

JOHN THE BAPTIST

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Cobb's study of the life and ministry of John the Baptist, examining his role as the forerunner of Christ, his preaching of repentance, his baptism of Jesus, and his prophetic significance.

6 Chapters

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01 - OT Prophecies, John's Miraculous Birth, John's Parents

Introduction:

In the Bible, we read about a man named John.

Not John the apostle, but another John who was just as important.

This John was prophesied about in the Old Testament.

This John was born by miraculous means.

This John was a personal acquaintance with Jesus Christ.

This John was so influential that some people thought Jesus Christ was John resurrected.

This John is the one normally called "John the Baptist."

The work of John the Baptist is important to understand so that you don't fall into the trap of false teachings that are popular in the religious world.

Before we delve into the life of John the Baptist, there are some things we need to understand.

John was not a member of the Baptist Church, for that denomination was not started until 1611.

The literal translation of "John the Baptist" is "John, the one who immerses," "John the Immerser," or "John the baptizer."

"Baptist" is an adjective which describes what John did: he was one who baptized people.

Today we are going to begin a short series of lessons learning about John the Baptizer and how he fits in the grand scheme of the Bible.

The person and work of John the Baptizer was prophesied in the Old Testament .

Isaiah 40:1-11

Hezekiah had just been told that Jerusalem was going to be carried away into captivity by Babylon and that many of his descendants would be castrated and be made servants of the king of Babylon (Isaiah 39, fulfilled in Daniel 1).

After that, Isaiah was told to comfort the people (Isaiah 40:1-2).

The people would eventually return from this captivity after God decided they had been punished enough.

Jeremiah prophesied that this return would take place after 70 years (II Chronicles 36:21, Daniel 9:2).

The people would need to prepare their hearts for the return to being the people of God.

God would care for them again in their own land (Isaiah 40:11).

The ultimate fulfillment of this, however, was not in their return from captivity, but in the first century with John the Baptizer paving the way for Jesus Christ.

John was “the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare the way of the Lord and make his paths straight” (Isaiah 40:3, Matthew 3:3, Mark 1:3, Luke 3:4-6, John 1:23).

It is interesting that John is said to have fulfilled this prophecy in ALL FOUR of the gospel accounts.

Just like today, when an important person travels, there are others that are sent ahead of time to make sure everything is just right for their visit.

John was to get people prepared in order to make things as easy as possible for them to accept Jesus.

This is why John preached a gospel of repentance.

This is why John pointed people to Christ.

This is why John was sent to baptize “for the remission of sins.”

After the voice [John] would cry in the wilderness, the glory of the LORD shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together because the mouth of the LORD has spoken it (Isaiah 40:5).

It was after John began his preaching in the wilderness that Jesus came to him to be baptized (Matthew 3:13).

The Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus, and God spoke from heaven, “this is my beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased” (Matthew 3:17).

After that, good tidings would be brought from Jerusalem (Isaiah 40:9).

Where was the good news (the literal translation of “gospel”) proclaimed from? Jerusalem!

The message would proclaim: Behold your God!

God would be the Shepherd (40:11).

As just a side note, Jesus was the one who called himself the good Shepherd (John 10:11).

This passage (Isaiah 40) shows that John the Baptizer was preparing the way for Jehovah.

The fulfillment (recorded in the gospel accounts) shows that John the Baptizer was preparing the way for Jesus.

Add these things together, and you end up with the unmistakable conclusion that Jesus is Jehovah!

Malachi 4:4-6

The final passage in the final book of the Old Testament was a prophecy about John the Baptizer.

The people are told at the end of the Old Testament to “remember ye the Law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments” (Malachi 4:4).

It is after this that He tells the people, “Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD” (Malachi 4:5).

Was He going to send Elijah back in the whirlwind which took him away?

Was it literally going to be Elijah?

Or was it something else?

This prophet would “turn the hearts of the fathers to their children...” (Malachi 4:6).

John the Baptizer is the one who fulfills this prophecy.

Zacharias, a Levite priest of God, was told by the angel known as Gabriel (literally either “man-God,” “man of God,” or “the power/might of God”) that he would bear a son (Luke 1:13).

That son would turn many to the Lord their God (Luke 1:16).

This son would go in the spirit and power of Elijah (Elias in the KJV) “to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children...” and to make ready a people prepared for the Lord (Luke 1:17).

At the Mount of Transfiguration, the literal Elijah (along with Moses) appeared and spoke with Jesus (Matthew 17).

After they faded away (a sign from God that the Law and the Prophets – aka the Old Testament—was ending), they said, “why then say the scribes that Elijah must first come?” (Matthew 17:10).

Jesus’ response was “Elijah truly shall come first and restore all things. But I say unto you that Elijah is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them” (Matthew 17:11-12).

After that, they understood that Jesus meant John the Baptizer was the Elijah of prophecy (Matthew 17:13).

How was John like Elijah?

Both were inspired by God (John was “full of the Holy Ghost” (Luke 1:15).

Listen to the physical description of both men.

Elijah was an hairy man, and girt with a girdle of leather about his loins (II Kings 1:8).

John was clothed with camel hair with a girdle of skin (leather) about his loins).

Both of them had a similar mission: bring people back to God.

When Jesus says it, and all four gospel writers plainly state it, there can be no doubt that John the Baptizer and his mission were prophesied about in the Old Testament.

John's birth was miraculous (Luke 1:11-25, 36-37).

Zacharias' wife Elizabeth was past childbearing age.

Zacharias was also old (Luke 1:18).

He expressed doubt to the angel Gabriel which said she would conceive, saying "Whereby shall I know this...my wife [is] well-stricken in years?"

Gabriel also expressed this fact to Mary by saying, "thy cousin Elizabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren" (Luke 1:36).

His birth was announced by an angel of heaven.

God never sent His angels for insignificant events.

The birth of John was a significant thing, for it led to the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies (some over 700 years old).

It was a direct act of God that allowed Elizabeth and Zacharias to have a child.

So, not only was John and his mission prophesied, his birth was miraculous.

When God intervenes and miraculously allows someone to conceive, it is usually important.

Hannah was barren, yet God permitted her to conceive and bear Samuel, the final judge of Israel (I Samuel 1).

Abraham and Sarah bore Isaac, the ancestor of the entire Israelite nation and Jesus specifically, when they were well-past childbearing age (Genesis 21).

Mary, a virgin, conceived a child by direct action of the Holy Spirit and gave birth to our Savior Jesus Christ (Matthew 1).

