

September 20, 2026
God Revealed in Mark
“Part 1: Jesus’ Baptism”
Mark 1:9-11

Intro:

This morning I am starting a three-part series I am calling “God Revealed in Mark”. I got the idea from the fourth chapter of a book called *Who Is God?: Key Moments of Biblical Revelation*, by Richard Bauckham. If you get a chance to read this not-very-long book, it is helpful in sorting through the high points of the Biblical revelation of God.

In this sermon series, we are going to touch on three key points in the Gospel of Mark where God is revealed from a Trinitarian perspective within the person of Jesus Christ. There are, of course, more than three moments of divine revelation in the Gospel of Mark, such as Peter’s declaration about Jesus in Mark 8:27-30 and the Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem in chapter 11. The three that we will look at, however, Bauckham considers to be the key points of revelation in Mark.

The passages we will consider are the Baptism of Jesus (Mark 1:9-11), the Transfiguration of Jesus (Mark 9:2-8), and Jesus’ Death – specifically the declaration of the Roman centurion at that moment (Mark 15:37-39).

So, without further delay, let’s dive into Mark’s account of Jesus’ baptism and how God is revealed in that moment.

The Passage:

Mark opens up his narrative simply by having Jesus coming out from the wilderness and being baptised by John. There is no preliminary dialogue and no significant prior mention of Jesus other than what Mark says in verse 1, that this whole gospel is about Jesus. For Mark, the important thing is not Jesus being baptised; it is what occurs afterwards.

As Jesus comes out of the water (v 10), he sees the heavens being torn open and the Spirit of God descending on him like a dove.

We are going to stop here for a moment and look at the words used. Mark's language in verse 10 of the heavens "splitting apart" (NLT) is unique to him. In Matthew and Luke's accounts, the heavens are "opened". The idea of the heavens being opened is found in several places in the Old Testament and is usually accompanied by the person who witnesses this being given a glimpse into heaven itself – they usually see a throne room scene of some sort. Here, Jesus is not seeing into heaven; rather, heaven is coming down to him. The same language is used in the Revelation passage we will look at in the third part of this series. At the moment of Jesus' death, the temple veil is torn (ripped, split apart) from top to bottom. This language connects both of these passages and bookends what Mark wants his readers to understand.

When the heavens are torn open, something is going to happen to earth. Things will spill out. This is not just an open window that offers a glimpse into the space of God; this is an erasing of the divide between heaven and earth – heaven is coming down to earth.

This event foreshadows what is to come in the end days when there will be a new Heaven and a new Earth. The sign of that foreshadowing is the Spirit of God descending like a dove. The Spirit coming as a dove also reminds us of the image in Genesis 1, where the spirit of God hovered above the yet-to-be created Earth and brought His will to bear upon it. In Jesus, the work of renewing and restoring creation is begun, and the confirmation of that is the Holy Spirit "hovering" down onto Jesus from Heaven. As we will see in the third sermon, this ripping-apart imagery of heaven signifies that because of Jesus, the barrier and the distance between creation and God are being removed.

So, heaven is more than opened up, and the Spirit of God descends, and all of this is just seen by Jesus, and then a voice speaks from heaven: "You are my dearly

loved Son, and you bring me great joy.” In other translations “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”

Through the wonder of time and distance, we as readers are brought into this conversation, but for those present in the moment, Mark seems to indicate that this post-baptism scene was private, for Jesus only. The scene of heaven being torn open and the dove descending was something only Jesus saw, and so the voice from heaven was probably only heard by him as well. The words are certainly directed to Him only. They are personal “You are my Son”, rather than “This is my Son”. (That second phrase comes in the second point of revelation that we will talk about next week.) It might have been an odd scene of awkward silence while Jesus watches the dove and listens to the voice and all anyone else sees is him standing there with John and no one doing anything.

When we read these words, and if we are familiar with church and the Bible, we immediately notice that this scene features the Holy Trinity – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Certainly this passage is evidence for that. But it would not have been so clearly understood in this way by the early readers of Mark’s gospel. So what else do those words have to tell us about who Jesus is?

We are only 10 verses into the gospel of Mark, and up to this point there has been very little said of Jesus, and nothing said about what he has been up to. So, what is it about Jesus that the Father is so pleased with? Mark does not shy away from the miracles of Jesus, or his teaching, or any of the other significant things we know about Jesus from the other gospels, but all of that happens after this moment in the water.

Can we assume that Jesus has been a model human being up to this point both in his childhood and young adulthood? We can, since we know about his character from the other gospel accounts, but that likely isn’t what is drawing the Father’s joy and pleasure.

John was baptizing people and calling them to repent because the judgement of God was upon them. This was a hard teaching and for many people, it was a strong wake-up call that they had not been faithful to the national covenant between the Israelites and God. For Jesus to walk into those same waters was to acknowledge God's judgement and to identify with the people who were under that judgement (i.e., everyone). Not only this, but in identifying with the people, Jesus took that judgement upon himself – which is why he came to Earth in the first place. This is what the Father was so pleased with. It was Jesus, fully stepping into the role and mission that he had been given.

For Jesus, these words of affirmation and confirmed that He was on the right track. The bestowing of the Holy Spirit confirmed not only his mission, but also that Jesus was walking and working in the will and power of the Father, and that he would find strength through the Holy Spirit to continue to be faithful in the work that lay ahead of Him. If you remember, in the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus asked the Father to take the cup of dying for the sins of the world from him, but through the power of the Holy Spirit, he was able to further pray, “but not my will be done, but yours”, confirming his willingness to complete the task.

Conclusion:

We get the privilege of reading about this event after the fact. And it is a privilege. We get this wonderful glimpse into the holy connection between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We get to witness the confirmation not only of who Jesus is, but of what he is going to do. We get a glimpse, not into heaven, but ahead into the future where there will be a new heaven and earth, and all around, those who believe will be in the presence of God.

What a joy this revelation is!

Let's pray.