

Mark 1:1-8: John's Baptism of Repentance

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[0 : 0 0] announcements that I want to make sure that we cover before we get started jumping back into the gospel of Mark. Okay, lilies. Loretta, where's Loretta at? Okay, right up front. So typically for Easter, we do, we've done this, I don't know for how long, we'll do Easter lilies to decorate the church. And we try to get people in the church to sponsor them. They cost a little bit.

And then after the Easter service, resurrection service, we can call it, you can take your lilies home with you. So do we have a sign-up sheet for that or how's that going to work, Loretta? I would rather people put their money in a room below and it's described in the... Okay, it's described in the... So we have an insert. So if you're like me and you never read the bulletin, it says, what does it say? If you wish to purchase one in memory of someone or just to enjoy for yourself, they will be available for our Grace Nice price of \$10 each. Sorry for the late notice. Yeah, we usually get a... I think everybody's kind of... Easter just kind of rushed in this year, didn't it? See Loretta or put your money in an envelope marked with your name and how many lilies you want and to whom you wish to remember and then just drop it in the offering box. So we got an offering box right outside those double doors just to the right. So you can either fill out the envelope or see Loretta again. Loretta, wave your hand so everybody can see you. That's Loretta if you'd like to buy some lilies. And everybody will be able to enjoy them on Resurrection Sunday displayed out and then you can take them home after you're done. A few other things. I think there's some John 3 16 signs. If anybody wants to take one home, if you requested one and didn't get one yet, make sure you grab it.

If you didn't request one but still want to put one up in your yard, there's still some out there. So go ahead and grab one. Next week we're going to do a communion service. And so just for everybody to know next week.

[2 : 1 6] And then I guess we went ahead and announced the Easter breakfast. There was a little bit of confusion because the original sign-up sheet had some different times and I think even a different date. So just so everybody knows, Easter this year is on the 9th. That's two weeks from now.

So in case that confused anybody else. Just one more announcement from, I guess a couple of things, from our family. As many of you know, we're, our family's involved in theater. Jamie runs a theater program with some other ladies for the homeschool community. And all the students, including several of the Rambeck kids, have a production this coming Saturday. So in six days. It's down in Wilmington, but it's a really beautiful theater. And if you'd like to come and join us, what's the, what are the times?

Two o'clock and 6.30. And they need to go online somewhere and say you're coming, right? Yeah, wholesomelifeproductions.com.

Or just see Jamie and she'll help you out. There's no cost. I think there's donations. We accept donations from people once you're there, if you'd like. But there's no cost to come see the production.

The name of the play is Kill Roy Was Here. Am I getting that right? And it's a, more of a patriotic type of show about the USO and World War II era. Yeah. So I'm looking forward to it. I've just heard bits and pieces. So a lot of these shows I get to experience myself for the first time when they actually do the production. So I'm excited about it. Anything else before we dismiss the kids?

[4 : 0 4] Anything else that we're forgetting? Going once, going twice. Okay. And we'll go ahead and dismiss the kids to your children's church class if you'd like to do that.

Oh, well, one more thing. I mean, that's okay. Kids, go ahead. You don't have to listen to me. But one of the things I wanted to share from this week, this weekend was a big weekend. I actually went

up to, I don't know, somewhere north in Ohio. I'm not even sure where we went. I just followed where the phone told me to go. But we had a camp. It was kind of a man camp. What's the name of it?

OWC, Ohio Warrior Camp. Is that the name of it? So a friend of mine put this on for boys age 13 to, I don't know, 20 or something, something like that. And it was just an opportunity to have a tough weekend of physical exertion, but also kind of strengthening in both mental toughness and spiritual robustness, we'll call it. Just a tremendous weekend. There were about, I think, 30 boys, maybe 10 dads who came along with their boys. I think most of the fathers were represented. And, but David told me, I said, how are you doing? You know, about halfway through the weekend, he said, dad, this is the toughest day of my life. Is that what you told me? Yeah. So I was like, great, that's awesome. That's what I love to hear. And so there were many, many push-ups done, many, many squats, lots of running, 300 push-ups.

Yes. Okay. And eventually I think they had to be modified push-ups, but, but it was good. And it was a great opportunity. The, the big thing I asked, I had both David and then one, another boy with us on the way back home. And I said, what was the biggest takeaway from that, from this weekend? And they both said that we can, we can push ourselves. We can do more than we thought we could. And what a great lesson for a young man, a young man or young men to learn. But many other, many other lessons along the way, it was a great blessing to be there. All right, you ready to jump back into the book of Mark? All right, open up your Bibles to Mark. And we finally hit verse one last week, I think, and talked a little bit about really John the Baptist is where Mark starts. And I wanted to, we talked a little bit about John's ministry of baptism.