So, can we doubt that John was going to be an important player in the plan of God?

John's parents made sure he was dedicated to God.

The angel gave Zacharias specific instructions on how he was to raise John (Luke 1:13-15).

They were to not let him have wine nor strong drink. Period.

Many people believe this means John was a Nazarite from birth, which would then also include not ever cutting his hair.

John was "full of the Holy Ghost" from the womb (Luke 1:15).

But imagine what would have happened if his parents did not raise him as they should?

Just because someone was filled with the Holy Spirit did not mean they were incapable of sinning.

Judas Iscariot had miraculous abilities, yet he betrayed Jesus Christ.

If John's parents did not do their part, then John would not have turned out the way he did.

This is why God specifically chose Zacharias and Elizabeth.

He knew the type of people they were.

He knew He could trust them to carry out the commands that He had given them in this matter.

We are given commands directly from God (via the Bible) about how to raise our children.

We are to raise them in the nurture (caring, building up) and admonition (correcting, disciplining) of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4).

We are to punish them (including spanking) so that they learn their lesson and mature the way God wants them to mature (Proverbs 22:15, 23:13).

Those parents who just want to be friends with their children will end up with children who are not mature, and who will not be properly prepared to go to heaven.

Even though God's prophets foretold of the work John would do; even though God's angel foretold of his miraculous birth, his parents still had to do their part in raising him properly.

Conclusion:

John the Baptizer plays a very important part in the gospel accounts.

This should be understood, because his work was prophesied, his birth was prophesied (and miraculous), and he was "full of the Holy Ghost" from the womb.

As we will see next week, John's mission was one of preparation and leading people to Christ.

Just because John played an important part, we do not need to make him more important than he really was.

Not to downplay his significance, but John did not start the church as a certain group claims he did.

It is just as wrong to give Peter too much importance (like the Catholics) as it is to give John the Baptizer too much importance.

The true focus should be on Jesus Christ.

Do you consider yourself to be the important one?

Do you put the emphasis on yourself in your life?

Or do you put the emphasis on Jesus Christ?

Each day as you go through your life, ask yourself, "am I doing this for Jesus? Or am I doing this only for myself?"

Here's something you can do for Jesus which also helps yourself: Become a Christian!

02 - John's Birth and Naming, John's Mission

Introduction:

As we established last week, John the baptizer was an important part in God's plan.

His work was foretold in the Old Testament.

His birth was miraculous.

Today, we are going to take a look at part of John's life as it is revealed in the gospel accounts.

John's birth/naming.

John's mission.

John's birth and naming (Luke 1).

Today, it is not much of a surprise when a child is given a name that is not what you would consider a "family name."

None of our children were named after other members of the family.

But in times past, it was more prevalent that the same family names would be repeated throughout the generations.

Abraham and Isaac both had run-ins with king Abemalech of the Philistines, but it was not the same king (there was likely 65-70 years between these two events).

Look through the Old Testament genealogies and you will see some of the same names repeated semi-frequently.

Even today there are still people who name their sons after themselves, even multiple generations down the line.

Zacharias, John's father, was instructed by Gabriel about his son (Luke 1:13).

The son was foretold, and Gabriel was told to name the son "John" (which in Hebrew means "Jehovah has been Gracious").

After Zacharias expressed doubt because of his age and his wife's age, Gabriel told him he would be unable to speak until these things were fulfilled (Luke 1:20).

Zacharias obviously did not think things through before he spoke, otherwise he might have remembered what God had done for Sarah and Abraham.

When we think things through and realize that God can accomplish anything, we should be willing to place our trust in Him.

When the child was born, they took him to the temple on the eighth day to be circumcised (Luke 1:59).

The Jews did not formally name their children until the eighth day, and it was then entered into the genealogical records.

These records were important, because it proved who was of the tribe of Levi, and descendants of Aaron.

The people there had already decided that the child should be named after his father, Zacharias (Luke 1:59).

His mother objected, saying “not so, but he shall be called John” (Luke 1:60).

They said, “there’s no one in your family by that name” (Luke 1:61).

Zacharias got a tablet and wrote out for all to see, “his name is John” (Luke 1:63).

After that, Zacharias was again able to speak, because that which Gabriel spoke was fulfilled.

This was spread around the area wherein they lived and the people knew there was something special happening (Luke 1:65-66).

Zacharias began to prophesy about the future of his son’s mission (Luke 1:67-79).

Old Testament prophecies about salvation are about to be fulfilled (Luke 1:68-70).

John will be a prophet of the Highest, preparing the way for the Lord (Luke 1:76).

John would teach people about salvation which comes by remission of sins (Luke 1:77).

The early life of John (after his birth and naming) is contained in one verse.

“and the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts [deserted places] till the day of his shewing unto Israel” (Luke 1:80).

This is a lot like our knowledge of the early life of Jesus.

Outside of the incident at the temple when Jesus was 12 (Luke 2:41-51), we know nothing about Jesus except that “Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man” (Luke 2:52).

Have you ever wondered what other things happened in the life of John or Jesus during those years?

It is interesting to think about, perhaps, but God did not think it was important for us to know anything beyond the fact that the two boys grew up with their minds focused on spiritual things.

The focus, when studying about John and Jesus, should be on the things they taught and their mission here on earth.

John’s Mission.

John was a prophet of God (Luke 1:76).

The word “prophet” means “one who speaks on behalf of another.”

God called Aaron Moses’ prophet (Exodus 7:1).

True prophets of God spoke on behalf of God.

We always seem to think that the word “prophet” means “one who foretells future events.”

While sometimes prophets did do this, it was not their only function.

Their main objective was to call people back to the Lord.

The foretelling of future events was usually connected with promises of destruction (for disobedience) or blessings (for obedience).

So basically, the prophet’s job was always to call people back to the Lord, giving the blessings that come from it and the curses that come from ignoring the plea to return.

Prophets of God throughout the Bible were inspired of God to speak and write the things that they did (II Peter 1:20-21).

Though we are not inspired, we can do the same thing that the prophets of the Bible did.

We can read the Bible and in doing so speak to others in God’s behalf (because God does not speak directly to people any longer).

The Bible says that “we have this treasure in earthen vessels” (I Corinthians 4:7), which means that God uses humans to be the means by which His word, His gospel, is spread.

We can call people to repentance.

We can tell people about the wonderful blessings which come with obedience to His will.

We can tell people about the horrible fate that awaits those who live lives of disobedience to God’s will.

