

EXPOSITION OF JOHN

Message #5

John 1:6-8

At major sporting events, there is a formal prelude to the actual competition. In that prelude the players are introduced. Typically some announcer on a PA system formally introduces the team before the actual play gets underway. This sets the stage for all the action.

Four hundred sixteen years before Jesus Christ surfaced, it was predicted by Malachi (Mal. 3:1) that one would come on the scene who would formally announce God to the world. His job would be to clear the way for the God/man by public announcement, thus setting the stage for the action to follow.

The Gospel of John is an account written by the closest friend Jesus Christ ever had on this earth - the Apostle John. The Apostle John was the "disciple whom Jesus loved." When we study the Gospel of John, we are studying the memoirs of Christ's dearest and closet friend. However, when we come to the opening chapters of the gospel written by the Apostle John, it is quite evident that he discusses the ministry of another man named John, the one we refer to as "John the Baptist." John the Baptist's ministry and teaching is the subject of much of the material found in chapter one and part of chapter three - 3:22-29.

Now the big question is why is there all of this emphasis on John the Baptist? He doesn't do any spectacular miracle (John 10:41). He did not have great oratorical abilities. Yet Jesus said that there was no person born of a woman greater than John (Luke 7:28). What does he have to do with the Apostle John's account of the life of the Lord Jesus Christ, especially if we keep in mind that John's purpose in writing this account of the life of Jesus Christ is designed to generate faith in Jesus Christ as God (John 20:31)? We must assume that in the big picture of things the inclusion of information concerning John the Baptist is designed to generate faith in Jesus Christ. The main point as I see it is this:

THE MINISTRY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST, WHO WAS A MAN ACTUALLY SENT BY GOD, IS DESIGNED TO ABSOLUTELY PROVE THAT FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST IS THE ONLY WAY OF SALVATION FOR HE IS THE ONLY ONE AUTHORIZED TO GIVE SALVATION.

The Apostle John has at least two personal connections to John the Baptist. **First**, the incident in John 1:35-39 would seem to indicate that John was first a disciple of John the Baptist. In this context, John mentions only Andrew by name (1:40), yet we know there were two disciples (1:37). John typically does not name himself, so it is very probable that he was the other disciple. So he was personally led to Christ by John. **Second**, John is writing this gospel account from Ephesus. I think this is an important point. Twenty years after the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Apostle Paul went to Ephesus and discovered that there were about twelve disciples of John who had not figured out what John's ministry was all about (Acts 18:25; 19:1-7). In fact, it is said that today there is a sect of people just south of Baghdad, Iraq who claim they are linked to John the Baptist. Since the Apostle John was living in Ephesus at the time he wrote this gospel, it is very clear that he wanted to establish that John's ministry was about Jesus Christ.

These verses in John 1:6-8 are given to give us true facts about John the Baptist so that we might be drawn to true faith in Jesus Christ. There are seven facts we want to draw to your attention:

FACT #1 – John the Baptist was a man. 1:6a

Notice what is said here - there “came” a man, not there always was a man. **The reason why John brings up the fact that John the Baptist was a “man” (ανθρωπος), in this context, is because he just got done describing Jesus Christ who was God (1:1-5).** The Apostle John wanted all to know that John the Baptist was not God, he was a man. There is a contrast here between Jesus who was God and John who was a man. That verb “came” means he had a beginning (G. Abbott-Smith, Greek Lexicon, p. 92). He did not always exist as Jesus did. His job as a man was to point people to the one who was not a man, but was God.

John the Baptist was a highly esteemed man among the Jews. When he came on the scene news spread about him and crowds quickly grew and people swarmed him just as they did at the Klondike in the Gold Rush in 1897. There is absolutely no doubt that he was a great man and a great prophet. John the Baptist was a great man of God. But he was still just a man. He was not God. He was not able to save anyone. As great a preacher as he was, he was still a man, a sinful, finite, flesh and blood man.

This point needs to be understood. No man can save you, no matter how great he may be. No prophet can save you even if he is the greatest prophet. No minister can save you even if he is the greatest minister. No church can save you even if it is the greatest church and you certainly cannot save yourself. If you place your faith in a man to save you, you are placing your faith in another sinner just like you. **The Person who can actually save you from your sins, must be more than a man, He must be God.** John the Baptist was just a man who pointed people to Jesus Christ.

I am totally amazed at how many people actually believe they are going to be saved because they follow a man. In the Salt Lake valley, there are thousands of people who truly believe they are going to be saved because they follow Joseph Smith, whom they call a prophet and his heretical sidekick, Brigham Young. Joseph Smith was just a man. In fact, he was a kooky man and a man cannot save you.

In the February 5, 2007 edition of *Newsweek Magazine* there was an article about a man who calls himself God. He has been a Catholic, Pentecostal and Baptist. He said that one night in 1973 he was wakened up in the middle of the night and said Jesus integrated with him. This guy is a lying, sinful, evil man who claims to be God and has more than 100,000 followers. They are following man.

