

Evotional: Sermon title: Call the First Witness John 1:19-34

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The story of Jesus's baptism by John is recorded in all four gospels but this account by John is unusual in that it records the time when Jesus returns to the River Jordan again after his 40 days in the wilderness. John says that he only realized that Jesus (who was his second cousin, of course) was indeed the Messiah – God's chosen one - when he saw the Holy Spirit descend on him like a dove.

Jesus and John were very close – see Matthew 11:11 and Mathew 14:13

John was unusual – he is the only person whose clothes and eating habits are mentioned in scripture! He deliberately dressed in a hair shirt and leather belt to show a similarity to Elijah

John was a phenomenon: Israel had been starved of prophesy for 400 years and people were looking for a message from God. Then John appears and gives them one! But he confused the Jewish authorities who sent priests and Levites to question him (John 1:18)

John pointed to Jesus: He looked scary but he was well educated (by his father Zechariah) and very humble. He says he is not the Christ, not a reincarnated Elijah come back (although Jesus calls him the destined Elijah (Mathew 11:15) and not the Prophet. He describes himself as a 'voice' making the way straight for the Messiah.

John baptized: He wasn't the first – Jews commonly baptized Gentiles who became Jews and still do today! But the authorities were puzzled because John was baptizing Jews so they questioned him. (John 1: 24). He says that although he baptises in water, Jesus will baptise with the Holy Spirit. He humbles himself saying that he is unfit to untie Jesus's sandals – something even a slave was not expected to have to do!

John calls Jesus the Lamb of God. He did not mean a nice fluffy lamb, but a sacrifice for our sin.

Questions:

Why did Jesus decide to be baptized when he was without sin?

What are good reasons today for people deciding to get baptized? Are there any 'bad' ones?

If you were baptized as an infant should you be baptized later on if you become a Christian? (Acts 19:1-6)

John preached the need to repent – do we need to repent? – and if so how often?

This passage contains one of only about four New Testament references to 'baptism in the Holy Spirit'. What does that term mean? How is it different from being filled with the Holy Spirit? Are all Christians baptised in the Holy Spirit? (Romans 8:9-10)

What does this passage say to me today – and how does reading it affect my life here and now?