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## Baptism of Our Lord • Romans 6:1–11 • January 11, 2015

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**Baptism of Our Lord • Romans 6:1–11 • January 11, 2015**

This pericope has all the dangers of a familiar text: we recall parts of it perfectly but may not remember how those parts all fit together. The themes of this passage are, no doubt, regular themes within our preaching. This day, however, can provide us with an opportunity to present this passage as something new, to see it from a new perspective, to connect it with Epiphany themes in a way that will restore its impact and let it be truly heard again.

The gospel reading for today (Mark 1:4–11) is more immediately about Jesus’s death and resurrection than it is about our baptism, so the pairing with Romans 6 can work very nicely. Our Lord accepts the judgment of John the Baptist that Israel is sinful and unprepared to welcome her Lord. He places himself under the condemnation of Israel’s last prophet, yet hears from his Father that in him the Father has, at last, found a son who pleases him. As servant-king Jesus goes forth to do his Father’s will and to complete the work he has been given to do. This leads directly to Romans 6.

Romans really is quite an “Epiphany book.” Paul is very concerned in this epistle with things that are being “made manifest”: first God’s wrath and then God’s righteousness. Martin Franzmann refers here to our old status and our new status—very appropriate themes for January preaching!<sup>1</sup> Having demonstrated that God’s righteousness is revealed in Christ Jesus, and having let Abraham illustrate his point, Paul now begins to explore the new status and the new life we have as people justified by faith in Christ. We are set free from old slaveries, especially from our bondage to sin. Living as free sons and daughters rather than as slaves to sin doesn’t come easily or naturally for us. In order to silence our confused chatter and clear our jumbled thinking, Paul has to give his first command in this epistle: λογίζεσθε (*logízesthe*), “reckon! think! evaluate! consider!” (v. 11).

**Suggested Outline**

Introduction: Many people take time in January to reflect on the year just past and consider the year just begun. It can be a very valuable time for evaluating and correcting where needed. The whole world finds itself in need of even more serious considering, evaluating, and repenting in light of the epiphany of our Lord Jesus Christ. As he makes himself known through word and deed, everyone must stop and consider what God is doing in this man Jesus and what that means for us now and forever.

- I. Consider his baptism and yours
  - A. With respect to sin and grace
    1. Jesus comes as the Lamb of God who bears away the sin of the world so that he might be the bringer and revealer of God’s grace.
    2. It’s a devilish logic that tempts us to think we can enjoy even more of God’s grace by continuing to sin.<sup>2</sup>
  - B. With respect to death and life
    1. Jesus lives to die: He emerges from baptism to a life of service and suffering that will lead to his death for us.

2. We die to live: We emerge from baptism as those who have been buried with Christ and raised to new life through the glory of the Father.
- II. Consider yourselves
- A. Dead
    1. Our old self—our body of sin—was crucified with Christ. At Christmas we celebrated with great joy the fact that God’s Son took upon himself our human nature and all our sin. For us he goes to the cross. In baptism, faith unites us to him so that his death is truly our death.
    2. “Death puts an end to all claims and cuts all ties.”<sup>3</sup> Our former master, the tyrant sin, no longer has any claim over us.
  - B. Alive
    1. Baptism is burial and resurrection.
    2. We are alive to God, with a new status and relationship as children of God.
  - C. Free
    1. We are free to live to God in this new-year-new-beginning new life.
    2. We are free to let Christ make himself manifest in us.

Jeffrey A. Oschwald

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Martin H. Franzmann, *Romans: A Commentary* (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1968), 19.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Franzmann, 108–109.

<sup>3</sup> Franzmann, 112.  
<http://scholar.csl.edu/cj/vol40/iss4/15>