

Genesis 1:1–5; Mark 1:4–11

Romans 6:1–11

<sup>1</sup>What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? <sup>2</sup>By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? <sup>3</sup>Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? <sup>4</sup>We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

<sup>5</sup>For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. <sup>6</sup>We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. <sup>7</sup>For one who has died has been set free from sin. <sup>8</sup>Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. <sup>9</sup>We know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. <sup>10</sup>For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. <sup>11</sup>So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

### IN THE NAME OF JESUS.

What happened in that water of the Jordan River, that when Jesus was baptized, the heavens opened up, the Holy Spirit comes down, and the voice from Heaven says, “*You are my Son, in whom I am well pleased*”? What happens in a river out in the wilderness, over a day’s travel from the city, that has Heaven opening-up and reacting here on Earth?

For the first thing, there’s a prophet. That’s no small deal. When the Lord has his prophet show up at a place, we know something’s going to happen, and that what happens here on Earth will be from Heaven. Second, there’s the Word of the Lord, there’s the Gospel, for the prophet John has been out in the wilderness proclaiming a baptism that gives repentance and the forgiveness of sins—that’s all Gospel. Third, there’s the Son of God in the flesh, Jesus.

We haven’t seen much of Jesus for a while. We saw him at his birth, but he’s just a little baby there, not doing a whole lot. Then we saw him at 12 years old when his parents took him to the Temple and he was speaking with the teachers there.

That’s about it. A baby, then 12 years old, and now he’s a man, about 30 years old, and we find him out at the Jordan being baptized by the prophet John. What happened in that water?

We know who walked down to that water. Into that river went when a man with no sin. A Man whose birth had been announced to the Virgin by an angel from Heaven. A Man who is God in the flesh, with the Name Jesus, which means, *the Lord saves*.

He goes into the water without any sin, without any count against him according to the Commandments, without any hatred harbored in his heart against his fellowman, even though he has certainly already seen enough of this world deserving hatred, he goes in

without any need to go in for himself, for not only is he completely without any sin or malice on his own, but the prophet doing the baptizing has even said to him, *“I need to be baptized by you, and yet you come to me?”*

He goes into the water clean and innocent and holy, and he comes out dirty with sin, stinking with guilt, dripping with shame—he comes out the greatest sinner of all. For in that water, the prophet John has been baptizing sinners, cleansing them, washing their sin and guilt away, so that these sinners walk out of that water clean and holy before God.

*“Forgiven,”* is John’s word for it—forgiven of all sin, released of all guilt, it has all been washed away by this water of the Jordan, and all this is worked by the Word of the Lord.

After the sinners are cleansed in the water, into that water, the Holy One, Jesus, then goes. He comes out the greatest sinner of all. He is not a sinner, there is no guilt to his Name for who he is or for what he has done, but the sins washed away in Baptism, are now put on him. As he stands dripping on the banks of the Jordan, he stands in the place of the sinner, he now bears the office of guilt, he walks away carrying the shame of the world—he who knows no sin is now accounted to be the greatest sinner of all, and it is at that point that the heavens open, the Holy Spirit comes down, and the voice says,

*“This is my Son, in him I am well pleased.”*

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Nothing brings the Father pleasure like the sinner forgiven. Nothing brings him more delight than to see you and me released of our guilt so we can look upon him in honor. He finds his rejoicing in seeing us and our children brought into the gift of repentance and standing before him righteous and pure.

And that’s what happened in that water when John baptized Jesus. The sins of the world now rest on Jesus. He now goes forth from that baptism as the Lamb of God taking away the sins of the world. He has been baptized into our sin, our guilt, or shame, our fear of death—he has been baptized into the cross, for that is the final place he takes our sin in order to put it to death in his own body.

We haven’t seen much of Jesus up to this point—a little baby, then a twelve year-old boy at the Temple—but now his baptism.

It will all happen pretty quickly after this. About three years of, first, gathering the twelve Apostles, then walking around Galilee proclaiming the Gospel, healing the sick, feeding the hungry, casting out demons, then the quick succession of betrayal, false accusations, being spit upon, and death on the cross.

For into that, he was baptized. That’s what happened to Jesus in the water of the Jordan—he was baptized into the office of sinner, and he was bound for the cross.

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What happened in that water when you and I were baptized? What happened in that water when our Lord baptized one of our children or grandchildren?

Romans 6:3

**<sup>3</sup>Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? <sup>4</sup>We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.**

Jesus, who knew no sin, was baptized into the sin of the world, and was publicly announced, before God the Father and the world, as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

We, who know no holiness, are baptized into the righteousness of Jesus himself, and are publicly announced, before God the Father and the world, to be those whose sin has been taken away, and who stand before God in the righteousness and purity of the Son of God.

A great exchange:

He was baptized to bear our sin,  
we are baptized to be clothed in his righteousness.

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In Baptism, that which is not ours is accounted to us. That which does belong to us, is drowned, and is ours no more.

The death of the cross, it is as much ours as it is Jesus'—it belongs to us.

The holy life of Jesus, the sinless heart loving neighbor, the willing hands touching the sick, feeding the hungry, it belongs to us, for Baptism has united us to Christ Jesus. The resurrection, the victory of death, it is ours, as much as it is Jesus', for he made us one with himself in Baptism.

Then why do we still find ourselves having doubt? Why are we still afraid to think about the demons, as if they still had power over us? Why do we still find ourselves harboring malice toward neighbor?

It is the sinful flesh; it's the old man of sin; it's our life lived by the envy, the desires, and the demands of our sinful flesh.

That's the Old Man who was drowned in Baptism. That's the old man St. Paul speaks about as "a body of sin to be brought to nothing." Romans 6:6:

**<sup>6</sup>We know that our old man was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing.**

What do we do with this old man of sin? What do we do as we set out to do good, to be good Christians, but then realize we have again been drawn into the old Adam's malice and desires of lust and envy? We hold onto our Baptism. We cling to the promise. We rejoice in being joined to our Lord Jesus and his cross. We delight in being made to stand before the Father in the righteousness and purity of Jesus forever. And as we do this, we again drown the old Man of sin, daily putting him to death in the water of Baptism.

As we memorized it in the Catechism:

*What does Baptism indicate?*

*It indicates that the Old Adam in us should by daily contrition and repentance be drowned and die with all sins and evil desires, and that a new man should daily emerge and arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.*

*That's* what happened in that water. We were baptized into the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, so that from the water of Baptism, the Lord created in us the new Man of faith.

He, Jesus, came up out of the water bearing our sin; we came up out of the water bearing his righteousness. And when our old-Man of sin daily rears his head, the new Man, our life of repentance and faith, takes the old-Adam, and again shoves him under the water.

Romans 6:11:

**So consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.**

**IN THE NAME OF JESUS.**