

Pt 3 John the Baptist – John 1:6-9

A sermon series in the Gospel of John, by Pastor Byron Chesney at Porchlight Baptist Church www.pbcknox.com

John 1:6-9

- 6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.
- 7 The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all *men* through him might believe.
- 8 He was not that Light, but *was sent* to bear witness of that Light.
- 9 *That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.*

There is no doubt many great men in the Bible pages. Of course Jesus Christ is the greatest of them all, that goes without saying, but there are many other great men and women that God has greatly used for His Glory. Some of my personal favorites, as you very well know, are Elijah for his boldness, the Apostle Paul for his wisdom, teaching, and persecutions, King David, a man after God's own heart, just to name a few. But of all of the great heroes of the Bible, if I were to choose one that I would like to model my life and ministry around, it would be John the Baptist.

That is who we are focusing our attention upon in this message this morning, **John the Baptist**.

- 6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.

One thing you should notice, in the Gospel of John, John the Baptist is always referred to as simply "**John**," and not "**John the Baptist**" the way the other Gospels writers do. Matthew, Mark, and Luke all use the phrase, "John the Baptist," but John never does.

And, just an fyi, John, the human penman of this Gospel never refers to himself directly by the name of John either.

Notice in our opening text the Bible says, "**There was a man sent from God**." The word "**sent**," that is used here was translated from the Greek word: *apostello*, which is where we get the word **Apostle** from, meaning, **One who is sent**. So, John wasn't just born, he was purposely sent by God.

They say that everyone is born for a purpose. We can tell from Scripture the exact purpose for John the Baptist being born and sent. Look at it in verses 7 and 8: **7 The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all *men* through him might believe. 8 He was not that Light, but *was sent* to bear witness of that Light.**

John the Baptists' purpose for being born and sent was "**to bear witness of the Light**." Again the word **Light** with a capital **L** indicating a person, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Further down in verses 19-28, the religious crowd is questioning John on who he was and what his purpose was. This is what he told them: **John 1:23 He said, I *am* the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias.**

John tells the religious crowd that he is the one that was prophesied by the Prophet Isaiah. He is referring to **Isaiah 40:3 The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.**

In ancient days whenever a king was passing through, they would send workers ahead of him to prepare the way. They would move anything that would hinder his travel such as rocks, trees, holes, or other objects. They would level hills and straighten crooked roads.

To prepare the way for the Messiah they needed to remove any obstacles in his way, not physical obstacles but spiritual ones. That means they needed to do as John preached, as we read in **Matthew 3:1-2: 1 In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, 2 And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.**

Both Mark and Luke state John the Baptist preached the "**baptism of repentance for the remission of sins**." That does not mean people were baptized to forgive their sins. It means people repented of their sins and believed in Christ who was to come and then John would baptize them. Repenting is not feeling sorry for what you've done, it is turning from your sin to God. At the time John was preaching, Christ had not started his public ministry and had not been crucified, buried, and risen again; however, John's preaching was preparing the way for that. His job was to preach to Israel to **repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand**. That is another way of saying "the Messiah's Kingdom." Every Jew knew that the Messiah was to setup an earthly kingdom in which every believer would reside. John was preaching to them to prepare them for that time.

I would like to read the other Gospel writer's introduction of John so we can see they all pretty much state the same thing but with a few other details:

Matthew 3:1-3

- 1 In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea,
- 2 And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.
- 3 For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

Mark 1:1-4

- 1 The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God;
- 2 As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.
- 3 The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.
- 4 John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

Luke 3:2-6

- 2 Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness.
- 3 And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins;
- 4 As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.
- 5 Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways *shall be* made smooth;
- 6 And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

There is no doubt John was a great and powerful man. He probably could have done anything he wanted in life. He had the ability to draw people. I mean, how many preachers go out in the middle of nowhere to preach hoping people came to him to listen? If you were to take a course on how to be a successful pastor or leader, I'm sure you won't find any of them saying "go out where there isn't anybody and just preach and wait for them to come." No, today's modernistic thinking is that we have to preach in a big building, have a designated place that is easy to get to and offer all of the world's conveniences.

John did just the opposite. His purpose was to prepare the way for Jesus. Just as in John's day, in the day in which we live in today we are to also prepare the way for Jesus by preaching the same message – repent and be born again.

God began working in John's life before he was even born. Luke the physician, talking about John the Baptist, writes this in his Gospel: **Luke 1:41** And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost:

Aren't you glad that John's parents, Zechariah, and Elizabeth, were not so-called "pro choice"? It makes me wonder how many of the 63-million babies that have been aborted in the United States since 1973, were destined to be great men and women to bear witness of the Light of Jesus Christ?

There were approximately 400-years of silence between the Old Testament and New Testament where it "seems" God was silent. But that doesn't mean he wasn't working and preparing for what was to come. John the Baptist almost seems like he belongs in the Old Testament.

Listen to what Jesus said about John:

Matthew 11:7-11

7 And as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind?

8 But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? behold, they that wear soft *clothing* are in kings' houses.

9 But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet.

10 For this is *he*, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

11 Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

Jesus was reminding the people of what the Prophet Malachi said:

Malachi 3:1 Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.

Many people wrongly state that John the Baptist was in fact Elijah reborn but that isn't the case. We see from the Bible first of all that John himself denied being Elijah:

John 1:19-21 And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou? 20 And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ. 21 And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, **I am not**. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No.

Also, the Bible tells us that Gabriel told John's father, Zechariah, this:

Luke 1:17 And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

So, John was not Elijah, but he preached in the **spirit and power of Elijah**.

And, preach in the spirit and power of Elijah he did! Listen to how he preached to the religious crowd:

Matthew 3:5-12

5 Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan,

6 And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.

7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

8 Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:

9 And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to *our* father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

10 And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

11 I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and *with* fire:

12 Whose fan *is* in his hand, and he will throughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

Of course, his confrontation with King Herod which led to his death, when John found out that Herod had married his brother Phillip's wife, Herodias, and John got in his face and told him that what he did was unlawful. We all know the story. It angered Herodias and she tricked Herod into having John arrested and then beheaded.

So, yes, he preached in the spirit and power of Elijah, but he was not a reincarnated Elijah as some people wrongly believe.

Probably the most striking thing about John is his humility. He knew he was simply a voice crying out. He adamantly expressed that he was not the Christ, he was not Elijah, he was not "**that prophet**" meaning Jeremiah.

As we will see in a few weeks to come when we get into Chapter 3, when John's followers saw how many people were flocking to Jesus, they came to John asking about it and he told them: **John 3:30** He must increase, but I *must* decrease.

I want us to stop right here this morning. There is so much more to cover where John the Baptist is concerned, and we will get to it eventually.