

The Johns in the Bible, can get a little confusing (because there's a few of them).

- There's the Gospel of John (the series we've just begun); and
- there's 3 letters that John wrote (1 John; 2 John; 3 John); and
- then there was "John of Patmos" who wrote the book of Revelation (& we're pretty sure that's also the same John {the Apostle});
  
- In the book of Acts, there is a young missionary, "John" (also known as Mark), but he's a different bloke,

And this week, The Gospel of John, is talking about John the Baptist (a different bloke, and he **didn't** write any of the books of the Bible).

So:

Last week, John (the Gospel writer) introduced John (the Baptist):

<sup>6</sup> There was a man sent from God, whose name was John ("JB" or "Bapto"). <sup>7</sup> He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light (Christ Jesus), that all might believe through him. <sup>8</sup> He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.

And today's reading, is how JB did that.

Let's set the scene:

The Jewish religious leaders in Jerusalem, had a responsibility to keep an eye on all of the religious happenings about the place. And when they heard about the preaching of JB, and that he was baptising people, they needed to assess the situation and see if this bloke's the real deal, or if he's a false prophet/messiah or something.

You see, the people of Israel were ready for a revolution. What they **needed**, was someone to lead them (**in** the revolution), and their hope was, that this would be the Messiah. Now, there'd been plenty of **false-Messiah's**, claiming that they were the ones to lead them..., well, maybe Bapto was one of these.

Anyway, it must've been some pretty high-up leaders (They were Pharisees, but they must've been pretty high up), because they dispatched "priests" and "Levites" to check JB out...

And check him out, they did:

*"Who are you?"*

*"Well, I'm not the Christ/Messiah."*

*"Alright then, Who are you??? Are you Elijah?"*

*"I am not" ...*

Now, this is a curious answer. At this point, it looks like JB was not fully aware of the role he was fulfilling.

You see, in Matthew 11, Jesus tells his disciples that JB is Elijah. And in Luke 1, an angel tells Bapto's dad (Zechariah)

that little baby Bapto would go before the Lord, in the spirit and the power of Elijah, to call the people to prepare for the coming of the Lord...

And yet, it seems like Bapto was a bit in the dark about who He really was. So he said, **“No, I am not Elijah.”**

*“Alright, Are you the prophet?”*

And once again, he said, **“No”**.

But what did they mean? They didn't ask “Are you a prophet?” They asked, “Are you **the** prophet?”

You see, they were referring to a promise that was made in Deuteronomy 18. Moses said:

Deuteronomy 18:15-19 (ESV)

<sup>15</sup> “The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers — it is to him you shall listen — <sup>16</sup> just as you desired of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly, when you said, ‘Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God or see this great fire any more, lest I die.’ <sup>17</sup> And the LORD said to me, ‘They are right in what they have spoken. <sup>18</sup> I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. <sup>19</sup> And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I

myself will require it of him. (in other words, there will be pay-back for that)

Alright, so JB said, “No, I’m not the Prophet”.

Who do you think The Prophet is?

- Who was raised up from among their brothers;
- Who **did** hear the voice of God;
- Who **did** speak the words of God; and
- Who is it, if we do not listen to His words and heed His words, we have to answer to God???

Who do you think “**The** Prophet” is? Jesus... In the book of Acts, twice, (once by Peter/Stephen), it is proclaimed that Jesus is “**the** Prophet” that was prophesied by Moses.

“Alright Bapto, if you’re not:

- the Christ; and
- Elijah;
- the Prophet,

Who the heck are you then???

You’d better tell us, because these big-wigs have sent us to find out who you are, and we can’t go back without an answer...”

And <sup>23</sup> [Bapto] said, “I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’ as the prophet Isaiah said.”

Now, that answer says more about Jesus, than what it says about JB.

He was quoting Isaiah 40:3, but I’ll begin at 40:1:

**40** Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.  
**2** Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,  
and cry to her  
that her warfare is ended,  
that her iniquity is pardoned,  
that she has received from YHWH's hand  
double for all her sins.