[6 : 53] And he is called John the Baptist because that was his big kind of role in the whole scheme of things during this gospel period, during the life of Christ. And we talked about that he was part of the plan. He wasn't just somebody that kind of showed up or somebody that just on his own decided, hey, I'm going to, I'm going to do this role. I think everybody needs to be, go through water rituals or I need to dunk them or spray them or pour water on them or whatever. It wasn't his idea. It was God's idea. And it was God's idea, not just at that time, but something that God had planned many years in the past that the prophets spoke of.

And so were there some prophecies that Mark mentions in the first chapter about someone who would come and prepare the way of the Lord. Jesus is coming on the scene and the Lord wanted someone who would help prepare the way to get the people's hearts and minds ready.

So John came baptizing. We'll read this again. Verse, well, we'll start with verse two. As it is written in the prophets, behold, I send my messenger before your face who will prepare your way before you. The voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. That reads like it's maybe from one passage of the Lord.

Scripture, but it's actually from two passages of Scripture. I think one in Malachi, the other in Isaiah. But they both speak of someone who would come and prepare the way for this coming one.

And that was John the Baptist, who was, by the way, Jesus's cousin. That was John's role. And it says this in verse four, John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. We talked also about that word baptism. And it's kind of a funny word. We're very used to it. Most people know or have an idea of what baptism meant. But it's a word we kind of invented ourselves for the English language. It's not a word that originally originated with English. It's a word that is actually called a transliteration. Because it's actually a Greek word, baptismo, that a lot of people are, because of the controversy around this whole baptism thing, decided, well, we're not actually going to translate this into something that, a word that we typically use.

[9 : 35] It could be like washing or, you know, some people, everybody has an idea on how it should be translated. So some of the translators, I think, whether this is wisdom or not, who knows?

They decide, we're just going to create a new word about this called baptism that represents this whole idea. So John called the Baptist, he preached a baptism of repentance for the remission of sin.

So even though we talked about this, I wanted to go back a little bit. There were some discussions and conversations last week that I thought there were some additional things to cover about this whole baptism thing, water baptism. So one of the controversies around baptism is, well, how do you do it? What's the proper way? You know, do you have to dump somebody under the water? Do you have to sprinkle them? Do you pour water? You know, I've seen, there was, there was a funny

meme, and I don't know if this was real. I don't think it was, but maybe it was. And it was either an Orthodox priest or a Catholic priest, the way that he was dressed up. I don't remember. But this was during the whole COVID thing, and you have to do social distancing, right? And there was a picture of a priest here with a water gun and a little baby over here. So I'm not sure if that was real or not, but it was pretty funny. So there's the mode of water guns, I guess, is another one that you could use. I guess that's a form of sprinkling, right? And so what exactly did John do there at the Jordan River out in the wilderness with these people? And man, you will get into some debates, and some people are really sure that they know exactly the way that John did this water ritual with the people of Israel that were coming out to be baptized by him. I'm going to tell you what I think, but I do want to preface it with this. I don't think it matters really too much. The whole purpose of this water ritual was to be a symbol, was to show something, was just really a touch point, I like to use that word, for people to make somewhat of a commitment. This is a baptism of repentance. And repentance means turning.

[12:09] That's all it means. Repent means to turn around. You know, you're walking one direction, and I'm going to turn around, and I'm going to go the other direction. Repentance toward God. People who are walking far from God, and they need to turn to him. And this water ritual was just an opportunity for them to do that. And that's the most important thing. Where are their hearts? God wants their hearts to be pointed toward God, pointed in the right direction. But there's an interesting thing with the, so I'll go through a few verses of scripture to tell you kind of what I think, but at the same time, again, preface, I don't think it matters that much. But Jesus said something interesting about John the Baptist later on. And I don't think it's found in Mark, but it is found in the book of Matthew.

And he's asking the Pharisees about this guy, Mark. And Mark was, or not Mark, John the Baptist. He's asking the Pharisees about this guy, John the Baptist, because the Pharisees didn't much like him.

He was getting a lot of attention from the people. They considered him a prophet, which he was. But they didn't like that he was getting all this attention. But Jesus asked the Pharisees, he says, what did you go out into the wilderness to see? Was it a reed shaken by the wind? Was it a reed shaken by the wind? And ultimately, I think he asked another question. And then he says, no, what you went out to see was a prophet from the Lord, somebody who was speaking for God.

Now, why would he ask that question? Was John a reed shaken by the wind? Is he talking about his character? You know, I think there's an illustration in the Bible where it talks about not being like a reed or something like that that's easily shaken, right? Somebody who's more like a firm tree, rooted and planted, that's not going to be swayed by any wind of doctrine.

