

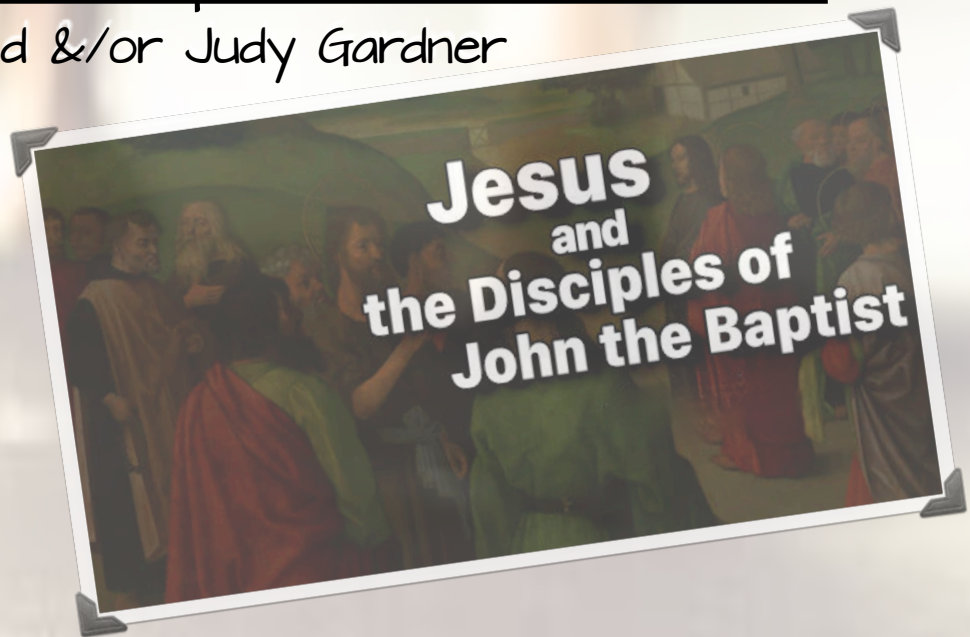
August 13-17, 2023 Edition

Following The Year_(s) Of ^Jesus Part 85

Jesus & John The Baptist's Crisis Of Faith

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When you read the Bible ask yourself if there's anything you're reading where God is speaking to you personally... anything that you need to start applying in your own life. Then try to reflect on what you read... what you heard from God throughout the day and we know you'll be blessed.

*** These are EXTREMELY rough drafts so if you see typos... well yuo knew the rest ;0) These are essentially the ramblings of thoughts running through Ed or Judy's mind the week before Ed teaches a lesson on these concepts. They are pretty much how Ed gets ready for the weekends. They are not necessarily coherent so if they don't make much sense... sorry about that.

**** Also these devotionals are the product of both Judy & Ed's experiences and education. Figuring out which are from Judy and which are from Ed (sometimes both are contained in a single day) is half the fun.

You can also get these devotionals on Riverside's Facebook page (www.facebook.com/EagleRiverside). You don't have to have a FB account to read them but if you do have an account if you "like" the Riverside page and click the box to get updates the devos will show up on your wall every weekday (along with other news and event updates).

Monday Reflection: This week we'll be continuing with our chronological timeline of the life and ministry of Jesus. Last week we reflected on Jesus raising the young man from Nain from the dead. Now we pick up in the gospel of Matthew:

After Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and preach in the towns of Galilee. Matthew 11:1 (NLT)

This is sort of a transition in Matthew's telling of the gospel. Up until now Matthew has focused on Jesus teaching the 12 apostles and even the crowds. But now Matthew will focus on a series of interactions that Jesus has where people are trying to come to grips with who He is and who He isn't. And the first interaction that Matthew tells us about is one with Jesus' cousin- John The Baptizer.

