

Peculiarities of John the Baptist

by Conrad Murrell

John the Baptist was a unique individual who prepared the way for Jesus, and as Christians, we have a responsibility to be witnesses of the light and share the full gospel.

Duration: 24:45

Scripture: Malachi 4:1

Topics: "John The Baptist"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the prophecy from Malachi chapter 4 about the coming day of judgment. He emphasizes that the proud and wicked will be burned up, leaving no trace, while those who fear God's name will be blessed with the Son of righteousness who brings healing. The preacher then highlights the darkness and apostasy that prevailed in Israel and Judah for 400 years before the arrival of Christ, the light. He explains that Christ appeared as an ordinary man, without any indication of his divine glory, as described in Isaiah 53. The sermon concludes by referencing the Gospel of John chapter 1, which declares that the Word, who is God, was in the beginning and brought light and life to humanity, even though the darkness did not comprehend it.

Transcript

Some forty years ago, something like that, I suppose, a brother from St. Louis, Missouri, named Joe Hoover, he and his wife, Jeanne, moved here. I don't know just how, except I got to preaching around up there, and they met me there, and they came down here, and Joe and I walked from the road there back through here. This is all grown-up trees.

Pushed our way through saw briars and everything else. Found a little opening up here, and we knelt down and gave it to the Lord. Thank you for coming.

Two passages of Scripture, one from Malachi chapter 4, and the other from John chapter 1. Reading first from Malachi chapter 4. For behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly shall be a stubble. And the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. But unto you that fear my name, the Son of righteousness, shall arise with healing in his wings, and ye shall go forth and grow up as calves in a stall, and ye shall tread down the wicked, and they shall be ashes unto the soles of your feet.

And the day that I shall do this, saith the Lord of hosts, Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded him? For in Horeb are all Israel with the statutes and judgments. Behold, I send you Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

The Gospel of John, chapter 1. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made.

In him was life, and life was the light of men, and the light shineth in the darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not. There was a man sent from God whose name was John. The necessity of the witness of the light was made so by the deep darkness of the day in which Christ the light appeared.

We are told that in Isaiah 59 and 60. There was a darkness of deep apostasy in both Israel and Judah, followed by 400 years of prophetic silence. Can you imagine a time like that? 400 years God said nothing to man.

What a race of beasts that must have been at that time with no light of God. Christ the light did not appear as a light and as deity, but as an ordinary man. Nothing about him to indicate his ineffable glory and light.

Isaiah 53 tells us. Isaiah 53, the first three verses. Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground.

He hath no form nor comeliness, and when we shall see him there is no beauty that we should desire him. Jesus wasn't good looking. He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

And we see as it were our faces hid from him. He was despised and we esteemed him not. I want to speak to you a little bit about the peculiarities of John the Baptist, which sets him apart from all other men in history.

In Luke chapter 1, verse 5. There was in the days of Herod the king of Judea a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abiah, and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. And they had no child because Elizabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years.

And it came to pass that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course, according to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. And a whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense, and there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.

But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias, for thy prayer is heard, and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear a son, and they shall call his name John. So he was chosen and ordained before his conception, before he was. He was chosen before he was.

Jesus was before his incarnation. Everything about his birth was supernatural. An old man and a barren wife, and then the sudden appearance of the angel Gabriel.

This marvelous event happened utterly unexpected with everything going on as usual. Faithful people continuing as God has told them. Absolutely nothing to indicate anything unusual was about to happen.

Then we have Zacharias' unbelief and resulted in his mutinous. He couldn't believe that his barren wife was going to have a child. And because he was mutinous, God just shut him up.

And his silence, the fact that he could not speak and didn't say anything, signaled to the people that he had met with God. Now when you find a blabbermouth, he don't know God. Quiet people generally are those who met with God.

They know they don't have anything to enrich people. But he met with God. And God was about to do something significant.

His name itself means Jehovah is gracious or merciful. The end and outcome of John's testimony was Jesus Christ, the grace of God. He was born again before he was born.