[14:21] Was that what he was talking about? That's what some people think. But I want to go back to the Old Testament and look at a few passages and see if we can maybe clarify a little bit what Jesus was talking about when he was saying, was John like a reed shaken by the wind? Is that what they went out to see? Just a reed shaken by the wind? In Exodus 12, 22, it describes right before the Exodus. And if you remember the story there, the Israelites were in slavery to the Egyptians and Moses came as their deliverer and went through announcing different plagues that ended up coming upon the Egyptians. The final plague was the death of the firstborn. And during that night, which they later called the Passover, the Jews were warned, the Jewish people were warned that you can, that your children will be at risk as well unless you do this one thing.

And they had to take the blood of a lamb and take that blood and kind of paint it on the doorposts of their homes. And the angel of death would pass over their homes. That was such an important visual for the Jewish people. And later we see kind of what the meaning of that is, that blood. Ultimately, that blood that Jesus shed for us, that the angel of death, if you will, death itself would pass over us if we would apply the blood of Jesus to our own lives. But in chapter 12, verse 22, it says this, as part of this instruction, and you shall take a bunch of hyssop, dip it in the blood that is in the basin and strike the lintel and the two doorposts with the blood that is in the basin. And none of you shall go out of the door of his house until morning. So there was this plant and people debate over what kind of plant it was. A lot of people think it's in the mint family, but it's kind of like an herb and something that carries liquid really well. And so in this case, it was used kind of like a paintbrush.

You take this hyssop, a bunch of hyssop, think of like a mint plant or something like, especially a flowering one. We think of the mint leaves, but when a mint plant flowers, it's got all these tiny little petals. And so you can imagine there's probably lots of plants like this that they carry a lot of water. You dip them in water, let's say, and it comes up pretty heavy and it kind of drips.

And you can use it in the fashion of a brush. Psalm 51, verse 7. This is, Psalm 51 is a somewhat of a famous psalm. It's a psalm of David that he wrote after he committed adultery. And he committed adultery and after a while finally was confronted by Nathan the prophet. And afterwards, gratefully, or thankfully I should say, he repented.

He turned back to God, even though we don't know exactly how long he had been kind of deep in that sin, adultery and also murder of her husband.

[18:09] But he wrote this psalm, and it's a psalm of repentance and turning towards God and asking God to cleanse him. And in verse 7, as part of this psalm, he says this, Psalm 51, verse 7. He says, Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean, and I shall be whiter than snow.

Well, how do you purge with a branch of a plant? Well, he's talking about the use of this plant as a cleansing tool. You dip it in water, and you can use it to bathe. Put water on yourself. Splash water on yourself. You grab a bunch of this plant, you put it in the water, and you splash it on yourself like this. Kind of like a washcloth almost.

Then there are a couple of passages, one in Leviticus. We won't turn there. Another in the book of Numbers that talks about cleansing rituals for the people of Israel.

This is part of the law of Moses, in which they would use hyssop branches, or hyssop bunches, calls them branches in different places, to cleanse themselves through a ceremonial washing.

And through this ceremonial washing, they would use hyssop branches. And then, if you'll turn there, we'll go ahead and turn to this last one, Hebrews chapter 9.

[19:38] Hebrews chapter 9 and verse 19. Let's see if I can find it.

It's talking about the greatness of what Jesus did for us, his sacrifice, and how his sacrifice is better than the animal sacrifices that were accomplished through the Jewish people, the ritual sacrifices that the Jewish people did.

And not only was it better, but it was once and for all. It was final. But he says this in, let's see, verse 19. Let's start with verse 18.

It says, therefore, not even the first covenant was dedicated without blood. So that first covenant through Moses was dedicated with blood. Not the blood of Jesus, but the blood of animal sacrifices. Verse 19. For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law. So he spoke the words of the law. And then it says he did this. He took the blood of calves and goats with water, scarlet wool, and hyssop.

[21:04] And he sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, this is the blood of the covenant which God has commanded you. Then likewise he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry.

And according to the law, almost all things are purified with blood. And without shedding of blood, there is no remission. Now this is a little bit gross, right? Because what Moses did here was he took this hyssop branch and he dipped it in blood.

It says that there was also water. And he sprinkled the law with it. And he sprinkled the people. Now I don't know that he went around to every single individual and sprinkled them with blood.

That would have been quite a sight if he did so. It's a lot of people. But he might have just kind of in their direction, right? As the people were listening, kind of just sprinkled towards the people.

That's what I imagine is what he did. And then also the tabernacle, the tent of meeting and some of the different vessels that they had created as part of the ministry service to the Lord.

[22:09] All these symbolic things. And all of these things were symbolic. And I'm sure a lot of people were asking, this is weird, right? Probably back then. Why are we sprinkling blood on everything?

That's just gross. But you can imagine that this ritual would have stayed in their minds for a long time watching this whole thing happen.

And then maybe people would tell their children about it. And then maybe even their grandchildren. And of course they can go back and read about this whole thing that happened. But I think that's the idea for this to be a memorable thing.

But I just wanted to point out here that notice that he used a hyssop branch in order to do this sprinkling. So when it goes back to, going back to what Jesus said about Peter, when you went out to see Peter, were you just looking at a reed?

