

A Sign of Home

God's Word:

Matthew 3:1-6, 11-16

Key Verses:

"And behold, a voice out of the heavens, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased."

--Matthew 3:17



Breaking It Down:

John the Baptist was not your typical religious leader. He didn't wear nice clothes or jewelry or put on cologne or hold potluck dinners at his house. I'm not saying there's something wrong with those things, but God wanted people to recognize through

John's life that those aren't the things that are most important. John wore simple clothes, ate simple food, and led a simple lifestyle – which many in his day probably called, "shabby."



John's message, though simple, was profound. "Repent, because God's going to establish His Kingdom soon." (Verse 2, my paraphrase.) God sent John to prepare the way for Jesus' earthly ministry (verse 3). His message was much like that of the Old Testament prophets, a message of repentance – of giving up ungodly behavior and turning

toward doing what's right in the Lord's eyes.

The symbol of this change of heart was water baptism. In this baptism, a person symbolically washes off the dirt of his or her sins. In John's day, people were familiar with Gentiles getting baptized so that they could be seen as righteous, but good Jews didn't get baptized. John taught that it doesn't matter to whom in church you're related or how long you've gone to church. Every person is a sinner, and we all need to turn

toward God and do what He would have us do. Everyone needs to start living a life of obedience.

It's in this context that we see Jesus coming to be baptized in the Jordan River. Jesus didn't need to be baptized – He was the only sinless person who ever lived! In fact, John picks up on this and asks, “Why are You coming to be baptized by me? You should baptize me!” (Verse 14, my paraphrase) Jesus responded that this was the righteous thing to do, so John consented. Then John got the privilege of witnessing an amazing blessing by God on His Son. The heavens opened up, God's Spirit visibly came to rest on Jesus in the form of a dove, and God spoke audibly before the people there proclaiming: “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.”

This was evidence to all who heard it that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah about whom John the Baptist had been preaching.



Living It:

What is baptism all about? Baptism is one of the two sacraments (along with The Lord's Supper) given by Christ for His disciples to observe. A sacrament is a sign that you are God's child, and God is your Lord. Baptism is a sacrament that shows you are no longer an enemy of God, but that you now believe that Jesus is your Savior and Lord. This baptism symbolizes not only that your old way of life has died, but that you've given your life to Him, and He has forgiven you of your sins (Acts 2:38, 41, and Romans 6:3). Symbolically then, your immersion in water represents cleansing and death to the old life, and your rising out of the water represents being raised to a new life in Christ.

Baptism doesn't save you. Ephesians 2:8-9 says, “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.” It is only by God's grace and your acceptance of Him by faith that you are saved, but baptism shows you and the people around you that God has forgiven you of your sins and you belong to Him.



If you have been baptized, that's awesome. You have a sign, in the same manner that Jesus had this sign, that you are God's child. Live according to the truth of that changed life. You can look back on the day of your “2nd Birthday” (John 3:3) and know that your sins are forgiven, you belong to Christ (Romans 7:4), and He has met every obligation you owe to God as you live according to His Spirit (Romans 8:3-4).

If you haven't given your life to Jesus yet, don't wait another day. You may think you have a long life ahead and plenty of time before you need to make that decision, but we aren't promised tomorrow. Nearly 3,000 people died in the 9/11 attacks on the United States, and they went to work the morning of Sept. 11, 2001 thinking it was going to be a normal day. Plus, when you give your life to Jesus, you receive the power of God's Holy Spirit to help you through life and to bless you. Take advantage of the awesome gift of God's grace and accept His Son as your Savior now. Then, as John urged, repent of your old way of life and begin living life as God desires.



Questions:

1. Why did people go out to see John in the wilderness?
2. What type of baptism was John's baptism? What type of baptism is Jesus' baptism?
3. What does it mean to say that one's life before they received Christ is dead?
4. How can you help prepare your friends to meet Jesus?



Do It!

Baptism is a visible testimony that you've given your life to Jesus. This week, write down a few things that testify to what God is doing in your life. Be prepared to share one or two of them with your class the following week.