We'll get to the actual story tomorrow but for today let's spend a few minutes refreshing our memories of who John The Baptizer was- one thing I think is pretty important to point out is that John The Baptizer was not a Baptist (as in the Baptist denomination that has existed in this world for about 300-400 years). John was not a "Baptist" and Jesus didn't have other cousins named Ralph the Methodist or Bubba the Episcopalian. That's why I'm so committed to calling him John The Baptizer instead of John The Baptist- it just clears up a lot of possible confusion. He was called John The Baptizer because he baptized people. Which is kind of funny because baptizing people wasn't his most important job- if he was known for his most important job he would have been John The Messenger or John The Way Preparer.

In those days John the Baptizer came to the Judean wilderness and began preaching. Matthew 3:1 (NLT)

Notice how it's pointed out again that John came out of the wilderness (we'll get to why I'm hung up on that in a minute). And what did he come to do?

The prophet Isaiah was speaking about John when he said, "He is a voice shouting in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord's coming! Clear the road for him!'" Matthew 3:3 (NLT)

John is the one who will announce the coming of the Messiah and prepare the way for Him. And you better believe the people were watching for the coming of the Messenger every bit as much as they were watching for the coming of the Messiah. Every Jew knew how God's Anointed One would be made known and they were waiting for the Messenger because they knew he had to come first. And they were not disappointed. John cast a pretty impressive shadow. I'm guessing nobody that met him ever forgot him:

John's clothes were woven from coarse camel hair, and he wore a leather belt around his waist. For food he ate locusts and wild honey. People from Jerusalem and from all of Judea and all over the Jordan Valley went out to see and hear John. And when they confessed their sins, he baptized them in the Jordan River. Matthew 3:4-6 (NLT)

What must he have looked like? I'm guessing pretty frightening. In lots of ways John fit the imagery of what first century Jews were looking for in the coming Messiah much more than Jesus did. John- as strange as he might have been- made sense to the people of Israel. Jesus rarely did.

So John was not a Baptist. Ok, then what was he? Oh I'm glad you asked that question because I love this. John dressed in a specific way and ate specific things and lived in a specific place that I believe immediately identified him to any first century Jew as a part of a very strange, very exclusive and very reclusive group of people- the Essenes. Who were the Essenes? They were a religious sect of Judaism that had abandoned Jewish society and culture to go live in the wilderness along the shores of the Dead Sea in a community called Qumran. If that place rings some bells for you it's because the ruins of Qumran is where the single greatest archaeological discovery of the 20th century was found- the Dead Sea Scrolls.

In the first century Israel was deeply divided (sound familiar?). There wasn't just one Jewish religion- there were many denominations that were deeply divided over how to go about loving God. You had the priests of Jerusalem (the Sadducees) who believed collaborating with Rome was the only way to keep the Jewish faith from being stamped out. You had the Pharisees who were disgusted by the Sadducees betrayal and so they withdrew from Temple worship because they felt the Temple had been profaned by the secular priests. The Pharisees (which means "the separate ones") believed that the only way to usher in the coming of the Messiah was to be so pious and so completely devoted to the Law of Moses that God would see their work and send the Messiah.

The Essenes were most closely aligned with the Pharisees but they felt like the Temple had been so thoroughly desecrated by the Sadducees that the only hope for Israel was for a small remnant of faithful Jews to completely remove themselves from Jewish society and life and move to a monastery far out in the wilderness and live such pious and pure lives that God would notice and send His Messiah. One of the main differences between the Essenes and the Pharisees was that the Pharisees were evangelistic (they tried to convert people to their cause through any means necessary) while the Essenes were not.

At all.

When the Dead Sea Scrolls were found 1900 years after the Essenes had hidden them in caves surrounding the Dead Sea to protect them from the Romans it was a Biblical gold mine. But among the Old Testament scrolls found so well preserved was a sort of handbook for being a good Essene. It contained instructions on what a good Essene should wear (camel skin clothing and leather belts), what an Essene should eat (locusts and wild honey were a staple for the community located about 25 miles from Jerusalem). Sound like anyone we've been talking about today? Oh yeah, and one more thing- the Essenes were baptizing fanatics. They baptized themselves (an important distinction that we'll see completely revolutionized by John and Jesus) multiple times a day. They felt like they had to make themselves pure by constantly washing themselves in one of the dozens of mikvehs (ritual purity cleansing pools) that was sprinkled around Qumran.

