

Introduction

I learned so many things from my father. He was always for me and behind me. He was a great organizer and used check lists extensively. He worked hard and played hard. One of the things that he emphasized to me is to get things done now or immediately. He did not like putting things off. He liked to get things done right away. He did not know this but about forty years ago I gave his exhortations a name. I called it the “Now Theory.” You need to get things done now, not later. I think my father had a lot of things in common with Mark, particularly this trait of doing things immediately. One of the things that stand out in the Gospel of Mark is his use of the word immediately. The Greek word is *euthus* (Strong’s G2117), which means immediately or straight way. Mark uses that word 41 times, and it is translated in Mark as “immediately” 39 times. He not only uses the word, he applies that word. Mark 1:1 starts with “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” He immediately tells us the subject of the book. He gets right to the point; it is about the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

The Gospel of Mark begins with prophecies about John coming. There are prophecies from Isaiah and Malachi about the messenger that God was going to send ahead of the Messiah to prepare the way. One might ask, why begin with prophecies? There are a number of reasons why, but a good one to start with is found in Amos 3:7. We read that the Lord God does nothing unless He reveals His secret counsel to His servants the prophets. God was not going to send the Messiah without disclosing it to the prophets. There are 324 Messianic prophecies, so God spoke very clearly about the Messiah through His prophets. He also spoke through the prophets about the Messenger coming.

(Amos 3:7) “Surely the Lord GOD does nothing unless He reveals His secret counsel to His servants the prophets.”

A great second reason for starting with prophecy is the credibility that it gives the message. Peter Stoner, a mathematician, wrote a book called, *Science Speaks*. In it he discusses the probability of just eight of the Messianic prophecies being fulfilled. He said the probability was 10 to the 17th power. To get an idea of how large a number that is, he said you could take silver dollars and stack them next to one another in the State of Texas and they would fill the whole state two feet deep. Then, he said if you marked just one of those silver dollars and then blindfolded a man and told him to find that one coin in the whole state of Texas, that would be about the same probability of just eight of these prophecies coming true. But, there were not just eight prophecies that came true, there were 324 prophecies.¹ Mark starts with these prophecies and I believe they validate the gospel message.

This morning, we are looking at the first eight verses of Mark 1. It is about the preparing the way for the Messiah. God sent John the Baptist to prepare the way. Our text has three parts, the Prophecies, the Prophet, and the Preaching. Let’s read our text.

Preparing The Way For The Gospel

1. The Prophecies
2. The Prophet
3. The Preaching

¹ Stoner, Peter W. *Science Speaks*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1963, pp 100-107

(Mark 1:1-8) “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. {2} As it is written in Isaiah the prophet: "BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER AHEAD OF YOU, WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY; {3} THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, 'MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT.'" {4} John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. {5} And all the country of Judea was going out to him, and all the people of Jerusalem; and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins. {6} John was clothed with camel's hair and *wore* a leather belt around his waist, and his diet was locusts and wild honey. {7} And he was preaching, and saying, "After me One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to stoop down and untie the thong of His sandals. {8} "I baptized you with water; but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

1. The Prophecies

Mark begins by saying that it is written in Isaiah the prophet, “Behold, I send My messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; the voice of one crying in the wilderness, ‘make ready the way of the Lord, make His paths straight.’” We actually find the first line that he quotes is from Malachi 3:1. It was Malachi who prophesied, “Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me.”

(Malachi 3:1) “Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming," says the LORD of hosts.”

The part that is from Isaiah is “a voice is calling, ‘Clear the way for the Lord in the wilderness.’” So, Mark has correctly stated that the prophet Isaiah prophesied about John coming. Both prophets prophesied that God was going to send His messenger to prepare the way for the Messiah.

(Isaiah 40:3) “A voice is calling, "Clear the way for the LORD in the wilderness; Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God.”

