

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

FEBRUARY 8TH-9TH // BOOK OF MATTHEW

FRONT RUNNER (MATT. 3:1-3)

WAIT, WE JUST FAST FORWARDED 28 YEARS!

Though we know quite a bit about Jesus' birth, there is little info and much speculation about His adolescent years.

- The most clarity we get is from Luke 2:51-52. Jesus was "obedient" to his parents and "increased in wisdom and stature with God and with people."

THIS PRESENTS A LOT OF QUESTIONS

Jesus was fully God, but the question arises, when did He know that? Though we don't know from scripture, it implies that as He grew in age, He rapidly became aware of His purpose and identity.

- We see this in Luke 2:46 when Jesus was in the temple teaching the teachers as a child.

THE FIRST PROPHET IN OVER 400 YEARS

We are now introduced to the powerful last prophet of the OT era, John the Baptist. John was a miracle child born from older parents who were in the priesthood and were not able to have kids.

- John was also Jesus' cousin who would have known Jesus from the time they were kids.

JOHN BROUGHT A POWERFUL MESSAGE

John came much like the prophets of old, especially Elijah (Mal. 4:5; Isaiah 40). Like Elijah, John's message was a call to repent.

- The people in John's day were living in an **entitled, arrogant, and blame-shifting** manner. **They were lazy with their faith and made excuses for their sinful lifestyles.**

THE PEOPLE NEEDED TO CHANGE

Israel was out of step with God, therefore society was not functioning properly. **They needed to change, but without a confession of wrongdoing and a desire to change, that was impossible.**

- **The people had gotten so comfortable in the world that their spiritual eyes had become blinded!**

WE ONLY HAVE SO LONG TO DECIDE

John came to teach repentance (changing the way we think and act), but he also came to teach that the Kingdom of God was near.

- This means 2 things: Jesus will come back when all people have had the opportunity to accept Him (Mt. 24:14), and the Kingdom is near literally by Jesus being in their presence.

THE KINGDOM IS REVEALED IN 3 WAYS

Jesus Christ in the flesh. Through the infilling of the **Holy Spirit** and the evidence of the fruit and gifts of the Spirit. And, through **the return of Jesus** before the final judgment of mankind.

- **The signs are clear to the one that has a desire to see them. Are we looking and listening?**

REPLACE THAT WITH THIS

John essentially came to be a messenger of a better choice. John asked the people to lay down their pride in place of humility, trade your selfishness for the greater good, lose yourself in order to find your God.

- **Repentance leads us to give up our kingdom for a better one and to trade our imperfection for His perfection!**

FRUIT (MATT. 3:4-10)

JOHN WAS A MAJOR ATTRACTION

John's diet and attire was reminiscent of other prophets, but the real draw to him was the clear message he delivered with power from the Spirit. Scholars estimate that over 100,000 people came to get baptized by him.

- **People are looking for hope and clarity in this confusing world! We need to teach a clear message.**

THE IMPORTANCE OF JOHN'S BAPTISMS

Jews didn't get baptized, but would ritually clean people who wanted to convert to Judaism. The point was to symbolically show their new identity into God's family.

- John's baptism was a call to turn from sin and belief that being a Jew saved. He also set the stage for all people to be adopted into Christ's family.

NOT ALL THE PEOPLE WERE SINCERE

Like any large crowd, there were rebellious and hypocritical people, and it is with John's baptisms that we are introduced to the Gospels' antagonists, the Pharisees (legalistic) and Sadducees (liberal).

- These were 2 political/religious parties that controlled the Jewish courts and legal system.

"BROOD OF VIPERS!"

John's discernment told him to directly address the hypocritical Pharisees and Sadducees. He did this to both warn the people from the corrupt religious leaders and to warn the leaders about their inevitable judgment from God if they don't repent.

- **We're called to warn the "innocent" and the guilty. God wants to save both.**

OUR FRUIT DEFINES WHAT WE ARE

John tells the Pharisees to **"produce fruit consistent with repentance."** This means our actions should reflect the faith we claim.

- In Mt. 12 Jesus says, **"A tree will be known by its fruit." What we do shows our faith more than what we say and proclaim to others. We cannot have faith without works (Jn. 2:18).**

THE SPIRIT (MATT. 3:11-12)

IT WAS NEVER ABOUT JOHN

The pinnacle of John's ministry was to point to Jesus. With great humility, John understood his brief role in the bigger picture of redemption.

- John positioned himself as the lowest, not even being worthy of taking Jesus' sandals off. **It is when we are humble and allow the Spirit to work that God makes us great.**

JESUS WOULD MAKE THE LINE CLEAR

John came to baptize with water, but Jesus would "baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire." The Holy Spirit will lead us in righteousness so we will not experience the "fire" and judgment of His second coming. **Jesus makes the lines clear and gives us power through His Spirit to endure until He comes back.**

THE SPIRIT WILL BALANCE US AS WELL

The Holy Spirit exemplifies grace and love, but the mention of fire also reminds us that God is just and a righteous Judge.

- We tend to swing to extremes, but we need to learn the balance of our faith. **Yes, God is perfect love, but perfect love cannot exist without perfect justice. We will be held accountable.**

THIS SHOULDN'T SCARE THE BELIEVER

Though we will face ridicule and possibly persecution in this life, Christians will not face God's wrath or eternal separation from Him.

- Mt. 10:28 says, **"Don't fear those who kill the body...rather fear the One who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." If we are walking with Him, we have nothing to be afraid of.**

A KING'S BAPTISM (MATT. 3:13-17)

PASSIVE AND QUIET TAKE A BACK SEAT

The first 29 years of Jesus' life is in quiet passivity as He grew into His role as Savior. At age 30 and after His baptism, this would all change. Jesus was about to get to work.

- Remember, **Jesus is 100% God and man.** Jesus has always existed, but the flesh side of Him began His earthly ministry at age 30.

IF JESUS WAS PERFECT, WHY WAS HE BAPTIZED?

Virtually all of Jesus' ministry was setting an example of how we are to live by God's standards. Jesus didn't need baptism, but to set the example of obedience to God, He humbled Himself to John the Baptist. Jesus even clarifies to John, "this is the way for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then, John understood the plan.

WITNESSING THE TRI-UNITY OF GOD

The word *trinity*, 3 persons in 1 God, is not a biblical term. *Trinity* is a term we use to explain the nature of God to the best of our abilities. John witnessed the Trinity at Jesus' baptism.

- **Some aspects of God are beyond comprehension**, and that is ok! This fact is what makes Him so extraordinary.

THE DYNAMICS OF GOD

The 3 manifestations of God in the baptism scene highlight the importance of the 3 roles God plays in the salvation story. The **Father gives affirmation and encouragement** to the Son. The Spirit **gives comfort and peace** before **the Son embarks on a journey to set humanity free from their sins. "THIS IS MY BELOVED SON..."**

From Adam and Eve, Abraham, David and Solomon, Mary and Joseph, Mary Magdalene, Peter, John, Paul, to Jesus at baptism we see the relational father-side of God.

- **The relationship of God to Jesus the Son in Matthew 3 is the same relationship our Creator longs to have with all of us.**

HOW DOES GOD SEE US?

God loves everyone, and He has sacrificed Himself for our salvation. We are invited to be in His family, **but we must be willing to shed the identities of this world and replace them with the identity of a son or daughter of the rightful King of Kings.**