The baptism of Jesus is the second crisis experience of the life of Jesus. The first was the Incarnation of Christ, when the Son of God was born to a virgin in Bethlehem. Mark skips his birth and introduces us to Jesus at his baptism, which begins the ministry of Jesus.

Mark states the theme of his Gospel in the opening verse: “The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” Mark wrote to a Non-Jewish audience in Rome. So, unlike Matthew’s Gospel, there are not many Old Testament references in Mark. But the first piece of evidence Mark gives that Jesus Christ is the Son of God is fulfillment scripture. Verses 2-3 read: As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, “Behold, I send my messenger before you face, who will prepare your way, the voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.’” These Old Testament references point to a forerunner who would prepare the way for the coming of the Lord. Mark claims this promised forerunner was John the Baptist.

Verses 4-8 read: “John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel’s hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey. And he preached, saying, ‘After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.’” John was the first prophet of God in four centuries. He was also the last Old Testament prophet. The ministry of John ushered in the new covenant established through the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. Mark signals the beginning of this transition from old to new covenant with the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist.

The baptism of Jesus is also recorded in Matthew 3:13-17 and Luke 3:21-22. But the meaning, purpose, and significance of this event is shrouded in mystery. In a real sense, the temptation of Jesus teaches us how to face our temptations. But the baptism of Jesus cannot legitimately be linked to Christian baptism. Why should believers be baptized? A common answer is that Jesus was baptized. But the baptism of Jesus is not about what Christians should do. It is about who Christ is. The baptism of Jesus reveals him to be the sinless Son of God. Harry Ironside summarizes the text: “He who had been baptized as identifying himself with confessed sinners was thus declared to be himself the sinless one.” Jesus is the sinless Son of God who came to save us from our sins. Mark 1:9-11 record what happened when Jesus was baptized and what happened after Jesus was baptized.

### I. What Happen When Jesus Was Baptized

Mark 1:9 says, “In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.” “In those days” refers to the ministry of John the Baptist. There was no gap between the ministry of John and the coming of Jesus to leave people wondering about the identity of the “mightier one” John proclaimed. Jesus came as John prepared the way for the coming of the Lord. These were the greatest days in human history. Galatians 5:4-5 says: “But
when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons."

Mark writes, “In those days Jesus came.” This is our understated introduction to the central figure of Mark’s Gospel. John the Baptist appeared out of nowhere. Jesus showed up in much the same way. It was approximately 27 A.D. According to Luke 3:23, Jesus was about thirty-years-old. With no account of his genealogy, birth, or upbringing, Mark says Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee. Jesus was born in Bethlehem. His family fled to Egypt, when Herod the Great slaughtered the male Hebrew children to assassinate the newborn King. But he was raised in Nazareth. There are no direct references to Nazareth in the Old Testament. Jewish historians do not mention Nazareth. In verse 9, Mark noted that Nazareth was in Galilee, assuming his readers did not know where it was. John 1:45-46 reads: Philip found Nathanael and said to him, “We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” Nathanael said to him, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Philip said to him, “Come and see.”

Verse 9 says: “In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.” As the crowds came to be baptized, Jesus came from Nazareth and got in line. When it was his turn, Jesus got in the water and was baptized by John. This brief account of this great event begs the question: Why did Jesus get baptized? Mark does not answer this question. Mark apparently did not think the question was relevant. But it is. Verses 4-8 make it clear the baptism of John was about repentance, confession, and forgiveness of sin. If Jesus is the sinless Son of God, why what he doing in the water?

JESUS WAS BAPTIZED TO IDENTIFY WITH SINNERS. The New Testament teaches the sinlessness of Christ. Hebrews 4:15 says: “For we do have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.” Moreover, Christianity teaches the impeccability of Christ. Not only do we believe Christ did not sin; we believe he could not sin. Jesus was not baptized to repent of sin. Jesus was baptized to represent sinners. He did not stand at the river and judge the sinners. He got in the river and joined the sinners. Ralph Douglas West said the sinners stood in line to be baptized, wearing “Hi, My Name Is…” nametags. The nametags identified theirs sins, rather than their names. Jesus took the nametag of each person, put it on himself, then got in the water to be baptized.

JESUS WAS BAPTIZED TO IDENTIFY HIMSELF AS THE SAVIOR. Matthew 3:14 says: John would have prevented him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” This was not an act of humility. It was a confession of sin. John prophetically called Israel to a baptism of repentance. But John tried to stop Jesus from getting baptized. In so doing, John affirmed the sinlessness of Christ. John said to Jesus, “If you get in the water, we need to reverse places. I should be baptized by you.” Imagine what the response of the crowd would have been if John stopped baptizing to get baptized by Jesus. John declared Jesus to be the Savior of sinners – himself included!

In Matthew 3:15, Jesus answered John, “Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Jesus whispered in John’s ear, “No, I do not need to be baptized. Yes, I should baptize you. But this is the way my Father wrote our lines. So let’s stick to the script!” We are justified by the passive and active obedience of Christ. The passive obedience of Christ culminates at his death on the cross. The blood of Jesus satisfies divine judgment. But that only takes us back to square one. God demands righteousness, not innocence. This is why God sent
Jesus on Christmas, not Good Friday. The passive obedience of Christ’s death paid for our sins. But the active obedience of Christ’s life fulfilled all righteousness. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says: “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” This is the great exchange! Our sin was charged to his account and he paid for it at the cross. His righteousness was charged to our account and we stand justified before God.

