

## 5. The greatest man and the Lamb of God

October 3, 2010

The dictionary definition of 'witness' is "an individual who, being present, personally sees or perceives a thing; a beholder, spectator, or eyewitness." By law, witness to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. When they testify to speak the truth, they are under oath. If they lie under oath, it is a serious crime which is known as 'perjury.'

Witness gives his or her testimony as to what that person has seen and experienced, only the first hand, in an effort to establish the truth. Beyond that, they are unreliable, and operate on hearsay.

John the Baptist is a reliable witness, and knows who Jesus is because of what he has seen with his own eyes. It was not a hearsay or some mystic feeling he got because of a bad bunch of locusts he ate the night before.

As I mentioned before, the reason John the Baptist was the greatest man who ever lived up to that period of time was that he was the first one who got to announce the arrival of the Messiah for mankind. To give him creditability, the Father in heaven allowed him to witness the very special moment of manifestation of an appearance of the Trinity – God the Father from heaven, God the Son who is the Lamb of God, and God the Spirit. If you are looking for a major goose bump scene, this is it.

Let's take a look at the greatest man who was named by Jesus.

### A. A QUICK BACKGROUND OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

According to Luke 1:5-25, John's parents were Zachariah and Elizabeth, both older people, neither of whom expected to have a baby. Dr. Luke informs us that from his boyhood until the day of his public ministry John lived in the deserts.

During this time, he was clothed in camel's hair, wore a leather belt, and ate a steady diet of locusts and wild honey. In other words, John the Baptist was the original hippie eating organic foods.

His life and ministry was cut short, literally, because he was beheaded by king Herod the Great.

### B. JOHN THE BAPTIST'S MINISTRY

*Matthew 3:1-3 In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, 2 and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" 3 For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying: "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord; Make His paths straight.'"*

This means that John gave a fire-and-brimstone call to repentance in order to prepare the way for Jesus. Even though his ministry didn't last long and nor did he cover much area, the people during that time, took a special notice of this eccentric man who demanded their repentance for the upcoming Lord.

One interesting thing I found is that all of the three other Gospel writers record John the Baptist baptizing Jesus. But John the apostle does not. By the time we get to hear from John the Baptist again in v32, Jesus' baptism was already done and so

were the temptations by the devil in the wilderness for forty days and nights. This brings the beginning of Jesus' earthly ministry.

### C. THE VOICE, NOT THE WORD

*John 1:19-23 Now this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" 20 He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ." 21 And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No." 22 Then they said to him, "Who are you, that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?" 23 He said: "I am 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Make straight the way of the Lord,"" as the prophet Isaiah said."*

A group of the religious leaders from Jerusalem was dispatched to find out the facts about this weird, wild, and eccentric preacher in the Judean wilderness. As the custodians and guardians of the faith of Israel, they had every right to investigate him and his ministry.

Their questions were: "Who are you?", "What then? Are you Elijah?", "Are you the Prophet?", "Who are you, that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?"

John denied being either Elijah or the Messiah. John had nothing to say about himself because he was sent to talk about Jesus. Jesus is the Word; John was but "a voice". John pointed back to the prophecy by Isaiah and affirmed that he was the fulfillment.

*Isaiah 40:3 The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the Lord; Make straight in the desert A highway for our God.*

John the Baptist was not the least bit concerned about his own reputation, nor glory. The only thing he had in his heart was pointing people to the Messiah Jesus. With that statement in mind, I have a serious question to ask you guys:

Do you witness to your family members, friends, neighbors, and coworkers as the Holy Spirit leads? I am not talking about preaching to them about Jesus. Just simply giving your own testimony and what the Lord has done in your life in conversation with them. If you are not doing it, why not? What are you afraid of? Remember, it is the Lord's commandment to ALL OF US, not just a selected few.

John the Baptist told the religious leaders that he was not Elijah. But in Matthew 17, Jesus told His disciples that Elijah had come already which He spoke of as John the Baptist. It sounds like double talk with a lot of confusion.

*Matthew 17:10-13 And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?" 11 Jesus answered and said to them, "Indeed, Elijah is coming first and will restore all things. 12 But I say to you that Elijah has come already, and they did not know him but did to him whatever they wished. Likewise the Son of Man is also about to suffer at their hands." 13 Then the disciples understood that He spoke to them of John the Baptist.*

Some of you might be thoroughly confused by now. Please allow me to explain it to you in context of the Word.