Luke 1.15 This is the only person of the descendants of Adam that escaped human depravity. He never was a sinner. A new creation from his mother's womb.

His entire life was lived free from the tyranny of fallen flesh. Can you imagine that? Although he had normal fleshy desires, as do all Christians, the lying pleasantries of this world were unable to deter him from his mission. He lived in the wilderness, wore a rough garment of camel skin, and subsisted on locusts and wild honey, wild honey and grasshoppers.

A stranger to fleshy comforts and amenities, the world was impotent to weaken his singular mission, irrespective of how unpopular it was. He was full of God, great in the sight of God. God called him, saw him, great.

It's one thing to be great in the sight of men, but it's something else to be great in the sight of God. Can you imagine that? Contemptible in the sight of men. Nothing in his person, his personality, his style, his natural gift to commit him before men.

Nothing drew man to him but the power of the Holy Spirit. I had one old preacher who said, God never called a good-looking man to preach. His divinely appointed name, his fame, his renown is Jehovah is Gracious.

Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. Consider his power and greatness. Jesus said, Of those born of women, John was the greatest.

He comes in the spirit and the power of Elijah. The powerhouse of the old covenant Israel. But John did it the hard way.

Elijah did miracles and was feared and heard because of them, but John did none. His sole power was the anointing of God upon his person and his preaching. How do you get that? You don't get it.

God puts it where he wants you. No one can give credit for such gifts and anointing. His preaching defied the time-proven worldly wisdom of apostate religion, which is, don't say anything that will make people feel

badly or guilty, even if it means hiding the Word of God.

This was precisely his singular message. Far from driving people away, they poured out of the cities and flocked to hear him. This anointed preaching, as well as his person, caused men to think him, that is, John the Baptist, to be Elijah, that prophet or the Messiah that was promised.

He had a limitation, though. He knew and preached nothing but repentance in view of the imminent judgment of God. He didn't have a salvation message.

All he had was a condemning message. This was Israel's last warning before God reprobated the whole nation to judgment. His message of repentance was to turn the children of Israel back to the faith of the fathers.

Multitudes understood that and were baptized, and in doing so confessed their sins. Doubtlessly, many of these were among those 3,000 souls converted at pity cost. But John knew nothing of the new birth or the gospel.

He was only its forerunner, its witness, but not its preacher. This was a defect in the preaching of Apollos and his disciples. His high privilege.

He was a prophet of the Most High, Jesus. We're told that in Luke 1, 676 and 79. He went before him, Jesus, to prepare the way in which he would come.

He brought the knowledge of salvation and the remission of sins through repentance. His message of salvation was salvation through the tender mercy of our God. He himself was a witness of the light.

He did not merely witness and do witnessing. He was a witness. He in his person was a witness.

In his person and the fullness of the Spirit. In his boldness and his fearlessness and his unworldliness. We, you and I, can be witnesses like that.

We don't have to preach to folks. Just be a Christian. Be a godly person.

Be a holy, godly one. His faithfulness declared the truth about men, about themselves, and the eminent judgment of God. Through him it is evident that God was on the scene, that light was about to break through the thick darkness that existed at that time.

A boar witness was a testimony of light. Not only just light, but it's testimony. He refused to allow men to focus their attention upon himself, although they were more than willing.

John 1, 19-23. Indeed, they attempted to do that. He steadfastly pointed out Jesus to be the Lamb of God, of the world, the Savior of sinners, and the coming King.

John 1, 25. John 1, chapter 1, verse 25. And they asked him and said, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not Christ, nor Elias, nor the prophet? And John answered and saying, I baptize with water, but there standeth one among you whom ye know not.

He it is who coming after me is preferred before me, and whose shoe-latches I am not worthy to unloose. These things were done in Bethabara, beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing. His was just a water baptism.

He who comes will baptize you, he said, with the Holy Spirit and fire. And he who comes after me was before me. Believe on him.

He said, I must decrease that he must increase. I will soon be gone, but he will abide forever. It is through the witness of this man, this forerunner, that all men should believe upon Christ.

If we are now Christian, it is through this man, the witness of the light. I do get saved through John the Baptist. He was the witness of the light.