**MY HOPE IS BUILT ON NOTHING LESS**

**THAN JESUS’ BLOOD AND RIGHTEOUSNESS**

**I DARE NOT TRUST THE SWEETEST FRAME**

**BUT WHOLLY LEAN ON JESUS NAME**

II. **WHAT HAPPENED AFTER JESUS WAS BAPTIZED**

Mark records the baptism of Jesus in three verses. Verse 9 records the event. Verses 10-11 record the significance of the event: *And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, “You are beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”* The baptism of Jesus was a **Trinitarian event**. The triunity of God was on fully display. God the Son was **tangible** in the Jordan River being baptized by John. God the Holy Spirit was **visible**, descending on Jesus like a dove. God the Father was **audible**, speaking from heaven to declare Jesus to be his beloved Son. **What happened after Jesus was baptized?**

A. **THE ANOINTING OF GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT**

Verse 10 says: “And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove.” This verse begins with a subtle statement about how Jesus was baptized: “And when he came up out of the water.” The Greek word translated “baptize” refers to **immersion**. John did not **pour** or **sprinkle** water on Jesus, Jesus was dunked into the waters of the Jordan. Mark affirms this by telling us that Jesus came up out of the water. When he came up out of the water, two things happened **“immediately.”** This is Mark’s favorite word, used 42 times in this Gospel. Jesus saw two supernatural sights.

**THE HEAVENS WERE TORN OPEN.** Matthew 3:16 and Luke 3:21 report the heavens opened when Jesus was baptized. Mark uses more graphic language: **“immediately he saw the heavens being torn open.”** In Isaiah 64:1, the prophet prays, “Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down.” God answered Isaiah’s prayer at the baptism of Jesus. The heavens were torn open. It was a **cataclysmic**, **supernatural**, **eschatological** event! The Greek word for **“torn open”** is where we get our word **schizophrenia**. Creation’s split-personality was exposed as the **natural realm** and the **spirit realm** collided at the baptism of Jesus. This Greek term is also used at the crucifixion of Jesus. Mark 15:38 says, **“And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.”** This is one of the miracles of Calvary! The most holy place in the temple was covered by a curtain that separated sinful man from holy God. When Jesus died at the cross, the curtain was torn in two. It was a miracle, because the curtain did not tear from bottom to
Hebrews 4:16 says, “Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

**The Holy Spirit Descended on Him Like a Dove.** Isaiah asked the Lord to rend the heavens and make the mountains quake. At the baptism of Jesus, the Spirit descended on him like a dove. There was not a moment during the life of Jesus that he was not filled with the Spirit. But at his baptism, the **Holy Spirit anointed Jesus.** It was the Jesus’ **ordination** for ministry. The promised Messiah would be marked by the presence of the Spirit of God. In Acts 10:38, Peter proclaimed, “God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.” The Spirit descended on Jesus **like a dove.** The Holy Spirit did not become a dove. But as the heavens were violently torn open, the Spirit gently descended on Jesus like a dove. We are not told the significance of the Spirit’s dovelike descent. But let me speculate. **Noah** sent a dove thru the window of the ark to be his weatherman. When the floodwaters receded, the dove never returned to **Noah. Where did that dove go?** At the baptism of Jesus, the Spirit descended on him like a dove. It was the Holy Spirit’s way of saying that, as no one was saved from the flood who did not come to Noah on the ark, no one will be saved from final judgment who does not come to Jesus as Savior and Lord.

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**B. The Approval of God the Father**

Verse 11 says: And a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.” In verse 3, there is a voice crying in the wilderness. Now there is a voice from heaven. Mark does not identify the voice. He states the source of the voice: “from heaven.” The identity of the voice is revealed by what it says: “You are my beloved Son, with you I am well pleased.”

The **voice of God** spoke according to the **word of God.** This statement alludes to Genesis 22:2, where the Lord says to Abraham, “Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.” Psalm 2:7 says: I will tell the decree: The Lord said to me, “You are my Son; today I have begotten you.” Isaiah 42:1 says, “Behold, my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations.” Using the word of God, the voice of God declared his approval of Jesus: “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”

This is one of the most important Christological statements in the Bible. First, God calls Jesus, “my Son.” Jesus is not just a **good rabbi,** a **mighty prophet,** or a **miracle worker.** He is the Son of God. To **deny the deity of Jesus is to reject the word of God.** God called Jesus his Son. Second, God called Jesus **“beloved.”** We often talk of about God’s love for us. We do not talk enough about God’s love for Jesus. But it is the love of God for Jesus that makes his love for us possible. Ephesians 1:6 says we are saved: “to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.” Thirdly, God says he was **“well pleased”** with Jesus. It is one thing to have John the Baptist affirm the sinlessness of Christ. It is another to have God declare
it. Mark does not tell us about the hidden years of Jesus. But the heavenly voice tells us everything we need to know. **JOHN PHILLIPS** wrote: “He had been the unseen Listener to every conversation; the unseen Guest at every meal; the unseen Witness to every act, and the unseen Recorder of every thought, imagination, and desire.” Jesus got in the water to be baptized with all the other sinners. But the Father made it clear that Jesus was not one of the sinners. Jesus is God’s beloved son with whom he is well pleased!

**So what?** **Personal faith in Jesus is spiritual union with Jesus.** Believers come to Jesus, follow after Jesus, and go for Jesus. We are also in him. **2 Corinthians 5:17** says: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” If you are in Christ, you are clothed in his righteousness. It is not merely that God sees you as if you had never sinned. God sees you as if you had performed the righteousness of Christ. God says to you what he says to Jesus, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”

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A young man came up with an ingenious way to pass the final exam of his college level logic class that was known for its difficult tests. To help them on the test, the professor told them they could bring as much information to the exam they could fit on a piece of notebook paper. So the students crammed as many facts as possible onto their 8-1/2 by 11 inch sheet of paper. But this one student walked into class, put a piece of notebook paper on the floor, and had an advanced logic student stand on the paper. The advanced logic student told him everything he needed to know. So this student was the only one to receive an “A.”