

HIS NAME WAS JOHN

John 1:6

The text verse says, "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John." The name John means, "Jehovah is Gracious."

Who was this man that we know as John Baptist? Was he a great prophet, preacher, or teacher? Was he someone to be adored and revered by many? Notice the text says that he was sent from God. When did this sending take place? To find the answer to this we must turn to Luke 1:5-17. It is in these verses that we find an elderly priest by the name of Zacharias who is married to a woman by the name of Elisabeth. We also find that they had no children. One day while ministering in his priestly office an angel of the Lord appeared to Zacharias and told him that his wife would bare a son whose name was to be John. Luke 1:15-17 states, "For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, 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." So we see that the man sent from God was a man promised by God and called by God even before he was ever born. You may say well I don't believe that God would call someone to the ministry before they were ever born! Look in the Word of God if you will to the book of Jeremiah 1:4, 5 "Then the word of the Lord came unto me saying, Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee: and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations." So if God called Jeremiah before he was in formed in his mother's womb, then He could do the same pertaining to John the Baptist and every other God called preacher. Verse 15 also states that he would be filled with the Holy Ghost while still in his mother's womb. We see that taking place in Luke 2:41 when Mary the mother of Jesus entered into the house of Zacharias (Mary and Elisabeth being cousins) and gave Elisabeth the news about being pregnant with the Christ Child that John leaped in Elisabeth's womb and was filled with the Holy Ghost upon hearing this good news. In fact Elisabeth told Mary "For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy." John the Baptist was a great prophet, preacher, and teacher; but he was not someone to be adored, revered, or worshipped because he was not God. John Baptist did not desire the applause of man.

Was John called to be a great reformer or leader among his people? The answer is no! John was called as every other man of God is called to bear witness of that light, the Lord Jesus Christ (John 1:8). Also, John was not called pertaining to his age, social standing, or ability. Today it seems that this is all that many churches are looking for in a man. They never seem to be looking to see if the preacher has the call of God on him. The average church today when looking for a pastor seems to be more interested in a resume instead of a testimony. They seem to be interested more in educational pedigree than a stand for truth. They seem to be looking more for social standing and political abilities instead of what thus saith the Lord. A man that is called to preach the gospel has no business getting involved in social, political and other secular issues. Also the average local church has no concern for the doctrinal stand of the man they are considering as their pastor. In fact a great many of today's local churches take no doctrinal stand whatsoever.

You see John Baptist didn't have a resume to present, but he did have a Savior to talk about. We don't find anywhere that he had an educational background, and let me say that there is nothing wrong with education, but education does not make a man a preacher. He must first be called of God, and a call

to preach is a call to learn. But we do find that he stood for the Truth of God's Word. John the Baptist was not a man who was a great politician, but he was one who told the government, religious leaders, and the common man what was right and wrong. And he did this without compromise. Remember what Peter and the other apostles told the religious crowd in Acts 5:29b, "we ought to obey God rather than men. So what was the ministry of John Baptist?"

First of all we see that John Baptist presented Christ without compromise to the government. Luke 6:18 tells us that John pointed out to Herod the king that it was wrong for Herod to have his brother Philip's wife as his own wife. It was this stand of John Baptist that eventually cost him his life because he never backed down. Oh today that those who claim to be God's men would take a stand against unholy living. I'm not talking about preaching a "holier than thou" religion; but I am talking about taking a stand against the permissive, free loving, immoral lifestyles of today. Men that have more than one living wife should not be allowed to pastor churches. Let me say that there is things for men to do in the local church who have because of marriage problems disqualified themselves from the office of Bishop (pastor). Those who pastor should never allow those who are living out of wedlock be members of the church. People who are living like this without a doubt have never been born again. Today our government it seems is trying to push the churches into accepting those who live anyway but Christ-like. And I'm afraid that is going to get worse before it gets better.

Secondly, John Baptist preached without compromise to the religious crowd. In Matthew 3:7-12 when John was preaching and baptizing down by the river he was confronted by the Pharisees and the Sadducees. Did John welcome them with open arms and tell them that they were doing a great job? No! What John did do was point out to them just what kind of people they were...a generation of vipers (snakes) who had never been warned of the wrath to come. In verse 8 he challenged them to repent and in verse 9 John warned them about trusting in their religious pedigree to get them to heaven. Being the child of a preacher or some other religious person will not save you my friend. These religious leaders thought because they were descendents of Abraham they could participate in the merits of Abraham, which would make their prayers acceptable, they would be helped in war, they would have expiated sins, the wrath of God would be appeased, and they would be assured a share in God's eternal kingdom. My friend religion will not save you; denominationalism will not save you; and belonging to the lodge or some other fraternal organization will not save you. Only if one believes upon the Lord Jesus Christ and His finished work at Calvary and they confess Him as their Lord and Savior will they receive salvation and forgiveness of sin. In concluding his encounter with these religious leaders John preaches to them about the coming judgment in verse 10-12.

Not only did John preach to governmental leaders and religious leaders, he also preached to the common man. We find in Luke 3:12-14 that John preached to publicans and soldiers. The reason for his preaching was that all men might have hope. And that hope was in none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. John Baptist was not out to make a name for himself. His goal and call was to present Jesus to a lost and dying world. He never once took credit for anything in fact he even gave his followers to Jesus. John 1:35- 37 states "Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith behold the Lamb of God! And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus." John Baptist was responsible for leading Andrew to the Lord. This was the brother of Simeon Peter who would later bring Simeon Peter to Jesus. Those who followed John Baptist were not his converts but were the Lord's. It is a terrible thing to hear a preacher stand up and speak of his followers being his converts. Well if they're his converts they've never been born again. A pastor crossing the street one day and a drunk man came up to him and said, "Preacher do you remember me, you saved me in a revival meeting." The preacher answered, "You look like the results of someone that I would try to save."

My friend only God can save a man and those who are truly born again are converts of the Lord Jesus Christ.

What was the content of John's message? His message was one of repentance (Matt. 3:2). In other words his cry was "turn or burn." This is not popular preaching in our day and time and because of this people are going to hell sitting in our church pews week after week. His preaching was not eloquent but it was sound and full of the Holy Ghost. When asked who he was his reply was "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the ways of the Lord, as said the prophet Esias" (John 1:23). Remember John Baptist was a cousin of Jesus but he had no idea whatsoever that Jesus was the one he was to present until saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove and abiding upon our Lord. God had told John that this is how he would recognize Jesus (John 1:32-34).

In conclusion John Baptist was faithful to the end. His whole ministry was to prepare men for the Lord Jesus Christ. John the Baptist was not sent to build an Ark like Noah; He was not sent to lead a people from captivity like Moses; He was not sent to kill a giant like David; nor was he called to perform great miracles like Elijah and Elisha; but he was called to bear witness to the Light. I have always said that my hero in the Bible among men is John the Baptist. He would probably not be welcomed in the average New Testament Church of today. His appearance (in clothing of Camel's hair and honey dripping from his beard) and manners would not be acceptable in the so-called mega churches of our day. His message of repentance would not be popular. Notice though what Jesus said about this greatest of preachers in Matthew 11:9-11, "But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet. For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. My friend who is your trust in today? Some man or the Son of Man, the Lord Jesus Christ.