

Visions and Revelations

Message 8: John the Baptist

¹⁶ *When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. ¹⁷ And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” (Matthew 3:16–17)*

³² *And John bore witness, saying, “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. (John 1:32)*

- A. Born according to the word of God through the angel Gabriel, John came in the spirit and power of Elijah (Luke 1:17). His existence was completely for the testimony of God and he lived a life only for the testimony of God.
- B. John’s Ministry: The Forerunner of the Lord Jesus
 - a) He was completely out of Judaism and lived in the deserts (Luke 1:80)
 - b) He was completely out of the regulations of rituals and ordinances of Judaism. His food was locusts and wild honey (clean), and he was clothed in camel’s hair (unclean) (Matthew 3:4).
 - i. Showing that God is in his living (clean) while being not for Judaism but for the fallen Jews (unclean).
 - ii. In the same way, the Lord Jesus is completely holy, yet He lives among sinners. He is a friend of tax collectors and sinners (Matthew 11:19).
 - c) John’s testimony (Matthew 3:2–3)
 - i. Becoming “a voice in the wilderness.” It is an existence without self-manifestation.
 - ii. His proclamation is “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!” Repentance is to have a change of mind, a change from one kind of thinking to another. For the Israelites, they needed to change from the logic of abiding in Judaism to the thought of waiting for Messiah.
 - d) Producing a prosperous work. Many people came to be baptized by John, not only the common Jews but also Pharisees and Sadducees (Matthew 3:5–7). He had to be in Aenon near Salim, as there was much water there, which shows his work couldn’t be done by him alone but needed a large group of baptizers (John 3:23).

C. The baptism of Jesus (Matthew 3:13–15)

- a) Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan (descending) to be baptized by John.
- b) John tried to prevent Him, saying, “I need to be baptized by You and are You coming to me?”
- c) Jesus answered and said to him, “Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness,” showing that the Son of God was baptized positionally as the Son of Man.
 - i. Baptism indicates termination and burial. When Christians are baptized, they testify “I have Christ! To me, the world is terminated, and my old ‘I’ is buried!”
 - ii. Being raised from the water indicates germination. Now, we should walk in newness of life (Romans 6:4).
 - iii. Jesus’ baptism is a testimony for us who believe in Him to follow and to experience.

D. The declaration and praise from the Father (Matthew 3:16–17)

- a) John saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming upon Jesus, testifying He is the Anointed One. He is the Christ. (“the Spirit of God” is described as “the Holy Spirit” in Luke 3:22)
- b) A voice came out of heaven, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” Jesus is not only the Anointed One, fulfilling God’s economy (His works), but He is also the Christ, with an operation full of divine life (His being).

E. The failures of John the Baptist

- a) John ignored being baptized by the Lord according to His word, in order to end his work and to begin a new life as a disciple of the Lord (Matthew 3:15).
- b) Yet he still testified, “Behold, the Lamb of God!” and guided his disciples (John and Andrew) to the Lord (John 1:35–37).
- c) John testified, “I am not the Christ...He must increase but I must decrease” (John 3:28–30).
- d) But, due to the success of his work:
 - i. He lost the ability to close his work and to be firm unto God.

- ii. He became involved in politics, eventually being put in prison (Matthew 14:3–5).
 - iii. While he was in prison, he had doubt about the ministry of the Lord Jesus, asking “Are You the Coming One?” (Matthew 11:2–3).
 - iv. He was killed by Herod the king (Matthew 14:6–12).
- F. The testimony of the Lord Jesus concerning John the Baptist (Matthew 11:9–11)
- a) Greater than all the prophets in the Old Testament—the prophets in the Old Testament prophesized about the Messiah, but John saw the Messiah and ended the age of Old Testament prophecy.
 - b) The least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than John the Baptist—John saw the Lord Jesus, yet those who are saved by grace are greater than John because they have the Lord’s redemption, receive the Lord’s life, and enjoy the Lord’s salvation.