

**Mark 1:4-11** New International Version

4 And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 5 The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. 6 John wore clothing made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. 7 And this was his message: "After me comes the one more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. 8 I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

9 At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 10 Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. 11 And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

**QUESTIONS****1. What does the Gospel of Mark say was the purpose of John the Baptist's baptism?**

*Mark says that his baptism was "of repentance for the forgiveness of sin". People went out to where John was preaching and baptizing, they confessed their sins and were baptized in the Jordan River.*

**2. How does the Gospel of Mark explain why Jesus was baptized by John?**

*Mark does not say anything about why, (neither does Luke or John, only that Jesus was baptized by John in the Jordan. Matthew is the only gospel that offers a conversation between John and Jesus about this matter...*

*<sup>13</sup> Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. <sup>14</sup> But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" <sup>15</sup> Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented. (Matthew 3:13-15).*

**3. What does Mark mean when he says that Jesus saw "heaven being torn open"?**

*One commentator\* suggests that it answers Isaiah's plea that God would "rend the heavens and come down" (Isaiah 64:1) to bring salvation to the world. (Read that beautiful passage of Isaiah 64 for yourself.)*

*\*Pheme Perkins, Professor of New Testament, Boston College. The New Interpreter's Bible, Volume VIII, p 535.*

**4. Is Jesus the only one who sees this vision of heaven's opening and the descent of the Holy Spirit as a dove? (Mark 1:10) What do the other gospel accounts report? (Matthew 3:16), (Luke 3:21), and (John 1:32-34)**

**Mark 1:10** <sup>10</sup> “Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove” *Mark seems to say that it was only Jesus.*

**Matthew 3:16** <sup>16</sup> “As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him.” *Matthew seems to say it was only Jesus.*

**Luke 3:21-22** <sup>21</sup> “When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened <sup>22</sup> and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.” *Luke seems to say it was only Jesus.*

**John 1:32-34** <sup>32</sup> “Then John gave this testimony: “I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. <sup>33</sup> And I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, ‘The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.’ <sup>34</sup> I have seen and I testify that this is God’s Chosen One.”” *John says that John the Baptist saw the Spirit descend upon Jesus.*

**5. How do these other Scriptures suggested for the “Baptism of Jesus” Sunday’s lectionary readings relate to Jesus’ Baptism? Genesis 1:1-2, Psalm 29, Acts 19:1-7.**

**Genesis 1:1-2** “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. <sup>2</sup> Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.”

*The Holy Spirit was hovering over the waters, notably working in the creation epic to bring about God’s will to create, on the earth. Likewise, the Holy Spirit is*

**Psalm 29** A psalm of David.

<sup>1</sup> Ascribe to the LORD, you heavenly beings, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.

<sup>2</sup> Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness.

<sup>3</sup> The voice of the LORD is over the waters; the God of glory thunders, the LORD thunders over the mighty waters.

<sup>4</sup> The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is majestic.

<sup>5</sup> The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars; the LORD breaks in pieces the cedars of Lebanon.

<sup>6</sup> He makes Lebanon leap like a calf, Sirion like a young wild ox.

<sup>7</sup> The voice of the LORD strikes with flashes of lightning.

<sup>8</sup> The voice of the LORD shakes the desert; the LORD shakes the Desert of Kadesh.

<sup>9</sup> The voice of the LORD twists the oaks and strips the forests bare.

And in his temple all cry, “Glory!”

<sup>10</sup> The LORD sits enthroned over the flood; the LORD is enthroned as King forever.

<sup>11</sup> The LORD gives strength to his people; the LORD blesses his people with peace.

*The voice of the Lord is compared to thunder. Jesus heard the voice coming from heaven. Perhaps it sounded like thunder to those who were around there and did not hear the message spoken by God.??*

*Descriptions of God's presence on Mt Sinai when Moses went up there to receive God's commandments speaks of thunder and lightning. "And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled." Exodus 19:16*

*Jesus asks God to glorify his name for the sake of his disciples to hear. John 12: 28-30 "28 Father, glorify your name!" Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and will glorify it again." 29 The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him. 30 Jesus said, "This voice was for your benefit, not mine."*

#### **Acts 19:1-7**

**19 While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples <sup>2</sup> and asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?"**

They answered, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit."

<sup>3</sup> So Paul asked, "Then what baptism did you receive?"

"John's baptism," they replied.

<sup>4</sup> Paul said, "John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus." <sup>5</sup> On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. <sup>6</sup> When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. <sup>7</sup> There were about twelve men in all.

*John the Baptist proclaimed that after him would come one who would baptize with the Holy Spirit. This text reveals a difference between John's baptism of repentance and Jesus' baptism with the Holy Spirit which Paul introduced to these followers (probably disciples of John the Baptist).*

#### DISCUSSION

**1. Baptism is one of the two sacraments celebrated in the United Methodist Church (same for most Protestant denominations as well). Why do we baptize? What meaning do we take from this rite?**

**2. Describe your baptism. What significance does this sacrament hold for you?**

**3. What are some of the things that Jesus reveals about himself in his baptism, things that we would be wise to emulate in our lives?**