John’s mission was to call people back to obedience to God.

John went about preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying “Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 3:1-2).

To repent is to turn back, to change one’s mind.

John was calling people back to the Lord, asking them to repent of their sins (which separated them from God – Isaiah 59:1-2).

Our mission should be to get people to turn back to God.

While we must be like Jesus and seek and save that which is lost (Luke 19:10), we should take a lesson from John here and realize that he was calling people who were already God’s people back to a proper relationship with God.

We need to renew and redouble our efforts in restoring those people who have fallen away.

I have asked before, and almost every person in here has acknowledged that they know someone (most likely multiple someones) who was once a faithful member but has since fallen away.

We should not lose focus on evangelizing the lost sinners, but we need to also concentrate on those now-lost Christians.

John's mission was to proclaim that the kingdom of heaven was "at hand" (Matthew 3:2).

At preaching school, the students usually procrastinated until the last minute.

It was when they realized the time when the paper was due was "at hand" that they finally set their minds to getting it done.

John's proclamation was that the event for which they had been waiting hundreds of years was about to happen.

The people knew that God's kingdom was about to be set up, and that fact encouraged them to get ready for it.

Events have a way of influencing and focusing our thinking.

When the presidential elections draw near, people who usually don't care about politics are suddenly obsessed with all the news about it they can get their hands on.

As March rolls around, many people who don't care one whit about college basketball suddenly become huge basketball fans, waiting for every tidbit of information so they can fill out their "March Madness" brackets.

Now, imagine that it is actually an IMPORTANT event which is about to happen – how would that influence and focus your thinking?

The Jews had been waiting for this kingdom for well over 700 years (Isaiah 2:1-4 was written about 770 years before John began preaching), so to hear that it was "at hand" would have been quite the powerful message to bring them back to God.

The kingdom of God is no longer "near," it is HERE!

John was a prophet of God, and said it was "at hand" in AD 27-30.

Jesus Himself preached the same thing during the same time period (Matthew 4:17).

If the kingdom was not established shortly after they preached it, then both were false prophets.

The kingdom of heaven DID come into existence, and it still exists today!

We need to be telling people about the wonderful kingdom that Jesus built.

Paul and the Christians in Colossae were in that kingdom in the first century (Colossians 1:13).

John and all the Christians in Asia Minor were also in the kingdom in the first century (Revelation 1:9).

The kingdom is the church (Matthew 16:18-19).

There is no salvation outside the church that Jesus died for (Acts 20:28).

The only way to become a member of that church is to be added to it by God through baptism into His Son Jesus Christ.

All of this works together with John's ultimate message which was "come back to God."

Conclusion:

This morning we ask you to do that same thing: Come back to God.

God promises you eternity with Him in heaven with absolutely no pain, no sickness, no dying, no night, no sin, no temptation, no saying goodbye to your friends and loved ones there if you obey Him.

But God promises you an eternity of pain, sorrow, torture, misery, and punishment in hell if you do not obey His will.

If you are not a Christian, I ask you, "why are you waiting?"

If you are a Christian, but have not been faithful, I ask you to please come back to Him.

03 - The Timing and Effectiveness of John's Ministry

Introduction:

A preacher once had a disagreement with the elders in the congregation.

This congregation was in a large city.

That city contained many congregations of the Lord's church.

After a disagreement which had nothing to do with doctrine, the preacher left the congregation and began preaching elsewhere in the city.

As a result, many of the members followed him to this new congregation.

This was not because of any religious conviction, because the preacher left over a matter not related to doctrine.

Instead, they were more followers of the preacher than followers of Jesus.

This is what is commonly referred to as "preacher-itis."

Preacher-itis was a problem in Corinth, where people were saying "I am of Paul," "I am of Apollos," "I am of Cephas."

John the Baptizer had to deal with the same type of problem with some of his disciples.

A disciple is a learner, and so the disciples of John were those who followed John in order to learn from him.

It is not as if they put John ahead or equal to God, he was simply their teacher.

Today we are going to continue our study of the life and mission of John the Baptizer.

The timing of John's ministry.

The effectiveness of John's ministry.

The timing of John's ministry.

Luke has been called a "first-rate historian" by an atheist (Sir William Ramsay) who set out to prove the Biblical account of Luke and Acts false.

That atheist was converted to belief in God because he discovered that everything Luke recorded about names, dates, and places were 100% accurate.

Luke himself proclaims that he had "perfect understanding of all things from the first" and that he wrote in order "that [we] mightiest know the certainty of those things wherein [we have] been instructed" (Luke 1:3-4).

The ASV says that Luke “traced the course of all things accurately from the first,” which implies that Luke did an extensive amount of research.

He was a companion of Paul, who would have been able to relay the personal events which are recorded in Acts.

Luke records the time when John began to preach.

It was in the 15th year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar (Luke 3:1).

Tiberius began a co-regency (co-reign) with his father Augustus in 12 AD.

Pontius Pilate was the governor of Judea.

Herod the Tetrarch (Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great) was ruling in Galilee.

It was this Herod which later had John beheaded.

His brother Philip was tetrarch of Ituraea and Trachonitus.

This was also a son of Herod the Great.

This man’s wife (Herodius) left him in order to marry Herod Antipas.

Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene.

Annas and Caiphas were BOTH high priests.

One was the high priest, but had been disposed of his position by Roman officials, and was replaced by his son-in law who now served as high priest.

When all of this is put together, John the baptizer began to preach in 26 or 27 AD (depending upon what part of Tiberius’ 15th year this takes place).

Why is this important?

It helps to show the historical accuracy of the Bible.

Remember, this is what has convinced some atheists that the Bible is accurate.

Two atheists together decided that they were going to prove the Bible wrong on historical matters.

They did it separately for two years and then came together—both fully convinced of the Bible’s accuracy.

They both began to believe that the Bible is inspired by God.

It paints the background (especially for those who were closer to the time of these rulers) for the events which would happen later in the gospel accounts.

It helps to answer critics who claim the dates of the Bible are wrong.

Since Herod the Great died in 4 BC and most people say Jesus died in 33 AD, that would contradict the Biblical record which shows Jesus died at age 33 (not 37).

Instead, Luke places Jesus at about 30 years of age in 26 or 27 AD (Luke 23), meaning that his death at age 33 would have been in 30 AD.

Just because most people assume Jesus died in 33 AD (after all, our calendar is based on BC meaning “before Christ” and AD meaning ANNO DOMINI—the year of our Lord) does not make it true.