So why would John have grown up in Qumran? Well, remember his parents were REALLY old when they had him. If they were worried about living long enough to raise him they would have looked for a place for John to grow up in. The things the angel Gabriel told Zechariah about who John would be sound an awful lot like what the Essenes were about in Qumran:

But the angel said, "Don't be afraid, Zechariah! God has heard your prayer. Your wife, Elizabeth, will give you a son, and you are to name him John. You will have great joy and gladness, and

many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great in the eyes of the Lord. He must never touch wine or other alcoholic drinks. He will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even before his birth. And he will turn many Israelites to the Lord their God. He will be a man with the spirit and power of Elijah. He will prepare the people for the coming of the Lord. Luke 1:13-17 (NLT)

It's my belief that John was taken to Qumran by his parents at an early age and that he was raised by the Essenes. It just fits with what we know about John The Baptizer's story.

But John takes what the Essenes are about and does one thing very differently than they do- John becomes evangelistic in his efforts to prepare the way for the Messiah. All the sects of Judaism in the first century thought they were preparing the way for the Messiah but only John really knew what that would look like. What it would mean.

And prepare the way is exactly what he did. We'll talk more about John The Baptizer tomorrow but for today maybe spend some time thinking about John's message and how much we need a similar message today- prepare the way for the LORD. Make His paths straight. It's still God's plan for each one of us. How do you see it playing out in your own life?

Tuesday Reflection: Okay so we've got a grasp on who John The Baptizer was and what his mission was (if not read yesterday's reflection to get caught up). That brings us to this week's installment of the chronological story of Jesus' life- the one where John sends a couple of his friends to ask Jesus a question:

When John, who was in prison, heard about the deeds of the Messiah, he sent his disciples to ask him, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?" Matthew 11:2-3 (NLT)

John has been in prison for a long time at this point. He was arrested by Herod Antipas (the son of Herod The Great who was the guy that killed all the baby boys in Bethlehem trying to kill Jesus 30 years before) and put in prison. And Roman prisons of that day were no picnic. It wasn't three-hots-and-a-cot. In fact they didn't do anything for prisoner. Somebody brought you food or you starved because Rome (or Herod in this case) weren't going to reward prisoners by feeding them (it's interesting to me that this is why in Jesus' story about the sheep and the goats He included visiting those in prison as one of the signs of His people- He wanted them to visit people in prison to feed them and clothe them and give them water but that's another story for another time I guess...). The point is John isn't in any kind of prison you or I would have any experience with.

Now John The Baptizer is hearing about what Jesus is doing and he is confused (along with most of the Jews who were looking forward to the coming of the Messiah). Everyone in first century Israel was expecting a strong Messiah. When John was still baptizing in the Jordan river he was asked if he was the Messiah and this is what he said:

I baptize with water those who repent of their sins and turn to God. But someone is coming soon who is stronger than I am-so much stronger that I'm not worthy even to be his slave and carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. He is ready to separate the chaff from the wheat with his winnowing fork. Then

he will clean up the threshing area, gathering the wheat into his barn but burning the chaff with never-ending fire. Matthew 3:11-12 (NLT)

It's interesting that John never uses the word "Messiah" in either of these passages. Instead He calls Jesus "The One" when he sends his friends to question Jesus and at the Jordan he calls Jesus "The Strong One". I know it's not easy to see it in English but in Greek it's pretty obvious. John considered Jesus to be the "Strong One" because that's exactly what the people of first century Israel were expecting- a powerful Messiah who would fulfill the prophecies of the Old Testament.