Jesus Himself taught about John the Baptist. In Matthew 11:11-15, He said, “Truly I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist! Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force. For all the prophets and the Law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to accept it, John himself is Elijah who was to come. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.” What Jesus said is rich in meaning. He gave great honor to John the Baptist, saying that among those born of women, there was not anyone greater than John. Jesus also made it clear that getting into the kingdom of God was much greater than greatness on earth. That makes me want to help as many people into heaven as possible. The least in heaven are greater than the greatest people here on earth. That is quite a statement. We should all rejoice that our names are written in the book of life, and we should try to get as many into heaven as possible. However, my point in bringing up this account is that Jesus said that John the Baptist was Elijah. I do not believe that Elijah was reincarnated and came as a new person. I believe that the spirit of Elijah rested upon John the Baptist. John came in the spirit of Elijah, which was also prophesied by Malachi.

(Matt 11:11-15) “Truly I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen *anyone* greater than John the Baptist! Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. {12} From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force. {13} For all the prophets and the Law prophesied until John. {14} And if you are willing to accept *it*, John himself is Elijah who was to come. {15} He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

In Malachi 4:5-6, the prophet said, “Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord.” Jesus is affirming that John the Baptist was the fulfillment of Malachi’s prophecy about Elijah coming.

(Malachi 4:5-6) “Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD. {6} He will restore the hearts of the fathers to *their* children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse.”

In Mark 9:11-13, people asked Jesus, “Why is it that the scribes say that Elijah must come first?” One of the reasons that they would reject Christ from being the Messiah is that they were waiting for Elijah to come first. Jesus answered, saying, “Elijah does first come and restore all things...But I say to you that Elijah has indeed come, and they did to him whatever they wished, just as it is written of him.” Jesus lets them know that Elijah has come in the form of John the Baptist, and this is not a reason not to believe that Jesus is the Messiah. The gospel of Mark starts with the prophecies about John the Baptist because he had to come to fulfill the prophecies that God would send a messenger before the Messiah to prepare the way.

(Mark 9:11-13) “They asked Him, saying, “*Why is it* that the scribes say that Elijah must come first?” {12} And He said to them, “Elijah does first come and restore all things. And *yet* how is it written of the Son of Man that He will suffer many things and be treated with contempt? {13} But I say to you that Elijah has indeed come, and they did to him whatever they wished, just as it is written of him.”

In the Gospel according to Luke, he gives a much more detailed account of the birth of John the Baptist. Let’s read Luke’s account, starting in Luke 1:5.

(Luke 1:5-25) “In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah; and he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. {6} They were both righteous in the sight of God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord. {7} But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both advanced in years. {8} Now it happened *that* while he was performing his priestly service before God in the *appointed* order of his division, {9} according to the custom of the priestly office, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense. {10} And the whole multitude of the people were in prayer outside at the hour of the incense offering. {11} And an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the altar of incense. {12} Zacharias was troubled when he saw *the angel*, and fear gripped him. {13} But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your petition has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will give him the name John. {14} “You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. {15} “For he 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 his mother’s womb. {16} “And he will turn many of the

sons of Israel back to the Lord their God. {17} "It is he who will go *as a forerunner* before Him 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." {18} Zacharias said to the angel, "How will I know this *for certain*? For I am an old man and my wife is advanced in years." {19} The angel answered and said to him, "I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. {20} And behold, you shall be silent and unable to speak until the day when these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their proper time." {21} The people were waiting for Zacharias, and were wondering at his delay in the temple. {22} But when he came out, he was unable to speak to them; and they realized that he had seen a vision in the temple; and he kept making signs to them, and remained mute. {23} When the days of his priestly service were ended, he went back home. {24} After these days Elizabeth his wife became pregnant, and she kept herself in seclusion for five months, saying, {25} "This is the way the Lord has dealt with me in the days when He looked *with favor* upon *me*, to take away my disgrace among men."

Notice what the angel of the Lord said to Zacharias about his son, John. "He will be great in the sight of the Lord." Jesus affirmed that in Matthew 11:11. The angel said he would drink no wine or liquor, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit while yet in his mother's womb. We see the fulfillment of that in Luke 1:39-45. When Mary had a visitation from the angel and was told that she was going to conceive and that Elizabeth was also pregnant, she went in a hurry to the hill country to a city of Judah and entered the house of Zacharias. When she greeted Elizabeth, little John the Baptist, leaped in her womb and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. The angel had prophesied that John would be filled with the Holy Spirit while in his mother's womb.

