



Mark - Lesson 1B

Chapter 1:4-8

P.O. Box 702107
San Antonio, Texas, 78270
210.319.5055

©2022. Verse By Verse Ministry International.
All rights reserved

versebyverseministry.org/lessons/mark-lesson-1b

- Tonight, we will pick up where we left off last week.
 - In last week's session we discussed how Mark thematically begins what we now know as the first gospel record recorded.
 - And it begins in a very peculiar way.
 - He does not begin with a genealogy or traditional Jewish customary greeting, but rather he begins with a bold, and unapologetic statement.
 - He begins by saying in few short words, "The Gospel, this gospel, begins with Jesus Christ, the Son of God.
 - It begins with Peter's well-known confession at Caesarea Philippi.
 - It is the Holy Spirit that reveals to Peter, by the will of the Father at the appointed time, that Jesus was not just a man, but was in fact the Son of the Living God.
 - This is how Mark chooses to begin his gospel, and rightfully so.
 - Mark then moved the reader to a section of scripture that to many Jews was a familiar passage of scripture that was misunderstood regarding a messenger who would prepare the way for God and His Kingdom.
 - We discovered that the quote Mark mentions is from Isaiah in verses 2-3 of Mark 1, is actually a combination of 3 Old Testament texts.
 - Those texts come from Exodus, Malachi, and Isaiah.
 - Mark's ultimate concern is to connect the reader to know that this Messiah and this coming Kingdom has always been a part of God's redemptive plan.
 - This is good news for us because it one, points to God's sovereignty, but two it shows us that God's design and plan is without error.
 - Isaiah 40:3 pointed to the reality that before the promised Messiah would come, there would be an unnamed messenger that would prepare the way for Him.
 - This preparation for Messiah would begin through the ministry given to John the Baptist in the message that would be preached.
 - This is where we will pick up tonight, so with that being said, pick me up at verse 4.
 - Here's what the text reads:

Mark 1:4 John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

Mark 1:5 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.

Mark 1:6 John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist, and his diet was locusts and wild honey.

Mark 1:7 And he was preaching, saying, "After me One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to bend down and untie the straps of His sandals.

Mark 1:8 I baptized you with water; but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

- Let's pray.
- One of the most interesting conversations you will typically hear from two men in conversation after they have met for the first time in passing is the “conversation starter”.
 - The conversation will begin with a tight gripped handshake to feel out the gentleman and who they are as a person.
 - From there it then moves to introduction of names, “Hello, my name is such and such.”
 - Which will then be followed up with the name of the other gentleman.
 - But right after the brief introduction of names is complete, in comes the irresistible question, “So what do you do for a living?”
 - I find this typical introduction to be humorous because it shows something quite telling about men and our conversations, but more than that it is quite telling of where we place our value, worth, and identity.
 - As human beings, we tend to place our values and significance in the things that we do and the places we work rather than in who we are.
 - It is as if what we do identifies us as who we are rather than who’s we are.
 - Pastor Timothy Keller in his book “The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism” says this regarding identity:

“Our need for worth is so powerful that whatever we base our identity and value on we essentially ‘deify’. We will look to it with the passion and intensity of worship and devotion, even if we think ourselves highly irreligious.”

- As believers in Christ, we must recognize that our identity is found in only one person.
 - Not a thing, not a place, but a person, and that person is Jesus Christ.
 - As followers of Christ, we must be willing to identify ourselves in and with of our crucified Christ.
 - We must be willing to embrace the fullness of our Savior even if it means we lose favor amongst men.
 - Or even if it means that we miss out on the opportunity to brag about your promotion to others.
 - Christ must be the fundamental motivation and identification of who we are.
 - Tonight, as we walk through verses 4-8, we will see that the message that John preached, is a message that is fixed on identifying with a person and his work.
 - We will see how the identity and power of Christ fundamentally transforms the hearts and minds of those who receive this message.
 - And how it moves us into full commitment of His Person and power.
 - With that being said, pick me up in verse 4 and 5, once again.

Mark 1:4 John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of

repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

Mark 1:5 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.

