



Thursday January 7, 2021

Prepared for you by

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### Mark 1:4-11

<sup>4</sup>John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. <sup>5</sup>And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. <sup>6</sup>Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. <sup>7</sup>He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. <sup>8</sup>I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

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

Who is baptizing and who is being baptized? More importantly, who are you being baptized into? The gospel of Mark begins the story here in the wilderness with John and a description of John's "baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins," wasting no time on a lineage of Joseph or Jesus' birth in Bethlehem or any incidents of Jesus as a precocious youngster; instead, the gospel author wants to take us directly here, where the ministry of Jesus picks up as a fulfillment and continuation of the ministry of John. Mark, as well as the other gospels and Paul in the city of Ephesus, is eager to insist on differentiating between the two baptisms, that of John and that of the Holy Spirit. Notice that we don't baptize like Jesus baptized, because Jesus never baptized anyone. That was never something Jesus did, just as it was never John's modus operandi to travel about Palestine preaching or eat and drink with sinners.

Instead, the New Testament insists on two baptisms because they are fundamentally different from one another – John's baptism is a baptism of waiting for the arrival of the Messiah, and baptism in the name of Jesus Christ is a baptism of fulfillment in light of the Messiah's arrival. We cannot go back to the baptism of John, and we should not want to – John was likely envious of those whom he told that Jesus "will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." Our baptism, our identity as Christians, was sealed by the Holy Spirit in the fires of Pentecost and daily renewed in our own personal baptisms. When we are baptized, we are not baptized in the baptism of John or of Paul or of the nice pastor that our parents found for us, but rather we are all baptized in the Holy Spirit, the unifier who brings life and hope.