The man who came up with our current calendar system tried to make year 1 be the year Christ was born, but his calculations were off.

John preached in a time of religious confusion.

When John preached, there were five main “denominations” of Judaism, none of which truly reflected what God’s word had to say in the Law of Moses.

The Sadducees were the ones in control of the Sanhedrin.

They were the richer class.

They taught that there was no resurrection (Matthew 22:23).

The Pharisees appeared to have more pull with the people.

They were what we might call “legalists.”

They made strict laws that God never made, and then condemned any who didn’t follow them (see Matthew 15:2).

They went to far as to say that if, on the Sabbath, you had a small head of wheat in your hand, and rubbed it together, you were guilty of threshing on the Sabbath.

Paul was raised a Pharisee.

The Essenes separated themselves from the rest of society.

They moved to areas and had their own little compounds/ communities, usually in caves.

They did not want to have anything to do with the “modern world” of 2,000 years ago.

It is they who we have to thank for writing and preserving the Dead Sea Scrolls.

These existed during the time of John and Jesus, though they are not mentioned in Scripture.

The Herodians pledged allegiance to Rome and had no problem with the secularization of Judaism.

They would be what we might call the liberal wing of Judaism.

For them, Judaism was more national than religious.

They stood for nothing, but still claimed Judaism.

Some of them, along with the Pharisees, tried to entrap Jesus by asking Him if it was lawful to pay tribute unto Caesar (Matthew 22:15-17).

The Zealots were as anti-Rome as there was in Judaism.

The zealots especially hated tax collectors – Jews who came collecting money from their own people to give to the Roman government.

One of Jesus' apostles, Simon, was a member of this denomination.

For the Zealots, the idea of another country ruling over them was horrendous, and they were willing to fight to overthrow the Roman power over Israel.

The Zealots were part of the uprising against Rome that led to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

Truly, John began to preach in a time of religious confusion.

The Effectiveness of John's Ministry.

John's ministry was effective (Mark 1:4-5).

John baptized in the wilderness (deserted area) (Mark 1:4).

All of Judea and Jerusalem came to John to be baptized by him (Mark 1:5)

All of Judea and Jerusalem came, confessing their sins (Mark 1:5).

What kind of influence must this man have had to have thousands upon thousands of people come out to the wilderness to hear and be baptized by him?

Jerusalem had close to a million people at that time, according to Josephus.

Truly John's ministry was effective, to say the least.

Why was it effective?

It was effective because John preached the truth (Matthew 3:2).

John preached "repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!"

This was part of the message that God, by inspiration (Luke 1:15) had given him to preach.

John preached the need for people to repent of their sins, something which has been true since sin first entered into the world.

Noah preached repentance.

All the Old Testament prophets preached repentance.

John preached repentance.

Jesus preached repentance.

The apostles preached repentance.

John told people they had to truly repent, not just give lip-service to it.

He told the Pharisees and Sadducees to "bring forth fruits meet for repentance" (Matthew 3:7).

He told them that just because they were descended from Abraham did not make them righteous before God (Matthew 3:8).

That was the view of the Jews, as a whole, that they were saved by means of being born into the nation of Israel.

Our preaching to the world can be effective as well if we preach the truth!

“I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation” (Romans 1:16).

The power of saving souls is not found in the messenger, but in the message of Jesus Christ!

We must truly stress the importance of repentance so that people are truly converted, not just people who get wet.

It was effective because John was humble.

John had the opportunity to be a leader, drawing people after himself, but he turned it down.

The people came to him, and asked if he was the Christ (John 1:19-20).

Many attention-seekers would have said “yes” just for the fame and notoriety it would give them.

Instead, John said “I am not the Christ.”

John did not think higher of himself than he ought.

After Jesus, through his disciples, began baptizing people, one of John’s disciples complained that Jesus was taking away some of John’s followers (John 3:24-25).

John was not jealous, but instead he “rejoiced” because the people began to follow Jesus (John 3:29).

John realized that his role was to point people to Jesus, not draw followers after himself (John 3:30).

Our preaching to the world can be effective if we stay humble as well.

Far too many preachers seek to be “well-known” for their preaching abilities or their writing skills.

Instead, ALL CHRISTIANS should seek to be well-known to God because we point people to Christ.

It has been said that we put on Jesus like clothing; there should only be enough of us showing for people to know who we are...the rest they see should be Christ.

When you have religious discussions (IF you ever have religious discussions), do you tell others what YOU think?

Or do you point people to the inspired words of Scripture?

We must point people to Jesus and make them followers of Him.

It was effective because he gave instruction about how people should live their lives.

Jesus once gave a parable about a man who was freed from an evil spirit, but he did not fill himself with anything good, and thus was easy prey when the demon returned with other evil spirits (Matthew 12:43-45).

The application is that even though we may eliminate bad things from our lives, we have to replace them with good things, otherwise we will be very susceptible to the same temptations again.

The person who stops going to bars and drinking must find good things to fill his life and that time, otherwise the temptation to return to his old style of life gets stronger and stronger.

It has been said that those who view pornography on the internet will continue to come back to it unless they intentionally fill their time and mind with other things.

Paul said, “finally brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things” (Philippians 4:8).

We need to continually focus our minds on the good things so that we do not let our idle mind become the devil’s playground.

John did not just tell people to repent, but gave them instructions on what they needed to do after baptism.

The people asked him “what shall we do then?” (Luke 3:10).

John said “he that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise” (Luke 3:11).

Pure religion and undefiled is this: to visit the widows and orphans [people in need] in their affliction (James 1:27).

The publicans asked “what shall we do?” (Luke 1:12).

John said, “Exact no more than what is appointed you” (Luke 1:13).

Thou shalt not steal (Matthew 19:18).

Be content with what things as you have (Hebrews 13:5).

The soldiers (some believe these are Roman soldiers, thus John’s baptism possibly extended to Gentiles as well as Jews) asked “what shall we do?” (Luke 1:14).

John said, “Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely, and be content with your wages” (Luke 1:14).

One of the things God hates is a lying tongue; he also hates a false witness (Proverbs 6:17, 19).

In the same way, we cannot just baptize someone and then let them fend for themselves afterwards.

Without continued instruction and encouragement, people will usually fall away or become stagnant.

We must help to fill their minds with those good things by continued instruction and encouragement.

The failure to do this consistently has been tabbed as one of the main reasons why many congregations slipped into liberalism over the past 20 years.

The Christian's job is to show people the way to Jesus (through the plan of salvation), but also show them how to get to heaven afterwards.

