

Sam Storms
Bridgeway Church
3-21-10

It's All About Jesus, not John
Mark 1:1-11; John 3:22-30

Observe how different and shocking the appearance of John must have been:

He didn't come to the people in the synagogue, but called for them to come to him in the wilderness.

He didn't come in a soft and sensitive voice, but crying out loudly with great urgency and energy.

He didn't preach religious clichés in order to win friends and influence people, but spoke of repentance and impending judgment.

He wasn't dressed in clean robes, far less a sweater vest or pin-striped suit, but in a garment of camel hair with a leather belt.

And it wasn't a banana and orange juice for breakfast or fried chicken for lunch that sustained him, but locusts and wild honey.

We must remember, however, that whereas Mark has brought us to John, *it is John's aim to bring us to Jesus*. See **Luke 1:15-17; John 1:6; 3:27-30**.

After nearly 400 years of silence, God suddenly speaks through John the Baptist . . .

Let's note several things about John's message, all of which are designed to point us to Jesus:

First, he came "proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" (Mark 1:4). Briefly discuss the relationship between repentance and baptism and forgiveness . . . **READ Acts 3:19; 5:31; 10:43; 11:18; 13:38**. The baptism to which these people submitted was the public expression of their inward and personal repentance. Baptism, as it were, crystallized and embodied the repentance in their hearts.

Second, we must take note of the response (Mark 1:5). See also Matthew 3:7-8 and discuss it.

Third, most important of all is what he said about Jesus (Mark 1:7-8).

(1) v. 7 – Is John telling us something about himself here, or about Jesus? Explain.

(2) v. 8 – Spirit baptism - As John immersed the repentant in water, Jesus will immerse the repentant in the Holy Spirit. What does this mean?

The Baptism of Jesus

If Jesus was without sin and therefore had no need to repent, what reason could he have for being baptized? Observe our Lord's response: "But Jesus answered him, 'Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness'" (Mt. 3:15). **Four reasons** why Jesus was baptized by John:

(1) Jesus' submission to John's baptism was his way of putting **his stamp of approval** on the authority of John and the truth of his preaching.

(2) Matthew says it was to "fulfill all righteousness" (3:15). Righteousness requires that the Messiah **identify with his people and live inseparably with them**. There is a sense in which here, at his baptism,

Jesus is already taking on the sin of those for whom he will die. He is **stooping** to our level, **becoming as completely one with us in our humanity as he possibly can, identifying with us at every point.**

(3) Jesus submitted to the baptism of John to make it known publicly that a new age has dawned in God's redemptive purposes. The kingdom has come, as Jesus will say in v. 15. This, then, was the inauguration of our Lord's public ministry and his declaration that a new epoch in God's saving purposes has dawned.

(4) The baptism of Jesus was a concrete, visible illustration of the goal of his life. READ Mark 10:38-39. Jesus describes his impending death as a "baptism" in the sense that he will soon be immersed in death and buried in a tomb. Here, then, at the beginning of his ministry, the cross casts its ominous shadow across the path of our Lord.

Jesus sought baptism not from a consciousness of personal sin but from a concern for public righteousness. **Jesus didn't simply die the death you should have died; he also lived the life you should have lived!** He fulfilled the law of God both by obeying its precepts and suffering its penalty. Read Luke 2:52; John 8:29; Rom. 5:19.

And what was the Father's reaction to the Son's obedience? Three things happen:

- (1) The heavens were "torn open" (v. 10). READ Isa. 64:1ff. What did it look like?
- (2) The Holy Spirit descended on him like a dove (v. 10). Why a *dove*?
 - A sign of God's deep love and affection for Jesus ("beloved" Son)
 - A sign of the anointing of Jesus with the power of the HS (Acts 10:38)
 - The "dove" is bird of sacrifice in the OT; hence a preview of his atoning work
 - The "dove" was also an emblem of gentleness and compassion
 - The "dove" was also a symbol of creation and re-creation – READ Gen. 1:2 and Gen. 8:8-12 (the inauguration of a new era of grace and life).

N.B. – The reason the HS is symbolized by a dove is **not** to tell us something about **his nature** but to tell us something about **the nature of Jesus!** It is God the **Son**, not God the **Spirit**, whose qualities are expressed by the dove. The HS assumed the form of a dove to say something about Jesus, not about himself.

(3) The voice of confirmation – The baptism of Jesus and the descent of the Spirit in the form of a dove **do not make Jesus to be the Son of God**: they merely identify him and mark him out as such. He is being declared publicly to be who and what he has always been.

John 3:22-30

John's perspective on Jesus is seen in 3 statements he makes. They are found in v. 27, v. 28, and v. 30.

First, he joyfully celebrated the absolute sovereignty of Jesus Christ in all things, by acknowledging that He was the source of all things (v. 27).

Second, John had a remarkably honest self-awareness (v. 28). His sense of personal identity and value was shaped by Jesus Christ and his relationship to Him.

Third, and surely most important of all, he was committed to the supremacy of Jesus in all things (vv. 29-30).

- (1) v. 29 – What is the significance of John's "joy"? Can you say the same thing John said?
- (2) v. 30 – What does John mean in saying that he must "decrease" and Jesus must "increase"? Is this reflected in your own life? How?