

John the Baptist: A Significant Life

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Introduction: Open your Bible to the book of **Mark 1:1-8**. This morning the title of our Message is: "A Significant Life".

Mark 1:1-8, "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God; 2 As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. 3 The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. 4 John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. 5 And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins. 6 And John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey; 7 And preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose. 8 I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost."

Between Malachi and Matthew there are four hundred years of silence without any prophetic voice. There are four hundred years of darkness with no prophetic light. And then suddenly, dramatically, unexpectedly this strange man, John the Baptist, comes like a comet streaking across the night sky. He had a very short but significant life. What made his life significant? What can make your life significant?

Jesus Christ says he was a "burning and a shining light." Jesus said that there was no man comparable to John Baptist. Not Isaiah not Jeremiah not any of those towering saints. He is a very, very remarkable character. John is such an attractive figure in the Bible. Why is that?

Not too many preachers today have a simple lifestyle. All he wore was a home-spun camel's hair garment that he wrapped around him with a leather belt. His manner of life is so simple it seems almost strange. He survived on locusts and wild honey.

Not too many preachers today are as forthright and outspoken in preaching as John the Baptist. He denounced the preachers of his day as a "brood of vipers". He challenged a whole nation to a radical repentance.

Not too many preachers today preach even when it costs them everything like John the Baptist. John preached unpopular messages even when it cost him his life. He rebuked King Herod Antipas for unlawfully divorcing his wife and marrying his sister-in-law.

Maybe it was his transparent human weakness and frailty that makes John the Baptist attractive—because when he was in prison he began to be filled with doubt and questioned whether Jesus was the Messiah after all.

Or was it his martyrdom, where he sealed his testimony and ministry with his blood? Regardless as we begin the study of the book of Mark we are given the title of the book in verse 1, and here we are introduced to John's Messiah. **Verse 1**, "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God".

- I. John had a significant **Merging** of his life with someone else: Jesus Christ. Some people's lives are defined by a certain relationship. John's was too. Some people find their identity in marriage, or in knowing some famous person. Remember recently a couple crashed the presidential dinner. Why? They wanted significance. They wanted to look like they KNEW somebody important.
 - A. He had a **family** relationship with Jesus. Cousins. John had a significant relationship with Jesus. True, John was the half-cousin of Jesus through Jesus humanity. Mary and John's mother Elizabeth were **sisters**.

But there is a much more significant relationship than this.

- B. He had a spiritual relationship with Christ. This verse answers the question: **Who is Jesus?** The book of Mark tells us who Jesus is. Mark is writing primarily to Roman slaves—half the population of the Roman Empire! So in the book of Mark we have the WORK of Jesus Christ being presented in contrast to Matthew who emphasizes the WORDS of Jesus. **Verse one** gives us the title of the book and tells us who Jesus is. Verse 1, "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God".

1. Jesus is **God** come in human flesh. Mark uses a title to express this. He says that Jesus Christ is "the Son of God". This is a messianic term that comes from **Psalm 2:7**, "Thou are my son, this day have I begotten thee".
 - a. **Definition:** The Word "son" to the Jew meant that he had the **same nature**. To say someone was the "son of God" was impossible and blasphemous to the Jew. This is why when Jesus said he was the "son of God" they picked up stones to stone Him. "Son of God" would have the same significance to the Jews ears as "God the Son" would to ours. John is saying: this is the Messiah, the one who has the same nature as God.
 - b. Mark says, "There is GOOD NEWS!" The Son of God has come. John says it in a way the whole world would understand. Jesus is the Word who was from the beginning with the Father. John says it very simply: "The Word was made FLESH" (**John 1:14**).
 - **John 1:1**, "In the beginning was the WORD and the Word was with God and the Word was God."
 - Jesus shares the Father's glory. **John 1:18**, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him" (**John 1:18**). We therefore behold His glory, "glory as of the only begotten from the Father" (**1:14**).

Application: We cannot know God except through Jesus Christ.

2. Second Jesus Christ is a **King**. We notice He has a *forerunner*, a messenger—John the Baptist. Forerunners were those who went before the king in ancient times to build connecting roads to conquered lands.

To establish this, Mark quotes from Isaiah. The coming of John the Baptist is the fulfillment of ancient biblical prophecies. Mark quotes Malachi and Isaiah in **verses 2-3**, "As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. 3 The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." This promise is written 700 years before in Isaiah 40:3.

