

20:20 Vision Ministries – Devotions by Roger Browning Week 5 (January 25-31, 2015)

Matthew 3:13 begins with the words, “Then Jesus came.” This was the time when the Lord came to the Jordan River to be baptized by John the Baptist. I have been thinking recently about what I would like to have written about **this** ministry before these words are said again. Let’s look at John’s preaching in this same chapter to see what prompted the arrival of Jesus Christ.

Sunday, January 25 (read Matthew 3:1-3)

In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea and saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.” (Matthew 3:1-2)

The word “**repent**” is not used in many of today’s seeker-friendly churches. Their leaders may say, “If God requires any action on our part, then salvation is no longer free.” However, Acts 2:38 clearly links repentance with salvation. We bring a **willingness** to be transformed into the likeness of Jesus; God does the rest. I believe “repent” should be a key word in our vocabulary if we are truly looking forward to the second coming of Jesus Christ (v. 1-2). Our Lord’s return could be very close, so we should be absolutely sure of what we believe as well as the reasons why God’s Word can be trusted. Any belief that does not result in a change in the way we live is not true faith. John the Baptist has only one goal—to prepare his listeners for the arrival of Jesus Christ. As I approach the end of my journey on earth, I am well aware that this should be my one goal as well. To accomplish this, like John the Baptist, we need to level the playing field so that there is no obstacle standing in the way of others receiving salvation (v. 3).

Monday, January 26 (read Matthew 3:4-6)

Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. (Matthew 3:6)

John was a rugged individual who lived on a diet of locusts and wild honey (v. 4). The leather belt was to identify him with the prophet Elijah (see 2 Kings 1:8), the very one to whom Jesus compared John’s ministry (see Matthew 17:10-13). He drew a great crowd from Jerusalem and all Judea because of his unique and confronting preaching style (v. 5). The important fact is that people were not being baptized for church membership; they were coming under conviction and confessing their sins prior to baptism

(v. 6). I fear that many of today’s baptisms are merely for membership in the local church and that **repentance** is not even considered. Someday Jesus will separate true believers from mere church members. Until then, my job is to preach the Word, and your job is to share God’s love with others, so that by all means, some will be saved (see 2 Timothy 4:1-5).

Tuesday, January 27 (read Matthew 3:7-10)

Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. (Matthew 3:8)

The religious leaders in Jerusalem and the surrounding areas had absolute authority over religion in the temple. They became wealthy by imposing rules and regulations that made it impossible for the common worshipper to find peace. John did not beat around the bush to spare the feelings of the Pharisees and Sadducees (v. 7). He commanded them to “Produce fruit in keeping with repentance” (v. 8). (Luke **3:8** says exactly the same thing as Matthew **3:8**—interesting side point.) The fact that these men are descendants of Abraham will not save them unless they come to know Abraham’s God (v. 9). God’s judgments will take place at the “root level,” the foundation. Jesus is the Root (vine) for all true believers, providing nourishment to us, the branches (see John 15:1-8). He is the Rock that won’t roll! All other foundations are sinking sand (see Matthew 7:24-27).

Wednesday, January 28 (read Matthew 3:11-13)

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. (Matthew 3:13)

We have arrived at the three words that are motivating my every thought: “**Then Jesus came.**” These words will end the story of your life on earth whether it is in the rapture or in death. The great news is that you get to write the story that leads up to those final words. What do you want to place before this event? Personally, I want to be saying and doing exactly what John the Baptist is saying and doing. He is telling the people to “repent for the kingdom of heaven is near” (v. 2). He is confronting the religious leaders who are teaching legalism instead of grace (v. 7-11). He is humbling himself before the One who will come in judgment to all who reject His offer of salvation (v. 11-12). Write your own story in 2015 in such a way as to make Jesus proud of **your** actions and words before He comes back.

Thursday, January 29 (read Matthew 3:13-17)

Jesus replied, “Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.” Then John consented. (Matthew 3:15)

In the first 12 verses of the 3rd chapter of Matthew, John the Baptize emphasizes **repentance**. I want to make sure that those in my ministry who come to be baptized are responding to a message of repentance as well. Many people who join the church and are baptized never change anything about their lives. When a decision for Christ is not accompanied by a desire to follow His teachings, the person has not received true salvation. Jesus **fulfills all righteousness** in coming to John for personal baptism (v. 15), although His sinless life required no repentance. There are 4 ingredients I think every salvation should include: 1) repentance, 2) baptism, 3) acceptance as a child of God, and 4) the Holy Spirit’s arrival (v. 16-17). Can you testify to those events at your baptism?

Friday, January 30 (read John 1:19-28)

“I baptize with water,” John replied, “but among you stands one you do not know. He is the one who comes after me, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.” (John 1:26-27)

Today’s text emphasizes the humility of John the Baptist. From the start, he is fully aware of the task God has called him to complete. His only job is to prepare his listeners for the arrival of Jesus Christ (v. 23). At this stage of my ministry (as I stated in Sunday’s devotion) I am also aware that my remaining days on earth are to be spent doing the same thing. I believe Jesus is coming soon, but I do not believe many in the church are ready for His arrival. Like John, I will continue to baptize with water while trusting the Lord to baptize with the Holy Spirit (v. 26-27). Also like John, my credentials are not impressive, but it is typical of God to call the unlikely to fulfill His mission. If His return is really near, I believe 2015 can be the greatest year of ministry yet. Let’s trust Jesus to bring about miracles in many lives in the year ahead.

Saturday, January 31 (read John 1:29-34)

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29)

I admire John for recognizing the day when he is to step aside and turn his ministry over to Jesus (v. 29-31). Someday, I will be called to do the same. God had told John to look for the person on whom the Spirit would remain (v. 32-34). In the Old Testament, the Spirit came upon people at special times, but that Spirit could not **indwell** sinful men (see Judges 13:24-25, 14:6, 19, 15:14). Following Jesus’ death and resurrection, the Holy Spirit came on the Day of Pentecost to **indwell** all believers, because their sins had been paid in full by the blood of Jesus Christ. Praise His Name today because the Lamb of God has taken away the sin of the world (v.29).