Mark 1:9-11 9In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 10Just as Jesus came up out of the water, he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. 11And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love. I am well pleased with you.”

It is always a fascinating thing to contemplate the history of John the Baptist and Jesus. For instance, we know that they were somehow related to each other, for Elizabeth, John’s mother and Mary, the mother of Jesus were somehow related. We know that because the angel who spoke to Mary said to her, **“Listen, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age…”** The word the angel used states that there was some sort of family tie but the word is not specific enough to determine what kind of relationship.

We know that Jesus and John interacted very early, actually while they were both in the womb. After the angel’s visit to Mary, Mary then went to visit Elizabeth. Remember what happened? Scripture records this: **“Just as Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.”** The baby in Elizabeth’s womb reacted to the baby in Mary’s womb, all of this by the actions of the Holy Spirit. To add to the correctness of this understanding Elizabeth in speaking with Mary says, **“In fact, just now, as soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy!”** By the way, I have always used this history to remind people that clearly God’s Holy Spirit can and does impact even babies and infants with his gifts. A baby in the womb testifying to the wonder of the baby in the next womb! Wow!

From there we don’t know if John and Jesus spent any time together as children or young adults. Scripture does not see it important to tell us that. What I do find interesting is a statement of John recorded in the Gospel of John. Before I share that statement with you contemplate these thoughts. Let’s say John and Jesus did spend some time together, maybe every Passover holiday. Surely they heard from their parents the history and accounts of the angels and womb leaping, etc. But when you hear what John said, it makes you go, “Huh?” He said, this (Jn 1:32-34) **“I saw the Spirit descend like a dove from heaven and remain on him. I myself did not recognize him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘The one on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, he is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit. I saw this myself and have testified that this is the Son of God.”**

Those words tell us a few things. First, even if they spent time together and heard all the history behind their births, John was still not certain that Jesus was the Christ until he saw the Holy Spirit descend at the baptism of Jesus. Isaiah had told us that Jesus would be absolutely ordinary and plain, even though the Son of God, and John helps us to grasp that truth. And notice that in some way God the Father communicated with John on this. One would think that God would have simply told John, “Yep, it is Jesus you are looking for,” but evidently that doesn’t happen and this special sign is set up instead! Hmm? Perhaps a sign intended not just for John but for everyone in the crowds around John who will see this miracle!

Second, it is not until after the baptism that John specifically points to Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Before that his simple testimony was that the Christ was coming and that he, John, wasn’t even worthy to untie his shoe laces! Now John knew for sure! That does help us to grasp that when John sent his disciples to Jesus to ask, as recorded in Luke: **“Are you the one who was to come or should we look for someone else?”** This was not done for John’s sake but rather for the sake of John’s disciples that they would grasp what John already knew, Jesus is the Christ.

Third, these thoughts cause one to rethink and all the more contemplate what Matthew records for us (Mtt. 3:13-14). **“Then Jesus came from Galilee to be baptized by John at the Jordan. But John tried to stop him, saying, ‘I need to be baptized by you, and yet you come to me?’ But Jesus answered him, ‘Let it be so now, because it is proper for us to fulfill all righteousness.’ Then John let him.”** Those words seem to tell us that John was suspicious that Jesus was the one. Suspicious because of the history they had been told but perhaps mostly suspicious because John had a knowledge of Jesus’ life and it was clear that though Jesus was plain and ordinary in appearance, something was also very uniquely different about Jesus, namely, Jesus did not sin! Is this what is behind John’s testimony of Jesus here? Remember he is a preacher of repentance and sorrow for sins. He baptizes in the name of the forgiveness of sins! Does he say this to Jesus because he is aware of the fact that Jesus doesn’t sin? What a testimony that is then!

Like I said, to contemplate the history of Jesus and John is absolutely fascinating. One thing I can say for sure. John was the harbinger. John was preparing people for Jesus. Once John knew that Jesus was the Christ, basically from that point on John preached Christ and preached following Jesus. Because the important one in this history is Jesus. That’s who we will focus on. Our theme: **Jesus, the Son of God.**

The other day in Bible class I was wonderfully reminded of a passage that is so important for our history today. It is a passage that is found in 1 John 5 (9) and it says this: **“If we accept the testimony of people, God’s testimony is even greater, because it is the testimony that God gave about his Son.”** Think of what is said here. We hear people and we believe people, or tend to until proven otherwise. Now if we are willing to hear and accept the testimony of men, who are sinful, then as this passage points out, just how much greater is the testimony of God? And that is what we have before us. God’s testimony about Jesus. God telling us what is what and who is what! Yes, these are very important words before us, because without a doubt, this is God telling us about Jesus.

Grasp what happened. Jesus has come to be baptized by John, not for forgiveness because of sin, but rather to fulfill the commands and demands of the Law of God. Every priest of God, before he could take up his duties and serve as a minister of God, every priest, including the High Priest underwent a washing, a cleansing, an anointing to be ready for his duties. It was a part of God’s Law. Obscure, little known, not even something seen by most people, but it happened anyway. That washing prepared them for their ministry in just the way this baptizing of Jesus prepared, better yet, anointed Jesus for his ministry as the Lamb of God. And yep, every sacrifice presented at the Temple, before that sacrifice was killed, was washed, was anointed with water from the great basin of water found in the Temple. Jesus the Lamb of God washed, anointed to be the sacrifice for God’s people in accord with God’s Law. Jesus fulfilling all righteousness!