Malachi predicted that Elijah would come to herald the appearance of the Messiah.

*Malachi 4:5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.*

That was the reason why the Jewish religious leaders asked him if he was Elijah. When Jesus answered to His disciples that Elijah has come already, He meant that John the Baptist was ministering in Elijah's spirit and power as angel Gabriel mentioned before John the Baptist's birth in Luke 1:

*Luke 1:17 He (John the Baptist) will also go before Him (Jesus Christ) in the spirit and power of Elijah, 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,' and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."*

What does it mean when John the Baptist said in v23:

*John 1:23 He said: "I am 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Make straight the way of the Lord,"" as the prophet Isaiah said."*

Of course, he was not talking about a literal way or road. It was about the hearts of the people of Israel. We can find the answer from John the Baptist' own lips:

*Matthew 3:2 and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!"*

### **C. BAPTIZING THE JEWS**

*John 1:24-28 Now those who were sent were from the Pharisees. 25 And they asked him, saying, "Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?" 26 John answered them, saying, "I baptize with water, but there stands One among you whom you do not know. 27 It is He who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose." 28 These things were done in Bethabara beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing.*

To understanding this conversation, we must comprehend the background of baptism of Israel.

Baptism is not only for Christians. The Jews in John's day practiced baptism. It was an outgrowth of ceremonial washings. But the Jews of that time typically reserved baptism for Gentiles who wanted to become Jews. So to submit to John's baptism, a Jew had to identify with the Gentiles. This was a genuine sign of repentance.

If any one of us were John the Baptist, we might have dropped the name of God, or how his birth was announced by angel Gabriel, or how he was so spiritual from his mother's womb, etc. But John was very humble and knew his own position in Christ. He even made it so clear that he was not worthy to lose even the sandal strap of Jesus.

Untying the strap of a sandal before foot washing was a duty of the lowest slave in the house. How refreshing it is to see true humility with John the Baptist's status! I see a lot of Christian celebrity mentality. Some demand a round trip by a private jet, limousine service, five star hotel accommodation, or brag about how big churches or ministries they have. Then they talk about humility from their pulpit. I wouldn't doubt this kind of false humility makes God nauseate.

### **D. THE LAMB OF GOD**

*John 1:29-34 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! 30 This is He of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He*

was before me.' 31 I did not know Him; but that He should be revealed to Israel, therefore I came baptizing with water." 32 And John bore witness, saying, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. 33 I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' 34 And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God."

Have you ever seen any watch lamb or attack lamb that bares his fangs and snarls at you, "Baaahh"? Or Lambo? We all know that sheep or lambs cannot do a whole lot or scare other animals, well, other than getting killed. Exactly and precisely!

The whole message of the Bible can be summed up in this title – "The Lamb of God." The question in the Book of Genesis 22:7 when son Isaac asked his father Abraham, "Where is the lamb?" was answered with the four Gospels' "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" Then, it will be echoed by the heavenly choir, "Worthy is the Lamb!" from Revelation 5:12.

The people of the ancient Israel were familiar with lambs for the sacrifices. At Passover, each family had to have a lamb sacrificed for their sin covering. During the year, two lambs a day were sacrificed at the temple altar, plus all the other lambs brought for personal sacrifices.

Those lambs were brought by men to men, but this Lamb of God was given by God to men. The sacrificial lambs at the temple altar could not take away sin, but the Lamb of God can. The lambs at the altar were for Israel only, but the Lamb of God was sacrificed for the entire human kind.

At the very dawn of Jesus' earthly ministry, John the Baptist announced the Lord with the words that remind Him of His destiny: His atoning sacrifice on the cross was for those who hang Him with their sins and ours. Throughout the ministry of Jesus, the shadow of the cross had never left Him. He was born to die for others.

*John 15:13 Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.*

So what does John's baptism have to do with Jesus as the Lamb of God? Everything. It signifies the death, burial and resurrection of the Savior as we go under water and come out of water.

God gave John the Baptist the sure sign to know the Messiah. He would be the One on whom the Holy Spirit descended upon from heaven. John is a reliable witness regarding who Jesus is, because he has had confirming evidence from God.

## **E. APPLICATIONS**

1) Point people to Jesus. It is not a recommendation from the Lord, but a commandment.

2) Jesus gave His breath for our earthly life, and He gave His death for our eternal life.