- Mark makes it evidently clear from the use of the combined scripture references from Exodus, Malachi, and Isaiah, that the messenger mentioned from old was John the Baptist.
 - We see this evidently at the start of verse 4 with the following words: “John the Baptist appeared.”
 - In other words, this is the messenger that Isaiah and the prophets have spoken about who will make way for the coming Messiah.
 - Not only does John appear on the scene, but his appearance comes with a profound message.
 - The question becomes, what was John’s message and why would it have been so profound?
 - Mark’s gospel doesn’t mention what John is preaching, only what John is doing.
 - To refresh us on the purpose of the message that the messenger would bear, we must go back to verse 3.
 - Here’s what the prophet Isaiah mentions regarding the messenger, who we now know is John the Baptist:

Isaiah 40:3 A voice of one calling:

**“In the wilderness prepare
the way for the Lord;
make straight in the desert
a highway for our God.**

- The message that the messenger would give would be to “prepare the way for the Lord.”
 - How, is the question, right? How would this be done or better yet what would be the results of this message and how would it impact the hearer?
 - Notice after the semicolon it says “make straight in the desert a highway for the Lord.
 - In our last session of Mark, toward the end, I mentioned the latter half of Isaiah’s prophecy, Isaiah 40:4-5.
 - These last two verses dealt with how this highway for the Lord would be made for the people to receive their Messiah.
 - But more specifically how this message would impact the hearers.
 - To see what I am talking about let’s read Isaiah 40:4-5 together:

Isaiah 40:4 Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain.

**Isaiah 40:5 And the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all people will see it together.
For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”**

- Isaiah’s prophecy mentions several instances of natural geographical changes being made.
 - However, it is important to note that these changes that would be made are only metaphorical.
 - We know that there were no terrain changes in Israel, geographically speaking.
 - So, this further solidifies the suggestion that these changes that Isaiah uses metaphorically are meant to point the reader to spiritual matters.
 - Notice the breakdown of these metaphors:
 - Every valley shall be lifted up
 - Every mountain and hill made low
 - Uneven ground become level
 - Rough places a plain (made smooth)
 - The messenger would prepare the way of the Lord by a message that would change the very rocky and callused hearts of the people.
 - And all of this would be accomplished by the Power of the Holy Spirit working in the message turning the hearts of the people back to the Father.
 - The way by which this plan would be accomplished is by God Himself, actively at work within redemptive history using a messenger and a message to point the way to the Messiah.
 - Again, notice the language that Isaiah uses regarding these metaphorical changes of men and women’s hearts.
 - Every valley shall be raised.
 - Every mountain and hill made low.
 - Rough ground shall become level
 - Rugged places a plain.
 - It is an undeniable reality that what God is going to do, will be done because he is actively at work making these things happen.
 - Unwilling hearts that the Lord has called will come, why, because God is in them making them alive.
 - He chooses those in whom He chooses and there is no getting around God’s working through His creation.
 - It’s evident that this message that John is preaching in the wilderness is moving many people’s hearts to respond and to confess their sins.
 - Really quick, verse 5 mentions this about the impact John’s message is having at the Jordan River:

Mark 1:5 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.

- Clearly, there are many people from Judea and Jerusalem who are making their way to the Jordan river to hear John’s message.
 - Now, it’s important to note when Mark says “all the country” of Judea and Jerusalem, it is not literally all.
 - When the word “all” is used here it is speaking about many people.
 - “All” would be an exaggeration however it makes the point that a lot of people came to hear this message.
 - And we will see who is included in this group of “all”.
 - What we see throughout the gospel accounts is that the message that John was preaching was a three-part message.
 - John’s message consisted of:
 - A call to action - Repent
 - A call to act - Respond
 - A message to believe - Receive
 - We will carefully examine each part of this message that John preached and understand its significance.
 - We will first begin with the first two parts of John’s message which are: A call to action (Repent) and a call to act (Respond).
 - Matthew 3:1-2 records verbatim what the exact message is that John is preaching.
 - Check out the text.