As if this baptism of Jesus by itself isn’t enough to give pause for the greatness of Jesus, then contemplate what happened when the baptism was finished. We are told that as Jesus was walking up out of the water (a phrase that simply reminds us water is always lower than land) at least three things of great import happen. These three things should be noted.

First, three of the gospel accounts record the fact that **“the heavens were opened.”** Three accounts and two different words to describe this occurrence! When taken all together it indicates that something miraculous occurred, an opening of the heavenly realms that was visible and notable. In my own mind I have always envisioned that a bright beam of light appearing, much like what happened at the conversion of Saul to Paul. I believe it was visible and that the crowds that normally followed John were all witnesses of this “opening, this tearing apart of the heavens. It was as if God had turned a great big spotlight on Jesus to demonstrate the importance of Jesus.

Second, there was the dove. Not an ordinary dove, but one that flew in this light, and one that landed on Jesus and remained on him for the duration of this miraculous revealing of God. This dove is identified by all as the Holy Spirit, that third person of the Godhead whose whole job later on would be to testify to and of Jesus and his work. Here is the Spirit with his first visible testimony. It would happen again at the transfiguration of Jesus. The account never mentions the dove leaving or the heavens closing up, but my understanding is that these two things happened together. I believe that was one of the ways that the people who were watching could grasp that this dove was the Holy Spirit.

Third, there was the testimony, the voice of God speaking. What an awesome and marvelous thing this truly was. Did everyone hear clearly this voice? I don’t know for sure, but I believe they did. Why? Because what I do know is that God spoke directly to the people who were there. This voice was not for Jesus, although Jesus here is addressed! This voice was not for John! This voice was for the people who were a part of his followers, including the curious and the skeptics. This voice was for them. And again, note we are told this **“voice came from heaven.”** It was an “other-worldly” voice, a voice heard through and from this heaven, that was at this point, opened on Jesus.

And what a testimony God gives. Look closely at what is said. Again, Mark and Luke have the opening words as, **“You are my Son,”** But Matthew has the words as: **“This is my Son.”** I don’t understand the reason for the difference, other than to say I don’t think it’s a big deal. And yes, I believe that God could have spoken one sentence and Jesus heard one thing and the people there heard the other thing. We are dealing with God. Nothing is impossible with God. The important thing here is that you grasp the depth and wonder of what is said!

God testifies that Jesus is his Son! He doesn’t say he is adopted. He doesn’t say he is just pretending to be human or that he is just a specter son, he says Jesus is his Son. Dear people, you either believe that or you don’t. There is no middle road here. If God is a liar, or if this never took place, if the Scripture is false in recording this then there is nothing at all in this Christian religion for you to believe, think about, or even put your hope in because it is nothing but a religion of lies and falsehoods. Which basically means there are no gods because it really is all made up from man’s imagination. In case you think I am belaboring that point listen to verse 10 of 1 Jn 5: **“The one who believes in the Son of God has this testimony in him, but the one who does not believe has made God out to be a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God gave about his Son.”**

But, and this is what I believe, since this is true, then we have the testimony and eye-witness account of God himself that Jesus is his Son. Then everything about Jesus, from beginning to end, is true and we have a Savior and there is nothing at all false in God’s Holy and True Word because Jesus being his Son includes the work of the Holy Spirit and the fact that God has revealed all of this for us for our eternal life and salvation. Yes, Jesus is God’s Son.

Next God tells us He loves his Son. If God the Father loves Jesus, then is that not our calling too? To love Jesus as the Father does. Because Jesus is probably the only thing in our world and the only thing in our life that is truly and wonderfully deserving of our love. Deserving because he first loved us. He loved us so much that Jesus became one of us to be our Savior. But all of that drifts into the next statement. Just let it sink in that Jesus is worthy, truly worthy of our love.

For God says, “**I am well pleased with you.”** The only reason for God to be pleased, well pleased, is because Jesus is fulfilling his role as Savior. You might think, “Hey, this is the beginning of Jesus’ ministry, he hasn’t done anything yet, what does God have to be pleased about?” How about the fact that for the past 30 years Jesus has faced every temptation of this world and has remained holy and perfect. Jesus has kept every jot and tittle of the law, not wavering one bit in fulfilling the role as the eternal and perfect Lamb of God who because of his holiness and perfection would serve as our payment for sin and grant us the precious gift of eternal life. Perfect, holy, loving Jesus ready to begin his earthly ministry and that steady unwavering walk toward the cross and our victory because of what happens there. Jesus is here because his love, his life, his heart is working for us and our eternal life. So far, as God’s words indicate, he is doing a job worthy of the Son of God. Bottom line, God has just witnessed to the truth and wonder of Jesus and his redemptive goal, to the holiness and perfection of Jesus as the spotless Lamb.

I pray that as you contemplate this baptism of Jesus and its history that you marvel in the wonder that it is. Jesus fulfilling every aspect of God’s Law. Jesus being revealed to John and yes, to the crowd of people there as our Savior, the Lamb come to die for us. Jesus given the very testimony of God as to who he is and even given God’s “stamp of approval” for what He has been doing for our sake. Let those words of God reverberate in your head and heart, **“This is my Son….I am well pleased!”** Amen.