

Visions and Revelations

Message 8 Review: John the Baptist

John the Baptist: Forerunner of Jesus

What is John the Baptist's ministry? "I will be the forerunner of Jesus. I want to pave the way for Jesus." He didn't go to Jerusalem. He didn't follow his father to be a priest. He gave up everything of Judaism. He went to the wilderness and became a voice there. Many times we want to be an honored or respected person. Very few say that I just want to be a voice: "Repent, for the Kingdom of God is near!" That's a big voice.

The voice was accompanied by his living. He ate locust and wild honey. He wore camel's skin. He was a voice crying in the wilderness. "I want everything from God alone. I want everything God desires. I don't partake of anything that is unclean. I only partake of things that are clean. Yet, I am not in the form of a priest, of a Pharisee, of a Sadducee, or of a scribe. No! I live such a simple life because I am only interested in God's testimony and God's desire."

Camels are unclean. If we look at John's inside, he is very clean. But if you look at his living, he is in the midst of sinners. He wasn't clean to a point he was untouchable, yet his life was very godly. "I am so clean inside, I am so one with God inside, yet I am with all men, especially with the Jews. I am a voice calling out to the Jews and the Judaizers who are in the Jewish religion. Repent! Change your mind! Turn from what you are in! Turn from the religious deeds, the religious words, the religious talk, the religious behavior, the religious living, the religious everything that you do. Those things are related to God yet without God. Come out! You must have God Himself! Repent!"

What does repent mean? A change, a turn of your mind. Come out from your Jewish religion, from your Jewish practices, and from the law of commandments. Seemingly there was nothing here but for you to be baptized. Baptism is a termination of yourself. Being baptized means you changed your mind. Your old thought, old way of thinking, old expectations, and old ambitions are all over. I change my mind and I drop them all. How do I testify? I get baptized, I bury my old man, I terminate myself. When I come out of the water, I

am a new creation. Baptism indicates termination and burial. The world is terminated and my old man is buried. Being raised from the water indicates germination. What a marvelous baptism! We experience both termination and germination. When I come out of the water, there is germination, so I should walk in the newness of life. This was John's ministry: "I pave the way. I will bring people out of the Jewish religion so that they can turn to Christ."

Jesus' Baptism

Jesus came to John, "Can you baptize me?" His word was, "I should have come to you, how come you came to me?" Jesus said, "Suffer Me for now. Yes, you should come to Me. Yes, I am Your savior, but for the time being, I am a man. As a man, I need to be baptized, even though I am holy and sinless. Even as such a holy and sinless man, I need to be baptized." When Jesus was baptized, people saw the heaven open and the Holy spirit came down to Him as a dove. God was with Him, God was happy with Him, God was satisfied with Him, God even abided in Him.

There was a voice, heard by everyone, which declared, "This is My beloved Son. In Him I am well pleased. I am happy with this. All of you, look! You want to be baptized, you are in the wilderness, you do a lot of things, but come to My Son. In My Son, I am well pleased."

What a glorious declaration! It means: Love the Lord, but have the Lord. Pursue the Lord, but have the Lord. Serve the Lord, but have the Lord. Do things for the Lord, but have the Lord. Become a servant of the Lord, but have the Lord. Do everything with the Lord, for the Lord, but you must have the Lord, because only having Christ is what pleases God. God would say, "I want you to have Jesus Christ, not things of Jesus Christ, not truth of Jesus Christ, not messages concerning Jesus Christ, not works developing Jesus Christ's testimony. No, you can do all of these things—you need to do them—but when you do it, please do it with Jesus Christ." It is only with Jesus Christ that God says, "I am well pleased."

John's Failure

John began to talk with his companions and coworkers, "Now we should all go follow Jesus." Many would say, "No! We finally come out of the Jewish religion, come out of Jerusalem. We finally

get settled, finally have a happy life in the wilderness, and you tell me to follow Jesus? No!" Their voices kidnapped John. He couldn't follow the Lord anymore. Some even said, "John, you want to be baptized by Jesus? You owe us. We followed you all these years. Now you follow Jesus? Who will be our leader?"

Many times in the church life, the fleshly ones, the soulish ones, the young ones, have a lot of opinions: "Why is the meeting so long?" "Why do you preach?" "Why is that testimony good (or not good)?" "Why should the church life be like this?" A lot of these voices kidnap many elders. Many servants of God cannot go on, cannot properly lead, because of all the voices. Dear saints, don't be a voice causing problems. John was clear. John was the leader. If he said, "I am going to be baptized by Jesus as I desired," and they said, "Let us all go," John should have said, "I don't force you to come. If you don't want to do that, please go your way. But, I'm going."

After all the "No's," John realized he couldn't leave, but he made a few testimonies. First, he brought two of his favorite disciples, John and Andrew, who were later among the twelve apostles, to see Jesus. "Behold, the Lamb of God! Don't follow me, go follow Jesus." Second, people asked him, "Are you the Christ?" He replied "No, I'm not." When more people went to Jesus for baptism than going to John, his word was, "He shall increase, I shall decrease." Isn't that a sweet statement? But if he said, "He shall germinate, I shall terminate," everything would have been better. It is not "decrease" and "increase," but you should be totally gone and disappear; only Christ remains. John's statement was so spiritual, but it was not after God. God said, "I don't want you to decrease, I want you to follow me." Many times the brothers say, "O I will decrease." No, the Lord doesn't want you to decrease, the Lord wants you to disappear. Then your whole person is geared only to Christ and to Christ alone.

John was such a good brother, such a success, but he got involved with politics. He went to Herod, "No, this is wrong. You should not marry your brother's wife." Herod put him in prison. The Lord said, "You want to do work? No, the work will be gone. I put you in prison so that you can't do a thing. Now, can you turn to me—to Jesus?"

John sent his own disciples to see Jesus. He knew Jesus from his mother's womb. They grew up knowing each other. All their life they knew what was going to happen. Yet he asked, "Are You the one, or are we waiting for another one who is coming? If You are the one, why don't you rescue me? Do something! Save my situation!" He didn't realize his situation was a frustration. Brothers, we don't understand we do things for the Lord, we do things for flesh, we do things in a way that we even feel the Lord blesses us. Our doing is a frustration to the Lord for building up the Lord's testimony.

After all these, John was killed. What a faithful servant for the Lord, but he would have to go. He was supposed to be a pioneer of Jesus, but now he was a competitor of Jesus. The Lord said, "John was greater than all the prophets in the Old Testament. They all predicted about me. John saw me. John paved the way for me. He was the concluding prophet of the Old Testament. He was greater than all the prophets in the Old Testament because he saw me physically." John could have been number one disciple, if he followed Jesus, if he baptized Jesus, and said, "Now Jesus, it's Your turn. Baptize me. Everything of mine is over, terminated. I have a new beginning." Wouldn't he have been one of the most useful disciples of the Lord?

To you, the Lord would ask, "Do you know, you are the smallest in the kingdom? Do you know the Bible? No, not much. Do you know the truth? No, not much. Do you bear fruit? No, not much. Are you really desperate after Christ? No, not much. 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 am one with you, and you can be one with Me. You are in the reality of the Kingdom of the Lord!"

May we say, "Lord, I want to have the reality of baptism. I want to have the reality of running after you. I want to have the reality of being Your pioneer fighting for Your interest. Lord, protect me from any other considerations such that my focus and my life is only for God's beloved Son, Jesus Christ. If God is pleased with Him, I can only be well pleased in Him." May the Lord have mercy.