Matthew 3:1 In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea

Matthew 3:2 and saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”

- John’s message was simple; “Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand.”
 - What a simple message: Repent and prepare to respond.
 - As a matter of fact, John preaches this exact message for approximately 6 months prior to Jesus coming to the Judean wilderness.
 - One message. One consistent message is changing the lives and behaviors of men and women who were all motivated and bent towards sin.
 - However, this one message is preached and yet hearts are moving from unrepentant hearts to repentant hearts.
 - Friends, we too have a message that we are to share, it is a consistent message, called the Gospel.
 - And when this message is preached, by God’s Spirit and Power it makes dead men and women come alive in Christ.
 - John’s call to action and call to act for the people who are coming to hear this

message begins with two things:

- Repent and turn from your old ways to receive your King and His Kingdom.
- The word “repent” in Greek is *metanoeō*.
 - It means to change one’s mind or to change one’s life based upon a complete change of attitude and thought concerning sin and righteousness.
- Notice what repentance is not. Repentance is not feeling sorry for what you have done only to go back to it as if nothing happened.
 - In other words, repentance is not giving crocodile tears.
 - Repentance is literally a turn from what you once did and moving in a new direction.
- A person literally abandons their former dispositions and displays their genuine regret by change in behavior.
 - Our view on what is right in our own eyes changes because we move from what pleases us to what pleases God.
 - Our concerns now become, “Does what I do please God and if not what must I do to please Him in my thoughts and my actions?”
- The reality of a changed mind bears the weight of the truth that prior to moving into truth, one was foreign to righteousness and headed towards a fiery judgement.
 - This is John’s message of repentance! It is calling God’s people to get right with their Savior!
- It is clear that repentance first demonstrates that there is a recognition or acknowledgement of sin.
 - Once that sin has been acknowledged you are then moved to change your direction and your behavior.
 - How do we know this process to be true?
- We see evidence of this “change of mind” in Luke’s gospel, more specifically Luke 3:10-14.
 - Within Luke’s gospel, John the Baptist is speaking to a crowd of men and women who were coming out to be baptized.
- What is fascinating to read is that Luke’s account provides great detail concerning the repentant hearts of the men and women in the crowd.
 - It will be seen from the text that we will read that these men and women have clearly seen within their lives that they have sinned.
 - And are now wanting to know what repentance looks like lived out.
- This shows just how seriously committed to this message, the Messiah, and coming Kingdom they were.
 - Imagine at one point in your life, all you knew was wickedness and sinful desires, but then all of a sudden you come to the realization of your ways.
 - It’s a sobering reality!
- These men and women want to know how they are to live and respond now. This was the disposition of those who were repentant in the crowd.

- Check out how John responds to them in the crowd.

Luke 3:10 And the crowds were questioning him, saying, “Then what are we to do?”

Luke 3:11 And he would answer and say to them, “The one who has two tunics is to share with the one who has none; and the one who has food is to do likewise.”

Luke 3:12 Now even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they said to him, “Teacher, what are we to do?”

Luke 3:13 And he said to them, “Collect no more than what you have been ordered to.”

Luke 3:14 And soldiers also were questioning him, saying, “What are we to do, we as well?” And he said to them, “Do not extort money from anyone, nor harass anyone, and be content with your wages.”

- John provides practical examples of what it looks like to live a life contrary to our old sin nature.
 - John mentions that our selfish and self-centered nature now moves towards things such as sharing our possessions and respecting others.
 - John sees some tax collectors in the group as well as soldiers and he provides personalized examples to their situation.
 - In a few short words, John shows the crowd that their actions and affections must be right before a just and Holy God.
 - Friends, it really boils down to the matters of one’s heart.
 - It is apparent what is going on within the hearts of those coming to hear the message and responding to it.
 - Their hearts are being moved to change!
 - I bring this to the forefront because of what the prophet Jeremiah said in Jeremiah 17:9-10. Check out the text.

Jeremiah 17:9 “The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it?

Jeremiah 17:10 I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, To give to each person according to his ways, According to the results of his deeds.

