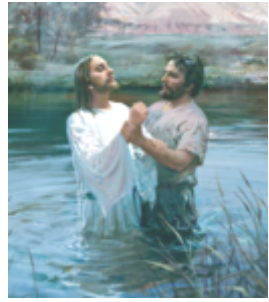


Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> January 2018

# The Baptism of Christ

## Epiphany 1

White



### Collect

Eternal Father, who at the baptism of Jesus revealed him to be your Son, anointing him with the Holy Spirit: grant to us, who are born again by water and the Spirit, that we may be faithful to our calling as your adopted children; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

**Acts 19:1-7** English Standard Version (ESV)

### Paul in Ephesus

19 <sup>1</sup>And it happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the inland<sup>[a]</sup> country and came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples. <sup>2</sup>And he said to them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” And they said, “No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.” <sup>3</sup>And he said, “Into what then were you baptized?” They said, “Into John’s baptism.” <sup>4</sup>And Paul said, “John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus.” <sup>5</sup>On hearing this, they were baptized in<sup>[b]</sup> the name of the Lord Jesus. <sup>6</sup>And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying. <sup>7</sup>There were about twelve men in all.

**Footnotes:** a. Greek *upper* (that is, highland). b. or *into*.

**COMMENT:** The early Church regarded baptism in the name of Jesus as a symbol of new creation. The gift of the Spirit confirmed this spiritual experience and enabled the newly baptised to live the full implications of their life in Christ. In this passage Paul helped the disciples of Ephesus, baptised by Apollos to learn the full meaning of Christian baptism. Apollos may have been one of John the Baptist’s disciples. An Alexandrian Jew of great eloquence (Acts 18:24), he is named half a dozen times in the New Testament, almost entirely in connection with the Corinthian Church except for one reference in Titus 3:13 without geographic identification. Knowledgeable in the Hebrew scriptures, especially with reference to the Messiah, he had been a catechumen and had become a teacher of “the Way of the Lord.” The Church in Ephesus had encouraged him to proceed to Corinth and there greatly helped those who

through grace had become believers (18:27). Just what the distinction between this teaching and that of Paul is not entirely clear. It has been assumed that he knew the whole story about Jesus and some of Jesus' teaching, but had not fully accepted Jesus' soteriological (salvation, or redemption) function as the Messiah/Christ which was so important to Paul. It would appear that the purpose of this passage was to clarify the difference between the ministry John the Baptist and Jesus in much the same way that Mark did in Mark 1:7-8. The key was the presence and power of the Spirit. It also appears that the apostles were mediators of the Spirit, which Apollos had been unable to do, apparently because he had not himself received the gift of the Spirit. This is mirrored in the function of the Bishop who alone can ordain new Priest and Bishops.

## **Mark 1:4-11** English Standard Version (ESV)

### **John the Baptist Prepares the Way**

<sup>1</sup> <sup>4</sup> John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. <sup>5</sup> 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. <sup>6</sup> Now John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey. <sup>7</sup> 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. <sup>8</sup> I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

### **The Baptism of Jesus**

<sup>9</sup> In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. <sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> And a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; <sup>[a]</sup> with you I am well pleased."

**Footnotes:** a. or *my Son, my (or the) Beloved.*

**COMMENT:** The early Church believed that the teaching and work of John the Baptist fulfilled prophecies found in Exodus 23:20 and Isaiah 40:3. These had been given a messianic interpretation. A dramatic if controversial figure, John preached repentance and baptism as the way for Jews of his time to prepare for the coming of the Messiah. Then Jesus joined the crowds that thronged to hear John's message and accept baptism. The vision of the Spirit as a dove descending on Jesus after he had been baptised confirmed John's conviction that this was indeed the Messiah who would bring the gift of the Spirit to all believers. This introductory passage also points to the continuity of Jesus' ministry with his heritage as a Jew. There appears to have been an extensive baptismal movement prior to the baptism of Jesus and the later, post-Pentecost practice of the early Church (Mark 11:32; Acts 10:37). Jesus came to the Jordan where John was preaching and baptising to identify himself with the people of God. Like most prophetic voices before him, John sought to recall Israel to its historic covenant. His baptism had some similarity with the purification rites required of all Jews under the law and also the baptism which proselytes

