

John the Baptist – True Witness of the Light

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Lesson Scripture: John 1: 6-9

Background: Mathew 3: 1-12

Introduction

For four hundred years, the voice of prophecy had been silent, and in John the Baptist, it spoke again. It seems that certain people were fascinated by John, and they gave him a higher place than he ought to have had. It was not that the Apostle John wished to criticize John the Baptist or downplayed his importance. It was merely that the Apostle knew that certain people gave John the Baptist a place that infringed upon the place of Jesus himself. So, all through the book of John, he is careful to point out that John the Baptist's place in the scheme of things was high, but he was still subordinate to the place of Jesus. He (the Apostle John) is careful to say that John was not that light, but only a witness to the light.

John the Baptist is the last witness of the prophets, John the Baptist. "He came to give testimony/witness to the light". John bore witness that he saw the Spirit descending upon Jesus (Mark 1:9-10). The one in whom the prophetic witness culminated was the one who bore witness to Jesus to whom all the prophetic witness pointed.

Lesson: True Witness of the Light John 1: 6-9

Verse 6

John the Baptist was both a model evangelist pointing those in darkness to the light and a model witness providing an excellent example for believers who would follow him. John the Baptist introduced the light to a dark world, and inaugurated Jesus' ministry. Therefore, mentioning him was appropriate at the beginning of Apostle John's account of Jesus' ministry. He is the first of many witnesses to the light that the Apostle John identified in the gospel.

The people universally accepted John the Baptist as a prophet. Many of the faithful followers of Jesus became so through the testimony of John the Baptist. Those that rejected Jesus also rejected the testimony of John the Baptist that Jesus is the Christ. The bottom line is that the people had someone whom they recognize as a prophet, pointing them to another person as the Christ (Jesus).

Verse 7 & 8

To help our basic understanding, let's explore what it means to be a witness. To be a witness, you have to know something or experience something. John the Baptist could testify about Jesus because he knew him. He was Jesus' cousin and knew him from his childhood (Luke 1:36). Thus, he was in the position to understand what was involved in being the Messiah. By the very circumstance that he

had been mistaken for the Messiah (John 1:19-23), he was driven to define in his mind the distinctive and characteristic marks for the Messiah. Therefore, he had to explain that he was not the light but witnessed to the light.

Verse 9

There are two possible interpretation for this verse. One is the true light enlightens every person that comes into the world. The second is the true light comes into the world and enlightens everyone. The point is that Jesus is the light that affects everyone. Everyone lives under the spotlight of God's illuminating revelation in Jesus. His light clarifies the sinfulness and spiritual need of humans. Those who respond to the revelation positively experience salvation. Those who reject the light will end up in darkness.

Now let's take a look at the testimony of John the Baptist. There are five things that we should know about John's testimony about Christ.

1. John the Baptist declares **the superiority of Jesus** (verses 15). John the Baptist testified that "the one who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me. This testimony lets us know that John the Baptist knew that Jesus was more significant than he was. John the Baptist's identity was often questioned, and he quickly points to Jesus as being his superior. John the Baptist invoked feelings that he could not satisfy. Followers became conscience people seeking what John the Baptist did not have the power or ability to provide (salvation) Therefore, his entire ministry pointed to a new order of things which he (John the Baptist) could not initiate, but declare the incomparable greatness of Jesus was to come after him.
2. The superiority of Jesus was based on **his pre-existence** (Verse 1-2). Previously in this chapter, we learned that the word was with God and the Word was God. We believe that Jesus was with God in the beginning. John the Baptist knows this through his conversation with Jesus about his work and consciousness. Since they were cousins, they had to have some discussion, and through those conversations, John learned who Jesus is and his origin.
3. John the Baptist pointed to Jesus as a **source of spiritual life** (verse 4). He makes the statement, "I baptize you with water, but he that comes after me baptize with the Holy Spirit" John the Baptist invokes the trinity and Jesus' ability to communicate with the Holy Spirit. Indicating that they are one, and through him (Jesus), we can find our spiritual life.
4. John the Baptist points to Jesus as **the Lamb of God** (verse 9) who takes away the world's sins. We see God's plan for salvation in John the Baptist testimony. The only way to atone for sins is through sacrifice. Jesus became the sacrificial lamb for the world. (Isaiah 53)
5. John the Baptist declares Jesus is the **"Son of God."** (verse 14) As the forerunner to Jesus, John the Baptist knew Jesus' true identity. Therefore, he could claim that Jesus is the Son of God.