

Matthew 3: "And... Action!" ~ 09/01/11 CELL NOTES

Here we meet Jesus and John for the first time in adulthood. After details of their births and childhoods, we leap forward some 20-30 years (last saw Jesus aged 12 in Luke).

1. Serve Well In Obscurity

Where've they been? Both lived in obscurity 28-30 years (John in wilderness ~ **Luke 1.80**)

- Jesus:
 - enjoying family/friends
 - Running household/man of house when Joseph dies?
 - Maybe facilitating his sisters' marriages?
 - Learning His (earthly) father's craft
- **Don't despise obscurity** = Your Father sees what is done in secret...
- **CONVERSELY: don't use that as an excuse to not step out.** John was the ultimate recluse but still called to public ministry.
- **NEITHER: "When will I be recognised?"** Serve well in obscurity, in the SMALL THINGS.

John is a fascinating character. Born to devout parents/priestly line. Fulfills the coming of a new Elijah, even wears same clothes! **Matt 3.4** = camel's hair, leather belt; eats locusts/wild honey.

- His clothing & demeanour show his sole focus, his unwavering vision...
 - ...for us, it would affect our contentment with our "**stuff**" etc if our focus is correct in the first place (Jesus was poor too)
 - **BIG ISSUE FOR TODAY: stuff: Is my primary focus on mobile phones, cars, food, clothing? Or my Jesus & His purposes?**
- Immersed in the Word: when in prison, John gets his followers to ask Jesus if He's the Messiah - Jesus answers with Biblical evidence (**blind rec. sight, lame walk, lepers r cured, deaf hear, dead r raised, good news preached to poor** = Lk7.22/Isa 29, 35 & 61) - He knows to answer John with Scripture...

2. Bear Fruit in Keeping with Repentance

- As a result: John is not afraid to ACT/speak out
 - Locked up (and killed) for speaking out re Herod Antipas/Herodias (bro's wife)
 - "**brood of vipers**" = sly creepers, deadly bite... Religious & political leaders, but self-righteous & unbelieving
 - John's message is good news to the people (Lk3) but warnings of judgement to those who oppose = true humility before God brings repentance & salvation; thinking WE know better leads to, ultimately, destruction...
 - **v8 "produce fruit in keeping w/repentance"**
 - Their lineage (**v9, Abraham**) would not save them... Baptism presumes repentance... Knowledge doesn't save
 - **Does your life - bar a couple of meetings a week - look any different to that of a non-believer? Really?**

Where did this Baptism come from? It's not new: Jews baptised Gentile converts > Still part of traditional ritual for converts (ritual bath/MIKVAH). Represents purity, change of status, which in some ways is similar to why we do so, but ours signifies so much more:

Yes, Jews baptised converts, but here John's baptising JEWS! WHY?

1. That the nation might be prepared for Christ (you think you're okay, but - Jewish or not - you STILL need to repent & honour the coming Messiah for Who He is)

2. That he might present Jesus- *Jn 1.31: the reason I came baptising with water was that he might be revealed to Israel*
- Jesus' baptism = His reveal from obscurity to ministry

Jewish baptism = washing/cleansing - regular

Ours = death & life - ONCE. Dead to old life (literally, spiritually, although we still fight the flesh, and NEW BIRTH in Christ)

3.6-7 - "confessing their sins, they were baptised by him" = they came voluntarily for baptism! Because they recognised the need for purification & cleansing. They realised they're still unable to fulfil the law - only One can do that...

3. Partnership with the Holy Spirit

Jesus arrives! No grand-standing monologue, nor immediate spectacle, but humility. Amazing. Leads by example to "**fulfil all righteousness**" (v15) = He fulfilled the law, the only one Who can.

The Holy Spirit is here for ENDORSEMENT/ENCOURAGEMENT, and for ENABLING:

3.17 = endorsement of Christ's sonship = the same for us: **Rom 8.14 & 16** = ENDORSEMENT

Acts 1:8 = ENABLING

The baptism of the Spirit shows itself primarily by giving its recipients a great evangelistic concern - M Lloyd-Jones ~ Jesus began His ministry after being filled with the Holy Spirit.

If we are on mission, we want the expert by our side: the HOLY SPIRIT!

- You may know God is calling you to action. What are you going to do?
- If not, here is where we grow & learn in the Small things
- = Beacon = feels "forgotten" perhaps? NO! Here's where we are prepared. **Fit for service.**
- **When He makes His move, do you want to be caught on the hop, or as ready as we'll ever be? IT STARTS HERE.**

Cell Q's:

1. How can we keep ourselves and each other encouraged during seasons of "obscurity"?
2. Does John the Baptist's single-mindedness and resulting demeanour unnerve or encourage you?
3. How would you explain Baptism to non-church folk, to the "uninitiated"?
4. What can we do in our everyday lives to ensure a regular/continual filling of the Holy Spirit?