

Visions and Revelations:
Message 8 - John the Baptist

After hearing and considering the word that was spoken, a group of brothers and sisters were inspired by some of the verses that were shared. We felt that it was helpful to reconsider these verses again to dig deeper into the burden of the message and to discover how rich it could be to us. We compiled these verses into six sections, one for each day of the week until the next message, in hopes that many other saints could spend a bit of time every day to reconsider the burden of our brother in a new light. If anyone considers some of these verses or questions and feels enriched by them, we ask you to please leave a comment on the Church in Cleveland site under the message to share your thoughts! Thanks! Grace and peace be to all the saints!

Note: These six sections are not comprehensive of the content of the message! This is just designed to be a help to get into a portion throughout the days.

DAY 1

Luke 1:17

He will also go before Him 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.

Before he was even born, John the Baptist was described as having the spirit and power of Elijah. Elijah was a prophet whose entire life was filled with fighting for God's testimony on the earth; he didn't just speak about God, but his actions, his living, and his person were totally given to God and to fight for what God wanted. This is a kind of person that God desires. "His existence was completely for the testimony of God and he lived a life only for the testimony of God."

To see a person like Elijah or John the Baptist is very inspiring to us. We can praise the Lord that He has raised up people like this who are utterly for Him. Yet their spirit and power is not remote from us—after all, the Spirit of God dwells in every believer and child of God. Today, we can pray for the Lord to give us a fighting spirit and a heart totally for His interest. We can ask how He is leading us each moment, each day, to testify of Him and to live a life unto Him. May the Lord cause us to grow up, to develop into people who stand for Him alone.

DAY 2

Matthew 3:1-3

In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" 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.’”*

2 Corinthians 5:17

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

John the Baptist was the forerunner of Jesus. Although his entire being and existence was for God, he did not cling to the traditions or the “form” of religion. He was not in Jerusalem as the Pharisees and scribes were; instead, he was in the wilderness. He did not live according to the regulations set by the priests, yet still his living was clean, signified by how he ate only locusts and wild honey. And although he was a man for God, he was not untouchable, as he wore camel’s hair and was among all kinds of people. John the Baptist did not live according to the traditions, rituals, or ordinances of religion; he lived entirely according to God and His testimony.

This living matched his voice, his message, his cry in the wilderness: Repent! To repent means to change or turn one’s mind, that is, to come out of the “oldness” one was in. John’s cry to those coming to him in the wilderness was to repent, to emerge from their old way of living, to leave behind the traditions and the form. There is something new on the way! Christ is at hand, so repent!

Even today, we can heed the cry of John the Baptist. It is humanly natural to fall into practices and routines, but we are not for a form, a tradition, or a religion. We are for Christ! And Christ is ever new. Spend some time in these verses and with the Lord. Let Him shine on you. Perhaps there is some “oldness” in us, but we don’t have to stay in it. The old things have passed away. We are in Christ and, behold, all things have become new.

DAY 3

Matthew 3:13-15

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” But Jesus answered him, “Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he consented.

Romans 6:4

Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

When reading this section one can wonder why Jesus needed to be baptized. He was sinless, He lived a life 100% for God’s will. However, in Matthew 3, He said, “let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Our savior Jesus is so high, He is the king

of kings, the Lord of Lords, all honor and glory should be unto His name. Even the earth and the rocks would cry out His name. When we think about the Lord, oh He is the worthy one and yet we are so unworthy. However, He took the place of a man, He brought Himself down to our level. As such, He set the perfect pattern for us to follow and to experience baptism.

When we are baptized, to us the world is terminated and when we rise up out of the water, it indicates that there is the germination of something new. Our baptism is the beginning of a new walk with the Lord. It was after the Lord Jesus was baptized that He began His earthly ministry and called the twelve disciples. In the same manner, when we are baptized we also have a new beginning! Not only that, but we can walk in newness of life. Brothers and sisters, when we touch the Lord, when we touch him in resurrection, we experience newness, we experience a fresh and living Christ. When we have the Lord everything is new. When we have the Lord we are able to walk in this newness of life.

DAY 4

Matthew 3:16-17

And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

"This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." Jesus is well pleasing to the Father, that should be so encouraging for each one of us to hear. Jesus. Is. Well pleasing. To God. When we have the Lord, when we have His presence, we can be well pleasing to God. Not just going to meetings, or reading the bible, or doing good deeds or services, but we must ask ourselves this one question, do I have Jesus Christ? Jesus is the unique one who is well pleasing to God! What a marvelous fact. Today many people may wonder, "What does God want me to do? What should I do?" Brothers and sisters, I think God would like to tell you and me, "I want you to have my son Jesus Christ." This is very precious. Our whole life and living can be full of the person of Jesus. When we get a new job, when we are considering where to live, what house to buy, what car to buy, when we attend meetings, when we read the bible with other brothers and sisters or by ourselves, we can do all things with our precious savior, Jesus Christ. (Phil 4:13 - I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me).

DAY 5

Luke 3:2-3

...the word of God came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. And he went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins,

Luke 3:16

John answered, saying to all, "I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

Matthew 3:13-15

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented.

John is someone who devoted his life to preparing the way for the Lord. He preached a baptism of repentance and proclaimed that there is a mightier one who comes after him, one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit and fire. His work for the Lord was necessary, but at the same time it was a hindrance. Once John baptized Jesus, he should have dropped his ministry completely and followed Him. He made the statement, "He must increase, but I must decrease." There is nothing inherently wrong with this statement, but is this what God is after? If he knew God's heart, he would want to not only decrease, but be completely extinguished so that only Christ remains. In our service to the Lord, there are often times when the Lord desires us to drop everything we're doing and simply follow Him. It becomes difficult when our ministry is very successful, but can we ask ourselves, "Does the Lord still desire for me to serve in this way?" I pray we can let go of any hindrance in our lives that prevents us from giving our all to the Lord in our service.

DAY 6

Matthew 11:9-11

But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet. For this is he of whom it is written:

*'Behold, I send My messenger before Your face,
Who will prepare Your way before You.'*

"Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

It's hard to say what Jesus' psychology was when he made his final comments about John the Baptist. On the one hand, he was greater than all the prophets of the Old Testament. They prophesied about Christ, but John saw Him. He was the concluding prophet of the Old Testament. On the other hand, it's possible Jesus could have been very sad. He could have wished that, instead of being the best Old Testament prophet, John could have been the best disciple.

Yet what does Jesus say afterwards? Something so encouraging. If you are least in the kingdom of heaven, you are greater than he, even the greatest of prophets. We often feel like the

smallest in the kingdom of heaven. Do I know the Bible? Not much. Do I know the truth? Barely. Do I bear fruit? Not at all. Am I desperately running after Christ? Not really. But even to such a person, the Lord would say, "But you are much greater than John. John saw me, yet you have me! You have me in your heart, you have me in your spirit. I'm one with you, and you can be one with me. You are in the reality of the Kingdom of the Lord." Isn't this encouraging saints? We may not feel like we are much, but we have the Lord! Even the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than John, greater than all the prophets!