

A Red Carpet Welcome

- When might a red carpet be rolled out?
- When have you ever been at something with a red carpet?
- What else might you do to get ready for a visiting celebrity?
 - eg food, speeches, ...
- This morning we are thinking about how John did his job of getting people ready for the coming of Jesus
 - one of the main things John did was tell people that how they lived would show whether or not they were ready for Jesus' arrival
 - truth telling, loving others, caring for those in need, pure thoughts, etc, etc!
 - John described these as "fruit in keeping with repentance" (Luke 3:8)
- John was able to help people get ready because God gave him the right words to say:
 - God equipped him for the job he had for him to do
 - we too can learn to trust God that he equips us for the job he has for us to do

All Change

- The message of John the Baptist as the forerunner of Christ might have been expected to be about a transition in the theology of the Jewish people, or even a relaxation of their religious ritual. But it was more radical than that - it called for a fundamental change of lifestyle
- "Prove by the way you live", says John, "that you have really turned from your sins and turned to God." (Luke 3:8, NLT)
 - Paul frequently calls this complete turnaround, notably in 2 Cor 5:17 (new creation, old gone, new come)
 - it is the experience Jesus describes as being born again

Repentance

- Though much confusion might surround the concept of repentance, it is at its simplest a change of mind (Greek metanoia)
 - it is this change of mind, prompted by the Holy Spirit, that produces the desire for a change in lifestyle, enabled by the Holy Spirit
 - the Holy Spirit's role is key - the Bible uses interchangeably the terms "born of God" and "born of the Spirit"
- Impressed by the aesthetic lifestyle of John the Baptist ([Matthew 3:4 - camel hair coat, leather belt, locust and wild honey for food](#)) we might be persuaded that conversion is about such things:
 - the adoption of strict rules and taking on the deprivations of a hermit
 - but it is not a mentality of ritualised repentance (a hair shirt mentality) that is the key to the kingdom of God
 - it is rather the centrality of the Holy Spirit - the inner reality, not the external appearance

The Holy Spirit

- It is the Holy Spirit - called by Jesus the Counsellor - who first reveals to us the truth of our lost condition:
 - eg John 16:7,8: "But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment:
 - or 1 Cor 2:4: My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power...
 - not only does the Holy Spirit reveal the extent of an individual's lostness
 - but he also draws the unbeliever to Christ and provides the supernatural enabling or equipping by which the unbeliever can turn from sin and embark on a Christ-centred lifestyle