(Luke 1:39-45) "Now at this time Mary arose and went in a hurry to the hill country, to a city of Judah, {40} and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth. {41} When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. {42} And she cried out with a loud voice and said, "Blessed *are* you among women, and blessed *is* the fruit of your womb! {43} And how has it *happened* to me, that the mother of my Lord would come to me? {44} For behold, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby leaped in my womb for joy. {45} And blessed *is* she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what had been spoken to her by the Lord."

Let me deviate from our text for just a minute. Little John was not a fetus in the womb, but a baby. Little John heard Mary's voice. Babies hear and sense what is going on outside the womb. Little John leaped in her womb with joy. Babies in the womb have emotions and feelings. John leaped in her womb in response. Babies in the womb can respond to things that they hear. Furthermore, John got filled with the Holy Spirit while in the womb when he heard Mary's voice. He was not a fetus, but a baby. God made us with a body, soul, and spirit, and we see all three of these operating three months before he was born. He was not a fetus that became a human after birth. He was a joyful little baby inside the womb that could hear, kick, leap, emotionally respond with joy, and to be filled with the Holy Spirit. We must fight against the lies of the enemy to our generation that these are just fetuses, not humans, and a mother can abort them with no consequences. These are babies that are being brutally murdered, and innocent blood is being shed in our country. This text is a strong defense to the lie being propagated in our schools and country.

Next, the angel said to Zacharias that his son, John, would turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God. He would be the forerunner before the Messiah in the spirit and power of Elijah. I mentioned earlier that John was not reincarnated. John was John, not Elijah, but he came in the spirit and power of Elijah. When Jesus said that John was Elijah, He was agreeing with what the angel had declared to Zacharias before Elizabeth even became pregnant with John. The angels also said that John would 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. That is why John came. He came as the messenger to prepare the way of the Lord.

2. The Prophet

a. John's Ministry

After giving the prophecies about the coming of John the Baptist and how he would preach in the wilderness, Mark jumps immediately to John's ministry in the wilderness preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sin. All the country of Judea and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him in the wilderness and were being baptized and confessing their sins.

(Mark 1:4-5) "John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. {5} And all the country of Judea was going out to him, and all the people of Jerusalem; and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins."

b. John' Birth

Mark does not give any of the background of John. I want to take a few minutes to fill in the gap. We will go to Luke 1:57-80.

(Luke 1:57-80) "Now the time had come for Elizabeth to give birth, and she gave birth to a son. {58} Her neighbors and her relatives heard that the Lord had displayed His great mercy toward her; and they were rejoicing with her. {59} And it happened that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to call him Zacharias, after his father. {60} But his mother answered and said, "No indeed; but he shall be called John." {61} And they said to her, "There is no one among your relatives who is called by that name." {62} And they made signs to his father, as to what he wanted him called. {63} And he asked for a tablet and wrote as follows, "His name is John." And they were all astonished. {64} And at once his mouth was opened and his tongue *loosed*, and he *began* to speak in praise of God. {65} Fear came on all those living around them; and all these matters were being talked about in all the hill country of Judea. {66} All who heard them kept them in mind, saying, "What then will this child *turn out to be*?" For the hand of the Lord was certainly with him. {67} And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying: {68} "Blessed *be* the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people, {69} And has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of David His servant— {70} As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from of old— {71} Salvation FROM OUR ENEMIES, And FROM THE HAND OF ALL WHO HATE US; {72} To show mercy toward our fathers, And to remember His holy covenant, {73} The oath which He swore to Abraham our father, {74} To grant us that we, being rescued from the hand of our enemies, Might serve Him without fear, {75} In holiness and righteousness before Him all our days. {76} And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; For you will go

on BEFORE THE LORD TO PREPARE HIS WAYS; {77} To give to His people *the* knowledge of salvation By the forgiveness of their sins, {78} Because of the tender mercy of our God, With which the Sunrise from on high will visit us, {79} TO SHINE UPON THOSE WHO SIT IN DARKNESS AND THE SHADOW OF DEATH, To guide our feet into the way of peace." {80} And the child continued to grow and to become strong in spirit, and he lived in the deserts until the day of his public appearance to Israel."

