

Living the Mystery: The Trinity and the Christian Life

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Jesus' Baptism and the Revelation of the Trinity

⁹In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw *the heavens opened* [*schizō*] and *the Spirit descending upon him like a dove*; ¹¹and a voice came from heaven, "*Thou art my beloved Son*; with thee I am well pleased." (Mark 1:9–11)

Baptism as Death

I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how I am constrained until it is accomplished! (Luke 12:50)

And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to him, and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you." ³⁶And he said to them, "What do you want me to do for you?" ³⁷And they said to him, "Grant us to sit, *one at your right hand and one at your left*, in your glory." ³⁸But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to *drink the cup that I drink*, or to *be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized*?" (Mark 10:35–38)

And with him they crucified two robbers, *one on his right and one on his left*... ³⁷And Jesus uttered a loud cry, and breathed his last. ³⁸And the curtain of the temple was *torn* [*schizō*] in two, from top to bottom. ³⁹And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that he thus breathed his last, he said, "*Truly this man was the Son of God!*" (Mark 15:37–39)

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. (Romans 6:1–4)

The Sign of the Cross

"He who does not love does not know God; for *God is love*..." (1 John 4:8)

And the LORD said to him, 'Go through the city, through Jerusalem, and put *a mark* ["T"] *upon the foreheads* of the men who sigh and groan over all the abominations that are committed in it.' And to the others he said in my hearing, 'Pass through the city after him, and smite; your eye shall not spare, and you shall show no pity; slay old men outright, young men and maidens, little children and women, but touch no one upon whom is the mark. And begin at my sanctuary.—Ezekiel 9:4–6.

²Then I saw another angel ascend from the rising of the sun, with the *seal* of the living God, and he called with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm earth and sea, ³saying, "Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God upon their foreheads." (Revelation 7:2–3)

Now the Greek letter *Tau* and our own letter T is the very form of the cross, which he predicted would be the sign on our foreheads in the true Catholic Jerusalem.—Tertullian (c. 160–250 A.D.)¹

"The seal, then, is the water: they descend into the water dead, and they arise alive."
—Shepherd of Hermas (2nd cent.)²

¹ *Against Marcion*, 3:22; *ANF* 2:340.

² Shepherd of Hermas, *Similitudes* IX, 16; *ANF* 2:49.

The Priestly Seal

And you shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother, *for glory and for beauty*...³⁶ "And you shall make a plate of pure gold, and engrave on it, like the engraving of a signet [*sphragis*], 'Holy to the LORD.'³⁷ And you shall fasten it on the turban by a lace of blue; it shall be on the front of the turban.³⁸ It shall be upon Aaron's forehead... (Exod 28:2, 36–38)

Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne,⁵ and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood⁶ and *made us a kingdom, priests* to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. (Revelation 1:4–6)

[Baptism confers] "a sacramental *character* or 'seal' by which the Christian shares in Christ's priesthood and is made a member of the Church according to different states and functions." (CCC 317)

The Piercing of Jesus' Side

When Jesus had received the vinegar, he said, "It is finished"; and he bowed his head and *gave up his spirit*.³¹ Since it was the day of Preparation, in order to prevent the bodies from remaining on the cross on the sabbath (for that sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.³² So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who had been crucified with him;³³ but when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs.³⁴ But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once *there came out blood and water*. (John 19:30–34)

The River of Life

³⁷ On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and proclaimed, "If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink."³⁸ He who believes in me, as the scripture has said, '*Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water.*'"³⁹ Now *this he said about the Spirit*, which those who believed in him were to receive; for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. (John 7:37–39)

Then he brought me back to the door of the temple; and behold, water was issuing from below the threshold of the temple toward the east (for the temple faced east); and the water was flowing down from below the south end of the threshold of the temple, south of the altar. (Ezek 47:1)

And why was it called the Water Gate? Because through it they brought in the flagon of water for the libation at the Feast [of Tabernacles]. R. Eliezer b. Jacob says: Through it *the waters trickle forth* and hereafter they will *issue out from under the threshold of the House* [cf. Ezek 47:1]."³

Then he showed me *the river of the water of life*, bright as crystal, *flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb*² through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree were *for the healing of the nations*... (Revelation 22:1–2)

The Temple of Jesus' Body

The Jews then said to him, "What sign have you to show us for doing this?"¹⁹ Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."²⁰ The Jews then said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?"²¹ But *he spoke of the temple of his body*. (John 2:18–21)

³ Herbert Danby, *The Mishnah* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933), 158. For a further discussion on this festival see, Håkan Ulfgard, *The Story of Sukkot: The Setting, Shaping, and Sequel of the Biblical Feast of Tabernacles* (BGBE 34; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1998); Jeffrey L. Rubenstein, *The History of Sukkot in the Second Temple and Rabbinic Periods* (BJC 302; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995).