Now that word reed is actually used kind of back and forth with the hyssop branch. You'll see sometimes, in fact, if you remember, when Jesus was dying on the cross, he was offered some vinegar.

[23 : 21] And if you read, it says that it was lifted up to him with a sponge on a hyssop branch. But there's one translation that doesn't say hyssop branch.

It says it was lifted up on a reed. Now, was it a hyssop branch or was it a reed? Well, it could have been both. The hyssop branch isn't very long.

Maybe it was a reed and a hyssop branch on top. And, you know, maybe you nestled a sponge in there or something like that. And it was lifted up. We're not sure how high he was up on the cross. But then some people, it seems that the reed and the hyssop branch are kind of used interchangeably. So, in the scriptures, especially in the New Testament.

And so, when Jesus said, what did you go out into the wilderness to see? Was it a reed shaken by the wind? And here's what I think Jesus was saying. Did you go out to just see some guy that was just taking a hyssop branch and just, you know, sprinkling it on people?

[24 : 25] Is that why you just wanted to see this fun washing ceremony? Is that why you went out to see John the Baptist? Or was it because he had a message that burned in your hearts?

And that he was a prophet from God. He was speaking on behalf of the Lord. So, my view on the whole baptism thing is that John was using this hyssop branch just like his forefathers had done. And remember, John was from the priestly tribe of Levi. And so, especially the priests would have been familiar with the cleansing ritual using the hyssop branch.

So, I imagine that at the Jordan River there, you have all this water available. People would come down into the water. He would take this hyssop branch. And those people who wanted to repent and turn to God, he would take that and he would shake it on them.

And they would be cleansed. Just like David said in Psalm 51.7, Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean. Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.

[25 : 31] So, I know I'd get, I know especially from our Baptist friends, we might get a lot of pushback from that. And there are arguments for, well, I think you've got to really put them all the way down under the water.

Really, I don't think it's a big deal. I don't think it matters. I think, I imagine that maybe even John the Baptist could have done it different ways for different people.

He could have sprinkled people with a hyssop branch or maybe someday he forgot his hyssop branches, right? And, well, I'm just going to take water. I'm going to pour it over your head. Or maybe he says, you know what?

You look like you need to be dumped. Maybe he did that. But I think the big takeaway is, you know, the mode, the exact way you do it isn't that big of a deal.

It's not, that's not what's important. It's, is your heart turning to the Lord? And this symbol is just a way to show, I want to be washed by the Lord.

[26 : 32] I want him to wash me. There's another story. I brought this up the other day. When I was talking to some friends, people put a lot of weight into this water ritual.

And some people think it's something that is absolutely necessary in order to find forgiveness of sins. And it just isn't. It's not at all. I remember when we were, when we had our last chat here, Adam.

And there were some issues with him in utero, some growth issues. And they weren't sure what it was. And they thought this might be fatal.

It was a very difficult time. We finally found out just a week before he was born that he had a condition that was not fatal at all. And we were so grateful. But we were talking to people at the hospital about, well, what will we do if he's not going to make it?

And somebody, I can't remember who it was. There's people at the hospital that help in, I think they call it palliative care. And they asked, you know, do you want to have him baptized when he's born?

[27 : 44] And I said, you know, I really appreciate, you know, you asking that and you being concerned about us and, you know, what kind of things we would like. But no, we don't need any water ritual.

We're fine. He's in the hands of the Lord. No water is going to provide anything else beyond the grace of God that God gives us.

And so, but a lot of people do. And throughout the history of Christianity, a lot of people, in fact, for most of Christianity, most people thought that you had to go through a water ritual in order to find forgiveness of sins.

So it was a really big deal. And people wanted to make sure that their kids had that done as soon as possible. Well, because especially years ago, right, a lot of kids didn't make it. The mortality rate was pretty high.

But that's just not the case. Even back then, even back then when John the Baptist was saying, you need to come out and you need to be baptized, you need to be washed.

[28 : 50] Even then, I think, wasn't an absolute requirement. Though, for those who heard, he wanted them to come out and do it.

Because really, not doing it, not following this command of the Lord, would have been a sign of rebellion. In fact, Jesus said, and I'll read here from Matthew chapter 3, verse 5, starting with verse 5.

Matthew 3, verse 5. Jesus said this. This is basically the same thing happening here. Excuse me, I think I said Jesus. This was John the Baptist.

Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region around the Jordan went out to him and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins. They were confessing their sins. But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, you brood of vipers.

He called them a bunch of snakes. Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore, bear fruits worthy of repentance. I want to see it's important that your heart is changed.

[30 : 01] You're religious. You pursue religious rituals. But what's important is that you bear fruits that show that you are turning to the Lord.

Also, in Proverbs 21, verse 3. Remember, this is in the Old Testament. This isn't New Testament. This is Proverbs chapter 21, verse 3. It says this.