It's important to remember that the Rabbis in the first century looked at the Messianic prophecies from the Old Testament and divided them into two basic categories- the prophecies that described a powerful, conquering king who would defeat the enemies of God and establish God's throne upon which this powerful (or maybe we should be using the word "strong" instead) Messiah would reign for all eternity. But there was another category of Messianic prophecies which talked about a mysterious suffering servant whose sacrificial death would bring about the healing of the nations (we might consider these prophecies to be describing a Messianic figure who accomplished God's will through His weakness rather than by strength).

The Rabbis didn't see how one person could possibly fulfill both categories of prophecies. After all, how could the suffering servant who comes in weakness be the same person as the conquering king who would establish God's throne and reign for eternity? It's just not possible. But at Jesus' baptism God lets anyone who's paying attention know that Jesus was both the "Strong One" and the "Weak One":

As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."
Matthew 3:16-17 (NLT)

It may not jump out at us but God's words at Jesus' baptism come straight out of the Old Testament- not from one Messianic prophecy but from two. Turns out God loves to do mashups (any Glee fans out there? If so you know what a mashup is). The first part of God's statement- "This is my son whom I love" is from 2 which was one of the "conquering king" prophecies and "with him I am well pleased" comes from Isaiah 42 which is one of the "suffering servant" prophecies. What was God doing mashing up those two prophecies? I think He was letting everyone know that Jesus would be both the "strong one" and the "weak one" and that if they'd just be patient and trust God would show them how He could possibly be both.

So when John sends his friends to ask Jesus if He is "the one" I don't think that John was expressing doubt that Jesus was from God or even that He was the Messiah. I think John was watching Jesus' ministry and noticing that everything Jesus did was rooted in weakness and that He didn't appear to be doing any of the "strong one" things that John (and everyone else in Israel) expected the Messiah to be doing. We'll look more at how God feels about doubt and doubters tomorrow but for today maybe spend some time

thinking about what it means that Jesus can take two seeming incompatible things like being strong and being weak and mash them together and be both at the same time.

Wednesday Reflection: If you read yesterday's reflection then you know that John The Baptizer was experiencing some doubt about who Jesus was. He sent some friends to ask Jesus a question:

When John, who was in prison, heard about the deeds of the Messiah, he sent his disciples to ask him, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?" Matthew 11:2-3 (NLT)

Now whether John was wondering if Jesus was the Messiah at all or just wondering if Jesus was only there to fulfill half of the Messianic prophecies and there would be another who would come along later to fulfill the other half doesn't really matter that much- one way or the other John had his doubts about who Jesus was. So the question that arises is this- what does God think about people who are dealing with doubt? Well let's start by looking at Jesus' answer to John The Baptizer's question:

Jesus told them, "Go back to John and tell him what you have heard and seen- the blind see, the lame walk, those with leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life, and the Good News is being preached to the poor." Matthew 8:4-5 (NLT)

I don't want to get into details about Jesus' answer until tomorrow but what I do want to point out is that Jesus doesn't reject John The Baptizer for his questions/doubts. Jesus gives John's friends an answer to take back to him. And let's not forget who it is that is having doubts. This isn't some random outlier who is struggling with doubts- it's God's prophet sent to prepare the way for the coming of His Son. In the gospels there are basically two things that amaze Jesus- someone who should have faith who doubts and someone who has no reason to be a man or woman of faith who demonstrate great faith. Both of those things repeatedly amaze Jesus.

So you'd think Jesus would be amazed by John The Baptizer's apparent lack of faith when John had every reason to be able to deal with any doubts that may have arisen from his situation.

But He wasn't. Amazed that is. Instead Jesus is pretty gentle with John. No scolding. No shaming. Just an answer that may or may not have settled John's doubts- we'll never know one way or the other if they did because John gets killed by Herod not too long after he gets his reply from Jesus. One thing that this story teaches us is that anybody can have doubts. Anybody.