Alright, the people of Israel have been suffering. They had sinned greatly, and they suffered because of their sins. But Salvation and Forgiveness, is about to come.

**3** A voice cries:

"In the wilderness prepare the way of YHWH;  
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

**4** Every valley shall be lifted up,  
and every mountain and hill be made low;  
the uneven ground shall become level,  
and the rough places a plain.

**5** And the glory of YHWH shall be revealed,  
and all flesh shall see it together,  
for the mouth of YHWH has spoken."

YHWH, is the personal Name of The LORD God Almighty.

JB knew, that his preaching and his baptising; his calling of the people to repentance, was the hard; dry; rough, spiritual places, being levelled up...

*For a while, after Mum & Dad sold the farm, I was driving laser buckets for a living (levelling paddocks (although not completely levelling – shifting soil from the high areas to the low areas, to create a single plane of a constant grade (slope) from one end of the paddock to the other). (It's for irrigation, so that water can run at just the right speed, from one end of the paddock to the other...*

*Anyway, the people I was working for (are bits of larrikins), a year or so before this, they joked with me about putting in for a bicentennial project... Who here, is old enough to remember the bicentenary? 1988, was 200 years from when the First fleet sailed into Botany Bay...*

*Do you remember how the Government was giving grants left right and centre, for all of these bicentennial projects?*

- *There was a bicentennial project for this; and*
- *a bicentennial project for that; and*
- *every road and every building that was constructed, was a “bicentennial project”...*

*And the two brothers of this earthmoving company joked that they would put in for a “bicentennial project” to square-up and level Australia.*

- *The shape of Australia is so inconvenient. It would be much better if it was a square or a rectangle;*
- *And level it up so the mountains can be farmed and what-not...*

*And the absurdity of squaring up and levelling Australia, is what made it funny.*

*It would be impossible. There wouldn't be enough oil in world to power the machines to do that.*

There are some things, that only God can do. Only God could square-up and level Australia. But an even bigger miracle, is to square up and level the heart.

You see, we live in a culture where the prevailing philosophy, is that man is essentially good, and that, given the right environment/motivation/guidance, the heart of man can become good... How's that working out for our culture? In our land, we've had more opportunities than we've ever had, and yet our society is getting more:

- selfish;
- self-centred;
- self-absorbed;
- vulgar;
- immoral;
- intolerant;
- judgmental;
- violent; and

- less secure

than it has ever been.

The possibility of levelling out evil, to make it good, is even more absurd than a bunch of country earth-moving larrikins, squaring up and levelling Australia...

And Isaiah goes on to explain how the time of man is short. God is forever. And even the most beautiful things of man, before God, they do not stand – they fade/fail – they do not come up to scratch.

Isaiah 40 V6

<sup>6</sup> A voice says, "Cry!"

And I said, "What shall I cry?"

All flesh is grass,

and all its beauty is like the flower of the field.

<sup>7</sup> The grass withers, the flower fades

when the breath of YHWH blows on it;

surely the people are grass.

<sup>8</sup> The grass withers, the flower fades,

but the word of our God will stand forever.

Do you remember how the Gospel of John began? **1:1** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.. Jesus is "The Word".

And now, John the Baptist is pointing us to Isaiah 40, where it says:

<sup>8</sup> The grass withers, the flower fades,

but the word of our God will stand forever.

You see, the message of JB, is "prepare for the coming of YHWH".

Now, Isaiah 40:5 says that when the LORD comes,

<sup>5</sup> ... the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,  
and all flesh shall see it together,

Is this talking about the 1<sup>st</sup> coming of Jesus? or the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Jesus???

Well, this bit of Isaiah is about the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Jesus.

But John the Baptist, his job, was to point to Jesus at His 1<sup>st</sup> coming, so that we (who are crooked) can get straightened up, to be ready for His 2<sup>nd</sup> coming. You see, on the Day of the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming – the Day of Judgment, you do not want to have a crooked and sinful heart, because the crooked and sinful heart, will be subject to judgment.