John the Baptist was just a man and that is exactly what Scripture says. His goal was to direct people to Jesus Christ and that is exactly what he did.

FACT #2 – John the Baptist was sent from God. 1:6b

For many years John lived in the limestone rocks and caves in the territory that runs from Hebron to the West shores of the Dead Sea. During those years, God was teaching him some very important things. We know when he surfaced he had a handle on deep theology because of what he preached: **1)** Repent because Israel’s Kingdom is at hand (Matt. 3:2); **2)** Flee from the future wrath to come, which includes an unquenchable fire (Matthew 3:7; Luke 3:17); **3)** Repent for forgiveness of sins (Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3); **4)** Jesus is eternal God (Mark 1:7; Luke 3:16);

5) Jesus is the sacrificial Lamb (John 1:29); 6) Spirit Baptism and its importance (Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16). He was being taught these things by God during those wilderness years.

It had been about 400 years since God had sent one of His prophets into this world and when John surfaced, he was a bold, confrontational prophet and preacher. John was not an ear tickler - he heralded the truth in front of anyone and that is what got him eventually killed.

John the Baptist was a very important man in the program of God. Prophets of God were divinely sent into various regions with various messages (i.e. Malachi 3:1). When the Apostle John emphasizes that one is sent from God, it is serious and sacred language. This kind of language was used by John in reference to the Holy Spirit (John 15:26) and in reference to Jesus Christ (John 16:27).

The thing that made John so important was the fact that God sent him. **God did give him a special assignment - to be the forerunner of Jesus Christ. But his assignment was in a subordinate role.** In other words, his assignment was to go forth and tell people of their need to believe on Jesus Christ.

There are all kinds of people who claim they are sent from God. Joseph Smith claimed it; Brigham Young claimed it; Jim Jones claimed it; David Koresh claimed it; Sun Myung Moon claimed it. But it is so easy to see through them. If they truly had been sent from God, they would unlock truth about Jesus Christ, but all they do is talk and twist truth. It is so easy today for one skilled in Scripture to see whether one is sent from God, because all one needs to do is stack up what they are saying with the Word of God. By this we may determine who is from God and who isn't. John the Baptist was sent from God.

FACT #3 – John the Baptist's name was John. 1:6c

This is not a reference to the Apostle John who is penning this gospel, this is a reference to the one commonly referred to as John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus Christ. This particular man named John had a ministry that lasted about three years, half of which was spent in jail. God can accomplish a lot when a guy is in jail. Paul wrote many of his epistles while in jail; John wrote Revelation while on a prison island; Bunyan wrote *Pilgrim's Progress* in a Bedford jail.

I don't care how menial or magnificent the task may be, God uses humans to accomplish His will. God uses real people with real names, who live in real places. If you know Jesus Christ, you are an important part of the plan of God. It doesn't matter what your location or situation, God uses His faithful people to accomplish His purposes.

FACT #4 – John the Baptist came for a witness. 1:7a

There are three main sections in this gospel that describe John the Baptist's ministry and all three stress he was a witness for Jesus Christ (1:19-34; 3:22-36; 10:40-42). Among the O.T. prophets, there was none greater than John for that is exactly what Jesus said (Luke 7:28). So the greatest prophet to ever live never performed any sign or wonder miracle (John 10:41). **What the greatest prophet who ever lived did was to preach the truth about Jesus Christ.** John was a witness, a preacher. God chooses to communicate His word through finite, sinful men.

The word "witness" is very important to this gospel (i.e.1:7, 15, 32, 34; 3:11, 26; 5:31-32, 36-37; 18:37; 19:35). The Greek word is "marturia" (μαρτυρία) which is **a word that means to be a witness in the sense of offering verbal testimony and verbal evidence** (Smith, pp. 278-279). John came to offer verbal testimony and evidence to the truth pertaining to Jesus Christ - He is the Jewish Messiah and He is the Lamb who can take away the sins of the world. John preached that people needed to flee from the wrath of God (Matthew 3:7) and flee to the Savior. His witness left people with an either/or decision. There was fire in his preaching and he preached about fire - either come to faith in Jesus Christ or burn for your own sins. His key verb was "repent" which means change your thinking about your sin and your salvation. Turn from your own efforts to save yourself and turn to Jesus Christ. Dr. H. A. Ironside said to repent means to change your attitude toward self, sin, God and Christ (*Except Ye Repent*, p. 15). That was the purpose of John the Baptist - to point a nation to Jesus Christ. **To be saved, they must trust in Him, not themselves.**

That is why Jesus called this John the greatest human ever born - Luke 7:28. He predicted Christ was in the world, he welcomed Christ into the world, He identified Christ for the world, He baptized Christ and He touched Christ. What a ministry he had. He could preach God's wrath then literally point out God's Savior.

