

John the Baptist

by Ernest Barker

John the Baptist was a prophet and a witness who prepared the way for Jesus Christ, and his humility and recognition of his role are significant in understanding his importance in the story of Jesus Christ.

Duration: 49:04

Scripture: Matthew 3:3, Matthew 11:7-9, Luke 1:15, Luke 7:24, John 1:29, John 10:41-42, Revelation 19:6

Topics: "John The Baptist"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a story about a friend who proclaimed himself as a citizen of heaven. He emphasizes the importance of being a witness for God and seizing every opportunity to testify for the Lord. The speaker then discusses three things that the Lord said about John the Baptist, highlighting his role as a burning and shining light. He encourages the audience to remember that they are representatives of God and should be ready to fulfill their purpose as voices for Him, whether in hidden lands or in their own communities. The sermon concludes with the reminder to be in harmony with God's will and to walk with Him.

Transcript

From verse six, chapter by John, chapter one to sixth verse, there was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The saint came for a witness, to bear witness of the light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that light, but was sent to bear witness of that light.

Did you notice that the word light here has a capital letter, referring, of course, to the Lord Jesus Christ, the light of the world. That was the true light, which lighted every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.

He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name, which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. Verse nineteen.

This is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and emirates from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou? And he confessed, and denied not, but confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then? After we die? And he said, I am not. After that prophet? And he answered, No.

Then said they unto him, Who art thou? That we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou as I said? He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness. Make straight the way of the Lord.

As said, the prophet is there. They which were sent were of the Pharisees. Now, one verse in chapter ten.

Or two verses. Chapter ten, verse forty-one and forty-two. And many resorted unto him, the Lord Jesus, and said, John did no mischief, but all things that John speak of this man were true.

And many believed on him, the Lord Jesus Christ. Many believed on him, that. Now, there are very few Christians comparatively, who appreciate the greatness of John the Baptist.

He was undoubtedly one of the greatest men the world has ever known. In the first chapter of Luke, verse fifteen, we read, He shall be great before the Lord. And those words were literally fulfilled.

Now, there are many evidences of John's greatness in the Bible. And one is this. His advent to this world, and his mission, were prophesied about five hundred years before he came.

And that of itself is significant. A way back in the fortieth of Isaiah, we read, the voice of one crying in the wilderness. Prepare me the way of the Lord.

The Lord makes straight from the desert a hot, hot highway for our God. He is also mentioned in the last book in the Old Testament, the book of Malachi, and in chapter three. Behold, I will send my messengers who shall prepare the way before me.

He is also mentioned in the closing verses of the Old Testament, where we are told that he would come in the spirit and power of the prophet Elijah. Now, this is very significant. We have many great men mentioned in the New Testament.

Outstanding men. But not one of them was prophesied in the Old Testament scriptures. Apart from our Lord Jesus Christ, John was the only person, so far as I know, who was prophesied in the Old Testament as one evidence of his greatness.

Now, another evidence was this. There was a man sent from God whose name was John. We've read the words in verse six of the first chapter of John's gospel.

John came, or was sent, into this world at a particular time for a particular purpose. Sent by God into this world. Now, in the Acts of the Apostles, we have a great number of men mentioned.

Outstanding men. Men who served Christ faithfully. Men who were true and loyal to their Lord, and who were greatly used by God.

But we never read of one of them, that he or she was sent into this world at a particular time for a particular purpose. It is true they had a work to do. It is true that they did that work thoroughly and loyally.

But John came at a particular time for a particular purpose. There was a man sent from God whose name was John. Now, a third evidence of his greatness is this.

He was filled with the Holy Spirit of God from his birth. And that is outstanding. Now, I have mentioned that there are men, and also women too, mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles, who testified for Christ, they served Christ, they preached Christ, they lived Christ.

It was said of him that they turned the world upside down. And you know, friends, I often think that there are sufficient Christians today to turn the world upside down. But they have failed to do so.

But these men and women of God were wonderfully old, wonderfully used of God. They no doubt attracted thousands, tens of thousands of men and women and young people to the Lord Jesus Christ. And the reason was this.

They were filled with the Holy Spirit of God. But we never read of one of them, that he or she was filled with the Holy Spirit from his or her birth. Now, John was.

And that's an amazing evidence of his greatness. But I want to say this. Although John was filled with the Holy Spirit from his birth, he never told anybody.

He never preached that upon the housetops. But it was evidence. It was evidence by his preaching.

