

THE SAVIOR IS BAPTIZED

+ **SESSION IN A SENTENCE:**

John the Baptist was the herald who prepared the way for the arrival of Jesus, the Messiah.

+ **BACKGROUND PASSAGE:**

Mark 1

+ **SETTING:**

In his Gospel, Mark first introduced Jesus to the world through the eyes of John the Baptist. The pacing of Mark's Gospel is fast—it's the shortest of all the Gospel accounts and the oft-used term "immediately" demonstrates that Mark was intent on progressing the stories quickly so that his readers could focus their attention on Jesus's work on the cross. Therefore, it is worth noting that Mark slowed down to consider how John paved the way for Jesus—both through his declaration of Jesus's identity and by baptizing Him in the Jordan River.

DAY 1

READ:

Mark 1:1-8

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Mark 1:2

NOTES

Anytime we bring a new message to someone or a group of people, it sure does help to have someone go ahead of you and set the stage for that message. This is particularly true if you are bringing a message that is difficult for people to understand or is painful for them to accept. A business owner, for example, might have a supervisor prepare the employees for some substantive changes in office protocol in a weekly staff meeting ahead of the annual performance review season.

John the Baptist played this role for Jesus. Being a forerunner and messenger was not his only role, but it seems to have been his key role. He brought a message to the world that made it easier for people to understand and respond to the news that Jesus would bring. This message revolved around the need for confession, repentance, and the forgiveness of sin. And this message would continue to define the ministry of Jesus, who announced His public ministry with exhortations to repent because the kingdom of heaven had come near (Matthew 4:17). Those who heard John's message and were baptized by John were better positioned to see and respond to Jesus as a result.

How does your life and your message make it easier for people to understand who Jesus is and what He wants to do in the lives of others?

DAY 2

READ:

Mark 1:1-8

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Mark 1:6

NOTES

John was an odd man. Why did Mark include the biographical note about the dietary habits of John the Baptist and his clothing? Surely this was not an attempt to give some sense for what Christians should eat or wear!

John's location (in the wilderness), his activity (crying aloud), his dress (camel-hair garment), and his food (locusts and wild honey) connect John to the Old Testament prophets. As you might remember, these same types of odd habits defined the life and ministry of many of those God raised up to declare His word long before Jesus came on the scene. In fact, many times God actually asked His prophets, like Isaiah, to dress and act in strange ways in order to call attention to His message or paint a picture of the spiritual need of the people.

It had been a long time since God had spoken through a prophet. The years surrounding the exile and return in the Old Testament were filled with voices proclaiming the word of God to the people. Even though they did not listen and heed the warnings, the people had messengers pointing them to God. But then it stopped. For over four hundred years, God was silent. But then John stepped on the scene and looked and acted and talked like the prophets of old. This was meant to prepare the people for God's ongoing activity and to encourage them that God had not forgotten the people forever.

What are some ways you have been encouraged by God's faithfulness after a long time of silence?

DAY 3

READ:

Mark 1:1-8

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Mark 1:8

NOTES



KEY DOCTRINE #91: BAPTISM

Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Savior, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. It is a testimony to the believer's faith in the final resurrection of the dead. Being a church ordinance, it is prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and to the Lord's Supper.

Baptism is not an arbitrary option for followers of Jesus. As with the fact that there are no church-less Christians, there are to be no unbaptized Christians. We are saved by faith in Jesus and baptized into the local church. Jesus inaugurated His public ministry with an act of baptism, and Christians reveal to the church and the world that they are new creations in Christ intent on living on mission for Him by this act as well.

The act of baptism is one of submission. Jesus submitted Himself to John's baptism, though He had no sin (Hebrews 4:15). Christians submit to God's directive that they should be baptized as well (Matthew 28:18-20).

This activity is modeled in the opening of the book of Acts, where, following Peter's sermon at Pentecost, many responded to the good news of Jesus. When asked, Peter told the people to repent and be baptized (Acts 2:38). Following their salvation, thousands were baptized and united to the church there in Jerusalem (Acts 2:41). Repentance and baptism went hand in hand.

In the same way, those who repent of their sins should be baptized in the context of the local church today. The act of baptism sets the pace for humble submission to God's leadership for the rest of the Christian's life. It is wise for the church and local pastors to assess the validity of a person's faith, but it's important to press the priority of baptism as soon as possible. A tight link between repentance and baptism is biblically faithful, and prioritizing this connection makes it clear to others who come to faith that this is normative for followers of Jesus.

How does baptism encourage you?

DAY 4

READ:

Ephesians 4:1-16

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Ephesians 4:4-6

NOTES

The church is united by faith in Jesus Christ and a common baptism in His name. The apostle Paul pointed to this unity with the rapid repetition of the word “one” here in verses 4-6 in the middle of his letter to the church in Ephesus. There is salvation in no one other than Jesus, and the common process by which we are united to Him in faith is through repentance of sins, symbolized in the act of baptism.