- If the heart is naturally deceitful and sick and only the Lord can understand it, then it is only the Lord that can change it – not us.
 - This was the first two points of John’s 3-part message in proclaiming men to repent and respond.
 - We will now move to part 3 of John’s message: A Message to Receive.
 - If one was to enter into this coming Kingdom that would be physically here on earth, the only way to enter was through receiving this message.
 - Once there was a recognition of repentance and a change of mind, Mark

mentions that there would be a “baptism of repentance”.

- For us to best understand the connection of this message to this method of baptism, we need to have a clearer understanding of Baptism.
- John’s baptism was unique in that it was not connected to the traditional sense of the word or its purpose.
 - Jews were well acquainted with the term baptism.
 - As a matter of fact, baptism was the idea of ceremonial cleansing within Jewish practice. (Slide 4)
- One scholar recorded this about baptism as it relates to the Old Testament:

“Baptism began as a ritual to initiate new believers into the Jewish faith and continued as a means to purify individuals.”

- “Jewish baptism always required total immersion.” (Taylor, *The Immerser*, pp.58-60, *Yeshua Life of the Jewish Messiah* Fruchtenbaum, pg.488)
 - The initial root of the English word, “baptism”, in the Greek is *bapto*.
 - It simply means “to dip” or “to dye”.
 - This term is best illustrated by imagining a piece of white cloth being dipped into a bucket of dye.
 - Once that cloth has been fully immersed in the dye and is pulled back up that cloth is no longer white.
 - It has now taken on the very identity in which it has been immersed in.
 - So what was happening in the Judean wilderness with John’s message is people were hearing this message to repent being preached.
 - Their hearts are convicted of their sin which causes them to turn from their old ways.
 - Therefore, they have this change of mind and change of heart and make this commitment that they would accept whomever John identified as Messiah.
 - As Dr. Fruchtenbaum mentions in “Yeshua: The Life of Messiah from a Messianic Jewish Perspective”, John’s baptism is a prophetic eschatological washing which points to the greater baptism of the Spirit.
 - Repentance, here, not only causes one to turn from sin, moving from untruth to truth, it ultimately “opens the eyes” for those being baptized by John to commit to the promised Messiah as the Messianic King.
 - This prepares the way for Messiah to be received and for His people to receive the Kingdom.
 - Friends, this baptism became a matter of insult amongst the religious leaders of that day, but most importantly, it created this line in the sand for those who heard the message.
 - For example, in both Matthew and Luke’s account, John is preaching to the crowds and within the crowds John notices a group of Pharisees and Sadducees.
 - As John recognizes them he says to the whole group, specifically addressing these religious men, “You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the

wrath to come?”

- Directly after that the text, both gospel accounts, mention this powerful line, “Bear fruit in keeping with repentance.”
- If there is no fruit to show of a repentant heart, there was no true repentance to begin with.
- The Gospel writers are pointing to a very unique thing that is going on and John was making this prominently known in the crowd.
- The time is up where you think that a simple ceremonial cleansing is somehow going to suffice for the wickedness of the hearts of men and women.
 - These ceremonial cleansings were instructed by God to bring to the forefront of the children of Israel that they must be clean before God.
 - However, what the religious leaders did was use the cleansing as an outward appeal to obedience rather than an inward commitment to obedience in the heart.
- Friends don’t miss this, the exterior cleansing was only a means to express what was going to be done inwardly.
 - God wasn’t focused on clean hands per se, He was focused on clean hearts.
 - This is why John was so forward with the religious leaders, because their lives bore no fruit.
- One thing my wife and I do with our kids at bath time is we do what’s called “the under-arm check”.
 - The underarm check is important in our household because it ensures my kids really washed for shower time.
- What typically happens is the kids get in the shower and think that just because the water hits them that somehow it makes them clean.
 - So the first time we gave our kids the opportunity to wash themselves, we followed up with the armpit check – clearly they failed.
- After that my wife and I come in and give a more thorough wash.
 - This ensures that they are fully clean and not wanting to give us an appearance of being clean without the evidence of being clean.
 - You can’t fake the funk. It will come to light and in the case of our text, it will be evident with your life and living.
- So as John is proclaiming this baptism of repentance, he is letting the Jewish people know, you need a bath because your bath is lacking.
 - The religious leaders were also making the assumption that their ancestry or Jewish lineage made them clean or made them acceptable in the sight of God and exempt from judgement. (Matthew 3:9)
- In pharisaic theology, there was a concept known as the *zekhut avot* which means “the merit of the fathers” (citation from pg.478 of Life of Messiah)
 - What this taught was that any descendant of the patriarchs, Abraham, Issac, and Jacob, was protected from divine punishment simply on merit of the fathers. (citation from pg.478 of Life of Messiah)
 - It’s like assuming that just because your mother and father are saved that you

somehow are “automatically” saved.

