

“Who will Stand in the Gap for the Lord?!” (Slide 1)

John “The Baptist!”

Reading: Luke 1:12-17 Matthew 3:1-6

(Slide 2) John: Sent by God.

His purpose: *to prepare people for the coming of the Lord.*

Many wondered as he was preaching if he was the Christ?

Luke 3:15-17 (Slide 3)

15 Now while the people were in a state of expectation and all were wondering in their hearts about John, as to whether he was the Christ, 16 John answered and said to them all, “As for me, I baptize you with water; but One is coming who is mightier than I, (Slide 4) and I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 17 His winnowing fork is in His hand to thoroughly clear His threshing floor, and to gather the wheat into His barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

If John was not the man on the mission for God that he was, he could have easily fooled people into thinking that he was the Christ. But he was fully dedicated to his mission for God being filled with the Holy Spirit even before his birth.

He was sent by God:

John 1:6-8 (Slide 5)

6 There came a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness, to testify about the Light, so that all might believe through him. 8 He was not the Light, but he came to testify about the Light.

God used men to bear witness or to be witnesses of the Gospel of Jesus Christ that is; the “Good News” about His only begotten Son. John was not only the first witness and he testified without signs, yet people believed what he said to be true.

John 10:40-42 (Slide 6)

40 And He went away again beyond the Jordan to the place where John was first baptizing, and He was staying there. 41 Many came to Him and were saying, “While John performed no sign, yet everything John said about this man was true.” 42 Many believed in Him there.

John did what he was called to do. His preparation helped people to believe in Jesus.

He did not preach with signs, however, John himself was a sign. Born to parents beyond child bearing years just as their forefather Isaac was recorded in their history.

The coming of John was also prophesied about by Isaiah and Malachi. In addition, he met all the qualifications of a prophet because what he said about Jesus before they happened came true.

Further, John's baptism and message was used by Jesus as a fundamental principle in establishing His authority on earth.

Matthew 21:23-27 (Slide 7)

23 When He entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to Him while He was teaching, and said, "By what authority are You doing these things, and who gave You this authority?" 24 Jesus said to them, (Slide 8) "I will also ask you one thing, which if you tell Me, I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. 25 The baptism of John was from what source, from heaven or from men?" And they began reasoning among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' (Slide 9) He will say to us, 'Then why did you not believe him?' 26 But if we say, 'From men,' we fear the people; for they all regard John as a prophet." 27 And answering Jesus, they said, "We do not know." He also said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.

John came preaching a simple message of repentance even before Jesus was crucified and shed His blood on the cross.

But let's not be confused. His message of repentance was purposeful, just as the message of repentance is today this side of the cross. However, "*Repentance*" without obedience to the Gospel is without use.

Repentance should lead one to confession which leads to faith in action that is; *baptism*. True obedience to the gospel of Christ! Without it, just being sorry only makes us apologetic, yet, still lost. Therefore being "Sorry" is not "*Repentance*." Real repentance means a change in direction! Some are sorry for *this or that* but soon they fall back into repeating the wrong.

John's message was to draw men to the full obedience to the cross!

A simple message without signs and wonders and people believed. He did not think of himself more highly than he should or pretend to be something he is not. He was a simple man and with a simple message.

Today the Bible offers a simple, plain message without signs and wonders, just the truth of the Gospel.

An interesting phrase we read earlier and we may have missed:
“people were in a state of expectation”

When they saw John, did their expectations match reality?

Matthew 11:7-15 (Slide 10)

7 As these men were going away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John, “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? 8 But what did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? (Slide 11) Those who wear soft clothing are in kings’ palaces! 9 But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and one who is more than a prophet. 10 This is the one about whom it is written,

***‘BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER AHEAD OF YOU,
WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY BEFORE YOU.’***

(Slide 12) 11 Truly I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist! Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. 12 From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, (Slide 13) and violent men take it by force. 13 For all the prophets and the Law prophesied until John. 14 And if you are willing to accept it, John himself is Elijah who was to come. 15 He who has ears to hear, let him hear.
Sometimes the expectation of people is to have a colorful, tuneful, charismatic preacher who lays down words like a whirlwind before they can feel edified, moved or stirred in the spirit rather than the simple message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

What did you come to hear a thousand words of fluff or *“Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at Hand!”*

Some have to be convinced by a sign or deceived by ones that think they can do signs to believe. *“We need a sign and then we will believe!”*

(Slide 14) A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. Matthew 16:4

What did you come to see?