It was evidence by the life he lived. It was evidence by the influence he exercised. Now, dear friends, I want to say this very definitely.

You and I as Christians, each one of us here in this hall, should be filled with the Holy Spirit of God. That should be our normal Christian experience. You know that passage, be filled with the Spirit, in the fifth chapter of Ephesians, is often referred to those who go abroad and give up everything for Christ.

They leave behind their friends. They leave behind their possessions, perhaps. They leave everything and go to some remote place to preach Christ.

And we say, now, those people, surely they should be filled with the Holy Spirit of God, and so they should. And there are many servants of God in the States today. And they are evangelists or teachers, and they have given up everything for the Lord.

They are in His service. And we say, well, they should be filled with the Holy Spirit of God. And it's quite correct.

But then there is every believer ought to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Be not drunk with wine where it is mixed there, but be filled with the Spirit. And if you are filled with the Holy Spirit of God, you'll never tell anybody about it.

You'll never boast to anyone that you are so filled. If you were to tell anybody about that, friend, it would be an evidence that you're not filled with the Holy Spirit at all. Because it would be the very last thing you would think about to speak of yourself.

John was filled with the Holy Spirit from his birth, an amazing evidence of His greatness. Now, I have mentioned these three evidences of His greatness. I want to mention three others, and with these I want to see more particularly.

First of all, I want to remind you of what John said of himself. Then I want to remind you of what the Lord Jesus said of him. Then I want to remind you of what he said of the Lord Jesus.

Now, here's a beautiful study for any of you. What he said of himself, what the Lord Jesus said of him, and what he said of his Lord. Now, what did John say of himself? We have read in the first chapter of John that the Jews in Jerusalem sent chief priests and Levites to him to ask him whom he was.

Now, you know, those people were mystified concerning John. They didn't understand him. They failed to appreciate his mission, why he was here at all.

And so, in order to clear the air, they sent deputations. And they asked John, who are you? Who are thou? Now, did you notice John's answer? He said, I am not the Christ. Now, that may appear strange.

No introduction at all. I am not the Christ. Why did he say that? Well, the reason, of course, is this.

In Luke chapter 3 and verse 15, we read that all men were debating in their minds concerning John, as to whether he was the Christ or not. And so he said, well, if you think that I am the Christ, you're mistaken. I'm not.

Well, they said, are you Elijah? No, they said. He said, I'm not Elijah. Now, it is quite true he came in the power and prophet, and then in the spirit and power of the prophet Elijah.

But they were two distinct personalities. Well, they said, are you that prophet? Referring, no doubt, to the passage in Deuteronomy 18. Then Moses said, a prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you like unto me.

No, he said, I'm not that prophet. Well, they said, who are you? We want to take an answer back to the people who sent us. What sayeth thou of thyself? And what had he to say of himself? Well, he said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, preparing the way of the Lord.

Now, dear friends, here we have two things. A voice, the wilderness. A voice as anything for God.

The wilderness as anywhere for God. He said, I am a voice. He did not say that he was a great preacher, although he was.

He did not say that he was sent by God into this world at a particular time for a definite purpose, although he was. He did not say that he had been filled with the Holy Spirit of God from his birth, although he had been. He said, I am a voice.

Oh, friends, do you know that one reason why God has saved you and me? That we might be a voice for him, anything for God. When I think of my own country, Great Britain, I realize that the people there are getting farther away from God than getting nearer to him. I assume that that is true of the United States of America.

With all the gospel you have in this country, people are getting away from God rather than getting closer to him. And I sometimes say to myself, oh, if God would raise a voice to draw the people back to God and back to his word. But you and I individually, friends, are a voice, or should be.

Now some of you may be Sunday school teachers, workers among the young. But as you go to those young people to tell them of Christ, of his dying love to them, friends, remember you're a voice. You're a voice for God.

You're his representative. Those who preach the gospel as opportunity affords, or those who minister to the believers as God opens the door of opportunity, shall we remember that we are a voice. And we are a voice for God, and friends, it is a privilege.

Our missionary friends over there, the other side of the sea, they're a voice for God in those heathen lands. You and I, wherever we may be, whether here in the United States, here in San Francisco, or elsewhere, let's remember, friends, we are a voice for him who has saved us by his grace and is ready for anything so long as God is willing. And then he was a voice in the wilderness, anywhere for God.

Not in the cities, not in the towns, not in the villages, not in the marketplaces where the peoples congregated, but away in the wilderness. That was where John was content to be, friends. And you and I ought to be ready to go where God sends us.