- Unfortunately, that’s not how it works and John clarifies that for them – everyone must be washed whom the Lord has called.
- Only God Himself is able to apply this spiritual washing within the hearts of men and women in whom He calls.
- Ezekiel speaks to this washing and cleansing in Ezekiel 36:25-26. Check out what it reads.

Ezekiel 36:25 Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols.

Ezekiel 36:26 Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

- One detail that we can’t afford to overlook is located, again, in Matthew and Luke’s account.
 - It will further expound upon what I mean by a line in the sand.
 - John mentions this in Matthew 3:10, right after he speaks on bearing fruit:

Matthew 3:10 And the axe is already laid at the root of the trees; therefore, every tree that does not bear good fruit is being cut down and thrown into the fire.

- John’s point to the religious leaders at this moment seems quite crystalized based upon his previous statement in Matthew about using heritage as a means of inheritance.
 - John’s point is that there is no amount of appearing to be holy that will keep them and anyone who is unrepentant from the judgement to come.
 - The message that John is proclaiming is a message that shows how men and women are saved from the promised coming judgement and wrath of God.
 - The axe that is used here in Matthew is a picture of the reality that one more blow to this tree and judgement is coming.
 - The judgment is imminent.
 - This message of repentance would show those who would be of the remnant and those who would not.
 - We will speak more about this idea of separation via judgement as we get closer to the close of our teaching tonight.
 - Let’s keep moving forward, check out verse 6.

Mark 1:6 John was clothed with camel’s hair and wore a leather belt around his waist, and his diet was locusts and wild honey.

- Mark mentions the attire and diet of John the Baptist here.
 - And if you were to be honest, the appearance would be a bit questionable.

- Here we have the forerunner of the Messiah, the Promised One, and yet the forerunner's attire is that of camel's hair with a leather belt.
- To make matters worse, his diet is that of locust and wild honey. The Keto diet had nothing on this!
- I could see it now, as John is preaching around the desert areas, locust and honey drippings within his beard.
- This is the picture that people are seeing as John is preaching.
 - Maybe some are there for the entertainment of the view whereas others are there to hear and receive the message.
 - Whatever the case may be, it's clear from verse 5 that the message that the Lord had given John was a message that was changing and preparing hearts.
 - And most assuredly, people were able to look past his physical features and hear his famous message.
- What I find most interesting is how God can use the most unlikely people to give a most profound message.
 - Recognize that this messianic message is being announced by a wild looking man in the middle of a desert.
 - This message is not being presented to the people by a religious leader.
- God chooses to give the message of His Son's entrance into His ministry through the mouthpiece of a man who looks like a maniac.
 - When I think about that, I think about how God can take the most unqualified, unlikely men, like myself, to speak about His Holiness and goodness.
 - 1 Corinthians 1:27, I think says it best:

1 Corinthians 1:27 but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong,

- It could be assumed by some that this message of Messiah and the Kingdom arriving would be announced by those who were in the religious circles.
 - Maybe a Pharisee or a Sadducee would have been most suitable for the announcement of the one they taught about?
 - No! God instead uses an unlikely man named John the Baptist to go out to the wilderness to live and prepare for a time, for this messianic announcement.
 - God uses John and gives him the attire that the prophets of old, more specifically, the attire that the prophet Elijah wore, to grasp the attention of the people.
 - Hear me when I say this, God can use whoever, however He wants. He always qualifies and equips those in whom He calls.
 - Moses thought that because he was a stutterer that he was incapable of delivering a message to Pharaoh.
 - The bible is filled with inadequate, unqualified men and women, who are used mightily by God.