And so, John is pointing to the 1<sup>st</sup> coming of Jesus, to get us ready. In Jesus Christ (the Word of God), is our hope and our forgiveness... It is through Him, that our iniquity is pardoned

Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.

....

her iniquity is pardoned

So, let's come back to JB.

The priests & Levites from head-office say: “Alright, so, if you're not the Christ/Elijah/Prophet, then why are you baptising???” , which is a bit of a strange question, because

the Pharisees who sent them, they used to baptise people...

And I can't help wondering, “Are the Pharisees a bit jealous about this?” The Pharisees wanted the people to be holy, and

**they** were baptising people too... Maybe JB was doing a better job and getting more people turning to God than they were... And so maybe they were a bit put out that JB was playing in their patch...

Anyway, this is where JB points away from himself, to someone greater... **“I baptise with water, but among you stands one you do not know...**

Do you remember last week, only a few verses before this, it said of “the Word” – “the light of the world” – it says of God Himself: <sup>11</sup> **He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.**

Do you see what JB’s doing here? He’s pointing to the religious leaders, and says **“among you stands one you do not know”**. Who don’t they know? The God Who came to His own people, and they didn’t recognise Him as the God that He is.

And so Bapto says, **“the one you don’t know, He comes after me, and I’m not worthy to even untie His sandals”...**

That’s very different to the Gospel we sometimes hear today – a gospel that’s designed to appeal to generation of narcissists... – you know the kind of message I mean – the one that says: *“You’re so wonderful; You are so valuable to God; God needs you as part of His family...”* It’s the kind of message that appeals to one’s pride and makes one feel “God would be lucky to have me”...

That isn't the faith of JB... This is his take on things: "The one who comes after me: I'm not even worthy to untie His sandals."

Anyway, it was the next day, that Bapto saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!

Now:  
Isaiah promised that iniquity would be pardoned... But the thing is, justice demands that sin be atoned for. And so, Jesus became the atoning sacrifice for our sins.

You see, in the Old Testament, there's several images of the lamb of God, saving. When Abraham was about to sacrifice Isaac, God provided a lamb, and that lamb died in Isaac's place.

When the people of Israel were about to leave Egypt, each family had to sacrifice a lamb, and paint its blood, on the lintel of their doorway. And when the angel of death went through Egypt that night, every house with the blood of the lamb on the lintel, it passed over.

But, given that John the Baptist has already pointed us to Isaiah, maybe Isaiah 53 is what he wants us to consider:

**Isaiah 53:4** Surely he has borne our griefs  
and carried our sorrows;

yet we esteemed him stricken,  
smitten by God, and afflicted.

<sup>5</sup> But he was pierced for our transgressions;  
he was crushed for our iniquities;  
upon him was the chastisement that brought us  
peace,  
and with his wounds we are healed.

<sup>6</sup> All we like sheep have gone astray;  
we have turned—every one—to his own way;  
and the LORD has laid on him  
the iniquity of us all.

<sup>7</sup> He was oppressed, and he was afflicted,  
yet he opened not his mouth;  
like a lamb that is led to the slaughter,  
and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent,  
so he opened not his mouth.

<sup>8</sup> By oppression and judgment he was taken away;  
and as for his generation, who considered  
that he was cut off out of the land of the living,  
stricken for the transgression of my people?

“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of  
the world!

And the word “Behold”, it sounds like a very “holy” sort of  
word, doesn’t it. It’s not the sort of word we would use every

day, but it simply means, “Look” – “Would you look at that!”  
the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the  
world!

This is the One I was telling you about.

- He comes after me;
- But He’s better than me;
- Because He was before me.

which is what we talked about last week: Jesus is the Son of God. He was there at the beginning. He created the world. Jesus is far, far greater than the Bapto.

Now, the thing is: John the Baptist wasn’t born, knowing that Jesus is the Christ. (They might have been cousins, but he didn’t know that Jesus was the Son of God), at least not until God revealed it to Him. And this is what God does. God reveals to us, Who His Son is.