That we would do righteousness, or to do righteousness and justice is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice. To do justice and to do righteousness is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice. And what does it mean, sacrifice? Well, it's talking about the animal sacrifices. Do, in fact, there are times in the scriptures in the Old Testament that God told the people of Israel, I detest your sacrifices.

I detest them. And they were doing these sacrifices to the Lord. And why was that? Because their hearts were far from the Lord. They focused on the ritual.

[31 : 07] They got the ritual right. But their hearts were far from Him. Another verse that I think of is Romans chapter 2, verse 26, in which Paul is talking about this circumcision ritual, which was another bloody ritual that the Jews did, which pointed to a future thing.

But Paul was talking about the Jews put so much weight on this ritual of circumcision, yet their hearts are far from the Lord. And so he said this in Romans 2, verse 26.

He says, Therefore, if an uncircumcised man, so somebody who has not followed the law of circumcision, if an uncircumcised man keeps the righteous requirements of the law, will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision?

You know, maybe you didn't know about this whole circumcision thing, and there were whole periods of times, hundreds of years even, where the people of Israel, like the Bible, got lost. The Bible was lost for hundreds of years, and nobody had a Bible. They didn't know what was in it. And so they didn't know about circumcision. Some of them didn't care.

[32 : 27] But what Paul is saying here is that if there are people who want to do what is right before the Lord, their heart before the Lord is upright. They want to do His will.

They want to do what is right. But they haven't done this ritual of circumcision. That's what's important. It's not the ritual.

Even back under the Old Testament, it wasn't the rituals that were of utmost importance. It was the heart of the people. And so especially today, under this age of grace, we should not put any emphasis, any major emphasis, and there are still rituals that we do that I think are fine.

In fact, next Sunday, we'll do the Lord's Supper, which is a type of ritual. It's not one that we put any weight of. It's not one that we think, if we do this, we'll be approved of the Lord.

It's just an opportunity for us to remember the Lord, and we'll talk about that next week. Another thing I wanted to point out, as for a reason and a purpose, why John did this water ritual, was, and some people have put this forward, and I think it has some merit to it.

[33 : 42] I'm not sure that I would say that this is for sure, but turn to Exodus chapter 19, and this is right around the time of the giving of the law.

Yes. We lost my mind. Okay. I'll just stay here. Right around the time of the giving of the law, and Moses is speaking to the Lord, and God's establishing his covenant with Israel, and there's this kind of momentous point right before he goes up onto the mountain.

Exodus chapter 19. Let's start with verse 5. Now, therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to me above all people, for all the earth is mine.

And then he says this, and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel.

So this is God speaking to Moses, telling him what to say to them. Saying here, I've got this covenant, and are you willing to abide by this covenant? And if you do, you will be a special people to me, and you will be a kingdom or a nation of priests.

[35 : 13] Now, we know later that God established a priesthood through a certain tribe, one of the 12 tribes of Israel. It was the tribe of Levi. And they were the priestly nation.

And then through the sons of Aaron, who was one of the sons of Levi, so a subgroup within that tribe, he established a priesthood through the heritage of Aaron.

But here he says he's going to make the nation. It's going to be a kingdom of priests. And so there are other references throughout the Old Testament to all of the people of Israel being as priests.

Well, as priests to who? If everybody's a priest, then who needs the priest? Well, there are references, and sorry I didn't take the time to look at them up, but there are references to the nation of Israel being a nation of priests to the Gentile people.

That the whole nation of Israel would act as priests, taking the, basically, right, what does a priest do? It's a stand between.

[36 : 24] Somebody who stands between the people and the Lord. And so the whole nation of Israel would basically stand between the Gentile people and the Lord and bring them together.

Now, I don't think that that ever was accomplished, even though that was what was God's plan for Israel. And so, you know, as we, the whole story of the, kind of the New Testament and after the life of Christ, and we read in the book of Acts that there was really a rejection of what Christ had done for the people of Israel.

And so, in Romans chapter 9 through 11, we see Paul talking about how the Israel nation was cut off from the promises of God and the Gentiles were grafted in.

So God went directly to the Gentiles, but that wasn't the original plan. The original plan was that the Jewish people, they would be God's people and they would take God and the message of the Lord to the Gentile people.

In fact, we read in Revelation chapter 1, and Revelation is a book written to Israel. And it says this.

[37 : 41] This is John, the revelator, and he's writing to the people of Israel. He says this in verse 6, Revelation 1, 6, and he has made us kings and priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever.

He's saying Israel, God has made us kings and he has made us priests. You know, when Israel does come back in one of the things that Paul talks about, he says, you know, Israel's cut off for now, but in the future, there's a time coming when God will reestablish the people of Israel.

He will reestablish his covenant with them, and Jesus will return as the Messiah to rule on the earth. And when that happens, the people of Israel will be a priestly nation, but a kingly nation.