You cannot just become a Christian and live your life the same way you did before baptism.

God expects you to live a new life (Romans 6:3-4).

Conclusion:

John's situation was not really that much different than ours today.

We are surrounded by competing denominations, none of which accurately represent what God laid out in His word.

It is our job to call people to repentance, pointing them to Christ.

We must stress to them the importance of baptism, and then continue to teach them what they need to do afterwards.

We must speak the truth of the gospel, because only the true gospel has the power to save souls.

Are you doing these things that will make you an effective teacher of the gospel?

If you are not a Christian, the God of heaven commands you to repent of your sins and be baptized (Acts 2:38) so that He can then add you to His church (Acts 2:47).

When you do that, and continue to live for Him, you can rest assured that you have eternal life in heaven awaiting you!

04 - John's Doubt and Discouragement

Introduction:

If you were to read several biographies of a person, you would find some information in one book that was not in another.

Most biographies focus only on certain aspects of a person's life.

The biography I read of Abraham Lincoln last year focused largely on the development of his attitude towards slavery and his relationship with the Union army.

Others focus on his religious background, his speeches, or his family life.

If every biography said the same things in the same way, would you not think that they copied from each other?

Since the biographies are different, do you assume that they cannot be true because one mentions facts that the others do not?

Of course not!

Yet this is exactly what critics of the Bible try to do.

They say that since certain events in one gospel account are not mentioned or identical to the described events in the other gospel accounts, then that proves the Bible is a work of man and not God.

Yet if they were all identical you know that they would say that they just copied it (in fact, that is what they accuse Luke and Matthew of doing: copying Mark's gospel and then adding stuff to it to fill it out).

When we study about John the Baptizer, as we have been doing the past few weeks, we need to realize that the most complete picture comes from taking all the mentions of him in the gospel accounts and putting them together.

This is also what we must do if we want to get the most complete picture of the life of Christ.

We saw the prophecies of John's birth and work in Isaiah and Malachi.

We saw John's prophesied miraculous birth as well as his naming in Luke.

We see John dealing with questions about whether or not he was the Christ in John.

We read about John's instructions to those he was baptizing also in Luke.

We know the message John preached from Matthew and Mark.

Have you ever been unsure of yourself or someone you believed in?

Many times people have absolute faith in themselves, but later begin to doubt.

Look at Peter's experience trying to walk on the water as an example.

This week we will look at John's uncertainty

Even inspired men can have times of uncertainty.

John the Baptizer knew beyond any doubt that Jesus was the Son of God sent to be the Messiah.

He had been told ahead of time that the one upon whom the Holy Spirit descended was the one they had been waiting for (John 1:33).

He saw the Holy Spirit descend upon Jesus (John 1:32).

Because of this, He knew that Jesus was indeed the Son of God (John 1:34).

He openly proclaimed "behold the lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world!" (John 1:29).

As we saw last week, John knew that he must decrease while Jesus increased, and he rejoiced that Christ was come.

However, when we look at Matthew 11 and Luke 7, we see that something had changed: doubt had crept in.

In Luke 7, we see that Jesus had raised the son of a widow in Nain from the dead (Luke 7:11-16).

Because of this event, people knew that God had visited His people and send a prophet (Luke 7:16).

This event was reported throughout Judea and the surrounding areas (Luke 7:17).

Some of John's disciples heard the report and relayed it to John (Luke 7:18).

In response to this, John sent a couple disciples to Jesus to find out if He really was the one they had been waiting for, or if they should look for another (Luke 7:19-20).

You would think that John would have been sure about Jesus being the one they had been waiting for.

After all He had literally seen the Holy Spirit descend like a dove upon Jesus.

He heard the voice from heaven which declared "this is my beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased" (Mark 1:9-11).

Now he heard about Jesus raising people from the dead.

Don't you think that would be enough proof for you?

What changed? What could have caused John to feel the need to send disciples to ask Jesus this question?

For "the rest of the story" we need to turn over to Matthew 11.

When the message was brought to John about Jesus raising the widow's son from the dead, he was in prison (Matthew 11:2).

John had been put in prison by Herod Antipas at the request of Herodias, his brother's ex-wife (Matthew 14:3).

John was cast into prison for teaching the truth.

John was out doing God's work, trying to call people back to Him, and now he found himself locked up in prison.

It is also quite possible that John thought that things would move quicker once Jesus came.

Perhaps he thought that the kingdom would come during his lifetime.

Perhaps he was wondering why those things hadn't come to fruition yet.

Things don't always go the way we think they should, and sometimes that causes us to get depressed or unsure about our path in life.

Some people get a new job, expecting it to be wonderful...and it is for a little while.

Then things aren't going the way they thought it would when they first came there.

Then they start to get easily discouraged.

This, possibly as much as being thrown into prison, would cause great discouragement in John.

Difficult times can sometimes cause us to doubt.

Job is a perfect example of this.

Twice, Jesus had to appear to Paul to reassure him (in Corinth – Acts 18:8-11, and in Jerusalem—Acts 23:11).

John was indeed going through a difficult time and began to doubt his entire mission.

He did the right thing, though: he looked to Jesus for the answer.

Jesus was the only one who had the answers for John's doubt.

Jesus, in the sight of John's two disciples, performed miracles and then told them to go back and report to John the things that they had seen (Luke 7:21-23).

He quoted from Isaiah 35:5-6 and basically said, "you know that I am the one because of the works that I am doing."

In our times of doubt (suffering, questioning of our beliefs), the best thing is to go to Jesus by reading the Scriptures.

We can pray to God and ask for strength, but one of the main ways He gives us strength is through the Scriptures.

If you do make a habit of reading God's inspired word, you do not have the strength and confidence that you could have.

All the words of the New Testament are the words of Christ, either spoken directly by Him or conveyed by Him through the Holy Spirit for the New Testament writers to record (John 16:12-15).

Conclusion:

It is not a sin to get discouraged or to have doubt.

The sin comes when we give in to that doubt and discouragement.

Pray to God!

Study His word!

Talk to other Christians, because every one of us has had periods of doubt or discouragement.

Even Jesus seemed to be discouraged and in need of comfort when His disciples slept while He was praying in the garden.

God is there for you!

Are you a Christian?

05 - The Death of John the Baptizer

Introduction:

The past few Sunday mornings we have been examining the life and work of John the Baptizer.

He played an important part in preparing the people to accept Jesus as the Messiah.