- Do not discount who God uses for His purposes!
- We arrive now to our last two verses for tonight, verses 7 and 8. Check out the text.

Mark 1:7 And he was preaching, saying, “After me One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to bend down and untie the straps of His sandals.

Mark 1:8 I baptized you with water; but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

- Notice that in verse 7, John’s preaching had a shift in conversation.
 - I mention this because prior to verse 7, we are told that John is simply preaching for people to repent in preparation for the promised Messiah and His Kingdom.
 - However, we notice there is a sudden change or pivot in John’s communication.
 - What begins with Him preaching “Repent for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand”, now shifts to him saying:
 - “After me, One is coming who is mightier than I.”
 - Why does John feel the need to make a distinction between himself and Jesus? Isn’t that the gist of the message?
 - What or who seems to be causing the confusion?
 - John has made it clear from the start that He is the forerunner who is preparing the people for the coming of their God and King.
 - Clearly, there is confusion stirring in the camp.
 - Luke 3:15-16 expresses what the confusion is whereas John 1:19-28 expresses who the instigators of the confusion are.
 - Let’s look at Luke 3:15-16 quickly:

Luke 3:15 Now while the people were in a state of expectation and they all were thinking carefully in their hearts about John, whether he himself perhaps was the Christ,

Luke 3:16 John responded to them all, saying, “As for me, I baptize you with water; but He is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to untie the straps of His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

- John either sees curiosity in the eyes of the people he is baptizing as they contemplate on if John is the Christ or not
 - Or the Holy Spirit reveals to John what the people are thinking in their hearts.
 - I personally believe that the Holy Spirit gives insight to John as to what is going on within the people’s hearts.
 - However the chips may fall, John wants no confusion regarding who the promised Messiah is.
 - John is adamant with the fact that his message points to Messiah and his

baptism acknowledges the people's commitment to this Messiah and His message which provides forgiveness of sins.

- So, if John is clear in his messaging, then who or what is causing speculation or issue as to who Messiah is?
 - Well, we don't have to look too far to know who is causing the confusion whether in whisper or in presence.
 - If you recall last week, I mentioned that we would come back to revisit a particular piece of scripture today, well here we go.
 - Turn with me to John 1:19-28.

John 1:19 This is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites to him from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?"

John 1:20 And he confessed and did not deny; and this is what he confessed: "I am not the Christ."

John 1:21 And so they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" And he *said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No."

John 1:22 Then they said to him, "Who are you? Tell us, so that we may give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?"

John 1:23 He said, "I am the voice of one calling out in the wilderness, 'Make the way of the Lord straight,' as Isaiah the prophet said."

John 1:24 And the messengers had been sent from the Pharisees.

John 1:25 They asked him, and said to him, "Why then are you baptizing, if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?"

John 1:26 John answered them, saying, "I baptize in water, but among you stands One whom you do not know.

John 1:27 It is He who comes after me, of whom I am not worthy even to untie the strap of His sandal."

John 1:28 These things took place in Bethany beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing people.

- There is a group of priests and Levites that have been sent to John's baptism to investigate this Messianic movement.
 - This explains the confusion amongst the crowd.
 - The religious leaders have arrived on the scene observing and witnessing what can only be explained as a move of God in the midst of His people.
 - With all these people coming to hear the message and being baptized unto repentance, it makes sense that it would spark controversy.
 - As a matter of fact, over that 6 month period of John preaching this message to prepare for the Messiah and His Kingdom many people were being drawn and confessing their sins and being baptized unto repentance.
 - Why do I mention this?
 - I mention this because John the Baptist and this large crowd began to gather the attention of many people, but more especially the religious leaders.