One thing that you'll notice if you're reading through the entire Bible is how many of the heroes of our faith had tremendous doubts. Job is famous for his patience but as his misery stretched out Job finally loses that famous patience and starts shaking his fist at heaven. How does God react? He draws closer to Job to let him know that he's not alone. And the Psalms are famous for the expression of doubt towards God. Take a look at these two examples:

I am quiet; I do not open my mouth, because you are the one who has done this. Quit punishing me; your beating is about to kill me... Leave me alone so I can be happy before I leave and am no more. Psalm 39:9-13 (NLT)

You have taken away my loved ones and friends. Darkness is my only friend. Psalm 88:18 (NLT)

Did you know those Psalms were in the Bible? It's mind boggling to me that they made it into the scriptures and it's mind boggling to me I never heard about them being in the Bible until recently. Those are some pretty doubt-filled Psalms. But God left them in His best selling book (we call it the Bible which just means "the book" in Greek and that should tell you an awful lot about the power of this "book") knowing that we'd see them thousands of years later and know that doubt doesn't disqualify us from being His children. In fact Jesus' brother- Jude- had some advice for us when it comes to dealing with people who are struggling with doubt:

Be merciful to those who doubt. Jude :22

How about that one- did you know that was in the New Testament? Yes, Jesus is amazed when people who should have faith don't but He is also extremely forgiving and merciful toward those who have every reason to be struggling with His plan for their lives. It makes sense that John The Baptizer was confused about his situation and sent some friends to ask Jesus what the deal was. Maybe you've gone through some periods of doubt (maybe you're going through a season of doubt as you read this)- I think this story shows us that if John The Baptizer could doubt then anyone can doubt. But I think it also shows us that doubt isn't the unforgivable sin either. Jesus knows how hard it is when we struggle with doubt- the last He wants to do is add on to our struggles by shaming us when our reality doesn't match up with our expectations.

Thursday Reflection: One more thought on John's origin story for this week- John The Baptizer didn't know everything. There was a ton (as it turned out) that John wasn't informed of by God. We know that he did know that he himself was NOT the Messiah:

Everyone was expecting the Messiah to come soon, and they were eager to know whether John might be the Messiah. John announced: "Someone is coming soon who is greater than I am- so much greater that I'm not even worthy to stoop down like a slave and untie the straps of his sandals. I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit!" Mark 1:6-8 (NLT)

He was constantly telling people, "I'm not the One you're waiting for- I'm only the messenger preparing the way for Him." He knew that much. He knew he was to preach a message of repentance and integrity. But there was a lot he didn't know. Including who the Messiah would be:

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! He is the one I was talking about when I said, 'A man is coming after me who is far greater than I am, for he existed long before me.' I did not recognize him as the Messiah, but I have been baptizing with water so that he might be revealed to Israel." John 1:29-31 (NLT)

John almost certainly knew Jesus while he was growing up. He almost certainly knew the story of the angel who came to his own father, Zechariah and who also went to Mary. He almost certainly knew that Jesus was VERY special and that Jesus was a bigger deal than John was but it's pretty obvious that John didn't know Jesus was the Messiah he was preparing the way for. He says it a couple of times in the gospels. He learned that Jesus was the One at Jesus' baptism.

But even after he knows Jesus is the Messiah John still struggles with questions and doubts just like you and me:

John the Baptist, who was in prison, heard about all the things the Messiah was doing. So he sent his disciples to ask Jesus, "Are you the Messiah we've been expecting, or should we keep looking for someone else?" Matthew 11:2-3 (NLT)

Why does John need to ask if he found out at Jesus' baptism that Jesus was the Messiah they were expecting? Because Jesus confused everyone- including John and His own mother. In most ways John The Baptizer was much more what the Jews of the first century were expecting in a Messiah than Jesus was. John was strange but John made sense to the people of Israel. Jesus just confused the heck out of them. Why is He doing what He's doing? Why isn't He doing what we thought the Messiah was supposed to do? Mary had that question at least once during Jesus' ministry. John has the same question. What's going on? Why aren't you doing things the way I thought/think you should be doing them?

We'll dive into that story much more deeply in a few months but let me just point out today that in this one thing we have more in common with John than we know. I don't know about you but I've spent many an hour questioning why God is doing what He's doing and why He isn't doing what I think He should be doing. But like John the Baptizer- God doesn't give us all the info we think we need. Knowledge of the ways of God is given on a need-to-know basis and much of it we don't need to know. But that's hard for me. Maybe it's hard for you too. I know it was difficult for John.

