



John the Witness

Message Notes, February 28, 2016

As we continue in The Gospel of John, today we examine John (not the author), typically called “the Baptist.” He got this name because he baptized people (in repentance). While this was an integral part of his ministry, his true role was to “prepare the way of the Lord,” to bear witness to Jesus the Messiah. He is better named as John the Witness!

John’s amazing story begins before he is born. An angel appeared to his father, Zechariah, as he was performing his priestly duties at the temple. The angel told him that his very-aged wife would bear a son, “and you are to give him the name, John.”

Luke 1:13-17. Take time to read this passage together. Discuss the many characteristics the angel used to describe John and his mission. (A pretty impressive birth certificate!)

Nearly 30 years after his birth, John appears on the scene as a passionate preacher (of sorts).

Matthew 3:1-6. How is he described here? Why were people drawn to him? Are people in our lives “drawn” to us? Why or why not?

The religious leaders were nervous about John’s popularity and influence. They wanted to examine his *credentials*, so they sent some representatives to check him out.

John 1:19-28. These Pharisees ultimately had two concerns:

1. **Who are you, John, to be baptizing?** Baptism was not a new concept. It had been a form of ceremonial washing for many hundreds of years among many cultures. However, typically participants would baptize/wash *themselves*, but John was actually doing the baptizing. Again, they were asking – “Who are you to do so? By what authority?”
2. **Why are you baptizing like this?** Jewish people did not need to be baptized; they were the chosen people. Baptism was typically for Gentiles who wanted to come into the Hebrew faith, but John was baptizing Jews – “for the forgiveness of sins” (Luke 3:3).

The religious leaders questioned him – “Are you Elijah? Are you The Prophet? What *great one* are you? John’s answer was simple and clear – “I am the voice calling in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way of the Lord.’” In other words, I’m not the one; I am preparing the way for Him. I’m not the message; I am but the messenger.

John, the messenger, the witness, was waiting for God to reveal His Son, the Messiah. Yes, John and Jesus were cousins, and they had surely heard the prophecies concerning themselves from their mother and aunt, but John was waiting on God, for God’s timing.

John 1:32-34. How does God reveal His Son?

John 1:29-31. How does John proclaim Jesus?



- “the light of the world” – John came to bear witness to the light (John 1:6-9)
- “reveals the Father” (John 1:18)
- “the lamb who takes away the sins of the world” (John 1:29)

Rooted in the Jewish Passover story – the blood of the lamb rescued the Hebrews from death. Jesus was to be a wounded lamb, a dying sin-bearer, *not* a political leader come to reign. Not to simply wash sins (for a moment), but to take away sins forever

- “ushering in the last days” (the Kingdom come!)
- baptizing with and pouring out the Holy Spirit (John 1:33)
- “full of grace and truth,” not Law (John 1:17)
- for *all* people, not just the Hebrews (John 1:9, 12)

John 3:22-26. Why were John’s disciples troubled about Jesus?

John 3:27-30. How did John himself respond to such mutterings and envy?

- A clear sense of his unique identity and purpose (v. 28)
- A joyful delight in being “the friend of the bridegroom” (v. 29)
- A free and healthy humility – “He must become greater, and I must become less” (v. 30)

Are you like John? Are we, as a church, like John? We must be, ever and always, about Jesus! People don’t need us; they need Jesus. Yes, like John, we are His important messengers, but *He* is the message.

How are you challenged by the life of John?