- As you can imagine jealousy, envy, and pride are beginning to bubble up.
 - The religious leaders see this as competing interest – this cannot be so.
- It's like when you see a Chick Fil A right across the street from a McDonalds, you are going to have some competition, per se.
 - And in the case of Chick Fil A, they are getting all the customers.
- In a similar way, John's message is impacting the hearts and minds of people which is causing an allegiance issue.
 - Are the people going to be committed to the religious/political structures and power structure of that day or will their allegiance move to this coming King and His Kingdom?
- These competing Kingdoms would soon be face to face and the religious leaders did not like it, so they sent in some spies to interrogate.
 - This would begin what would be known as the Sanhedrin Investigation.
 - Whenever there would be noise of a Messianic movement of some sort, the religious leaders would conduct an investigation into the claims.
- This investigation would be a two step process:
 - First step consisted of simply observing what you see, what is said and done.
 - No questions could be raised during this first phase.
- If the findings from the first half of the investigation had grounds for concern, it would move to the second stage – Interrogation.
 - In this phase those who would be sent out by the religious leaders would be able to raise questions, objections, etc for the confirmation or rejection of 'said' Messiah.
- It becomes evidently clear that within John's account, the religious leaders were already at step two of their investigation due to the series of questions asked.
 - John, his message, and the coming Messiah officially became a threat to the religious leaders of that day.
 - Jesus hadn't even stepped foot into His ministry yet and He will be held under a microscope having not yet even uttered a word.
- Isn't it profound how the message of the Gospel to this day is a message that is consistently under investigation by men and women who don't want to hear the truth.
 - This is the result of depravity and wickedness at its best. The enemy does not want the truth to be made known and will stir confusion wherever he can.
 - The enemy's plan from the garden to now has not and will not change.
 - The enemy seeks to silence the message; however the message will continue to be proclaimed.
- The religious leaders are seeing with their own eyes and some by way of the investigation that their gig of false relationship is coming to a close.
 - The King is coming on the scene to usher in a new way of life preparing the people for what this new Kingdom will be and look like.
- John mentions that the Messiah that is coming, whom he will point out, is "mightier

than John”

- John even goes a step further to articulate the reality of how much greater Jesus, the Messiah is than he.
 - He gives this illustration that he is not even worthy to stoop down and untie the sandals of Christ.
- David Daube mentions in the book ‘The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism’ that the use of stooping down to remove the sandals off the Messiah’s feet was a traditional custom for slaves and their Masters.
 - The Talmud makes mention of this customary service of a slave during that day.
 - However, John mentions that he is not even worthy to do the typical task of that of a slave as it pertains to serving Jesus.
- What we must also recognize in John’s humility is that he continually points the people back to Christ.
 - John has no confusion as to who he is and his role.
 - As followers and servants of Christ, even within our leading people to Jesus, you are leading them to Christ – not us.
 - If I may even be so frank as to say, you are leading people to a person and not a church.
 - The reality is the good news is not about your church or your pastor, the good news is about Jesus Christ and what He did!
- The text continues in verse 8 with John further explaining why Christ is so much mightier than he.
 - John mentions that the baptism that I am giving you is simply with water, but the baptism that Messiah will give you is with the Holy Spirit.
- Interesting to note, Mark’s Gospel does not mention the phrase “and fire” regarding Jesus’ means of baptizing.
 - Why does Mark not include “and fire” to his account?
 - Could it be that the use of that phrase was too soon from the event that his audience would have just endured with the “great fire of Rome”?
 - Some could speculate to that extent however John is simply trying to reinforce for the people two things:
 - 1. John is not the Messiah
 - 2. He is not even worthy to be compared to Messiah, more specifically their methods of baptism are not even worthy to be compared.
- Within Matthew and Luke’s account the authors describe John’s dialogue in detail regarding the difference between John’s baptism and Jesus’ baptism.
 - What is clear from looking at both baptisms is that everyone will experience a baptism of some sort.
 - To further explain this, I would like for us to turn to Matthew 3:11-12. Here is what the text reads:

