

9.6.20
Matthew 3:1-12
John the Baptist: The Man, The Message

As we move on in our study of Matthew, the majestic, spiritual events of the New Testament continue to unfold.

Several hundred years after Isaiah and others preached and prophesied that the Messiah, the Savior of the Jews would be born, Jesus is given to the world as an infant human child. Mary and Joseph, wise men, shepherds, a widow, a servant of the church and a few others were witnesses to this earth shaking event.



The King of the area, Herod and all Jerusalem with him were stirred about the news of the King of the Jews being born. But then, things got quiet for several years but God wasn't done speaking. In fact, even before the announcement of the birth of Jesus to Mary and Joseph, the angel of the Lord spoke to someone else about what was about to come about.

God wasn't just going to have Jesus pop up out of Nazareth and begin to preach. No, God was going to send a herald, a messenger to His people so they could prepare themselves for who and what was about to appear.

VIDEO - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3vYdXkNC2-s>

Reveal parties. There are something that came along the scene probably about 5 or so years ago.

Not only when you about to find out what gender your child is, when you have something important coming up and you want others to know about it and even come and participate, you don't just spring it on them at the last moment do you?

No, you give them a call weeks in advance, send them an invitation, make some kind of special announcement, letting them know what is coming up and that you want them to be a part of it. That's who John the Baptist is. He is the one who is delivering the invitation. He is the one who is in the know about the coming event.

After Jesus was born and there was a big stir in Jerusalem and Bethlehem, the news about the new King of the Jews dies down. Joseph, at the prompting of an angel, takes Mary and Jesus to Egypt and then returns with them back to Nazareth, his home town.

In Luke 2:52 we read, **Luke 2:52, "And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men."** In other words, in the obscure town of Nazareth, Jesus learned the family trade of being a carpenter as well as grew in wisdom and favor with God and men.

That's an odd statement isn't it? Jesus grew in favor with God and men. The men part I get but Jesus grew in favor with God? The only explanation I could think of was that because Jesus was human He could have chosen some human ways but He didn't did He? We know that He was sinless and followed God's will for His entire life, all the way to the cross.

But thirty years did pass since He was born as we read in **Luke 3:23**, **“When He began His ministry, Jesus Himself was about thirty years of age...”**

Thirty years of silence. But then the silence is broken.

This is where we pick up in Matthew, **Matthew 3:1-6**, **“Now in those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ For this is one the referred to by Isaiah the prophet when he said, ‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness, make ready the way of the Lord, make His paths straight!’**

Now John himself had a garment of camel’s hair and a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then Jerusalem was going out to him, and all Judea and all the district around the Jordon; and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, as they confessed their sins.”



I tried to find what I thought might have been a close depiction of John. That he was a rugged man is no doubt. His dress was simple. Camel hair was not the preferred cloth for clothing as it was pretty rough so it was used by those who couldn’t afford nice clothing.

Locusts or probably grasshoppers doesn’t sound to tasty either although if you dunked them in honey they probably weren’t bad. Instead of having honey roasted peanuts John ate honey roasted grasshoppers.

John was special though. Like Jesus, John was conceived for a purpose.

Look with me at Luke 1:15-17. The angel Gabriel came to the father of John and announced his birth. Like Abraham and Sarah, we are told they

were advanced in their years and Elixabeth was barren, childless. As the angel Gabriel was telling John's father what was going to happen he also told him who John was going to be.

Luke 1:15-17, "For he (John) will be great in the sight of the Lord; and he will drink no wine or liquor, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit while yet in in his mother's womb. And he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God.

It is he who will go as a forerunner before Him (Jesus) in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

Some great things we find here about John.

First we see that...

1. John was going to be great in the sight of the Lord

God set apart for Himself a special person who was going to prepare the people for the coming King.

For years the Israelites had read about the coming Messiah. Since they had been oppressed and under the rule of a number of different countries and now Rome, they ached for a land of their own and a king of their own who would rule them and bring their country back into the glory days when David was King.

Not only were they looking for a Messiah, they were also looking for the herald, the voice of one crying in the wilderness.

Look back at **Matthew 4:3, "For this is one the referred to by Isaiah the prophet when he said, 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness, make ready the way of the Lord, make His paths straight!'**

600 years before John was born, Isaiah the prophet was talking about him, saying someone was going to come as a herald, a messenger, helping people to be prepared for the coming of the King.

The second thing I see about John in this passage is the fact that he

2. John was filled with the Holy Spirit while in his mother's womb

Something unique occurred with the conception of John. Throughout the Old Testament you can read about individuals that God put His Spirit on and in but to be filled with the Spirit of God who was Holy was unique. And to have it occur while in the womb was, well, very unique.

In his proclamation of who God had called John to be, John's father, Zacharias said the following.

Luke 1:76-77, "And you child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; For you will go on before the Lord to prepare His ways; to give His people the knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins."