His ministry was effective because he spoke the truth, he was humble, and he told people how to live their lives properly after baptism.

He called people to repentance.

He also got discouraged and was in need of reassurance.

Today, we are going to take a look at the events surrounding and culminating in the murder of John the baptizer.

What bought it on?

What right did John have to preach to a Gentile?

Did he back down?

John was imprisoned because some people didn't want to hear the truth.

While "all of Jerusalem" came out to hear John and be baptized for the remission of sins, not everyone was pleased with the content of his messages.

The Pharisees rejected him and his teachings.

They would not say aloud that they believed John's baptism was from man because they feared the response of the people who followed him (Matthew 21:25-26).

John knew that they were not repentant (Matthew 3:8).

Herodias was so angry over the content of John's message that she nagged Herod until he threw John in prison.

Herod, the inspired Scriptures state, cast John into prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother's wife (Matthew 14:3).

Herodias had apparently asked for John to be murdered immediately, because Herod was going to have him put to death, but feared the multitude who knew he was a prophet (Matthew 14:4).

Herod was "sorry" or sorrowful when Herodias' daughter asked for John's head on a platter (Matthew 14:8).

Herod apparently had a level of respect for John and felt great guilt over what was done (he thought Jesus was John the Baptizer, raised from the dead – Matthew 14:1-2).

Herod couldn't have been pleased with the content of John's message, though he—like Ahab—probably realized that it was the truth.

What exactly did John preach that caused him to be murdered?

It was not his usual message of “repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

This message seems to have been directed mostly at the Jews.

There is a possibility that we have an example of Gentile soldiers coming to John's baptism, though that is not definite (Luke 3:14).

Instead, John preached the truth about marriage, divorce, and remarriage.

He told Herod, “it is not lawful for thee to have her” (Matthew 14:4).

According to history, Herodias had divorced Phillip in order to marry Herod, Phillip's brother.

The cause of her divorce? Deciding she'd rather be married to someone else.

Herod was an Edomite, a Gentile race or nation which descended from Esau.

The Edomites were forced, by threat of death, to be circumcised approximately 100 years before the birth of Christ, and the Jewish rulers declared them to be Jews.

The people never accepted them as Jewish, viewing them just like they viewed the Samaritans.

While many Edomites may have converted to Judaism, Herod's family did not.

Herod the Great murdered at least one Jewish high priest as well as a vast number of Jewish rabbis.

Some of Herod's relatives were named for Cos, the chief god of the Edomites (something that you would not do if you have converted to Judaism).

Herod was in thought, in actions, and in descent a Gentile.

Why is this important?

Because John the Baptizer said Herod was violating “law” by being married to his brother's wife.

John applied the law regarding marriage, divorce, and remarriage to a Gentile who was never under the Law of Moses.

What is the law about marriage, divorce, and remarriage?

While many people will appeal to emotional, heart-rending situations for their standard, we must look clearly at the word of God.

Jesus Christ Himself stated that even though Moses “allowed” people to divorce because they were so hard-hearted, it was not the case “from the beginning” (Matthew 19:8).

“In the beginning,” God made them male and female, joined them together, and “what God hath joined together, let not man put asunder” (Matthew 19:4-6).

Jesus said that “from the beginning,” divorce for “every cause” (Matthew 19:3) was not allowed.

Jesus said that “from the beginning” “whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery; and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery” (Matthew 19:8-9).

Jesus is clear: the only acceptable reason for someone to divorce their spouse and get remarried is if they divorced their spouse because of fornication.

Anyone who divorces for any other reason, and then remarries, is living in adultery (which is listed first among the works of the flesh, which will keep you out of heaven – Galatians 5:19-21).

The person who marries someone who has been divorced by their spouse is also committing adultery (Matthew 19:9).

John the Baptizer took this exact “from the beginning” law of God and said it applied to Gentiles as well.

This is important for us to realize, because it means this law applies to everyone—Christian or not.

Jesus said it applied to everyone “from the beginning.”

John preached the truth about Herod and Herodias’ marriage, and it cost him his life.

Many preachers refer to sermons on marriage, divorce, and remarriage as “moving sermons.”

They call it this not because it motivates the people to correct their lives.

But instead, it is called a “moving sermon” because often the preachers are asked to move shortly after preaching it.

The topic of marriage and divorce is sticky to some people.

What closer bond is there here on earth than between a man and his wife?

But then they discover that they are living in adultery because of an unscriptural divorce; what do they do?

Unfortunately, the vast majority of people decide to stay with their unscriptural spouse and look for a different church that will tell them it is ok (and if they look very hard, they will find such a group).

We who hold to God’s inspired word are called “heartless” and “mean” because we would dare suggest that they need to separate because they are living in sin.

So, imagine John’s predicament: telling the ruler of Judea that he is violating God’s law by being married to his new wife.

How do you think most people would react to being told this?

John was first thrown in prison, and then murdered over it.

This is one of the classic cases of attempting to ignore the facts by killing the messenger.

Many people today don’t want to hear the truth either.

Have you tried to set up a Bible study with someone, or even tried to talk about the Bible with them?

Those who aren't already religiously-minded will usually shut those conversations down quickly.

Those who ARE religiously-minded will usually reject what you have to say because it doesn't match up with what they've always believed.

Many people IN THE CHURCH don't want to hear the truth, either!

There are so many people who simply want their ears tickled and who want to leave services feeling happy and good about themselves, even if they are lost!

This has given rise to preachers who are nothing more than glorified story-tellers.

The people have truly heaped up to themselves teachers, having itching ears.

This is the reason why some preachers are asked to leave after preaching on topics like this.

Ask yourself what is the most important thing to you: feeling good and being happy in sin, or obeying God—even if it means making some hard choices?

John was murdered because he would not back down from the truth.

If John had just said this one time, any anger might have died down.

But John did not back down.

It is quite likely that Herod was informed on multiple occasions that his marriage was “unlawful.”

John didn't back down when he preached to the people, either.

He continually commanded that people repent (Matthew 3:1-2).

He continually chastised those who were giving an outward appearance of repentance with no inward change (Matthew 3:7-8).

John stood for the truth and would not back down from it.

He understood well that obeying God is the most important thing in this life (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

We, too, must not back down from the truth.

Far too often, Christians back down from the truth because of fear.

They fear losing friendships.

They fear what other people might say about them.

They fear being ridiculed.

It doesn't matter what the topic is, we must not back down.

Brethren, there are entire congregations (some in the thousands) that have backed down from the truth on many issues because they want to “blend in” with the rest of the religious world around them.

