

Torn Open

Scripture Reading — Mark 1:9-13

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 1:10

The gospel of Mark uses a powerful verb to make a point. The heavens were “torn open.” At Jesus’ baptism God rips open heaven and pours out his favor and blessing. He showers his love upon the world.

Ask Protestants to cite a verse on baptism, and most will think immediately of “The Great Commission,” where Jesus says, “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them . . .” (Matthew 28:19), but wise early church leaders taught that the key to understanding baptism is the passage about Jesus’ own baptism. For example, John Chrysostom (A.D. 347-407) asked, “Why were the heavens opened?” And he answered: “To inform you that at your baptism this is also done.”

At Christ’s baptism and ours, God rips heaven open and pours out his grace. It’s an amazing thought. We can have his peace. We can know his joy. We can live out his gentleness. We can commune with him in prayer. God comes to us with amazing grace and full favor. The blessings of heaven are available to all of us who are united with Christ in baptism.

There’s an old, mistaken understanding of baptism that says, “I should postpone my baptism, because if afterward I sin, I’ll be in trouble.” But the good news of this text is that baptism isn’t about us at all. It’s about God ripping open heaven and pouring out grace. Thank God!

Prayer

Father, thank you for pouring on us your grace and love and all the -other blessings of heaven. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

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