

The Baptism And Testing Of Jesus

An exegetical examination and exploration of Jesus's baptism in Mark's gospel

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Introduction:

The baptism marks the beginning of Jesus' public ministry-from Galilee to preaching. It shows God is with Jesus and loves him and that he is God's son. The baptism is a sign of the presence of God(YHWH)and the Holy Spirit and is in light of the Jewish ritual practice. Jesus consents to be counted as a sinner in an act of humility,the baptism calls for people to conform their lives to Jesus and to god.

Jesus becomes anointed as the messiah through his baptism,the prophecy has been fulfilled as it was written before Jesus in Psalms and in Isaiah.

Outline:

Mark has drawn from Jewish scripture and the passage is linked to Ezekiel 7 evoking imagery of doom and worked to warn Jewish-Christian believers to repent and get baptised.

"Mark was not an observer of Jesus and therefore must have used oral/written sources himself" (Black,Clifton).

This passage comes at the beginning of Mark's gospel, having only the proclamation of John the baptist beforehand. The baptism is found in all three of the synoptic gospels,Mark,Matthew and Luke and is evoked in the testimony of John the baptist in the gospel of John.

John is in the wilderness, as Jesus must then also go,the whole Judean region is going to get baptised by John in the Jordan.

The passage shows the proclamation of Jesus by John.

Analysis: NRSV

Mark 1:9-15

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptised by John in the Jordan.

Written in past tense.Showing us where Jesus has come from, where he has travelled to and whom he has gone to see,shows purpose to the trip. There are echoes of Exodus when the Israelites crossed the river Jordan to get to the promised land.

"The call to repent is tantamount to the call to be baptised"(Davis,Don).

Jesus has obeyed the call to be baptised,John becomes the endorser of Jesus and his ministry,as Jesus becomes John's replacement.

And just as he was coming up out of the water,he saw the heavens torn apart and the spirit descending like a dove on him.

Jesus experiences a vision,there is apocalyptic imagery of heaven being torn apart,which is connected to the end of the gospel when Jesus dies and the temple curtain is torn(divine disclosure).

Jesus sees a glimpse of his divine purpose to bring salvation.The symbolism of the dove was often used in early Christian baptism to represent peace,such as the dove of David.In Noah's ark the dove is symbolic of rebirth and new beginnings.

And a voice came from heaven "you are my son,the Beloved,with you I am well pleased."

This part of the text is confirmation, even an endorsement by God that Jesus is his son. It shows God's love for his son, whom he must sacrifice. The other gospels differ slightly on their word use at this point.

There is an echo of the prophecy of the coming messiah as Isaiah 42:1 states "I have put my spirit upon him, he will bring forth justice to the nations." Here we see the theological exposition of who Jesus is, Eternal, Beloved and divine.

And the spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness.

The wilderness plays an important role in Judean history, particularly in the Exodus and the 40 years the Israelites wandered the desert, God's deliverance comes from the desert. The fact Jesus is driven out immediately shows haste, there is no time to waste.

The wilderness is a place of testing, where Jesus must battle Satan.

Jesus is tested to prepare for his ministry and his fate to come. It shows dedication and complete submission to God as he embraces his identity through fasting and prayer.

The other gospels of Matthew and Luke show Jesus being led into the wilderness by the spirit.

He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

Only Mark's gospel refers to wild animals, but all three synoptic gospels tell us the testing of Jesus lasts for forty days. The number forty appears in the Bible in many instances, The flood lasts for forty days, Moses must spend forty days on Mount Sinai, to receive the ten commandments.

For Christians there is forty days between Ash Wednesday and Easter, this period is observed as Lent, a time for reflection, repentance, spiritual growth and abstinence. Christians imitated Jesus in the desert here by fasting, early fasting rules were strict, only one meal a day was allowed and meat, fish, eggs and butter were forbidden.

The fasting was dispensed with during World War Two and now only Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are permitted as fasting days.

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God.

John the Baptist was arrested as King Herod feared him and his popularity, John the Baptist was beheaded and his disciples took his body and buried it. King Herod was the king who wanted Jesus dead as a baby, proclaiming the death of all first born sons and echoes the curse of the Egyptians first borns, being killed in the Exodus story.

John's death echoes Jesus's own death for the Jews hated him and the Romans feared him. John had disciples as Jesus would have also.

"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near, repent and believe in the good news."

This is the first quote of the Gospel of Mark and shows that the prophecy has been fulfilled. Jesus asks that all the sinners repent and believe in himself as the messiah and in

God. The kingdom is connected to both Jesus and God. The kingdom of God shows God's plan for the salvation of his chosen people.

Conclusion:

The baptism of Jesus in Mark's Gospel shows that God and the Holy Spirit have confirmed Jesus as the son of God, that the prophecy has been fulfilled, that he is the messiah. Jesus demonstrates his desire to serve God, knowing he will die for the sins of God's people. Mark demonstrates clearly the authority of Jesus and that he is the messiah proclaimed. We are shown that John is the forerunner for Jesus in both life and death. Mark's primary point in his gospel is that Jesus fulfils scripture.

Bibliography:

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