They have backed down from the truth about Jesus building one church, and are now saying that the church of Christ is just another denomination.

They have backed down from the truth about the role of men and women in the church, and are now saying that we can have women elders and preachers.

They have backed down from the truth about homosexuality being an abomination to God (Leviticus 18:22), and have now begun to say that “Jesus never said anything about it, so it’s perfectly ok to God now” (see Romans 1).

They have backed down from the truth about marriage, divorce, and remarriage, and have begun to say that so long as you realize you shouldn’t have done it, God will forgive you and then you can remarry whomever you want.

They have backed down from the truth that God’s word is 100% inspired, and have begun saying that “we can’t know exactly what God wants us to know, because we can’t comprehend ‘God-speak’.” (that’s what Rubel Shelley recently taught).

They have backed down from the truth about baptism being essential to salvation (like Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38, Acts 22:16, Galatians 3:27, Romans 6:1-4, and I Peter 3:21 all say), and now they are saying that baptism is optional.

And these are BRETHREN IN CHRIST saying these things?

Truthfully, many people don’t want to hear the truth, and instead of standing up for the truth, many brethren are backing down so as to not upset anyone.

We MUST NOT back down from the truth!

John was murdered because Herod was more concerned about what people thought than in doing what was right (Matthew 14:6-9).

Herod made a foolish oath to Herodias’ daughter that he would give her whatever she wanted (Matthew 14:6-7).

She had already pre-arranged this with her mother, and asked for John’s head on a charger [platter] (Matthew 14:8).

Instead of refusing her request, Herod gave in.

He gave in because of how it would appear to those who were sitting with him if he refused (Matthew 14:9).

He gave in because he had made an oath which he regretted (Matthew 14:9).

Sure, it is a great thing to be a man of your word.

But if keeping your word causes you to sin, then you apologize for giving your word and then you DO WHAT IS RIGHT!

There are examples of godly men who made foolish oaths.

Jephthah vowed to give to God as a burnt sacrifice the first thing which came out of his house...which turned out to be his daughter.

Joshua pledged not to destroy the citizens of a supposedly far-off city, only to discover that they had lied and it was very near.

In both of these instances, the men kept their word.

In both of these instances, they shouldn't have made the vow.

Do not make promises that you either can't keep or shouldn't keep.

If you find yourself in a spot where you have given your word, and keeping it will cause you to sin, then you break your word.

We cannot be like Herod!

We must always, ALWAYS do what is right, regardless of what others might think about us!

It doesn't matter if you lose face in front of your friends; you always do what is right!

Herod thought more about what others thought about him than he did about John's life!

And whether they realize it or not, there are times when people care more about what others think about them than they care about their own soul!

They don't speak up when someone is lost in sin.

They go along with whatever everyone else is doing instead of standing up for God and His truth.

People who stay quiet or seek to "blend in" with the world are sacrificing their soul just so they don't have to feel uncomfortable!

Conclusion:

John the Baptizer is a man we should seek to emulate.

Jesus said that of all people born of a woman, none was greater than John (Matthew 11:11).

He stood up for the truth and would not back down from it, even though it cost him his life.

"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Revelation 2:10).

He was not afraid to point out where people needed to change their lives.

John called people to come back to God, and today we do the same thing.

If you are not a Christian, you are lost and the only thing awaiting you is continual pain and suffering beyond anything you can imagine in the fires of hell.

But today we ask, we plead, we beg you to consider coming to God.

Jesus Christ, His Son, came to this earth and died a horribly cruel death on a wooden cross as a punishment for your sins.

He rose up from the grave on the third day and He now sits at the right hand of God.

You must realize these truths, believe them and let others know you believe them.

You must leave your past life of sin behind, repenting, turning to Jesus to save you.

Then you must be baptized in order to have your sins forgiven, because Peter clearly states that “baptism doth now save us” (I Peter 3:21).

If you are already a Christian, and you aren't living your life the way you know God wants you to, why not come back to Him today?

06 - John's Baptism

Introduction:

Many people do not realize it, but there is more than one type of baptism mentioned in the New Testament.

How many can you name?

John's baptism?

Baptism of the Holy Spirit?

Water baptism (ala Acts 2:38)?

Believe it or not, there are eight different baptisms mentioned in the New Testament.

We need to understand the differences between these so that we do not get confused as we read the Bible.

The eight baptisms are:

John's baptism.

The baptism of Jesus by John (yes, the first two are different from each other).

Baptism of fire.

Baptism of suffering.

The "baptism unto Moses."

Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

"Baptism for the dead."

Baptism of the Great Commission (baptism "into Christ").

What does "baptism" mean?

The English word "baptism" or "baptize" is not a translation of the Greek work "Baptizo."

The word "baptize" was created as a transliteration of "Baptizo."

Contrary to popular accusation, however, it was not the King James translators who "made up" the word in order to not condemn the Church of England who was sprinkling exclusively at the time.

The word "baptize" was used in:

Tyndale's English bible (1534).

Geneva Bible (1587).

Miles Coverdale's translation (1535).

Instead, it was in Latin that baptizo was first transliterated.

In Acts 2:38 of the Latin Vulgate, the word used is "baptizetur."

In Mark 16:16, the word used is "baptizitus."

From there, it migrated into languages such as French and English.

The English translators of the Bible, who had been familiar with the Latin versions, created an English word that would be (at the time) familiar to the readers instead of actually translating the meaning.

The same thing is true with some other words in the New Testament as well, such as "angel" (ANGELLOS in Greek), "apostle" (APOSTOLLOS in Greek), "prophet" (PROPHETES in Greek), "synagogue" (SUNAGOGE in Greek), and others.

The Greek word "Baptizo" literally means to submerge, immerse.

It is related to another word, "Bapto," which means "to dip."

You do not have to be a Greek scholar to understand what baptism is.

Let us look through the Bible and see how the word is used.

In baptism, one is "buried" (Romans 6:3-4), showing that one is completely surrounded, immersed in something.

John the baptizer spoke of some being baptized with fire, and went on to describe it as "he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire" (Matthew 3:12).

It is not a mere sprinkling or pouring of fire, but a complete immersion into the fire which will burn up all the chaff.

Jesus asked if James and John were able to drink the cup [of suffering] that He was going to drink, and be baptized with the baptism with which He is baptized [a baptism of suffering] (Matthew 20:22-23).

Jesus wasn't asking them if they could endure a sprinkling of suffering, because Jesus was not sprinkled with suffering either.