(converts) were required to perform after circumcision as the sign of their inclusion in the covenant. There can be no question, however, that Mark also regarded Jesus as entirely unique. This is the obvious meaning of the quotation from Psalm 2:7, an ancient hymn usually sung at a royal accession or coronation. Here it is used with an obvious Christian messianic connotation and linked with another messianic interpretation of Isaiah 42:1. Jesus was now equipped as “Beloved Son” to accomplish. As Mark quotes John in verse 15, “The time is fulfilled. The kingdom of God has come near; repent and believe the good news.”

### **Psalm 29** *Afferte Domino* Grail Psalter

#### **℟ The Lord will bless his people with peace.**

1 O give the Lord, you sons of God,  
give the Lord glory and power;  
2 give the Lord the glory of his name.  
Adore the Lord in his holy court. ℟

3 The Lord's voice resounding on the waters,  
the Lord on the immensity of waters;  
4 the voice of the Lord, full of power,  
the voice of the Lord, full of splendour. ℟

5 The Lord's voice shattering the cedars,  
the Lord shatters the cedars of Lebanon;  
6 he makes Lebanon leap like a calf  
and Sirion like a young wild ox.  
7 (The Lord's voice flashes flames of fire.) ℟

8 The Lord's voice shaking the wilderness,  
the Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh;  
9 the Lord's voice rending the oak tree  
and stripping the forest bare. ℟

3b The God of glory thunders.  
10 In his temple they all cry: “Glory!”  
The Lord sat enthroned over the flood;  
the Lord sits as king for ever. ℟

11 The Lord will give strength to his people,  
the Lord will bless his people with peace. ℟

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son  
and to the Holy Spirit,  
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,  
world without end. Amen.**

**COMMENT:** Have you ever stood in a safe place to watch the beautiful violence of a thunderstorm? Such an experience like that lay behind this early hymn of praise celebrating God's powerful presence in nature. Many elements drawn from the common, primitive cosmology of the Near East have found their way into this song. Divine victory over chaos determines the natural processes of creation according to the LORD's command and provides for human security. the LORD's glory visible in the storm forms the central theme of the psalm. The psalm opens with a summons to "heavenly beings" to offer their praise and worship to the LORD. The realm where the LORD reigns was conceived as a temple with heavenly beings robed like ministering priests. As the storm develops, the psalmist hears thunder rolling across the sky as the powerful yet majestic voice of the LORD (verses 3-4). A violent wind sweeping down from the Lebanon mountains breaks great cedar trees as they roil and skip. These too he sees as the direct action of the LORD (verses 5-6). Lightning becomes another expression of the LORD's voice (verse 7) and the thunder which follows rolls across the whole length and breadth of the country as far as the wilderness of Kadesh in the Negeb desert (vs.8). All of these details form a vivid description of how the LORD controlled the chaotic forces of nature. So the LORD "sits enthroned over the flood ... as a king forever" (verse 10). After a violent storm like this all the wadis gush with raging floods as the water is carried away for several more days. Few as such violent storms may be in the relatively benign climate of Palestine, storms do occur in winter. One such storm wreaked havoc in parts of Israel and Jordan in February 1998. Yet the rainfall from such storms is essential to the growth of crops and so the psalmist saw this storm as a blessing which would yield welcome security for the people. Nature had spoken of the LORD's strength and greatness, the infinite source of spiritual blessings.

### **Short Preface**

And now we give you thanks through Jesus Christ our Lord, whose willing submission to the way of righteousness is the pattern of our calling to be his people and live in his way.

### **Post Communion.**

Lord of all time and eternity, you opened the heavens and revealed yourself as Father in the baptism of Jesus your beloved Son: by the power of your Spirit complete the heavenly work of our rebirth through the waters of the new creation; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

### **Blessing**

May God, who in Christ gives us a spring of water welling up to eternal life, perfect in you the image of his glory; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you, and remain with you always. **Amen.**