And in verse 80 we read, **verse 80, "And the child continued to grow and to become strong in spirit, and he lived in the deserts until the days of his public appearance."**

So John had a call on his life but it wasn't until he was probably about 30 years old that he came out from the desert to start sharing the message God had written upon His heart.

I have no doubt that during his time in the desert, before his public ministry started, John spent a lot of time with the Lord. What occurred during those days we don't know but the result of those days are clear as

when John did begin his public ministry, he moved in the power of the Holy Spirit and the people responded.

Look back at verses 4-5, **“Then Jerusalem was going out to him, and all Judea and all the district around the Jordan; and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, as they confessed their sins.”**

Hundreds, thousands of people flocked to hear John speak. It was like a Billy Graham or a Reinhard Bonnke revival. Some of you might not of heard of Reinhard Bonnke but he was a German born evangelist who spoke to crowds of up to 2 million people.

I don't think John the Baptist had 2 million people flock to him but many from Jerusalem and the surrounding area came to him and not only listened to his message but they were being baptized and as they were being baptized they were confessing their sins.

That would be a sight to see today wouldn't it? The church gathers at the lake and as people come into the water to be baptized they publicly confess their sins.

There is something powerful about this process. Confessing your sins, not just to Jesus in a silent or private prayer but confess to another person.

James, the brother of Jesus wrote this. **James 5:16, “Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed.”**

Are you struggling with sin in some area of your life? The biblical way to be healed of that sin is to grab a brother or sister in Christ and confess it to them. Not just confess it to them but pray with them and let them pray with you as you both take it before the Lord.

This passage says confession is the path to deliverance, to healing. Be honest, open and transparent before God and before man.

That is what was occurring along the Jordan river. But it wasn't just spontaneous confession. No, it was happening because...

3. John was given a message

John was given a message and it was being delivered in the power of the Holy Spirit. Conviction was falling upon people and they were confessing their sins and being baptized for the forgiveness of their sins.

Two things I wanted to say before we talk about the message of John the Baptist. First, John spent a lot of time with God in the desert, growing strong in the Spirit and in the message God wanted Him to share.

Second, there was no wavering in his message. It was strong, hard and to the point. And when the religious leaders came along, he didn't show them any special treatment. In fact, he was pretty hard on them. John himself was a man under conviction, the conviction of what God had called him to do.

So, John was given a message to share.

I have listed in your bulletin all the places where the story of John the Baptist is found in the Gospels.

For outline only...

Matthew 4:1-17, Matthew 11:1-19, Matthew 14:1-13, Mark 1:1-8, Luke 1:5-25, 57-80, Luke 3:1-20, John 1:6-34, 3:22-35

I wanted us to take a deeper look at the message of Jesus next week. But for now the following is enough.

Matthew 3:1-2, “Now in those days John the Baptists came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’

The message: Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand.

John’s message was a simple message. We all know what it means to repent. Stop doing what you are doing which is against God’s law. Confess it and go a new way. Right? Repent.

And for John, the message was the Kingdom of Heaven is coming. The Kingdom of heaven is coming first in the form of the Savior and then it is coming in a unique and spiritual way. We will talk more about this next week.

I wanted to close with this.

John was going to be great in the sight of the Lord. He was chosen by God to do a special work. The same is true of each of you. Since you are sitting here this morning or watching this on-line, God has moved on you and in you.

4. You are great in God’s eyes

Luke 15:10, “In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

When you accepted Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior, there was a reveal party in heaven for you.

We are told in 2 Corinthians 5:17, “Therefore if anyone is on Christ, they are a new creation; the old has passed away, the new has come.”

You were reborn through the great work of Jesus Christ. It is not fully revealed to you all that occurred, you are still working out your salvation. You still have struggles but the reality is you have been reborn into a new life that will go on for eternity.

God sees your struggles now but He also sees you who are going to be for eternity and He is pleased. As pleased as any parent could be.

John was filled with the Holy Spirit while in his mother's womb.

Boy, don't you wish that would have occurred with you. I do for me. It would have saved me a lot of heartache and pain I'm sure.

But the truth is, if you have accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior

5. You have been given the Holy Spirit

Galatians 4:6a, "Because you are His sons and daughters, God sent the Spirit of His Son into our heart..."

You might not be as full of the Holy Spirit as you could be. There may be some things, some blockage you have yet to deal with or confess, but you have been given the gift of the Holy Spirit and that is a big deal.

Lastly, like John the Baptist...

6. You have been given a message

You will never be like John the Baptist. There was only one forerunner for the Son of God. You will probably never be a Billy Graham or Reinhard Bonnke, speaking to thousands of people and seeing thousands come to Christ.

But I bet God will give you someone that He wants you to share the message of the saving work of His Son with. Maybe more than one.

John the Baptist was unique. He had a special assignment from God. But so are you. Each one of you are unique in the eyes of God. You are blessed, empowered and given a message that only you can share.

Let's stop here this morning and we will hear more about that message John was given and you are given next week.

Let's pray.