

ASTONISHED

AT THE WISDOM AND WORDS OF JESUS

IT'S RIGHT TO DO RIGHT RIGHT NOW

SUMMARY

Throughout His ministry, Jesus came close to people, and He conversed with people, and when He did people were astonished at what He said. In this sermon series, we are listening to and learning from the wise Words of Jesus.

REVIEW

Last week, we began this series of messages by considering our key text – Luke 2:47.

Luke 2:47 says, *“And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers.”*

We found that Jesus had an **INTENSE INTEREST** in the Word of God, but He also had an **INCREDIBLE UNDERSTANDING** of the Word of God. Jesus knew how to handle the Word of God, and it showed in the fact that people were **ASTONISHED AT THE WISDOM AND WORDS OF JESUS**.

We found that the word *astonished* has the idea of a person that is stunned and shocked by something.

The Gospel Records make it very clear that Jesus did many incredible things, but Jesus also said many incredible things. Sometimes He **PREACHED**, sometimes He spoke in **PARABLES**, and sometimes it was nothing more than a **PERSONAL CONVERSATION**, but it was always truth that eventually resulted in transformed lives.

This journey is one where we are looking at the wisdom and words of Jesus and we need to be the ones that are astonished at and transformed by the wisdom and Words of Jesus.

MESSAGE

We didn't look at it last week, but, at the age of twelve, Jesus made His purpose abundantly clear. After astonishing the doctors with His **QUESTIONS**, His **UNDERSTANDING**, and His **ANSWERS**, in Luke 2:49, Jesus says to His mother, "*...How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?*" The next statement that the Bible makes about the teenage years of Jesus Christ is that He "*...increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man*" (Luke 2:52).

For eighteen years, the Bible goes silent on the life of Jesus, but it makes it very clear that God was still at work preparing the landscape for His earthly ministry. Those preparations included a forerunner who would prepare the way for Jesus.

Isaiah 40:3 says, "*The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.*"

That voice was the voice of John the Baptist. He was the cousin of Jesus, the son of Zacharias and Elisabeth. He was a miracle child as Elisabeth was well beyond the age of childbearing, but it serves as a reminder that "*...there is nothing too hard for [God]*" (Jeremiah 32:17). John was born, just like the angel Gabriel had said, and the next phase of God's plan began, and it was focused on the life and ministry of Jesus Christ.

Luke 1:80 says, "*And the child [John the Baptist] grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel.*"

It was in the wilderness that John developed a **CLARITY**, a **COURAGE**, and a **COMMITMENT** to the cause of Christ and his purpose. This season of time could have taken nearly twenty years. Don't rush the necessary seasons of preparation. Far too many have crashed and burned because they weren't ready to stand and shine when the time was right. The great tragedy when we stand before God is that we didn't fully accomplish what could have been had we simply learned to live our life according to God's plan and out of God's provisions.

When we consider the early years of John the Baptist, we aren't given a lot of insight as to what his upbringing looked like, but we do know that it produced a difference in him from the world around him.

(1) John was different in his **APPEARANCE**.

We're told that his "*...raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey*" (Matthew 3:4). The child of God is not called to fit into this world; the child of God is called to fit into the kingdom of God. We're to live as citizens of Heaven while we're citizens on earth.

Luke 9:62 says, *“And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.”*

(2) John was different in his **ATTITUDE**

We’re told that John drew a clear distinction between what was right and wrong. John was not interested in living in the grey areas of life. He was not interested in shifting his understanding of right and wrong to keep up with what the world decides to allow or tolerate. John was committed to do and say what was right and he called out what was wrong. While everyone else was too cowardly to speak up about truth and right, John stood up and spoke up without shame or apology. The reality is that those who truly love God and have a passion to live for God have no desire to waste time trying to justify that which is not pleasing to God.

Matthew 3:1 says, *“In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea.”*

The word *came* here “literally means “to appear publicly.” For several years, John lived and grew up in the wilderness. Now look! I’m not saying that you need to pack up your family and move out into the wilderness, but what I am saying is that John’s parents cared more about John doing right than they were concerned about John fitting into the wrong world that was around them. What I’m trying to say is that there isn’t anything wrong with being different. God blesses and God uses different people, but He works against worldly people.

When John shows up on the scene, we find that He shows up simply doing what he was told to do. When God said wait, John waited. When God said that it’s time, John went, and he did what God said to do. You’ll never regret doing what is right and you’ll never regret doing what is right at the right time. but there will always come a point when you will regret doing wrong and doing right at the wrong time and/or in the wrong way.

God tells John to go down to the Jordan River and to preach and to baptize.

Matthew 3:5-6 says, *“Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan, And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.”*

John’s message rang throughout the region and many people came out to hear him and to be baptized by him, and others came to simply find out more about who he was.

John 1:19-27 says, *“And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou? And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No. Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself? He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias. And they which were sent were of the Pharisees. And*

they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet? John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not; He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose."

John made it clear that this wasn't about him. He wasn't looking for popularity or profit; John was simply intent on living out his purpose – to prepare the way for the Lord.

John's message was clear: "*Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*" (Matthew 3:2).

They had heard the message repent before (many times through the prophets), but this is the first time that we find the phrase *kingdom of Heaven* in the Bible.

The *kingdom of heaven* is a phrase that refers to the literal, visible kingdom of Jesus Christ on earth, which had been prophesied multiple times in the Old Testament.

Now, that might not mean a lot to us, but that statement meant a lot to them.

The Assyrians had come and gone,

The Egyptians had come and gone,

The Babylonians had come and gone,

The Persians had come and gone,

The Grecians had come and gone,

The Romans had come and were currently ruling over them.

For nearly five hundred years (with the very brief exception of a period of time where they experienced a little independence under Judas the Maccabean), the Jews had lived under Gentile Rule. And now, things seemed even worse. You see, they weren't just living under Roman authority, but the Romans had divided the nation up into smaller parts and they had placed the hated Edomites (the descendants of Esau) over them.

The Jews had longed for their Messiah to come and deliver them from the government that was over them, and here is John preaching the message the King is coming and the kingdom is at hand.

Now, we're not told how long John preached this message, but we are told that there was a day when John was preaching and baptizing that the Pharisees and the Sadducees came to

Matthew 3:7 says, "*But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?*"

John is essentially looking at them and saying, "I won't baptize you, unless there is visible change in your life." He was calling them out. This was not about a false front being put up for others to see. This was about a change of heart and belief that resulted in a change of life.

Now, it's in the midst of all of this that John is met with another situation that he is unsure how to handle it. Jesus, Who had been conducting His earthly ministry in the northern region of Galilee, showed up and John identified Him saying, "*...Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world*" (John 1:29).

Matthew 3:13-17 says, "*Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*"

If you're in the habit of marking things in the Word of God, I'd like to draw your attention to verse 15 where the Bible says, "*Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.*"

For a few moments, I'd like to consider this thought: **IT'S RIGHT TO DO RIGHT RIGHT NOW.**

John wasn't sure what to do. He knew that he didn't want to baptize the Pharisees and Sadducees, but he didn't feel worthy to baptize Jesus, the only Begotten Son of God. It was something that he didn't expect or plan for. After all, Jesus was supposed to increase, and John was supposed to decrease (John 3:30).

It's important to note that Jesus did not correct John's reasoning, Jesus corrected John's reaction. Jesus was demanding immediate obedience. We still have the responsibility to repent of our sins and to say "Yes" to the will of God for our life.