You know, to be in harmony with God's will, to walk with God down here before us, in heaven here below. Men have known that right down the ages. Enoch knew what it was to walk with God.

Noah knew what it was to be a righteous man before God. Others have walked with him, and it's possible for you and for me to walk with God down here, and to know his will, and then to obey his will, and to be just altogether abandoned to him. A voice in the wilderness.

Now, there's something else that John said of himself which is very important. You notice in the first chapter of John, in verse 27, you have these words toward the end, I am not worthy. He it is who coming after me is preferred before me.

Whose shoes lack it, I am not worthy to wonder. You know, this wasn't the only time when these words were uttered. In a certain chapter of Luke, we have the record of a man who was a Roman officer, a centurion, and he sent over a hundred soldiers.

And that man had a servant, and that servant was ill. And he was critically ill. It was what we should say, touch and go with him.

And, you know, that centurion heard that Jesus was in the neighborhood. And so he sent a message by his friends, the Jews, and they went to the Lord to heal his servant. And, you know, they gave him a wonderful testimony.

They said, Lord, he is worthy for whom thou should do this. He loves our nation. He's not a Jew.

He's a Gentile. He's an outsider, but he loves our nation. He's very large-hearted.

And he has gone so far as to build us a synagogue. Lord, he is worthy. Now, the Lord made his way toward the house to heal that servant.

And he was not far from the house when the centurion sent another message. This time by his friends, his Roman friends. And they had to give this message.

Lord, trouble not thy servant. I am not worthy that thou should enter under my roof, neither for thyself worthy to come to thee. Say no more.

My servant shall be healed. Where thou art, without coming a step nearer to my house. Speak, Lord.

My servant will be well. Now, do you know the difference? The first reputation said, he is worthy. He said, I am not worthy.

Now, who was correct? Were they right, or was he? Well, friends, he was right. I am not worthy. And do you know these words are their equivalent? They are spoken by the Prodigal Son.

After that disgraceful experience of his in the far country, when he just lived for himself, forgetful of his father, forgetful of his own, where he disgraced his parents, where he disgraced himself, and he came back, and his words were these, I am no more worthy to be called thy son. Do you know, dear friend, John the Baptist hadn't wandered into the far country? He hadn't wasted his money in righteous living? He was not a disgrace to his parents? No doubt his parents were proud of him. And yet he said, I am not worthy.

When did he say that? When he compared himself with the Lord Jesus Christ, the greater than he. When did the centurion say, I am not worthy? When he compared himself with the Son of God. Oh, friends, when you and I compare ourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, his perfections, his holiness, his love, and see how far, far short we have come of what we should have been, what's our language? Surely your language is this, I am not worthy.

It's my language. But thank God there is one who is worthy, who is altogether worthy, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. And by and by, in yonder setting, you and I will take those very words upon our lips when we are around the throne, and we sing that new song, and we shall sing, Thou art worthy, for Thou art slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood.

I am not worthy. Now there was something else that John said of himself. It's in chapter 3, and verse 29.

The latter part of the verse, he says, This my joy, therefore, is fulfilled. Now, this is very interesting. The whole verse is very interesting to me.

He that hath the bridegroom, the bride is the bridegroom, but the friend of the bridegroom which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth briefly because of the bridegroom's voice. This my joy, therefore, is fulfilled. Now, I don't know whether I shall surprise you when I say this, but as far as I understand this passage, John the Baptist was never a part of the Church.

The Church is the bride, but John the Baptist was a friend of the bridegroom. I remember making that statement in a meeting, and a gentleman came up to me afterwards, and he disagreed with what I had said. He said to me, Did you say, sir, that John the Baptist was not a part of the Church? I said, Yes.

He said, Was he not a great man, sir? I said, Yes, indeed, he was a great man. He said, Sir, would you dare to compare your life with the life lived by John the Baptist? I said, Never, friend, not for a moment. And yet you say he is not a part of the Church.

You know, that dear man nearly got angry with me. You can imagine anybody getting angry with me, but I said, No, friend. He was a friend of the bridegroom.

Now, will you turn with me to another passage on this? It's very interesting. It's the nineteenth chapter of Revelation, verse 6. Revelation 19, verse 6. And I heard of his word a voice of a great multitude, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. The voice of a multitude.

The voice of a great multitude. As the voice of waters. As the voice of many waters.

