

## A01

Explain how Marks account of Jesus Baptism has influenced Christian beliefs and understanding of the sacrament of Baptism. Refer to the central features of Infant and Believers baptism in your answer.

A Sacrament is an outward sign of an inward, spiritual blessing. Christians celebrate Sacraments as they believe that they are special channels for bringing God's love and blessing to them. They are viewed as a very important part of worship in many Christian Churches.

The word Baptism was initially derived from the dipping of sheep to kill parasites. The same principle is used in baptism; those who are cleansed with water are cleansed from their sins. It is also believed that the term derives from the Greek word baptizein, which is thought to have the meaning "to dip repeatedly" or "to immerse". The Christian sacrament of baptism is the service by which people become members of the Church. There are many references to Baptism in the scriptures and Jesus was baptised by John the Baptist. In Christian Churches, there are two types of Baptism; Infant baptism; mainly practised by the Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Anglican Church, and Believers Baptism; which is practised mainly by the Baptist Church.

Infant baptism is based on the principles that when baptised, you are freed from original sin and you enter the Catholic Church. In the Infant baptism, the child is sprinkled with water, unlike in Adult baptism, where the candidate is fully submerged in the water. Believers Baptists frequently point out that their baptism is the only kind mentioned in the bible, i.e. Jesus was submerged at the Jordan and not sprinkled.

Jesus was baptised by John the Baptist at the River Jordan. His baptism symbolised that he was beginning his work and mission on

earth. Jesus was fully submerged in the water so all of his body was covered and John's baptism was not offered to children. His baptism indicated to his followers and those present at the Jordan that he was making a fresh start and that he was beginning a new journey and a new mission to fulfil the Lord's work on earth. When "Jesus came out of the water, he saw heaven opening" and this was a personal vision (which means that it was only Christ who saw this). It was then said that "the spirit came down to him like a dove" (a sign of peace) and a voice came down from heaven "you are my own dear son, I am pleased with you". His voice showed that he approved what Jesus was doing. Jesus' baptism was unique and individual, as when he was submerged, the holy trinity was present; his father spoke from heaven, the son was submerged in the water and the Holy Spirit was represented by a dove. After the Baptism, Jesus was cleansed and the spirit gave him strength for the journey ahead. When he was baptised at the Jordan, Jesus showed that he approved of John's Baptism and the work he was doing. Jesus baptism was quite Ironic because he was the sinless son of god and yet, he came to be baptised for the forgiveness of his sins.

Baptism was popular throughout the early Christian church, but it was only Adults who were baptised. Infant Baptism gradually became a ceremony in the churches when it was identified that Adults wanted their children to be baptised too, so that they could receive the blessings of church membership as well. The Baptist church was formed when a group of people left the Church of England and moved to Holland in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. They formed their own church and they were known as Anabaptists but later became known as Believers Baptists. They did this because they believed that only adults should be baptised, mainly as the only reference of baptism in the bible was of Jesus' which was carried out when he was 30, so he was an adult.

In both Baptisms, Jesus' baptism is recalled by both the Ministers and the Priests. Many of the rituals in the Baptisms today are derived from Jesus' own Baptism. In Believers Baptism, the

candidates who wish to be baptised, are submerged in a pool of water. Before being baptised, the candidate must show knowledge that they know and understand the scriptures and their meanings. The candidates are aware of the promises they are to make, just as Jesus was 2,000 years ago. Jesus was baptised in the Jordan and Baptist Churches try to recreate his baptism by using a pool of water (the Baptistery) to baptise the candidates. Some candidates go to great lengths to be baptised in rivers and even the Jordan itself. The ceremony is conducted in front of the public and Jesus' was also a public ceremony. The Baptistery is usually positioned at the front of the church and is sunk into the floor. Being led into the water is linked with your life being washed away with your sins. Going down into the pool of water is linked with dying with Jesus. Being beneath the water is linked with Jesus' burial and coming out of the water is linked with rising with Christ. Their submersion in the water shows that their former life is gone and their re-birth to Christianity has occurred. Also, the male candidates must wear a white t-shirt and the women must wear a white dress. They do this to show Jesus' purity and forgiveness. During the ceremony, a candle is present and this will guide them on the correct path and help them on their journey of faith. John the Baptists sacrament was not offered to children, and neither is Believer's baptism. Adult baptism is a personal choice, just as was Christ's when he decided to be baptised by John to show he approved of his work. For those candidates who are baptised, baptism changes your life showing that you are a fully fledged follower of Christ.

The ceremony of Infant baptism begins when the parents and Godparents present the child for Baptism. They will then take responsibility for the child's spiritual welfare until it grows up. The ceremony takes place eight days after birth, the same day a Jewish boy is circumcised. This may be linked with Jesus' baptism or life as he was Jewish. The infant is welcomed at the door and this symbolises that the child is welcomed into a new community of believers. The child is held up in front of the font facing east. This

may also be linked with Jesus as this is the symbol of resurrection. Then, water is poured over the child's head (unlike Christ's baptism in which he was submerged) three times. Original sin is now cleansed and the child is reborn to Christianity. The oil of catechumen is used during the ceremony and this gives the child strength to be able to get through difficult times. The oil of chrism is also present and this represents that the child has been chosen by god for a special task. The sign of the cross is made on the infant's forehead and this represents the trinity e.g. the father, son and Holy Spirit which were also present at the Jordan. During the proceedings a candle is lit, and this shows that the child has been lead from spiritual Darkness to light. The child wears a white robe and this represents purity and forgiveness. For many, infant baptism is a very important part of a child's Christian journey and is the foundation for receiving all of the other sacraments.

To conclude, I think that Mark's account of Christ's baptism has influenced the sacrament of baptism substantially. His baptism has affected the way we think of the sacrament and changed our beliefs and the way we carry out the ceremonies. I believe that neither church is right, and neither church is wrong. Both baptisms have their roots in the Christian Church. As long as water is used during the service and the reference to the trinity, "I baptise you in the name of the father, and of the son and of the Holy Spirit, then it is considered valid by most Christian. When it comes to baptism these two factors are the main sign of unity between the Christian Churches.