

## Theophany

*Make ready, O Zebulon, and prepare, O Nephtali, and thou, River Jordan, cease thy flow and receive with joy the Master coming to be baptized. And thou, Adam, rejoice with the first mother, and hide not yourselves as ye did of old in paradise; for having seen you naked, he appeared to clothe you with the first robe. Yea, Christ hath appeared to renew the whole creation.*

*—Troparion of the prefeast of Theophany.*

*In the running waters of the Jordan River, on this day the Lord of all crieth to John: Be not afraid and hesitate not to baptize Me, for I am come to save Adam, the first-formed man.*

*—Kontakion of the prefeast of Theophany.*

### Introduction

The baptism of our Lord is of such importance that it is one of the few events recounted in all four Gospels (Matthew 3, Mark 1, Luke 3, & John 1). Since the Nicene Creed tells us that baptism is ‘for the remission of sins’, why was Jesus Christ, who was without sin, baptized? Indeed, St John the Baptist had the same question, ‘John would have prevented him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?”’ But Jesus answered him, “Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he consented.’ (Matthew 3.14–15 ESV) The hymns of the prefeast show us that renewing humanity and the whole creation is included in fulfilling all righteousness.

### Paradise and the Fall

‘God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes.’ (Ecclesiastes 7.29 ESV) In the first chapters of Genesis, we read how God created paradise, and created man to tend it. Man was created without sin, with but one commandment: “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” (Genesis 2.16–17 ESV) The first couple, however, partook of the Fruit of knowledge and were driven out of paradise into this world. This was done to prevent humanity from partaking of the Tree of Life and living forever as the demons, without the possibility of repentance.

### Renewal and Baptism

The Synoptic Gospels recount that after Jesus was baptized, he went out to the desert to fast and be tempted by the Devil. This contrasts with Adam: whereas Adam failed to fast from one food in a garden, Christ (the Last Adam) fasted from all foods in the wilderness. Christ in his humanity resisted the temptations of the Devil, whereas the first humans were deceived by the first temptation. This juxtaposition links baptism to creation. (The earth was also brought forth from the waters as Genesis 1 relates.) Throughout the Epistles, the Apostles link baptism to regeneration and the renewing of creation (E.g., Romans 6.3–6, Titus 3.5) St Peter links baptism with the Deluge, which was a renewal of the world (1 Peter 3.21).

### Conclusion

In undergoing baptism, Christ renewed the whole of creation and effected the regeneration of humanity. Christ brings the new creation out of the waters, just as he brought the earth out of water originally. In the wilderness, he succeeded where Adam failed in paradise; he fulfilled all righteousness. Because of this, in our baptism, we are united to this new work of creation God is bringing about. Indeed, the baptism of Christ was for the remission of our sins.

*O Son of God, Who wast baptized by John in the Jordan, save us who sing to Thee. Alleluia.*