As the voice of thunderings. As the voice of mighty thunderings. Saying, Alleluia, the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

Oh, friend, why all this commotion in heaven? The voice of a great multitude. The voice of many waters. Many liabilities just thrown into one.

Many mighty thunderings. What's it all about? It's all about the wedding. It's the marriage supper of the man.

And will you notice that in verse 9 it says, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. Now, here again I surprise you when I say that that does not refer to you, friend, and it doesn't refer to me. That is to say, you and I will never be called to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

You say, What do you mean? Well, what I mean is this. Those of you here who are husbands, when you were married, you did not invite your wife to the wedding. You invited friends, no doubt, and they came.

But although you did not invite your wife, she was there. As we say in England, she was all there. And no doubt, my brother, you were all there too.

And you know, she was, it was absolutely necessary for her to be present. Had she not been there on that day, I don't know what would have happened to you. You might as well say you'd be clean away.

But she was there. And why was she there? Because of her position. Because she was the bride.

It was essential that she should be there. She needed no invitation. Now you and I will be at that marriage feast.

Every chair will be occupied. But we shall not need an invitation from you. We shall be there because of our dignified position.

The bride of Christ. And we shall be there, thank God, in the innermost circle. Now John said, I hear the voice of the bridegroom.

My joy, therefore, is fulfilled. I hear that lovely voice. I am satisfied.

And with John, joy was fulfilled when he heard the voice of the bridegroom, the lovely friend. What shall your joy and what shall my joy be by and by when we are in his lovely presence, never to go out again for us? This my joy, therefore, is fulfilled. Our joy will be complete.

Now will you please turn to chapter 5 of John. We have seen three things John said of himself. Now I want you to notice three things the Lord said of him.

First in John chapter 5 and verse 35. He was a burning and a shining light. And he was willing for the season to rejoice in his light.

Now I may remember that I asked you to notice in chapter 1 that the word light there was with a capital L. Now the word light in this passage is with a small l. And the difference is very, very important. You know there in chapter 1 we have the light of the world, the light of heaven, the Lord Jesus Christ. But John had to be lit.

And therefore the word here really is an L. He was a burning and a shining light. And when he was lit by the light of the world, John became an L to shine for him. And he was a burning man and he was a shining man.

Now this has to do with testimony of course. He was a burning man. You know John's witness was penetrating.

It had rays. It was effective. And John's witness and mine for Christ should be exactly the same.

It should be penetrating, it should be effective. It should have weakness. You know Christianity is not weakness.

Christianity is strength. I remember when I was in London in Disney. I was in the family county council.

And in my early days I was in the office. And there were two or three other young men there. And they knew what I stood for.

And one of them looked at me and he said contemptuously, you wouldn't say bo to a goose. I said yes I will my friend. I looked straight at him and I said bo.

Well he never troubled me after that. Now Christianity is not weakness. Christianity is strength.

And John was a burning and a shining light. Now do you know the light of the candle can be seen a mile away. And in this dark world you and I should be lamps for Christ.

We have been lit. We have been turned from darkness to light. And we who were sometimes darkness, not merely in darkness, but darkness itself.

We who were sometimes darkness are now light in the Lord. Therefore we are to walk as children of the light. And we are to bear testimony to him who is Jesus by his grace.

In other words you and I are here as witnesses. A friend of mine was at a place in London on one occasion. He was really in the theological gardens there.

And a perfect stranger was just by him. And apparently this stranger was a very long-sighted, never-headed businessman. And my friend, who was always speaking about the Lord, and he happened to say to this businessman, said you know I'm a citizen of heaven.

Citizen of heaven, eh? Yes, yes, I'm a citizen of heaven. Well he said what on earth are you doing down here then? Well what was he doing here? He was a witness for Christ, just as you and I should be. And we ought to grasp every golden opportunity to testify for our Lord.

Always ready to give a reason for the hope that is within us. He was a burning light. And then he was a shining light.

That is, his influence radiated. He was not merely circumscribed in a certain area, but it just radiated far and near. And St. George's testimony and mine ought to be like that.

The light which shines the farthest, shines the brightest, nearest holy. And if you and I are faithful as we should be, where we are, where God has placed us, then he will enlarge our borders. He will enlarge our borders of usefulness.

And as we are faithful to him, so he will be glorified. The Lord Jesus Christ will be exalted and the kingdom of God exalted. A burning and a shining light.

Now, dear friends, I don't know whether you and I are willing to face up to this tonight. God was willing to be anything for God and to go anywhere for God. He was a burning lamp and he was a shining lamp.

