God now reveals Himself as the Father and as a Father who dotes upon His Son. He is well pleased; he is satisfied. Why? Because His Son, son of God and Son of man, by coming to the Jordan to be baptized, by His own will, to identify Himself with God's people, has fulfilled the will of God. Christ, in His obedience to the Father, has set out on the ministry of the gospel, the gospel of salvation. Christ has come to this His public anointing not for His glory or power or dominion but to please His Father and to show the Father's glory. His love for His Father compels Him to love the people of God. His love for the Father shows itself by saying, "Thy will be done." Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, will undertake his messianic task, for this is the Father's will. As Adam was called and failed, the new Adam, the son of God, will not fail! And the Father tells Christ and all that He is well pleased. For the Father knows and the Son, who is the Word, knows that the words of Psalm 22:1: "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?"—will ring from the cross as the King, the Son of God would bear the sins of the people as the son of man. He would do this also because this was the will of His Father. He will do this as an expression of the Father's love for the children of God and because Jesus, as the son of God, will make Sons of God. Jesus will do this that the Father may say of us who call on the name of Jesus, this is my beloved with whom I am well pleased as we share Christ and His Spirit! Blessed be the name of the Lord!

Do you begin to see how the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit identify with Christ's anointing as King and His calling as the Messiah? We must see who Christ is. He is anointed as the Prophet, Priest and King. The Father had promised by the voice of John the Baptist that one was coming who would baptize with the Spirit. God had told of the one coming that would purge the nations of their sins and that by the Spirit, He would bring justice to the Gentiles. The one prophesied by Isaiah, Elijah, and John the Baptist has come. He was the One who, in His humanity, would be the chief prophet, the great High Priest and the King of Kings. He is the One who was revealed as the obedient Son of God. Why? So that we might believe that He is the resurrection and the life. So that all might believe that this One is the only way to the Father. So that we might see that this one was a man who might pay for



our sins and that he was God so that he might withstand the horrible wrath of God that our sins brought upon Him.

Can it leave you untouched? Some might say, yes, so what? Others will say this is mythological nonsense or even that it perhaps happened, but it makes no difference. What must we do with all these matters now? We must repent and believe. Believing, submit yourselves body and soul to your King. Look what Jesus had done for you. He pleased God the Father so that we might become pleasing to God in His baptism. The Spirit descended upon Him that He might baptize with that same Spirit and that He might be strengthened to preach and to fulfill that preaching by suffering a cruel and horrible death on the cross. As the son of God, He gives us the Spirit so that we might be strengthened to live out our callings as prophets, priests and kings living as the world's light. Jesus was baptized to become sin for us, to die to take away that sin for us on the horrible cross, and after three days, God raised Him, and He raised Himself from the dead. We read in Colossians 1:19-20 that peace has been made between God and man through the blood of this King, who came not to defeat the Roman Empire, but to defeat sin, death and hell and bring a life of peace. This peace we must pursue. The glory of this King we must pursue. We must seek to live in humble obedience to a God who loved us so much that from before the foundation of the world, He has chosen us as His own, sent His Son to save us and gave us His Spirit as a guarantee of our salvation. Praise God.

**Conclusion:** This whole passage here telling us of the baptism of Christ tells us of Christ's coming out of a very quiet and private Nazareth to a rather muddy and not all that beautiful Jordan River where God's people had stood once before. Once, so long ago, God revealed Himself there at the Jordan through the law, his servant Moses, and then the leadership of Joshua. Now, at the Jordan, God reveals himself more fully in the new Joshua, Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah that is the anointed Christ. The King is anointed to be a prophet and priest, too. The King is revealed to be the true God and true man. Behold you, God, your Savior, and the Holy Spirit. Indeed, we have cause to sing and to worship. And as you serve the King this week, keep this before you. How can we not be humble considering such

a King, who humbled Himself in every way and identified Himself with us, that now, by granting us faith, we may go forward looking forward to the hope that never disappoints us? This is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Amen.