This is the whole reason that JB was baptising folk. He says  
V <sup>31</sup> I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I  
came baptising with water, that he might be revealed  
to Israel.”

So, how did God reveal to Bapto, that Jesus is the Son of God?

Well, the Gospel of John doesn’t tell us about the baptism of Jesus, but the other 3 Gospels (Matthew, Mark & Luke) do. And it was at the Baptism of Jesus, that the Holy Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it [landed on Jesus, and it] remained on him

And God had told JB, “Look, when you see that happen – when you see on whom the Spirit descends and remains” **this is he who baptises with the Holy Spirit.**

Now, did God tell that to Bapto audibly? I don’t know. Maybe He showed Him in the Old Testament Scripture. Have you noticed that most of the quotes today, have been coming from Isaiah?

Well, Isaiah 11 foretells the coming of the Messiah, and it says:

Isaiah 11:2 (ESV)

<sup>2</sup> And the Spirit of YHWH shall rest upon him,  
the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
the Spirit of counsel and might,  
the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of YHWH.

And so, JB testifies 3 things about Jesus:

1. He is the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world.
2. He is the One Who can and does baptise with the Holy Spirit;
3. He is the Son of God.

And so:

1. Jesus Christ, takes away our greatest problem: Sin
2. He gives to us, our greatest helper: The Holy Spirit; and
3. He is the greatest (full stop): The Son of God...

But before we finish off, I want us to consider, “What does it mean to be “Baptised with the Holy Spirit”?”

The word “Baptised” means to be dipped in; to be submerged in; to be washed with.

To be baptised with the Holy Spirit, is to be:

- washed by the Spirit;
- enveloped by the Spirit;
- to be filled with the Spirit;
- to be brought into the Spiritual relationship with The Father, Son and Spirit.

And this is an ongoing thing. In the Greek, the word used here βαπτίζω ( baptizōn ) is a present; active; participle Verb. It means Jesus is the One Who is baptising with the Holy Spirit...

It isn't a one-off event. He continues in this work today:

- As we repent of sin today, He washes us clean.  
And when we sin again, and repent, He's still washing us clean.
- When we face troubles and hardship, He comforts us – He envelops us with His Spirit...  
*It's not like a paint-job that gets done once, and it's really good at the start, but within a few weeks, it's fading and flaking...*  
Jesus is baptising us with His Spirit today.

- And He fills us with the power of His Spirit. How would the Gospel be proclaimed in the world, if it wasn't for the Power of God...
- And He welcomes us into the Fellowship of the Spirit today...

Even today – right here – right now, the Lord Jesus Christ, is:

- sending His Spirit;
- He is baptising us with His Spirit;
- enabling us to:
  - worship in Spirit; and
  - to be one in the Spirit.

**Look at that:** The Lamb of God, Who takes away the sin of the world.

**Look at that:** the Son of God, who lavishly immerses us in His Spirit.

This encounter with John the Baptist, is so that the Messiah might be revealed to Israel. Isn't it a glorious thing: to have the Son of God revealed to us, that we might have Life in His Name.

If God is revealing the Lord Jesus Christ to you, it is for a reason. It is so that you might know Him, and that you might believe. And that by believing, have life in His Name.

Let's pray:

Heavenly Father,  
we thank You, that you make Your Son known.

We thank You,  
that He is the Lamb of God,  
Who takes away the sin of the world.

We are not worthy.  
If JB was not worthy to even untie Jesus' sandals,  
we are **far** from worthy of being called Your children.

And so we thank You Lord,  
for Your gracious gift.  
That the Lamb of God was slain,  
to take away our iniquity.  
-that You have laid on Him,  
the sin that we could not otherwise be rid of.

And we thank You for life.  
Cleanse us by Your Spirit;  
Fill us with Your Spirit;  
Transform us by Your Spirit.

We pray this in Jesus' Name,  
Amen.