But John didn't let the things he didn't know stop him from doing the job God gave him to do. And that's an important lesson I think we should all learn from John. Don't let what we don't know stop us from doing the job God has given to each one of us. And what is that job, you ask? To shine. To live a life that radiates the goodness of God. How do we do that? Well, according to the book of Proverbs it's by choosing the path of "right-living":

The ways of right-living people glow with light; the longer they live, the brighter they shine. But the road of wrongdoing gets darker and darker- travelers can't see a thing; they fall flat on their faces. Proverbs 4:18-19 (MES)

What exactly is "right living"? It's choosing the path that John chose. It's living lives of repentance and integrity and love. And that's what changes the world- not knowledge. Knowledge is great as far as it goes but it's not what changes the world unless it's accompanied by repentance, integrity and love.

This is how individual lives are changed- one step at a time in the direction of either light or darkness. It's also how the world is changed. One individual choice won't make much difference usually in how much light or darkness is in our lives. But over the course of a

lifetime our trajectories matter and will either bathe us and everything around us in God's light or it will lead us further and further into darkness until we can't take a step without fear of tripping up and falling hard.

So let's learn a lesson from John and ask ourselves if we're on the path of right-living where Jesus' light shines all around us and gives us confidence to strike out following in the footsteps of Jesus. And if we're not, then maybe today is a good day to start doing that.

Friday Reflection: Another thing that happens at Jesus' baptism is we learn all about His ipseity. That's right, you read that right (but did you pronounce it correctly? ;o)- ipseity. What is ipseity you ask? It's sort of like Jesus' spiritual or heavenly or prophetic attributes. Well why didn't you just say that Pastor Ed? Because attributes wasn't exactly what I was wanting to get at but that concept might help us understand ipseity better. If you've ever played D&D you know that the attributes of your character are pretty important. The attributes of your character will determine how you proceed through your adventure. At the baptism of Jesus God gives us some pretty great insight into the ipseity or the spiritual attributes of Jesus that will inform His "adventure" or quest on this earth.

Who were the Jews expecting? A Messiah. A Christ. A Rescuer. And that's exactly what Jesus was. But not in the way they expected. In fact in most ways John The Baptizer much more resembled the Messiah figure the people of first century Israel were expecting. This Messiah was to come and set everything right that the people of Israel had gotten so wrong. There was a lot of information in the Old Testament that described who the Messiah would be and what He would do. But the information confused the heck out of the religious leaders of Israel.

There were tons of prophecies about the Rescuer/Messiah/Christ but they seemed to be contradictory. On the one hand the Messiah would be a conquering King who would trample God's enemies under His feet and establish God's throne upon which He would reign for all eternity. On the other hand the Messiah would be a shadowy, mysterious figure whose sacrificial death would bring about the healing of the nations.

Do you see why the experts were confused? How could one person fulfill both prophecies? If the Messiah died to bring about the healing of the nations then how could He establish God's throne and reign for eternity? The religious leaders of the first century reasoned that there must be at least two different people they were waiting for. Into this cauldron of confusion came Jesus and God tries to clear up the mystery for anyone who would listen:

After his baptism, as Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and settling on him. Matthew 3:16-17 (NLT)

Growing up I always thought this was just something God decided to say that meant a lot to Him maybe and was instructing us to pay attention to Jesus but it turns out it's more than that. This is what fans of the TV show Glee would recognize as a mashup. If you are not familiar with the TV show then you might not understand what a mashup is. A mashup is when someone takes two different songs and "mashes" them together to create a new song that contains the most important elements of both songs. It's become a popular thing to do

but God has been doing it for at least 2,000 years. The statement God makes about Jesus is a mashup of two different scriptures- Psalm 2 and Isaiah 42. God mashes these 2 scriptures together and if you walk with us through the next year of Jesus we'll see that Jesus will continue the practice.