In divine order of things, everything must be established by two or three witnesses. He is a friend of the bridegroom. He tells us that in John 3 and 29.

He does not have the bride, however, because he has a high privilege of bringing the bride to the bridegroom. The significance of John the Baptist to us, this practical application of these things, his greatness, the greatest of the old covenant prophets, and those born of women under the old covenant. The least of those in the kingdom of God, the new covenant, is greater than John the Baptist.

I'm telling you that you and I are greater than John the Baptist. If that gets you poofed up, you ain't. We who are now Christians live under this new covenant, which John didn't know anything.

As witnesses of the light, we are John's spiritual successors. We are John the Baptist's spiritual successors. You can brag on your kinfolks.

Uncle John. The light must have a witness. How shall they believe upon him of whom they have not heard? How shall they hear by the preacher? How shall the preacher except to be sent? We have been sent as John has been sent.

Like John, we've been baptized with the Holy Spirit in fire. We've been filled with the Holy Spirit from our spiritual birth. There's no reason why we should not disdain, sustain from, and avoid fleshy lusts and worldly vanities any less than John did.

We do not have to sleep in the desert, live on grasshopper salad, and wear all high garments, but neither should let our wardrobes be dictated by garment designers. Every peddler who uses every carnal fad under the sun to dictate our appearance, we should be content with modest dwellings. We can freely abstain from the world's frivolous parties and pastimes, Epicurean revelings, and insane sports manias.

My, how this country is eat up with that. Football games. Basketball games.

Men prancing around, showing off, bragging. And we take it like a sow at the swill trough, slurping it up. There's nothing godly about it.

Nothing pure and holy about it. We are greater than John in that we know the full gospel. You know, there's a certain branch in Christianity that they call the full gospel.

Well, what is it if it's not a full gospel? It's an empty gospel. It ain't nothing. Any gospel is a full gospel.

But he didn't know it. John knew nothing of regeneration, of the new birth. He's the only man that was born again before he was born.

He knew nothing of justification by faith. He had no idea of the blessedness of being a member of a church, of the body of Christ in the church, of being a functioning member of a local church. He did not know them as brothers, although you and I do.

Although he recognized Jesus as God's lamb and that he would take away the sin of his people, he did not know of his obedience, his triumph over the devil, and that he was the head of a new race of people. He did not know of his intercession, his priesthood, and his suffering and his effectual, satisfying, sacrificial death. His greatness, therefore, was not a personal or an official greatness.

He who would be great in the kingdom of heaven must become a little child, a servant of all. It is a greatness of privilege, of life and knowledge and understanding, of joy unspeakable and full of glory. John had no song to sing, only a warning of judgment to sound and the herald of the advent of Israel's Messiah.

We have no songs to sing of which John knew nothing. With endowment of this superior light and understanding the fullness of light from he who is light, we have a heavier responsibility than John. None in this world shall ever know or believe on Jesus Christ except through our witness.

If our mouths are closed, our life and light does not shine, all men shall forever be doomed to darkness. As we preach and as we witness, we must continually, vehemently disclaim anything of ourselves and our witness. We are no more than voices, forerunners of Jesus Christ.

And this same anointing that was upon John is upon each of us. Think about that a little. And there will be a people who will mistake us for light, their Savior and their hope.

And we must be confessing ourselves nothing but witnesses, water Baptists. I'm not talking about the denomination of Baptist. A Baptist is somebody who ducks folk in water.

He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit is now on the threshing floor, winnowing his fan. He is burning up the chaff and gathering wheat into his garner. Father in Heaven, we wonder of the priceless privilege that we are here.

Coming from different parts of the country, even some from other countries, to this little place back in the woods and meeting with us here. We cannot properly appreciate how privileged we are. Stir our hearts and souls.

Protect us and protect these saints as they travel from here. Hear the prayers of the mamas and daddies for their little children. And give the children a desire to look to their mothers and fathers and those who witness for the time ahead for their lives.

For we ask it all in Jesus' name. And we'll be pleased to give you the glory. Amen.

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