



WEST VALLEY CHURCH OF CHRIST

9:30 am Bible Class—all ages
10:30 am Sunday Worship
5:00 pm Proverbs study (online)
7:00 pm Wednesday Bible Class

Phone Number: (623) 695-5623
Website: www.wvcochrist.com
Email: wvchurchofchrist@gmail.com
Facebook: West Valley church of Christ

March 27, 2022

The Baptism of the Sinless Son of God

One of the “marks” of difference (if you’ll excuse the pun) between Mark’s account of the life of Christ and the other three inspired accounts we have is its pace and brevity. For example, have you ever noticed the number of sentences in the book of Mark that begin with the word “and”? “And” is found in the NKJV translation of Mark more than a hundred times more than the book of John, even though John’s account is about 50% longer than Mark’s (based on word count). Many times, those “and’s” begin a sentence and are followed by an action of some kind. Mark is designed to quickly and efficiently communicate the Gospel of Christ with an emphasis on Christ’s key deeds.

Given that the account is so brief and its pace is so deliberately fast, we do well when we pause to reflect on the details Mark was inspired to include. While all revelation surrounding what Christ did was important, the details that Mark includes represent the “Cliff’s Notes” version of Christ’s life – the aspects of Christ’s life and ministry that reveal the very heart of the Gospel.

Given the above, it’s incredibly interesting that while Mark bypasses the entirety of Christ’s early life here on earth, he stops not only to include but to begin his account of Jesus’ works here on earth with an account of His baptism (Mark 1:9-11). Many people in the religious world undervalue baptism. Some call it an outward sign of an inward grace; others question its validity at all. Yet Mark felt the need to include the detail that Jesus’ mission here on earth began with His baptism.

Mark doesn’t include in his account the conversation between Jesus and John on this occasion. Upon seeing Jesus approaching him, John didn’t understand why Jesus was being baptized “for the remission of sins” (Mark 1:4; clearly, he felt Jesus had none) and according to Matthew, John tried to prevent Him (Matthew 3:14). Jesus responded by saying that His baptism was necessary “to fulfill all righteousness” (Matthew 3:15). While Jesus did not need to be baptized for the remission of sins, He needed to be baptized in obedience to God’s command. For Him to ignore God’s command would have been sin in of itself, a sin of omission (failing to do the right thing) rather than a sin of commission (doing the wrong thing). Jesus’ righteousness could not be complete without obedience to the command to be baptized.

What Mark does include in His account of this event is significant: he includes God’s immediate, visible, and audible response to Jesus obeying John’s command to be baptized. First, the text records that the heavens parted and that the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus “like a dove” (Mark 1:10). While it is possible that this was simply a visual sign of God’s approval, it is equally possible that this passage marks the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy: “The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, The Spirit of counsel and might, The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD” (Isaiah 11:2; cf. 42:11; 61:1). John records that Jesus did no miracle prior to His encounter with John the Baptizer, as Jesus’ first miraculous sign was at the wedding feast in Cana of Galilee (John 2:11) after He was baptized (John 1:29-34). It is therefore highly likely that Jesus’ obedience to John’s command to be baptized brought about the fulfillment of God’s promise, thus enabling God the Father to begin to work publicly through Him.

The second detail Mark records is God’s audible approval of Jesus: “You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Mark 1:11). Note carefully: God did not say that He was well pleased with Christ before He obeyed John’s command to be baptized, but after. While Jesus had no doubt done other things to please the Father prior to His being baptized, there can be little doubt that His baptism particularly pleased the Father, enough for Him to tell everyone present that He was not only pleased, but “well pleased.”

Jesus’ baptism was exceptional both because of why He did it and what followed. No one approaches baptism as He did (without sin) and no one can expect the visual, miraculous confirmation He received. However, the fact that Mark’s short gospel recorded it is evidence of its importance, and this evidence is further substantiated by the details He included that occurred after.

A sister who has now gone on to be with the Lord told me once of her conversion to New Testament Christianity. She had been attending a denominational church that taught that baptism was optional – you could either do or not and be received into fellowship by this church, and, if you decided to do it, you could even decide which way you felt like doing it (via sprinkling, pouring, or immersion). After she was shown the account of Jesus’ baptism, she came to the obvious conclusion – in her words, “If baptism was good enough for Jesus, it was good enough for me.”