In first century Israel the people shared a cultural and religious consciousness the same as any group of people. They were so familiar with the messianic prophecies of the Old Testament that you didn't have to quote the whole passage in order for people to know what you were talking about- just quote the most famous part of that scripture and everyone would sort of fill-in-the-blanks.

It's like the old joke about a guy who stops in a tiny town with one diner in the middle of nowhere to get dinner. While he's sitting at the bar eating he hears one of the regulars yell out, "number 5!" and everybody laughs. After a few minutes another regular shouts out, "number 22" and everyone laughs even harder than before. The new guy asks his server what's up with the numbers? She explains that since they all know each other they also know each other's jokes so they compiled their jokes in a booklet and numbered them so instead of telling the whole joke they could just call out the number and everyone knew the joke they were going to tell. The new guy gets out the joke book and looks it over and finally blurts out, "number 34!" all the while trying to contain his laughter. There is no laughter from anyone else in the diner. It's dead silence and a few shaking heads. The new guy looks to the server who shakes her head and says, "some people just can't tell a joke..."

That's sort of what's going on here with God's mashup. When the people hear the voice from heaven the first thing they would have all thought about what Psalm 2:

The king proclaims the Lord's decree: "The Lord said to me, 'You are my son. Today I have become your Father. Only ask, and I will give you the nations as your inheritance, the whole earth as your possession. You will break them with an iron rod and smash them like clay pots.'" Psalm 2:7-9 (NLT)

This is one of the messianic prophecies that indicated that the Messiah would be a conquering king who would defeat the enemies of God. The second half of God's mashup was a line from Isaiah 42:

Look at my servant, whom I strengthen. He is my chosen one, who pleases me. I have put my Spirit upon him. He will bring justice to the nations. He will not shout or raise his voice in public. He will not crush the weakest reed or put out a flickering candle. Isaiah 42:1-3 (NLT)

Psalm 42 is one of the prophecies of the Messiah that indicates the Anointed One would be a sacrificial suffering servant who would be gentle and die a sacrificial death to bring about the healing of the nations. So what does it mean when God mashes up those two categories of Old Testament messianic prophecies at Jesus' baptism? I think God's letting anyone who will pay attention know that they shouldn't be expecting multiple Messiahs who would each fulfill a particular role that the prophecies suggest must be fulfilled. For God's Anointed One will fulfill all of them Himself.

At His baptism God let's us in on an important secret that nobody could see coming- it's only when looking back that we all say, "ohhhhhhhhhh that's how He did that!" And what did He do? He perfectly merged (or mashed) the role of the conquering King who would defeat all of God's enemies with the suffering servant whose sacrificial death would heal the nations. How did He do that? On the cross. On the cross Jesus trampled on the enemies of God- hell and death. It wasn't what the Jews were expecting. They thought their biggest enemies were the Romans. They thought the Messiah would establish a military, political kingdom that would never be defeated. They were wrong. God's Messiah would defeat much bigger enemies than Rome. And with His sacrificial death on the cross- in what appeared to be the greatest expression of weakness ever witnessed in the history of this planet- Jesus died and brought about the healing of the nations while He conquered the enemies of God and established His throne upon which He reigns to this very day (and will for the rest of eternity).

Is your mind blown? Because mine is. How did He do that? I mean we can see it now looking back but who could have possibly seen this coming? Anyone who was listening at Jesus' baptism. God told us- we humans just couldn't see it.

I wonder how many of God's promises that we find in the words of the Bible are still like that? Things that we just can't comprehend because of our limited perspective and insight. Most of the prophecies we focus on in the church these days revolve around the second coming of the Messiah- when He will set everything right again. I imagine when that's all said and done most of us will be walking around Heaven with our jaws hanging open in wonder because we never would have dreamed the ways in which God fulfilled prophecies which we thought we understood but in the end we will realize we understood nothing (sort of like Jon Snow [that was a little nod to any Game of Thrones fans out there]).