The people of Israel will rule with Christ over the whole world. So the nation of Israel will be at the center of the whole world at that time.

And so that's what John is talking about here. And then in 1 Peter, again, Peter is one of the apostles to who? Is it to the Gentiles like Paul was? No, Peter was actually, in fact, there's, it talks about it there in, was it Galatians?

[39 : 04] And also in Acts, that when Paul came and said, hey, God sent me to the Gentiles, and Peter's like, that's awesome. I'm glad you have a ministry to the Gentiles.

We're going to stay back here. We're going to minister to the Jews, because that's what God has called us to. And so Paul says, in Galatians, he says that God has made me effective as a minister to the uncircumcision, just as he has made the other apostles effective as ministers to the circumcision, to the Jewish people.

And so Peter, in 1 Peter 2, verse 9, says this. And again, he's writing to Jewish believers, Jewish believers in Christ.

He says, but you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, his own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of him who calls you out of darkness and into his marvelous light. You're a chosen generation. You are a royal priesthood. And was he talking to just Levites? No, he wasn't. He's talking to any of the Jewish believers who had trusted in Christ.

[40 : 16] In fact, I think we know that Peter himself was not a Levite. But they were to be a priestly nation at some point when the time was ready.

So some people have made, you know, said, well, I wonder if this water ritual that John the Baptist was doing was the beginning of establishing that priesthood.

Because as you read throughout the Old Testament, the priests had to go through these ceremonial washings in order to prepare for their service in the temple. They washed their hands, they washed their clothes, they washed their bodies, all in preparation for their priestly service.

Some people have said, well, maybe this, what John the Baptist was doing was that he was preparing all the people of Israel to prepare for a priestly service that they would accomplish for the Lord.

All right. And then just to make it clear, we talked about how God doesn't put as much weight and emphasis on rituals and how it's hearts that matter most.

[41 : 31] But I wanted to just bring up a few of the passage, a few passages from Paul, who is the apostle to the uncircumcision, those who are not under the law of Moses, those who are not under the Jewish covenant as part of Israel.

And so let's turn to Ephesians chapter 4. And look, Paul actually talks about baptism and he says in Ephesians 4, he lists a bunch of one thing, a bunch of ones.

How many gods are there? Does anybody know? One. One. There's one God. Now the Muslims might look at Christians and say, well you guys say that there's three gods, right?

If you talk to a Muslim about the differences, they view Christians as being polytheists because we believe there's God the Father and God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, but we believe in one God.

In fact, in Deuteronomy, I can't remember, Deuteronomy chapter 5, is it? It says that specifically. The Lord our God, he is one, one Lord.

[42 : 51] Sorry, I'm having trouble finding Ephesians. Ephesians chapter 4. Ephesians chapter 4, verse 4 through 6, we'll read, there is one body, it's talking about the body of Christ, the body of believers who trust in Christ.

One spirit, there's one Holy Spirit, it's not like there's ten Holy Spirits, God's Spirit that he's given to us as believers, just as you were called in one hope of your calling, and that's the hope that we have of eternal life, it's not like there's lots of hopes, we have a hope of a resurrected body, in the future we will have eternal life, not just spiritually, but actually physically, we'll have bodies, for those of us who trust in the Lord, we'll have bodies that last forever, one day.

There's one body, one spirit, as you were called, and one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, there's not many faiths, some people say, well there's many ways to God, there's one faith, and then one baptism, and he's, to finish, to finish this out, one God, and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

So he lists all these ones, and one of the things he says is there's one baptism, or one washing, or maybe actually, the word baptizo, in a very literal sense, means to overwhelm, and you know, when you, when you get, when you bathe yourself, you overwhelm yourself with what?

Water, and you might go under the water, and that's overwhelming, and you might, you know, have the shower head, sprinkle water on you, and that's being overwhelmed with water, or you know, back before we had showers like that, people would just take a ladle, and from a bucket, or a tub, and they would just pour the water on themselves.

[44 : 45] Those are all being overwhelmed with water, but he's not, so what is he talking about? Is he talking about a water ritual? There's just one water ritual, that we all abide by?

Well, let's look at another passage, 1 Corinthians chapter 12. 1 Corinthians chapter 12. So if you were in Ephesians, you're going to go back a few, a few books or letters.

1 Corinthians chapter 12 and verse 13. We'll start with the verse, verse 12 and chapter 12. For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body being many are one body, so also is Christ.

For by one spirit, again, there's that word one, we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slave or free, and have all been made to drink into one spirit.

It says, things have changed here. There was this Jewish program before, now it's Jew and Gentile, and we all have the opportunity for a baptism of sorts, for a washing of sorts, for an overwhelming type of thing.

[46 : 11] For by one spirit, we were all baptized into one body, having been made to drink of one spirit.

So the Holy Spirit is the baptizer, the one that washes us. Does the Holy Spirit use water? No, the Holy Spirit's a spirit, right?