Matthew 21:16-19 (Slide 15)

16 “But to what shall I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the market places, who call out to the other children, 17 and say, ‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.’ (Slide 16) 18 For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon!’ 19 The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Behold, a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.”

Wisdom is not fooled by a charismatic speech without substance. Wisdom instructs those with a simple expectation to Love God with all their heart, strength, soul and mind.

Jesus says to them here; you are given everything you need but you have rejected it. John performed the task he was given to do yet, by many he was rejected.

John and the Holy Bible have a simple message: *“Repent and then be obedient.”* John not only *“Stood in the Gap”* for the Lord, but he put his whole body in the gaping hole to save entire generations from themselves!

He called out evil:

Matthew 3:7-10 (Slide 17)

7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 Therefore bear fruit in keeping with repentance; 9 and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, (Slide 18) ‘We have Abraham for our father’; for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham. 10 The axe is already laid at the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

He gave His entire body to fill the gaping hole:

Mark 6:17-29 (Slide 19)

17 For Herod himself had sent and had John arrested and bound in prison on account of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip, because he had married her. 18 For John had been saying to Herod, “It is not lawful for you to have your brother’s wife.” 19 Herodias had a grudge against him (Slide 20) and wanted to put him to death and could not do so; 20 for Herod was afraid of John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he kept him safe. And when he heard him, he was very perplexed; but he used to enjoy listening to him. 21 A strategic day came when Herod on (Slide 21) his birthday gave a banquet for his lords and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee; 22 and when the daughter of Herodias herself came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his dinner guests; and the king said to the girl, “Ask me for whatever you want and I (Slide 22) will give it to you.” 23 And he swore to her, “Whatever you ask of me, I will give it to you; up to half of my kingdom.” 24 And she went out and said to her mother, “What shall I ask for?” And she said, “The head of John the Baptist.” (Slide 23) 25 Immediately she came in a hurry to the king and asked, saying, “I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter.” 26 And although the king was very sorry, yet because of his oaths and because of his dinner guests, he was unwilling to refuse her. (Slide 24) 27 Immediately the king sent an executioner and commanded him to bring back his head. And he went and had him beheaded in the prison, 28 and brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl; and the girl gave it to her mother. 29 When his disciples heard about this, they came and took away his body and laid it in a tomb.

The one that will “Stand in the Gap for the Lord” must not only abhor sin but call it out!! *“If God be for us, who can stand against us!”*

Invitation

“Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”

The invitation is here, all things are ready. Here the invitation through the simplicity of the Gospel of Christ: He went to the cross, He died on that cross. He was buried and then raised from the grave on the third day.

The invitation is open to you today. No signs given, just the simple message of love and hope in obedience to His death by being immersed in that watery grave, reenacting the gospel message of Christ, to arise a new creature. If you have not yet been obedient to the cross, don't delay. Do it today!

If you have once obeyed the Gospel call but have fallen back into a sinful walk, can we pray for you and with you and help you once again restore your walk with Him.

Please let us know how we can help you this day!

Reading:

Luke 1:12-17 Matthew 3:1-6

12 Zacharias was troubled when he saw the angel, and fear gripped him. 13 But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your petition has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will give him the name John. 14 You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. 15 For he will be great in the sight of the Lord; and he will drink no wine or liquor, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit while yet in his mother's womb. 16 And he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God. 17 It is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, TO TURN THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS BACK TO THE CHILDREN, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

1 Now in those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, 2 "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." 3 For this is the one referred to by Isaiah the prophet when he said,

*"THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS,
'MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD,
MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT!'"*

4 Now John himself had a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey. 5 Then Jerusalem was going out to him, and all Judea and all the district around the Jordan; 6 and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, as they confessed their sins.

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