- a. And the point is, John's job is to level the society for Christ's ministry. He is to make the crooked paths straight. He is to humble them and to bring them to repentance.
- II. John had a significant **Mission** in life. *He was to introduce Jesus to Israel*. He was totally defined by introducing people to Jesus Christ. John was the long predicted Forerunner of Jesus Christ. This is what defined him. He was to prepare the way for Christ. In ancient times, kings often sent people ahead of them to prepare the way for their coming. The forerunner had two primary duties.

- A. John was to prepare people to meet the King. He was to clear the way or build a new road entirely. John cleared the way for the coming of the Lord by appealing directly to the people. The Jewish religious leaders had long ago blocked the way to Jesus Christ through legalism. John came preaching to the people, calling on them to repent because the Lord, the King was coming to deliver His people. He was to proclaim the coming of the King.
- B. You have an even more important mission in life. You are to introduce Jesus Christ to the world. John prepared the way. You have an even greater place in the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus said in **Matthew 11:11**, "Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." John's mission was great. He was to give an introduction to Christ incarnation and coming. We have a much greater task. We are to proclaim Christ's finished work.

- C. John was the last of the Old Testament prophets. Peter said that the OT prophets diligently enquired to the finished work of Christ. He says in **1 Peter 1:10**, "Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you". John was the last of the OT prophets. Jesus says, "notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." What is your mission in life? What are you defined by? What do people know you by?
- III. John had a significant **Method** of living. How did John introduce people to Christ? How can we introduce people to Christ?
 - A. **Preaching** Repentance. **Verse 4**, "John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

John's Preaching – John was a preacher! He came telling men of the need for repentance. His message was a message of confrontation. John came confronting sin and calling on people to repent. The word "**repentance**" means "**a change of mind that results in a change of action.**" The people had sinned and John called on them to change their minds regarding sin.

1. What is repentance? We get a picture of it in **2 Corinthians 7:9-11**, "Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. ¹⁰ For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. ¹¹ For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, *what* clearing of yourselves, yea, *what* indignation, yea, *what* fear, yea, *what* vehement desire, yea, *what* zeal, yea, *what* revenge! In all *things* ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter."
2. It is translated REMORSE and REGRET in other passages.
3. Spurgeon's catechism.
 - Q. What is repentance to life?
 - A. Repentance to life is a saving grace (Acts 11:18), whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sins (Acts 2:37), and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ (Joel 2:13), does with grief and hatred of his sin turn from it to God (Jer. 31:18-19), with full purpose.
4. In short repentance differs from simple sorrow because it is GOD centered not Man centered. Pity is not repentance. Repentance is a deep remorse for offending the character of God. It is to be TORN up over what we did.

Our offense against a holy God was so bad it put Jesus Christ on the Cross!!

John told the people that their "**repentance**" would result in the "**remission of sins**".

- B. The POWER of this method. **John's Power** was the preaching of the Word of God. Verse 5, "And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins."

He called people to repent and be reconciled to God. "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God" (**Romans 10:17**).

We are told that many of the people living in that region came to John the Baptist to be baptized. These people made a break with their past and were changed by the power of God. Someone has estimated that as many as 300,000 people may have been baptized by John and his disciples.

This method of preaching was so powerful that multitudes went to be baptized.

IV. **JOHN'S MANNER OF LIFE**

- A. He **renounced** this world.

Verse 6, "And John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey;"

All he wore was a home-spun camel's hair garment that he wrapped around him with a leather belt. He survived on locusts and wild honey.

John did not wear the fine robes that adorned the bodies of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. He did not gravitate toward the finer things in life. His clothing was as rough as his message. He was a man of the desert and he dressed like a man of the desert. He was out of step in his fashion sense.

Christ calls us to renounce the world.

B. He **revered** Christ! Verse 7, "7 And preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose."

V. **JOHN'S MESSAGE.**

Verse 7-8, "7 And preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose. 8 I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost."

A. He proclaimed to Christ's **Position**. We are not worthy to be near Him!

B. He proclaimed Christ's **Power**. Baptism of the Holy Ghost

Conclusion: is your life significant? It can be only as it is intertwined with Christ. You were created to worship Him!