

Sermon Series:
Who is this man? - The Book of Mark
Sermon Title:
The Testimony of John the Baptist [Sermon #2]
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Mark 1:4-8

4 John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. **5** And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. **6** Now John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey. **7** And he preached, saying, "After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. **8** I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

Corresponding passages:

Matthew 3:1-12, Luke 3:1-20, John 1:19-42, John 4:22-36

Introduction:

If I were to ask you what the most important event was of the last 400 years, what would you say? From 1616 until now, what has been the most important event in history?

Well, in Israel the biggest event that had happened in the last 400 years was the appearance of John the Baptist in the desert.

It seemed God was silent.

There had not been a prophet for 400 years.

The last prophet to speak was the prophet Malachi, who had promised that there would be a messenger crying out in the wilderness to Prepare The Way of the Lord.

So, when John appeared out in the desert at the river Jordan, it was a big deal.

He was instantly a super star.

He was weird.

He was loud.

He was a 'blast from the past'.

His location was significant and said strong things.

Last week we talked about the Testimony of Scripture...that the scriptures testify that Jesus Christ is the promised Messiah, the promised King and the Son of God.

Today, we want to look at the Testimony of John the Baptist to this same truth of WHO JESUS IS!

I. John's Unique Ministry-

As we saw last week, there were these amazing verses in the Bible that mentioned John's coming.

It's pretty awesome.

John had a miraculous birth.

His parents were very old and couldn't have children.

An angel announces his birth.

The angel Gabriel tells his parents exactly what his name is supposed to be; John.

The scripture says that he is filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb. (Luke 1:15) {Think on that for a while}

He was born for a single purpose. He had a simple single ministry...To Prepare The Way of The Lord.
To Make His Paths Straight.

*In that day when a king or a high official would travel they would have servants that would go before them to remove the rocks or fix the holes in the road. They would 'prepare the way.'

*or like when Xi Jinping or Barack Obama visit another country. Think of all of the preparations that go into that.

John's purpose was to remove the obstacles for people to respond to Jesus.

John's purpose was to remove the rocks, plough up the ground and get the ground ready.

Illustration: When I was living in Tibet. We saw very little fruit. The ground was hard. The ground was stony. The ground was dry. I will say that for years people labored there removing rocks, watering the soil, ploughing the ground....preparing the way for the Lord.

So, John had a UNIQUE MINISTRY of testifying of who Jesus was and getting people ready.

II. John's Unique Method-

What was John's method?

Well, he's known by this name...John the Baptist.

John the Baptizer.

Even our church has the word 'Baptist' in it.

Was this something common in his day? No it wasn't.

There is good evidence that, in this part of the world, this baptism was unique to John.

Non-Jews would have to wash and clean themselves, to show that they were removing and washing off their dirtiness before they could be Jews.

But John's method was calling **Jews** to be baptized.

Were they having their real sins washed away?

Were they being spiritually cleaned?

NO.

They were just showing their desire to turn away from their sins, admit it and submit to God.

John's baptism was saying, 'I acknowledge my need to change.'

Baptism didn't save them and it doesn't save anybody.

Only Jesus' blood washes away sin.

Their sins would only be washed away by BLOOD....not water.

GOSPEL: what can wash away my sin? Only Jesus'. Only Jesus.

John's baptism was to prepare your heart.
Jesus' baptism in the Holy Spirit would change your heart.

As John Piper said, John's baptism was like a lightning bug.
Jesus' baptism would be **LIGHTNING!**

John's baptism was unique. Why? Because it was a way for people to prepare their dry, hard, broken hearts for the seeds of the gospel through the lips of Jesus.

III. John's Unique location-

John is in the wilderness, the desert. John is calling people to be baptized in the Jordan river.

Why is this significant?

How well do you know your Bible history?

The children of Israel came out of Egypt, out of slavery and passed through the waters of the Red Sea.

In the wilderness, God led them through the wilderness, through the desert for 40 years. He was with them.

Yes, they disobeyed and that is why they were there for so long, but when the Bible speaks of the wilderness, it is God calling them back to the beginning, back to when they first walked with him.

Then they passed through the Jordan River to enter the promised land and John is calling them to repent, not just as individuals but as a nation.

‘Come back to where you first knew me’. ‘Come to the wilderness and come into the Jordan. Enter the promised land once again.

IV. John’s Unique Message-

John’s message would’ve been hard for some.

Even though ALL of Jerusalem and Judea were going out to him to be baptized, the religious leaders didn’t like his message.

They were OK. They didn’t need to change.

‘How dare he tell us Jews that we need to be cleaned up.’

‘He is treating us like the other nations.’ {Read Matthew 3:7-10}

Although John’s message may have sounded harsh, ‘REPENT’... it is also a message of grace.

The whole point of John coming was to announce the GOOD NEWS’, to prepare the way for people to be saved.

In {John 1:29} we see John’s unique message announced very clearly.

‘Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.’

*John’s message was clear. I’m not the man. I’m just a voice. I’m just a screamer in the desert. He’s the LAMB OF GOD!

V. John's Unique Appearance-

John looked, dressed and spoke like a prophet.

For 400 years people had waited to hear a prophet.

He was dressed like the prophet Elijah.

He had never cut his hair.

He was totally dependent on God to provide for him, and God did, honey and grasshoppers.

Elijah was fed in the desert by ravens and John is fed by God in a similar manner.

The last prophet of the Old Testament is screaming out in the desert- REPENT for Messiah has arrived.

Everyone in Judea and Jerusalem knew right away that he was someone special.

His ministry was unique.

His method was unique.

His location was unique.

His message was unique.

His appearance was *definitely* unique.

BUT.... that wasn't the most unique thing about John.

VI. John's Unique Cousin-

John 1:7 says that John came to 'bear witness about the light' but that he wasn't the light.

John 3:29 says that John is 'the friend of the bridegroom' not the groom.

John is preparing the way for someone else.

John baptized with water only.

His cousin, Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit of God.

John is the king's herald. Jesus is the king.

Look in Mark 1:7. It says, "After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie."

In John 3:22, Jesus and John were baptizing at the same time and they said to John, 'Rabbi, he who was with you across the Jordan, to whom you bore witness—look he is baptizing, and all are going to him.'

John's response was, 'I told you that I am not the one. I was sent before him. The one who has the bride in the groom. The best man just rejoices because the groom has a bride.

HE MUST INCREASE. I MUST DECREASE.

APPLICATION:

As I have studied this passage, I have asked myself some questions.

- Do I have John's attitude when it comes to my ministry? Do I just want to point to Jesus or in some way, am I really trying to point people to myself?
- Do I desire to see the work done even if God doesn't use me? What if God chooses to bless someone else?

*Cari sharing with Natasha in our village.

QUOTE: "You're not the painting that people are meant to look at. You're a window to the glory of the Christ." Paul Tripp

- Don't all of us have a ministry similar to John the Baptist?
- Point to Jesus
- To proclaim Christ
- To make the path straight
- To remove rocks
- To remove obstacles
- To plough up the ground.
- **Don't we need to do the same?**

The Scriptures testify that Jesus is the Christ. The Son of God. The lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. John also testified to this same truth.

WE ARE TO DO THE SAME.

