

THE WITNESS OF JOHN THE BAPTIST
John 1:6-8, 15, 19-37

Intro: Let me borrow a couple of statements from the Gospel of Luke to introduce this passage from John tonight.

In the last verse (80) of Luke 1 we read these words about John the Baptist:

"And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel."

From the first three verses of Luke 3 we take these words:

"Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar . . . the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins."

Following this we have the Apostle John's statement in John 1:6:

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

Undoubtedly the Apostle means that God is the one who sent the Forerunner. Isa. 40 proves that. But there seems to be more here because the Apostle is saying that this John came from the side of God. Like our Lord, the Forerunner spent most of his life away from the public eye. The Gospels are concerned with probably half of the time of our Lord's public ministry when they speak of the ministry of John. It was probably about 18 months.

But, when this man appeared, he came right from the side of God, deeply taught in the truth of God. It seems that the Apostle John wants us to be very certain of this.

In addition, the Apostle John tells us what the nature of John the Baptist's ministry was, and he uses some form of this word seven times.

V. 7, "The same came for a witness,
to bear witness of the Light."

V. 8, "To bear witness of that Light."

V. 15, "John bare witness of him."

V. 19, "And this is the record of John."

V. 32, "And John bare record."

V. 34, "And I saw, and bare record."

As a witness, what was he to do? He was commissioned to give, not hold back, knowledge which he had received either by divine revelation or by personal experience (which is his case would have been a form of divine revelation).

The witness was to be verbal. Note:

V. 15, "John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, . . ."

V. 23, "He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness."

V. 32, "And John bare record, saying . . ."

The passage brings out four ways in which John was a witness, and all of them have to do with CHRIST.

I. JOHN CAME TO BEAR WITNESS OF CHRIST AS THE LIGHT (vv. 7, 8).

Do you remember what Zacharias said to his infant son, as recorded in Luke 1:76-79? (Read.)

In the Bible darkness speaks of ignorance and sin and bondage. Light, on the other hand, represents knowledge.

Cf. 2 Cor. 4:6, "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

Christ appeared as the Light of the sun in a world enveloped in darkness, but the men of the world could not see the light "because that darkness hath blinded his eyes" (1 John 2:11).

So it demanded that there should be a Witness.

"He was a burning and a shining light," or Lamp. Cf. John 5:35. But, "He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light" (John 1:8).

Oh, how much becomes illuminated when we witness to Christ, the Light of the world.

II. JOHN CAME TO BEAR WITNESS OF CHRIST AS THE PRE-EMINENT ONE.

Three times in this one chapter it is recorded that John said the same thing. Cf. vv. 15, 27, 30.

What does it mean? Much has been written on this statement?

There is no doubt that John here is teaching the pre-existence of Jesus Christ. But he is certainly teaching more.

John had come before Jesus Christ in two ways: (1) He had been born first, and (2) He had started his public ministry first. In both respects, therefore, he had a certain priority over the Lord.

But John realized that, even at this point, the Lord, lit., had become before him, had taken a place of pre-eminence over him because this had always been His place.

III. John 3:25-31.

Is it any wonder that John answered the delegation from Jerusalem as he did when they came to find out who he was?

Was this not the great secret behind the ministry of John--that he knew, as few men have known it, the absolute pre-eminence of Jesus Christ in everything--even though it meant the end of his ministry when the Lord Jesus appeared?

How we need to learn and live in this truth!

III. JOHN CAME TO BEAR WITNESS OF CHRIST AS "THE LAMB OF GOD" (vv. 29, 36).

Does this not indicate how deeply taught in the Word John was? Does it not seem that he may have been unique in his understanding of the purpose of Christ's coming in the world?

Would he have responded to the Lord as Peter did in Matt. 16:22?

What caused him to use this expression? Was it divinely revealed to him as a result of our Lord's baptism (the full significance of it), or was it the outgrowth of an intensive study of Isaiah's prophecy where one day the light had fallen for John on that wonderful 53rd chapter?

Who will ever know? One thing is certain. John

was now identifying our Lord with the Paschever Lamb and with the countless lambs that had been sacrificed in Israel. Now he saw that they were now an end in themselves, but they were all types of "the Lamb of God" who would come to take away, not just the sins of Israel, but "the sins of the whole world."

Religion was not what men needed (not even the religion of the scribes and Pharisees). THEY NEEDED A SAVIOUR, and He, thank God, had come!

Cf. Isa. 53:6, 7; Heb. 9:24-28; 1 Pet. 1:18, 19; 2:24.

As far as we can tell, John understood something about the Lord and the purpose of His coming which none of the disciples understood until after the resurrection.

IV. JOHN CAME TO BEAR WITNESS OF CHRIST AS "THE SON OF GOD" (v. 34).

Who can exhaust the truth that is in that title? Cf. John 3:16-18.

It undoubtedly means Deity. God has no other Son like the Lord Jesus Christ.

Cf. Heb. 1:1-3; Rom. 1:3, 4.

But, to a Jewish audience, this meant more than Deity; it meant that here was the Messiah.

Cf. John 20:30, 31; Matt. 16:16.

During our Lord's trial Caiaphas "the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God" (Matt. 26:63).

In Luke 4:41 we read, "And devils also came out of many, crying out, and saying, Thou art Christ the Son of God."

For John, this knowledge evidently came at the baptism. Cf. Matt. 3:17.

Concl: Do I need to remind you that we are to be witnesses? Acts 1:8 makes that very clear-- witnesses of a Person: CHRIST. If we can do no more than repeat John's message, that is sufficient because the message has never changed.