So it's not a priest that does this, right? Whether it's an Orthodox priest or a Catholic priest or a pastor of a church, this is the Holy Spirit that's doing this work.

For by one spirit, we are all baptized into water. Is that what it says? Not into water. Here's the one baptism that Paul speaks of, the one baptism that matters, it's of utmost importance, that we allow the Holy Spirit to take us and to overwhelm us into the body of Christ, into this new entity, what is called elsewhere a new creation, a new created order called the body of Christ, that we belong to that body, that we are in him.

And the body of Christ is us, it's believers, but we represent his body because we are in him. The Bible says over and over and over again that we as believers are in him.

[47 : 43] So that is, I believe, the one baptism that matters most, that is of central importance.

One more verse, Galatians 3.27, you can turn there if you want, but I'm just going to read it here. Galatians 3.27 says this, for as many of you as were baptized into water, no, as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

Again, there's that picture of being overwhelmed, being covered, just like you're covered with water, which is a symbol, when you trust in him, you are covered with him.

He is your clothing. He is the water that washes you. He is the one that protects us from the dangers in the world, even the danger, really, of our own sin.

I think to finish up, I'd like to, I think I said that was the last one. I'm going to take that back. We'll turn to Colossians to finish this up. The book of Colossians, so if you're in, if you're in Ephesians, you're going to go a few more letters over to the right.

[49 : 12] Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Colossians chapter 2. Colossians chapter 2, and we'll start with, let's start with verse 6.

As you therefore have received Christ Jesus, the Lord, so walk in him.

He says, there's a way in which you receive Jesus. I want you to walk in him in that same way, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith.

You get a faith is, another word for faith is trust, and your trust in him. As you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving. Paul's giving instruction on how to live the Christian life.

You were saved in a certain way by trusting in what Christ did for you. That's your faith. Your faith is in him. It's not in rituals. It's not in circumcision. It's not in keeping a law of commandments.

[50 : 20] It's in what he accomplished for you through the blood that he shed for all of us. So verse 7 again, rooted and built up in him, established in the faith as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.

Man, are we grateful? We ought to be each and every day for what he accomplished for us. You know, I can imagine that the Jewish people were grateful that God would call them out as a special people to have them keep this set of commandments.

I'm sure they were probably grateful, some of them, maybe not all of them, that God called us out to be a special people to him, to keep this law so that we might be a special people.

But God has called us to something even better. Not that here's a set of commandments that we keep and if we do, then we can be a special people. No, he said, here's my blood as a gift and if you'll just reach out your hand and take it and say thank you, then we can be his people.

Not just for now, not just for a day, but for all of eternity. And so, that's how we need to receive him, that's how we receive eternal life, but that's how we also walk out our Christian life is in gratitude gratitude.

[51 : 46] And thankfulness to what he's done for us. And he says in verse 8, beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.

People will come to you as a Christian believer and say, hey, listen, I know you, you know, you might be putting all of your trust in what Christ accomplished for you, but look at your life. You're a mess. Would a Christian really, you know, be a mess like this? You know, you need to do some of these rituals or maybe obey some of these commandments, and you need to put some of your confidence in those things.

And they're going to try to cheat you out of the gift that God gave you in Christ. He said, don't let anyone do that through empty philosophy, through the basic rudimentary principles of the world. And these are basic principles. Everybody knows, you know, that you screw up, you mess up, you do bad things, and you get punished. Right? Anybody who's gone to court, broken the law, gone past the speed limit, the police come, the siren's on, you're getting a ticket.

[53 : 03] That's how the world works. But that's not how Christ works. Christ works different from the basic principles that you see in the world. So beware, lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.

For in him dwells all the fullness of a Godhead bodily. In Jesus Christ, it's not just some special person, this is the fullness of God himself who did this for us.

and you are complete in him. Complete. That's a very final word.

Not partial. Not 99% of the way there. Jesus said, it is finished and when we trust in him, we are complete.

We don't need anything else. Is there opportunities for us to grow in how we love and serve others? Certainly. But when it comes to our relationship with him and knowing him and having confidence in him, we are complete.

[54 : 15] We don't need anything else. We don't need that philosophy from the world. We don't need those basic principles of the world. You're complete in him who is the head of all principalities and power.

Then he says this, in him, you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands. So just like the Jews had this circumcision ritual that they did that they had to use hands for, cutting of the flesh, very gross and bloody thing that they were required to do, Christ did something for you that it's a type of circumcision but it didn't require hands.

It's a spiritual type of circumcision by the putting off of the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ, it says.

The sins that we held in our body and our flesh, he cut it off spiritually. We don't carry the weight of that sin anymore.

It's gone. It's removed. It's taken out of the way. It's a spiritual circumcision. We now see with clear eyes that symbol that was back then is no longer needed because Christ has already accomplished the meaning of that symbol in us.