I want to make just a few comments about this. First, when the angel told Zacharias that Elizabeth would have a baby boy, he asked in disbelief about how this would happen. Because of that, the angel said he would be silent and unable to speak until the day when these things happened. (Luke 1:20) So, Zacharias has been unable to speak until little John was born. On the 8th day, when he was being circumcised, they were going to name him Zacharias. They asked Zacharias what he wanted him to be named and he wrote on a tablet, "His name is John." As soon as he did that, his tongue was loosed and he was able to speak again. The prophetic word of the angel had come to pass. The first thing Zacharias did was to begin to praise God. There is a progression. Next, we find that Zacharias is filled with the Holy Spirit. Praise and worship fills us with the Holy Spirit. Paul wrote in Ephesians 5:18 that we are not to be drunk with wine for that is dissipation, but we are to be filled with the spirit, speaking to one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with our hearts to the Lord, always giving thanks for all things in the name of Jesus Christ to God the Father. Praise and worship fills us up with the Holy Spirit. As soon as Zacharias began speaking words of praise, he was filled with the Holy Spirit.

(Eph 5:18-20) "And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, {19} speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; {20} always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father;"

The next thing we see is Zacharias prophesying. Most prophets that I know spend time in the word and in worshiping the Lord. Many will call the musicians to begin to play as they prepare to minister prophetically. Prophecy flows out of worship because we prophesy by the Spirit of God and worship fills us with the Holy Spirit. I don't want to go over all of the prophecy, but I do want to cover what he prophesied over his son, John the Baptist. He said, "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 to His people *the* knowledge of salvation By the forgiveness of their sins, Because of the tender mercy of our God." Notice that this prophecy lines up with what Isaiah and Malachi had prophesied about the messenger coming before the Messiah. There was an abundance of prophetic confirmation about John and the ministry that he was going to have in the wilderness preparing the way for the Messiah. These prophecies were fulfilled by John's ministry. John had an effective ministry in the wilderness, as people were confessing their sins and being baptized in the Jordan River.

c. John's Appearance

Mark records that John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt. The prophets were known for wearing leather belts. John the Baptist came in the spirit of Elijah, and we find in 2 Kings 1:8 that Elijah was a hairy man with a leather girdle. By wearing a leather and dressing in camel's hair, John would have looked the part of Elijah.

(2 Kings 1:8) “They answered him, “*He was a hairy man with a leather girdle bound about his loins.*” And he said, ‘It is Elijah the Tishbite.’”

I believe the real significance of John wearing garments of camel hair has to do with the message he is preaching. Camel hair is very coarse and was used for carpets, blankets and coats. About five pounds of camel hair could be taken from a Bactrian Camel each year. Both goat hair and camel hair were used for making sackcloth. Sackcloth is mentioned 48 times in the Bible and it has to do with mourning and repentance. The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament (TWOT) says, “*Sackcloth was used as a garment by mourners and those who wished to express contrition. It was worn in such a way as to leave the breast free for beating. As a garment of grief and self-abasement, sackcloth was sometimes the dress of the prophet who preached a message of repentance. Such a sight would be a call to trembling and repentance. Both Elijah and John, preachers of repentance, wore garments of camel's skin (2 Kings 1:8, Matthew 3:4).*” So, I believe that John’s clothing of camel’s hair was sackcloth, which conveyed a message of repentance and contrition. His appearance was clearly in line with the message he was preaching.

d. John’s Diet

He also tells about John’s diet, that it consisted of locusts and wild honey. I asked myself, “what is the significance of his diet of locusts and wild honey. I grew up in Iran and about every seven years they had locusts that would swarm in. When I rode my bike to school the tires would constantly be running over the locusts as they were everywhere. They were everywhere and they devoured everything. I also thought about Egypt and how God brought them there to cause Pharaoh to let His people go. Let’s pick it up in Exodus 10:13-15.