Matthew 3:11 “As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

Matthew 3:12 His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

- So how does Jesus’ baptism directly differ from that of John’s?
 - Clearly it differs in many ways but the key to understand how specifically is found in verse 12.
 - Verse 12 mentions that Jesus’ winnowing fork is in His hand.
 - There may be some who are asking the question, what is a winnowing fork and what does this have to do with a baptism?
 - To best answer that question I would like to first explain what a winnowing fork is.
 - A winnowing fork was an agricultural tool used to toss threshing grain or barley into the air.
 - In tossing the wheat into the air the wind would separate the lighter straw from the heavier grain.
 - This process literally aided in separating the wheat from the chaff.
 - Once the winnowing had been done, the chaff would be removed with a winnowing shovel and discarded.
 - Within the Old testament, the mention of winnowing is figuratively connected to God’s divine wrath.
 - It is rarely mentioned as a means of scattering as is done in Ruth 3:2.
 - Within this context in the New Testament this term of the winnowing fork is directly connected to God separating and judging.
 - The question is what or who, for that matter, is being separated?
 - The answer goes back to verse 12 of Matthew 3. The text says “ He will gather wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”
 - The text makes mention that the wheat will be separated from the chaff.
 - The wheat will be placed in the barn and the chaff will be burned up.
 - All of this sounds great, but what are the true implications of this biblical truth. In other words who is the wheat and who is the chaff.
 - Within this context, the wheat are those who believe and will therefore be baptized by the Holy Spirit.
 - Whereas the chaff are the non-believers, those who do not accept Messiah and reject His claims, they will be baptized by fire.
 - This particular fire is not a mere campfire situation. This fire is that of the Lake of fire as the text mentions in Revelation 20:11-15.
 - Check out the text for direct clarity on this separation.

Revelation 20:15 And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

- John's explanation of the differences in the baptisms is showing the hearer that Jesus is unlike any other.
 - Jesus' baptism will reveal two important aspects of His ministry:
 - It will reveal that Jesus is both the Gatherer and Divider.
 - Check out what the text says in Luke 12:49-53

Luke 12:49 "I have come to cast fire upon the earth; and how I wish it were already kindled!

Luke 12:50 But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is accomplished!

Luke 12:51 Do you think that I came to provide peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division;

Luke 12:52 for from now on five members in one household will be divided, three against two and two against three.

Luke 12:53 They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law."

- The Holy Spirit, through His illuminating the hearts and minds of men and women will draw those in whom are Christ to Christ.
 - Those whose eyes are opened by the Spirit are receivers of His grace whereas those whose eyes are not open are rejected.
 - Those who are not called by the Spirit are then separated and cast aside.
 - Scholar and Theologian Darrell Bock mentions in his commentary on Luke that John gives the reader 3 points that point to Jesus' superiority.
 - 1. John mentioning the illustration of a slave to a master: John saying he is not even worthy to be a slave to Christ indicates Christ's Superiority.
 - This speaks to an important aspect of regard to Christ as Lord and King. Jesus is not your "best friend" or your equal, He is your King.
 - 2. Jesus' baptism with the Spirit brings blessing, discernment, enablement, and His divine presence.
 - 3. Jesus is superior because He is the Judge who makes distinctions between people (citation from Darrell L. Bock)
 - Recognizing that Jesus is Gatherer and Divider, Judge and Prophet, King and God is an admission to His splendor, greatness, but above all His Deity.
 - Only God has the power to raise up and tear down!
 - Only God has the authority to Judge!
 - Only God has the Power to save and to set the captive free.
 - Only God has the ability to cast one to hell.

- It is evident that within John's detailed statement in Luke's account that this Jesus is more than just a teacher. Jesus is God wrapped in flesh amongst men.
- As Mark continues to unfold this gospel, it becomes clear that the One in whom John will point out as Messiah is not worthy to be compared to any man.
 - This coming Messiah and King is both distinct and divine in His Person.
 - There will be some who will accept Him and some that will reject Him, but what we will see is that the Father is the determining factor by who will receive His Son and who will reject Him.
 - In next week's teaching, we will see why this coming figure that John will introduce us to, Jesus the Christ, is so great!
 - I hope you join us next week as we travel through verses 9-13.
 - Let's Pray.

Citations:

- Fruchtenbaum, Arnold G. "Chapter 20-23." *Yeshua: The Life of the Messiah from a Messianic Jewish Perspective*, Ariel Ministries, San Antonio, TX, 2017, pp. 466–485.
- Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), Lk 3:15–20.
- SPROUL, R. C. "Chapter 1." *Mark: An Expositional Commentary*, LIGONIER MINISTRIES, 2019, pp. 1–6.