I wonder how many of us, dear friends, are really willing to allow God to have his way with us. If we were willing, and if we gave ourselves to him, spirit, soul, and body, presenting our bodies and giving sacrifice to him, which, after all, is our intelligent service. There's no knowing how God would use us in the future, wherever we may be.

That was one thing the Lord Jesus had to say of John, a burning and a shining lamp. Now, will you turn back, please, to Luke chapter 7, verse 24. And when the messengers of John were departed, he began to speak unto the people, that is, the Lord Jesus began to speak unto the people concerning John.

What went he out into the wilderness for to see? Now, in these verses, our Lord Jesus raised three questions. And he himself gave an answer to each question. And the first question was this.

What went he out into the wilderness for to see? If you were to refer to the third chapter of the Gospel by Matthew, in fact, and verse 5, you would read this. That Jerusalem, or Judea, and all in Galilee, they went out. All in Judea, or those parts of Jordan, they went out to hear John.

You know, thousands of people must have gone to hear this wonderful man. They heard about him. And they went out to hear him, and to see him.

Well, the Lord Jesus said, what went he out into the wilderness for to see? And he suggested the answer. A reed shaken with the wind. Well, if you went to see dark bread, you were disappointed.

A reed shaken with the wind. Just reed, one way or the other, according to the caprice of the elements? No. That wasn't John the Baptist.

You know, John the Baptist was more like an oak tree. I suppose you know here in California, one of the great characteristics of the oak tree, the greater the storm, the farther it strikes its root down into the ground and becomes firmer than ever. I suppose some of you dear friends didn't know that.

Well, if not, we'll have some information from England. But that was John the Baptist, you know. He was tempest, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

He was no reed shaken with the wind. John was a man of courage. He was a man of steadfastness and faithfulness, as well as a man of grand humility.

And then the Lord raised the question again. What does he add to the willingness for to see? And in verse 23, the Lord suggests the answer. A man clothed in sovereign.

Did you go to see that? Well, if you did again, you're disappointed. A man clothed in gorgeous garment? Why, to see that, you have to go to King's houses. To see that sort of thing, you have to go to Buckingham Palace, yonder.

Or Windsor. I don't know whether it would be in the White House here, but... However, the Lord Jesus said, they that are gorgeously appareled are in King's houses. Now John the Baptist was not gorgeously

appareled.

All he had for his clothing was a raiment of camel hair and a leathern girdle about his loins. Now that was indicative of the prudish people of the land. And as for his food, well, he lived on currency while hookers were coming.

Then the Lord Jesus said again. What went he out into the wilderness for, to see? And again he suggested the answer. A prophet? If you went to see a prophet, you were not disappointed.

Yea, I say unto you, more than a prophet. That was John the Baptist. In the Old Testament we read of those grand old prophets, Isaiah and Jeremiah and Ezekiel and Daniel and those so-called minor prophets, great men, grand men, as they were.

The Lord Jesus said, John is the Lord and the prophet. And I assume that the reason he said that was this. John was the connecting link between the Old Testament and the New.

The Lord, the prophet, prophesied unto John. And then there was a line of remarking. And after that, the dispensation of this was introduced.

More than a prophet. What a statement, Fred. What a testimony.

Now, our Lord said something else about John. Most remarkable. The finest, I suppose, the finest testimony the Lord gave to any man.

And that is found in verse 28. I say unto you, among those that are born of women, there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist. But he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.

One of the grandest testimonies ever given to anyone. Among all born of women, there had not risen a greater than John. I sometimes wonder how many people there were who lived between the creation of man and the end of the Old Testament era.

Millions and millions must have lived. But one of those millions was greater than John. Not one.

What a man he must have been. What a man of God. And, you know, dear friends, although John did no miracle, all that he said of the Lord Jesus was true.

And therein lay his greatness. He was reliable. He was faithful.

He was loyal to his Lord. Not a single miracle is recorded of John. But every word we speak of the Lord Jesus is true.

And what was true of him ought to be true of you. And ought to be true of me. Every word we speak of the Lord Jesus, whether by our lips or by our mouth, ought to be true.

Now, just for a little while, I want to mention three things John said about the Lord Jesus. In the first chapter of John, if you will return to that chapter, please, and verse 29, we have that well-known passage. The Lord Jesus Christ was coming toward John, and he said, Behold, the Lamb of God which beareth away the sin of the world.