(Ex 10:13-15) “So Moses stretched out his staff over the land of Egypt, and the LORD directed an east wind on the land all that day and all that night; and when it was morning, the east wind brought the locusts. {14} The locusts came up over all the land of Egypt and settled in all the territory of Egypt; *they were* very numerous. There had never been so *many* locusts, nor would there be so *many* again. {15} For they covered the surface of the whole land, so that the land was darkened; and they ate every plant of the land and all the fruit of the trees that the hail had left. Thus nothing green was left on tree or plant of the field through all the land of Egypt.”

So, the locusts were a sign of judgment. In the book of Joel, he prophesied that God would bring locusts as judgment (Joel 1:4). There were four types of locusts, the swarming locusts, the creeping locusts, the stripping locusts and the gnawing locusts. If God’s people did not repent, God was going to send these different locusts and they would devour and destroy everything. However, if they would repent and turn to God, He would restore to them everything that the locusts had stripped away. (Joel 2:12-27).

(Joel 1:4, 2:25) “What the gnawing locust has left, the swarming locust has eaten; And what the swarming locust has left, the creeping locust has eaten; And what the creeping locust has left, the stripping locust has eaten....{2:25} Then I will make up to you for the years That the swarming locust has eaten, The creeping locust, the stripping locust and the gnawing locust, My great army which I sent among you.”

John’s diet was locust and wild honey. I believe that the honey represents God’s goodness and favor. When the children of Israel were in the desert, He promised to bring them into a land of

milk and honey. That represented the very best of land and the blessing of God. John's message of repentance was two-fold. If they would repent and confess their sins, they would enter into God's Promised Land and His blessing and favor. If they rejected the message, there would be judgment, represented by the locusts. That was the message of his life, represented by his diet.

e. John's Attitude

In Mark 1:7-8, Mark addresses John's attitude, which was humble. John preached, "After me One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to stoop down and untie the thong of His sandals." John recognized that Jesus, the Son of God, the Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world (John 1:29), was mightier than himself. He recognized that Jesus existed before Him, even though in the flesh he was born before Jesus (John 1:30).

(Mark 1:7-8) "And he was preaching, and saying, "After me One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to stoop down and untie the thong of His sandals. {8} "I baptized you with water; but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

(John 1:29-30) "The next day he *saw Jesus coming to him and *said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! {30} This is He on behalf of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.'"

When Paul wrote the Philippians about having the attitude of humility, listen to what He said. Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves. That is exactly the attitude that John had. He said that Jesus was mightier and more important. He was so important in comparison with himself, that he was not worthy to untie his sandals.

(Phil 2:3-5) "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; {4} do not *merely* look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. {5} Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus."

Paul also said that they were not to look out just for their own interests, but to also look out for the interests of others. John's whole ministry was about preparing the way for Jesus' earthly ministry. He was looking out for Jesus' ministry. Later on, when Jesus' ministry was increasing and people asked him about it, he said, "He must increase, I must decrease." John's attitude was one of true humility.

(John 3:26-30) "And they came to John and said to him, 'Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have testified, behold, He is baptizing and all are coming to Him.' {30} 'He must increase, but I must decrease.'"

3. The Preaching

We have looked at the prophecies and the prophet. I want to finish by briefly looking at John's preaching. It was prophesied that he would prepare the way of the Lord and preach repentance. Then, in verses four and five, we saw that John was in the wilderness preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. We also saw that John preached that Jesus was mightier than himself and would baptize with the Holy Spirit, not with water.

I will try and briefly describe his message of baptizing for repentance and for the Holy Spirit. In Acts 19:1-6, Paul came to Ephesus and found some disciples. He asked them if they had received the Holy Spirit, and they said that they had never heard about the Holy Spirit. Then, Paul asked them into what were they baptized, and they replied, "Into John's baptism." Paul then explained that John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the Messiah who was coming after him, that is Jesus. When they heard this, they then got baptized in the name of Jesus, and after Paul laid hands on them, they received the Holy Spirit.

(Acts 19:1-6) "It happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the upper country and came to Ephesus, and found some disciples. {2} He said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And they *said* to him, "No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit." {3} And he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" And they said, "Into John's baptism." {4} Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus." {5} When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. {6} And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they *began* speaking with tongues and prophesying."