Instead, Jesus was immersed in suffering, even to the point of death.

So, when we read of a baptism, it is a submerging, an immersion, being completely surrounded or covered by something.

Please keep that in mind as we look at the baptisms described in the Bible.

The baptism of John (Matthew 3:1-8).

The first instance of baptism in the Bible is in Matthew 3:1-6.

John was the first man to command people to be baptized.

It is any wonder, then, that he was known as “John, the one who baptizes” or “John the immerser”?

This was something new, something which had not previously been done before.

Some people claim that baptism is like the ritual washings that the priests and other Jews had to do in order to be “clean” and able to perform their duties.

The problem with this view is that baptism in the New Testament is always something that is done TO you, not done BY you.

In the Old Testament, any washings were done by the person being washed.

They washed their own hands.

They washed their own bodies.

The Old Testament washings were more than just dipping themselves in water, but included scrubbing and removal of the filth of the flesh.

So the baptism of the New Testament was very different.

John’s baptism was in water (Matthew 3:6).

People came to John, and he baptized them “in Jordan.”

The word “in” shows location: they were baptized IN the Jordan River.

John did not sprinkle them, nor pour water upon them, but immersed them in the Jordan River.

If there is any doubt what is being spoken of, John said, “I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance...” (Matthew 3:11).

John’s baptism had repentance as a prerequisite (Matthew 3:2, 7-8).

John didn’t just baptize anyone, but instead commanded all to repent (Matthew 3:2).

In fact, John refused to baptize the Pharisees and Sadducees until they showed fruits meet for repentance (Matthew 3:7-8).

John’s baptism included confessing their sins (Matthew 3:6).

Luke 3:10-14 describes John telling specific people what they needed to do after baptism, and it is possible that these were as a result of the sins they had confessed.

John’s baptism was “for the remission of sins” (Mark 1:4).

This is the exact same wording found in Acts 2:38, when Peter said, “repent and be baptized, every one of you, FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS.”

This is also the same wording found in Matthew 26:28 when Jesus is instituting the Lord’s Supper: “this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many, FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS.”

John’s baptism, then, also took away the sins of those who submitted to it in repentance.

John's baptism was part of his mission to prepare the way for Christ.

It helped prepare people for entrance into the approaching kingdom.

Many brethren believe that those baptized with John's baptism prior to Pentecost were "placed" in the church without needing to be baptized again.

It introduced the concept of baptism for remission of sins.

It gave Jesus an opportunity to be "introduced" as the Christ to a group of people who were spiritually minded.

From this group came some of His apostles, specifically Peter and Andrew and possibly James and John as well.

It turned people's minds towards spiritual things, and put them in the right frame of mind to listen to what Christ taught.

John's baptism was temporary (John 3:26-30).

John's disciples came questioning him about "he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou bearest witness [Jesus]" (John 3:26).

They were worried because Jesus had begun baptizing people (through His disciples – John 4:1-2) and more people were following after Him instead of John.

John's response was, "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:29-30).

John had no problem with the fact that his role was decreasing and Christ's was increasing, because he was sent to lead people to Christ.

By the time of Paul, John's baptism was no longer valid (Acts 19:1-7).

Paul ran into some people who had been baptized with John's baptism, and he instructed them to be baptized in the name of Christ (Acts 19:3-5).

Therefore John's baptism was no longer an acceptable way of having your sins removed and being made right with God.

By the time of Paul, there was only "one baptism" which was valid (Ephesians 4:5).

John was not the only one who baptized with John's baptism.

Jesus' disciples baptized people in the same way for the same reasons BEFORE the church came into existence (John 3:22-23, 4:1-2).

Jesus was the one given credit for the baptisms (John 4:1).

The fact that Jesus commanded people to be baptized BEFORE the church began is important to remember.

Those who were baptized were not instantly members of the church (because it didn't exist yet).

But did someone baptized by the apostle Peter before Pentecost have to be re-baptized again by an apostle on the Day of Pentecost?

Questions about John's baptism.

Did John's baptism make people members of the church?

John the baptizer was killed by Herod (Matthew 14:3-12).

It was after John was already dead and buried that Jesus told the disciples, "I WILL build my church" (future tense) (Matthew 16:18).

When John was baptizing people, the church did not exist.

Did the people John baptized have to be re-baptized in order to be saved?

There is disagreement about this one among Bible students.

Apollos only knew the baptism of John, yet there is no statement that he was re-baptized.

Instead, he was "shown the way of the Lord more perfectly" by Aquilla and Priscilla.

Apollos had been "instructed in the way of the Lord" (Acts 8:24-5), but only understood/knew the baptism of John.

He apparently had been taught about Jesus as the Christ, but did not fully understand that John's baptism was no longer effective.

So he was taught the difference.

Paul counted him as a faithful brother (I Corinthians 3:6).

This example would seem to indicate that those who were baptized by John's baptism were prepared for the kingdom and became citizens when the kingdom was established.

Remember that Jesus' disciples also baptized more than John ever did BEFORE the kingdom (church) came into existence.

Did they have to be re-baptized?

Paul re-baptized some who were baptized with John's baptism in Ephesus (Acts 19).

These events likely took place some 25 years after John's death.

These men did not realize that Jesus was the Christ (Acts 19:4-5).

Upon hearing that the Christ had already come, they were baptized into His name (Acts 19:5).

Some common explanations for the differing accounts is this:

Apollos was baptized with John's baptism BEFORE Pentecost (while it was still effective) and the men in Ephesus were baptized with John's baptism AFTER Pentecost (after it ceased being effective).

Apollos believed in Jesus as the Christ, but simply misunderstood the meaning of baptism in some way (didn't understand it as showing the death/burial/resurrection of Christ perhaps), while the others didn't even realize Jesus was the Christ, and thus needed to be converted.

Was John's baptism the same as the baptism from Acts 2 onward?

Though there are some obvious similarities (for remission of sins, repentance needed, immersion in water), the Bible makes it clear that there is a difference between the two.

Paul re-baptized those in Ephesus who had been baptized with John's baptism.

If they were the same, there would have been no reason for Paul to re-baptize them.

Apollos was said to have only known the baptism of John, which shows there was a difference between John's baptism and the baptism "into Christ."

Conclusion:

Today there is only one baptism (Ephesians 4:5), and that is the one to which we must submit if we wish to be "in Christ" where all spiritual blessings are (Ephesians 1:3).

Have you been baptized into Christ?

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