Now, here we have an insight into John's lovely humility. Behold, the Lamb of God which beareth away the sin of the world. He diverted the minds not only of the people around him, but also the minds of his own

disciples away from himself to the Savior.

He was willing to be in the background so long as Christ should come to the forefront. Now, would you notice that the word sin here is in the singular and not in the plural? Behold, the Lamb of God which beareth away the sin of the world. Now, of course, we know that he bore our sins in his own body on the tree.

The Son of God was manifested, that he might bear away our sins. Christ suffered for sins, just for the unjust to bring us to God. But here it is sin, not sin.

I believe that this has reference to what we call original sin, as in transgression. And the Lord Jesus bore that sin away, dealt with it publicly, when he died on the cross. Now, if that is true, I believe it is true, then every dear child which dies at birth or through an accident, goes straight to be with Christ because he bore away Adam's transgression.

Had he not done that, there would be no hope for anybody, young or old. And if that is true, friends, that he bore away the sin of the world, Adam's transgression, then at the great white throne tribunal, men will be responsible not for what Adam did, but for their own doings, their own sins, their own life. Behold, the Lamb of God which beareth away the sin of the world.

That is his rejoice to us to know, he did bear our sins in his own body on the tree. He bore away our sins, canceled them, and canceled them entirely and forever. For that was one dream, John said of Archimedorus.

Now, another dream exists. In chapter 1 and verse 30, it says, It is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is before me, for he was before me. Do you know that that statement occurs no less than three times in this chapter? After me cometh one which is before me, he was before me.

Now, of course, here the word is photo. It's first. He was first, and Christ always came to be first.

He'll never, never be satisfied with a secondary position. And you all think you might have the preeminence. In verse 15 of this chapter and in verse 37, as well as in verse 30, we have the same statement as one coming after me.

He is before me. Now, John was perfectly content for Christ to be first. Christ was before Abraham.

Before Abraham, I was. I am. He was before Isaac.

He was before Jacob. He was before Moses. He was before any of the Old Testament heroes.

Friends, I wonder whether he has a first place in your life and mine. No, after all, it is only Christ who matters in the Christian experience. You and I should come back.

There on the Mount of Transfiguration, the Lord Jesus appeared in glory. And Moses and Elijah appeared in glory. And they had a conversation, one of the most momentous conversations ever held in the world's history.

It was all about the cross. They speak of his deceit which he should accomplish at Jerusalem. What happened? Moses, he represented the Lord.

The Lord was fulfilled in Christ. Elijah represented the prophets. All the prophets have their finality in Christ.

What happened? Moses had to go. Elijah had to go. Who was left? Jesus only.

That's Christianity, friends. That's what it is to be a free person. Jesus only.

Only he matters in your life, really, and in mine. When we came to him originally, it was only he who mattered then, you know. We gave ourselves to him.

We had our eyes focused upon him. We gave ourselves away. That was all we could do, keeping the rest.

And so, then, he must respond. And then, God said to Joseph, do you see the chapter 3 and verse 13? He must increase, but I must decrease. He must increase, I must decrease.

John was a wonderful character. And of all the statements John made, surely the most dignified and the noblest, the most magnificent statement was this. He must increase, but I must decrease.

Let him become greater and greater. And as he becomes increasingly great, let me become increasingly great. Let him fill all heaven with his glory.

Let the pleasure of Jehovah prosper in his hands. And as he fills all heaven with his glory, let me be content to fill a little space, where? Down here on earth, whereby God be glorified. He must increase.

Christ must be everything. I must decrease. I must be nothing.

And then, when you and I get just there, God can have his way with us. We are proud in his mighty hand. Channels only, blessed master.

Yet with all thy wondrous power, thou canst fill us, thou canst cleanse us, every day and every hour. He must increase. Do you know this is the divine imperative? It does not say he may.

It does not say in all probability he will. It says he must. He must increase.

Thank God he must. I am dear friend, brother, sister in Christ. You and I must decrease.

You and I must know what it is to get lower and lower down, thinking nothing of ourselves. Everything of us fails. And then our lives will be absolutely saturated with divine blessings, filled with divine usefulness.

Others will thank God that they ever met us, that they ever heard the word of the Lord through our lips. And by and by, when you and I arrive in heaven, the greatest welcome we shall have, of course, will be that of the Lord himself. And I do hope there will be those in heaven who will welcome us, because we were instrumental down here in their eternal blessing and salvation.

This is gloriously possible. And may Christ be as real, as gloriously real, as he was with John the Baptist. And to him shall be the entire glory.

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