The baptism of John was one of repentance. It was a message that we have sinned and need to repent of our sins and turn to God. So, we find that people were confessing their sins and getting baptized by John.

John also preached that the Messiah would baptize with the Holy Spirit. This was the same baptism of the Holy Spirit that Paul spoke about. When someone receives Christ, they are sealed with the Holy Spirit. In Ephesians 1:13, Paul wrote, "In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation, having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise." At the time of John's preaching, the Holy Spirit had not been poured out on the church. Jesus told the disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit. After His death, they waited in Jerusalem, just as He had commanded them. At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was poured out and they were all baptized in the Holy Spirit.

(Eph 1:13) "In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation, having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise,"

At Pentecost, peoples' hearts were pierced and they asked Peter, "What shall we do?" Peter told them to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, and they would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. It was the baptism of John – forgiveness and then the baptism of Jesus – Holy Spirit. It was the same message. The message of repentance prepared the way of the Lord.

(Acts 2:37-38) "Now when they heard *this*, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?" {38} Peter *said* to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

Up until that time, people were being baptized into the baptism of John, the baptism of repentance. As Paul stated, John was "telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus." John was preparing the way for the Lord. That was why he was sent. That was the message that he preached.

Conclusion and Applications

As we come to a close this morning, I want to finish with a verse in Hebrews 6. The author of that letter wrote, “therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God.” Repentance and faith in God are elementary and foundational teachings. John preached that we must repent and turn away from our sins and the trying to earn our way to God by good works. We have to turn away from dead works and place our faith in Christ. The baptism of John was about repentance. The baptism of the Holy Spirit was about placing our faith in Christ.

(Heb 6:1) “Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God.”

This morning, have you repented of dead works and placed your faith in God? Have you come to a place in your search for God that you believe that Jesus is the Messiah and you want to receive Christ into your life. If that is your desire this morning, you can pray with me right now.

“Lord Jesus, I believe that You are the Christ. I believe that all the prophecies are true and that You fulfilled all of them. I believe that You are the Son of God and that You came to earth to save us from our sins. I believe that You died on the cross and were raised from the dead on the third day. I ask You to forgive me of my sins, and I ask You to come into my life as my Lord and Savior. Baptize me and seal me with Your Holy Spirit. I pray this in Jesus’ name. Amen.”

On another note, most of you have made a profession of faith and have received Christ. The question for you this morning is about your life message. John preached a message of repentance and preparation of the gospel. John’s appearance of camel hair conveyed a message of repentance. John’s diet conveyed a message of repentance in preparation of the gospel. His life message was preaching the gospel, pointing people to Christ. What is your life conveying to other people? When people see you, are they being pointed to Christ? Does your appearance and the things you wear point to Christ? Ladies, does your dress point people to Christ or is it a distraction to the gospel message? Do the things you eat and the activities you involve yourself in point people to Christ? Does your life message line up with the message you proclaim? Does the proclamation of the gospel match up with the demonstration of the gospel message? God has called all of us to point the way to Jesus Christ.

Father God, may we be a church that not only proclaims the gospel, but may we be a church that lives the gospel. Just as John’s appearance and diet and message pointed people to the coming Messiah, may our appearance, lifestyle and message point people to Jesus, who came to earth to take away the sins of the earth. I ask this in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Introduction (Mark 1:1-8, Amos 3:7)

1. The Prophecies (Mal 3:1, Is 40:3, Matt 11:11-15, Mal 4:5-6, Mark 9:11-13, Luke 1:5-25, 39-45)

2. The Prophet

a. John's Ministry (Mark 1:4-5, Eph 5:18-20)

b. John's Birth (Luke 1:20, 1:57-80)

c. John's Appearance (2 Kings 1:8, Matt 3:4)

d. John's Diet (Ex 10:13-15, Joel 1:4, 2:12-27)

e. John's Attitude (Mark 1:7-8, John 1:29-30, Phil 2:3-5, John 3:26-30)

3. John's Preaching (Acts 19:1-6, Eph 1:13, Acts 2:37-38)

Conclusion and Applications (Heb 6:1)