There is nothing that will replace good old fashioned witnessing and preaching for Jesus Christ. One of the things that must be preached is pending wrath and eternal fire. It is said of David Brainerd (1718-1747) the missionary to the American Indians that when he thought of the Indians burning in hell, he would break out in a sweat on a cool day. Henry Martyn left a prestigious teaching fellowship at Cambridge to endure great hardships in India because in reading the writings of Richard Baxter and William Carey he did not want to see those people in India die and burn in hell. These were men who knew people were on their way to hell and they needed to witness to them.

When you look at the results John had, it almost appears like he failed. The Jews rejected Christ. But John did not fail. He accomplished exactly what God called him to do - he was a witness to the truth about Jesus Christ. You and I have the same responsibility - to be witnesses for Jesus Christ just like John.

John is never called a Baptist, but he is called a witness. It is true he baptized many, even Jesus, but the thing so important to the Grace Age is one's witness or testimony. You and I are called to be witnesses, not Baptists.

FACT #5 – John the Baptist came to be a witness for the light . 1:7b

What is interesting to me is that this John seems to be known more for his baptisms, but the Apostle John really zeroes in on his real purpose, a witness. We will be most effective witness for the light, if that light is shining through us. It is hard to be a good witness for the light if our lives are filled with dark sin. D. L. Moody used to say, "Never forget the Christian is the world's Bible and in the majority of cases a Revised Version is needed" (G. Campbell Morgan, *The Westminster Pulpit*, Vol. 8, p. 15).

The concept of “light” is one most developed by John. The Greek word is used 21 times in this gospel. In I John 1:5, John says “God is light.” A good way to think about this is to understand “light” as being the revelation of God to man which is designed to affect their faith and life.

There is an article “the” before the noun "light," literally "the light." John's job was to be a witness for someone who could be identified as "the light" which of course is Jesus Christ, who is God. The purpose of a witness is to present evidence so people may see truth and believe the truth. **This is the first use of this key verb “believe”** which occurs some 99 times in this gospel. It is referring to what you believe that will save your soul.

All of us are in depraved darkness. We are all sinners. If this were not true, we would not need any light. We need someone far greater than ourselves who is our light out of this dark dilemma. That light is none other than Jesus Christ (1:5). Jesus Christ is the light to bring us from darkness to life. John's job was to testify of that. His ministry was about getting people to believe in Jesus Christ so they could get out of darkness (John 12:46).

Now the result of his testimony was that "all" people might believe in Jesus Christ. John's goal in witnessing was that all people would believe on Jesus Christ as the only means of salvation. John was crying to Jews and those few Gentiles who heard him that the only way to be right with a Holy God was through faith in Jesus Christ. John testified over and over again that Jesus Christ was the Savior who could bring light to a dark life and dark world.

No matter how dark your circumstances, no matter how dark your past - you can have the darkness and gloom removed from you if you will believe on Jesus Christ. That is what John taught and that is what we teach.

FACT #6 – John the Baptist was not the Light. 1:8a

John was a great man, but he could not bring any light to a dark heart and mind. Many people today miss this very important point. **We are not the light, Jesus is the light.** He is the One who can change things, we can't. Whenever we are testifying to someone the goal is to show we were dirty, filthy, depraved sinners in need of Jesus who is the light. B. F. Wescott said, John was not the light, he was a lamp whose job it was to shine forth the Light (John 5:35) (Whitelaw, p. 12).

No man is the light that can get you out of sin. No man is the light that can remove your guilt. Therefore, if you follow the teachings of a man, you'll end up miserable, in some spiritual gloom and deadness. But if you come to faith in Jesus Christ, He will literally "light up your life."

FACT #7 – John the Baptist came to witness of the Light. 1:8b

Most people want other people to be occupied with them. Not John. John wanted people to be occupied with Jesus Christ. The idea behind witnessing is that at some point you must open your mouth. **This is not friendship evangelism or lifestyle evangelism, this is verbal evangelism and that is exactly what John did - he verbally evangelized and witnessed.**

John the Apostle is very clear in establishing the real role, the God-ordained role that John the Baptist really did have. His job was to proclaim Jesus Christ. That is our job. We should never proclaim ourselves as being the light; we are supposed to be witnesses for the light. That was John's job and that is our job.

In the Gospel of John there are seven witnesses to the need to believe on Jesus Christ for salvation:

- 1) The witness of God the Father – John 8:18
- 2) The witness of God the Son – John 8:14, 18
- 3) The witness of God the Spirit – John 16:13-14
- 4) The witness of the Scriptures – John 7:38, 42
- 5) The witness of Christ's works – John 10:38
- 6) The witness of John the Baptist – John 1:29
- 7) The witness of ordinary people – John 4

God uses ordinary people to witness for Him. It is our job to testify for Jesus Christ.