

COMMUNITAS

Jesus (part 3)

Baptism, temptation, beginning

A. John the Baptist

The dramatic arrival of John the Baptist cannot be overstated. His prophetic ministry ends the 400 silent years. His appearance suggests Elijah (Mt 3:4, cf. 2 Kgs 1:8) – the one who would announce the coming of the Lord (Mal 4:5).

- He is the voice in the wilderness – the place that Israel met with God.
- The axe is at the root of the tree – Israel is about to experience judgement.
- He announces the coming of a greater one – to a Jew this could only have meant Yhwh (see Is. 40:10, 51:5, 53:10. No one else could be spoken of in such terms (Mt 3:11).
- He called Jews to be baptised at the evocative location of the Jordan – the entry point of the Promised Land. The call for God's chosen people to repent would have been shocking - the temple is sidestepped; the forgiveness of sins is not about sacrifice but about responding to John's prophetic message.
- He announces a Spirit baptism (Lk 3:16) - given the "grieved Spirit" view that arose out of apocalyptic writings this is radical indeed. The Spirit was thought to be given at the end of history, the new age to come.

B. Jesus

John introduces Jesus as the Lamb of God, the Passover Lamb in John's gospel. The other gospels have him introducing Jesus as the Spirit-baptiser.

Jesus' baptism, not surprisingly, provides some fulfillment to John's message.

- He is baptised – the Jordan was the birthplace of the nation of Israel. No longer a loose collection of tribes, Joshua (= Jesus) founded a nation.
- The heavens opened – this is apocalyptic (Isaiah 64:1).
- The coming of the Spirit/dove – shades of Gen. 1:2 (a new creation?). The giving of the Spirit represents the OT hope of the new age to come (Is 32:15, 44:3, Ez 37:14, Joel 2:28-32).
- The voice of God – the words spoken summarise the OT. The son/messiah (Ps 2), the loved son (Gen 22:2, 12, 17), and the faithful servant (Is 42:1).

All this has deep implications. Jesus is the son of promise, the messianic king, the servant that will serve the Lord (Israel failed in this). **Jesus is taking up Israel's story.** He is the true messianic/servant Israel. All that Israel is called to fulfill will be fulfilled in him. He therefore must face the temptations of the wilderness (40 days versus 40 years) – unlike Israel he stays true to his Father.

- Wilderness temptation (Luke 4:1-14)
 - Appetite – bread
 - Glory – the kingdoms
 - Fame – adoration

While Israel failed in their wilderness temptations, Jesus holds fast to the words of Deuteronomy (all his responses are quotes from this book). He is true Israel.

C. The mission

- Mark 1:14
- Luke 4:14-20/Isaiah 61
- Matt 4:23-25

D. The actions

- The calling of the disciples (Mk 1:16-3:35) - nation forming
- Signs and wonders (Lk 11:20) – defeating the powers (aka Egypt)
- Teaching the crowds (Mk 4:1-20) – a wilderness multitude
- Colliding with the religious/political elite (as did Moses)