

Baptism of Jesus            Genesis 1:1-5, Mark 1:4-11

Mark's Gospel is full of action - he points us to Jesus. Mark starts off his Gospel with an echo from the story of Creation in Genesis.

**"The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ."**

According to the tradition of the early Church Mark wrote down the stories of Jesus that Peter told.

Mark wants us to see Jesus as Peter himself experienced Him so that we can also put our trust in Him.

As we see Jesus as He really is it will encourage us to believe and to pray.

The first witness Mark presents, to who Jesus is, was John the Baptist. John was not an establishment teacher but a prophet like Elijah. The OT prophets had pointed like signposts to the coming of a great saviour v2-3.

Along a motorway you may get many signs for the place you are travelling to but when you get close you get a sign to let you know when to turn off.

John the Baptist is the final sign pointing the Jews

to their Messiah. Their longings for a Saviour were about to be fulfilled. J-B warned people to prepare themselves by a true repentance for the coming of their King. J-B had a uniquely high Calling.

The job of untying the straps of someone's sandals was thought to be too menial a task for a Jewish man. But J-B said,

"I am not worthy to stoop down to untie the straps of the sandals one who is mightier than I."

He knew that amongst those who would come to him in the wilderness would be God's chosen One. He knew from God that he would recognize the Saviour when he saw the Holy Spirit descend upon him.

J-B shows a true humility he didn't promote himself.

**His job was to prepare the way for the Messiah.**

That is what preachers are called to do, to point point people to Jesus.

Jews from all over from the towns and villages came to the wilderness to hear John's message.

Why would people do that? Why would they leave their homes and go into the wilderness to hear a

preacher? John didn't have a big organisation. The Jewish authorities of the Jerusalem Temple and the leaders of the synagogues were suspicious of Him. Why would people come? Why are you Zooming this morning and joining with us?

There may be many reasons. Human beings are part of the physical material creation but we have also been created by God as spiritual creatures. Longing for relationship with God is part of our humanness. We are designed to live in relationship with God.

They came because God's Holy Spirit was at work in people's hearts. People were aware of their need. They were aware of their separation from God. It was a need that the Temple worship pointed towards but did not satisfy. There was a spiritual hunger.

Who were the people who came to John the Baptist? They were people who recognized their need of forgiveness.

They were from all walks of life; tradesmen, merchants, tax collectors, prostitutes, fishermen, shepherds, revolutionary Zealots, farmers, soldiers and housewives.

John the Baptist welcomed all who came repenting. He baptised them and taught them that their repentance should be sincere and should lead to a changed life.

But he warned the insincere of the coming judgement [Matt 3:7-10]. He did not welcome people who only wanted an outward ceremony. True repentance is heartfelt and leads to a changed life.

Jesus had come from God as the Old Testament prophets had foretold V9. He was the Christ the anointed one come to bring good news. But he didn't wear a badge or shout out "I am the Messiah".

What the crowds saw when Jesus travelled down from Nazareth was a young carpenter from Galilee, undistinguishable from the other young Jews in the crowd.

Jesus came to the River Jordan with all the other Jews who wanted a closer relationship with God.

He presented himself to be baptized by J-B.

Each person in the crowd needed forgiveness and came confessing their sins.

But Jesus had no blots or shadows between him & His Father. He did not need forgiveness.

Jesus came with the Father's blessing and a message of Good News. We are not told directly whether J-B recognized Jesus as his cousin or whether John's parents had told him the story of Mary and the special child called Jesus. But Matthew's gospel hints that J-B recognised Jesus before he agreed to Baptise Jesus [Matthew 3:13-15].

Jesus was not baptised for forgiveness of sins He was baptised to identify with us. His Baptism was a sign to show that he is one of us, our flesh and blood. To become our representative and to open the kingdom of heaven to all who put their trust in Him.

It was when Jesus was coming out of the water that John the Baptist saw the Holy Spirit come down on Him like dove.

"Messiah," and "Christ", are respectively from Hebrew and Greek words which both mean anointed. Israel's Kings and Priests were anointed with oil to begin their ministry. Jesus was anointed by the Holy Spirit for the work He had come to do as Saviour and King.

A voice from heaven confirmed it v11

**"You are My Son whom I love;  
with you I am well pleased."**

Don't be surprised if you have not heard a voice from heaven. There were a few other occasions when an audible voice was heard. When Jesus was transfigured on the mountain top Peter James and John heard a voice from a cloud say, **"This is my Son whom I love. Listen to Him"** [Mark 9:7]. St Paul heard a audible voice on the Road to Damascus [Acts 9:4-5] but is not a common experience.

Some of my friends have heard God speak aloud to them but I never have. God has always managed to guide and teach me in other ways. I'm happy with that. We should not be demanding certain experiences from God as signs. We have to accept what He gives and the way he chooses to speak to us.

J-B pointed people to God and he pointed people to Jesus as the Greater one who will baptise us in the Holy Spirit.

The Baptism with the Holy Spirit is the fulfilment of God's promises in the Old Testament. [Isaiah 44:3]

**I will pour my Spirit upon your offspring,  
And my blessing on your descendants."**

[Ezekiel 11:19] **"A new spirit I will put within them.  
I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh  
and give them a heart of flesh".**

[Joel 2:28] **"I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh;  
Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,  
Your old men shall dream dreams  
And your young men shall see visions."**

We are Born again by God's Spirit and brought into a new relationship with God by the Holy Spirit.

Jesus came to invite people to share the life of God. He came to meet us at our point of need.

There is a fuller opportunity to explore this for ourselves in the on line Alpha Course which is planned to start soon. The details of it are on the web site under the events section.

The Holy Spirit brings those who come to faith in Jesus into that close relationship with God for which we were created. He is the one who makes us alive to God.