[55 : 35] The sins that we carried in our body have been dealt with. They've been cut off and thrown away, put into a heap pile. And then he says this in verse 12, buried with him in baptism.

So burial, again, being overwhelmed with a type of water in which you also were raised with him through faith in the working of God who raised him from the dead.

So just like there was a circumcision ritual back for the Jews and there was also a overwhelming ritual, a washing ritual, a ritual of pouring water, of cleansing.

Christ accomplished that burial, that overwhelming for you through the cross. In Christ, we have everything that we need.

Our life in him is complete. complete. There's nothing new that we need to gain, nothing that we need as far as our relationship with him and our salvation and our rescue and our eternal life with him.

[56 : 51] It was finished on the cross and all we had to do was reach out and say thank you. We'll finish with this, and you being dead in your trespasses and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, he is

made alive to gather with him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us, and he has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

All those requirements, the circumcision, the water rituals, the commandments for what kind of food you should and shouldn't eat, it's all taken out of the way. Those commandments nailed to the cross, put to death, we were put to death, we were buried with him, and ultimately, because we were buried with him, because we decided we're going to partake with Jesus in his death, that's what we do when we put our lives into his hands and say, my life, it's all in your hands, Lord, what you accomplished for me, I'm giving it all to you.

I'm not going to give you a part of my life and put some confidence in you and part of the confidence in me, all my confidence is in you, and Lord, if you screw this up, all my chips are in, I'm not putting some chips over here and other chips over here, all my cards are right here with you, and if you screw this up, I'm sunk, and that's what God wants us to do, he wants all our chips with him, put all of our confidence with him, and that's the best kind of Christian life, and if we'll go with him, put all our chips with him, we're buried with him, just like he died, he's buried and immersed under the ground, overwhelmed by the dirt, and then also just as he rose from the dead, we have new life with him, a new life, a spiritual new life, in which our inner man, the Bible says is being renewed, day by day, and in the future, that same life will be given to this mortal body that so many of us feel, you know, death, pain, suffering, but we'll be no more in a future time.

If there's anybody here who hasn't made that decision, this is a gift that God offers to everyone. We put these John 3.16 signs in our yard, and what's the message of John 3.16, for God so loved the world that he gave his only son that whosoever, whosoever would believe in him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

In another place, it says that Christ died, is it for the righteous? No, his death was for the unrighteous, for the ungodly.

[59 : 52] God, he's a sinner. There's only one qualification to receive the gift of God, the gift of his blood. You have to be a sinner. That's it. You have to be ungodly.

You have to be unrighteous. There are some people, they don't think that they are, and so they'll refuse the gift. No, no thanks, I don't need that. But if that's you, you know that that's a gift that you need, all you have to do, at any point, is reach out your hand and say, God, I need that gift.

And you can have eternal life with him. Be buried with him in baptism, in that baptism of death, and raised to walk in a new life. Amen?

Amen. All right, thanks everybody. Let's go ahead and take just five minutes for some questions or comments, anything that came up while we were going through this.

And if there's not any, that's fine. I actually had a question the other week that I was going to bring up. Maybe we'll speak to that if we don't get anything else.

[61 : 08] Does anyone have anything? Now be careful, I saw somebody scratching their chin and I was about to call on somebody.

John up here. Isabel, you want to run up here? I noticed in several of those verses that you talked about, it said John baptized you with water, but, which means there's a change, that Christ will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.

And that's what I take away from that is that there has been a change made. And you don't have to do all those things. Yep. Amen. Thank you for that.

Anyone else? All the way in the back, Isabella. Can you go all the way in the back? She's running. She's a hustler.

I talked to Marv one day about next to your salvation, what is the most important thing to believe?

[62 : 14] And he said, you are sealed. The devil can't touch you. Can't touch your soul. And that's just so comforting. And it's interesting, what is the seal?

You know, a seal, we have, in the olden days, you have a seal of wax, right? You'd put on a letter. To seal it, shut, secure. Well, the scriptures say we're sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise.

It's the down payment. A down payment to secure something in the future. We won't have it all. We still have these dying bodies. But eventually we're going to get the full thing.

And that the Holy Spirit, God gave his spirit to us. The Bible says that we are the temples of God's spirit. Our bodies as believers is his temple. And because his spirit lives in us, that's the promise, that's the seal, the promise of a future fulfillment.

Boy, is that encouraging. Thanks, Roger. Anyone else? God's did for Israel, which was so gracious and loving and kind, yet in comparison to what you did for those people back then, to what you have done for us today, it's just unbelievable. And unfortunately, some people even refuse to believe it. [64 : 07] But I ask, Father, that you would stir up our faith, that we would believe you more and more and more every day, that we would take this message of being complete in Christ to heart, that you would open up the eyes of our understanding, that we would know and understand that more as we look to your word. In Jesus' mighty name, Amen.