

Screenshots of Jesus

A companion study to the podcasts of Amber Albee Swenson

John the Baptist's teaching:

Read Luke 3:1-20.

Luke uses the first three verses to put us in a place in history. These verses tell us about Roman rule and occupation, Herod's rule, Pontious Pilate and the Jewish leaders at the time. In essence, Luke is setting the stage. He's telling us this happened at a real time in history.

We covered the prophecy from Isaiah in the Screenshots, Lesson One podcast, so we'll skip that. Starting in verse seven we get a taste of John's ministry with actual dialogue.

1. What do you notice as you read John's words?

2. Look at James 3:1. Why were John and Jesus so hard on teachers/leaders?

John's message was one of repentance. Repent means to turn and go a different direction. Don't keep walking in the same sins. Turn around. Go a different way. When the crowd asked what to do, Luke gave three examples.

The people were told to share. Note, John's idea of having excess (v 11).

2. What do you think John would think if he looked at our closets today?

Tax collectors were well known for asking more than required and skimming from the top. John hit them in the pocketbook. To the soldiers, John told them not to take advantage of people based on the power they wielded by the government.

3. If John were to look at our lives today, what would he tell us?

John's ministry introduces us to the sacrament of baptism. A sacrament is a sacred act started by Christ that connects something earthly to God's Word. In baptism the water is connected to God's Word. Through baptism we receive the forgiveness of sins.

“After
me will
come
one
more
powerfu
l than I,
the
thongs
of
whose
sandals
I am
not
worthy
to
untie.”
Mark
1:7

Read John 3:5-6 and Titus 3:5-7.

4. What happens in baptism?

The word justified means right with God. An easy way to remember it is to say justified is just as if I never sinned.

5. Ephesians 2:1 says that we were dead in our sins. Dead people are unable to do anything on their own. With that in mind, look at the Titus 3 passage. Who is doing the work?

Why?

How?

To what end? What do we get out of it?

Read Mark 16:16.

6. Who should get baptized?

Matthew 28:19 records Jesus sending the disciples out to baptize all nations. 2 Timothy 3:15 says, "...from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus."

If a person comes to faith at an age where they are able to articulate their belief in Christ, they should be baptized. Also, parents can baptize their infants, knowing they are included in "all nations" and hearing the Scriptures even from infancy produces faith.

I had a professor and later a neighbor who were both baptized "just in case there was something to it." They didn't have believing hearts. Mark 16:16 clearly points out that the person who *believes* and is baptized is saved.

Let's get back to John. John was not looking for an earthly pedestal. He was content to be the least in order that he might raise Jesus up in the eyes of others.

How different this is from many influencers today! The drive of social media is numbers, likes, views, more! There's nothing wrong with putting Christian content out into the world. We want to be on platforms so that through our words and testimony some might be saved. We want to use every avenue possible to get the word about Christ out. But it's not about getting people to follow us. Like John, the idea is to continually point people to Christ, not to us.

7. What tangible ways can you do that in your life right now?

Big Idea: John spent his life pointing others to Christ. He was humble and content to take a lesser role as long as the work of God was being done.

Action Item: Be bold like John! When someone around you says something blatantly against the Bible or that's different than what God tells us is true, pray to be bold to tell the truth with kindness.

Prayer: God, thank you for people who point us to you. When I get distracted by the things around me, use your Word and the people around me to remember what is important. In Jesus' name, amen.