There are all sorts of reasons why people unite in the church. They might share a common ethnic heritage or denominational affinity. They might live in a common sector of society or socioeconomic strata. People might even align around hobbies or political alliances. Many times churches were created with this intent in mind—pastors or missionaries would attempt to evangelize one subset of the culture and unite people who are already alike in the church.

The beauty of the gospel of Jesus, however, is that Jesus unites different people—people who have no business being in relationship with one another apart from their shared union with Christ. We see this in Jesus’s choice of His disciples. These were men who had little in common but built their lives around their shared relationship with Jesus.

As we engage with our churches today, we should give praise to God for the differences that we see represented there rather than use those differences as a means of fostering disunity. Even more so, we should seek to share the gospel with people who are different than us so that the church is built up based on unity found in Jesus.

What examples of diverse unity do you see in your church?

VOICES from THE CHURCH

“Believers are never told to become one; we already are one and are expected to act like it.”¹

—Joni Eareckson Tada

DAY 5

READ:

Mark 1:9-11

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Mark 1:10

NOTES

Many Christians tend to under-appreciate or under-value the role of the Holy Spirit. After all, the work of the Spirit doesn't seem as tangible as the ministry of Jesus since the Son of God took on flesh and walked among this world.

Yet the Spirit of God wasn't out-of-sight-out-of-mind for Jesus nor for the Bible's authors. We see the fingerprints of the Spirit all over the story of God's work through redemptive history. Mark introduced his Gospel and Jesus's ministry through the sending of the Spirit. Jesus told the disciples to wait to begin their mission until they received the power the Spirit supplies (see Acts 1). Luke connected the Spirit's work to the birth of the church at the outset of the book of Acts (see Acts 2).

Christians would be wise to spend more time thinking and talking about the Spirit's activity. Churches should highlight the role of the Spirit of God in empowering and compelling the mission. The Spirit's presence was a constant comfort and guide to the work of Jesus through His life. Jesus told His disciples that the Spirit would continue to do this same work in the life of His people—He guides them to truth and empowers and comforts them in the work (John 15–17). If the very Son of God in the flesh relied on the agency of the Holy Spirit to empower His work, how much more do the people of God need that help in our work today?

How will you strive to rely more and more on the Spirit's work in and through you?

GROUP

NOTES

VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"The baptizing work of the Spirit is the means of associating us with the crucifixion of Christ (Colossians 2:12 and especially Romans 6:1-10) in our dying to the old life. Being associated by baptism unto His death, burial, and resurrection is the basis for the crucifixion of the believer's sin nature and his victory over sin."²

—Charles C. Ryrie (1925-2016)

POINT 1: The herald prepares for the Son (Mark 1:1-6).

_____ had prepared for all the details of Jesus's coming, including using John to prepare the world for Jesus's _____ .

? How should the steady use of Old Testament prophecy in the story of Jesus's birth encourage us?

John's practice of baptism, connected with confession and _____ , was a precursor to the work that Jesus would do to make a way for the _____ of sins.

? How would John's practice of baptism help people understand Jesus's message?

POINT 2: The herald points to the Son (Mark 1:7-8).

John knew that Jesus's baptism would be greater because it would symbolize the work of God's _____ to transform the _____ .

? What does baptism do?

KEY DOCTRINE #91: BAPTISM

Christian baptism is the immersion of a _____ in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of _____ symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Savior, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. It is a _____ to the believer's

faith in the final resurrection of the dead. Being a church ordinance, it is prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and to the Lord's Supper.

POINT 3: The herald baptizes the Son (Mark 1:9-11).

_____ was baptized, in part, as an _____
for us to follow in His steps.

? **Why did Jesus get baptized even though He had nothing to repent of or confess?**

God the _____ validated the identity of
God the _____, Jesus Christ, and sent His
_____ to dwell on Him.

? **How can growing in our understanding of the triune God help us worship Him more?**

MY RESPONSE

Because we have died with Christ and have been raised to new life through Him, we call on others to repent of their sin, trust in Christ, and be baptized.

- **HEAD:** What are some ways Christian baptism should impact believers in Christ and even unbelievers who witness a believer's baptism?
- **HEART:** In your life, what sources of identity compete with a secure identity in Christ as God's beloved child? How do you need to repent in this regard?
- **HANDS:** How will you leverage your life this week to point others to Jesus?



Scan this QR code to access
this session's Scripture passages.

VOICES from THE CHURCH

"He told them he had drenched them with water which was only external, but One would come who would drench them in the Holy Spirit, which was intrinsically internal. What a beautiful metaphor for the work of the Holy Spirit! When we are baptized with the Holy Spirit, he permeates every part of us."³

—R. Kent Hughes