

Series: John the Baptist #1695

Title: John 1.6-7

The Character of John the Baptist

Thank you for joining me today from wherever you are and by however you listen as we meet together coast-to-coast here in the United States and all the way around the world. Last time we began this series on John the Baptist. We will talk about the man and his message and there will be much in this that will challenge and encourage us. John the Baptist is a man worth emulating. He is a model for us to follow in our service of Christ. In fact, in Matthew 11, Jesus said, "There has not arisen *anyone* greater than John the Baptist!" John was *not* greater than Jesus, but until the time of Christ he was the greatest. That's definitely worth noting.

And at the start it is also worth noting that John the Baptist is a different man from John the Apostle. I point this out because we will be reading about John the Baptist in the Gospel According to John the Apostle. Do not get the two men of the same, common name confused. Let me read our text and then we will carry on. This is John's Gospel the first chapter and verses 6 and 7, "**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.**" We see five facts in these two verses.

First, God sent a man. Second, that man's name is John. Third, John was a witness. Fourth, John gave a testimony. Fifth, John was a witness and he gave a testimony about the Light. God sent John to witness for Christ (to witness for God). And what John the Baptist says will be *factual*. As we learned last time the Greek words here for witness and testify in verse 7 are words associated with *facts, not opinions*. So that what John, the man sent from God, is saying about "the Light" is fact. It's not just his personal idea or opinion of who the Light is. What he will say about the Light is factual and completely accurate. And the Light is Jesus Christ.

To emphasize that God leaves Himself with a witness in the world, we looked elsewhere in the Gospel of John and found a Samaritan woman who witnessed for Jesus Christ. Her witness testimony convinced others to believe in Jesus. I have two more examples.

The second example is the testimony of the crowd. Now again we have an incredible story here. This is John chapter 12, which follows the miracle in John 11 when Jesus raised His friend Lazarus from the dead. This man Lazarus was literally dead! He had been in the tomb four days when Jesus got to him. But when Jesus speaks his name, Lazarus comes out of the tomb completely alive! And in John 12, verse 17 the Bible says, "**So the people, who were with [Jesus] when He called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead, continued to testify about [Jesus].**" And there is that word again, "testify."

And my third example in the Book of John of who else witnessed and gave testimony about Jesus are the apostles. The apostles are Jesus' first followers. They are his students, His disciples. Later He will commission them, send them out, to testify about Jesus to the world. John, the writer whose text we are reading today, was one of the apostles. And listen to what Jesus correctly predicts of them.

John chapter 15 and verse 27, "**You will testify also, because you have been with Me from the beginning.**" That's John 15:27. That is why we have their witness testimonies in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John (the first four books of the New Testament). In these lengthy and detailed writings we have their testimonies about Jesus Christ. You should read them, study them, test them, and see if what they say about God is true. I invite you to please do that today.

So whether it be John the Baptist or the Samaritan woman or the crowds or the apostles, there are many valid witnesses who give testimony about Jesus Christ. Especially if you are skeptical of Jesus, I urge you to get a hold of a Bible and read at least the Gospels at the beginning of the New Testament. Read what these eye-witnesses have to say, and believe.

Let's continue now with some insights into who John the Baptist was. Since this man John is going to serve as our witness to Jesus (to God), then we need to know how credible this witness actually is. In a court of law, the only good witness is a credible witness. Is John credible? Yes. He's actually rather *incredible*. So let me tell you about him. There are at least eight elements in the character of John that we

read about in his Biblical bio. As part of this I will be directing you to other Scriptures outside the Book of John. And we will not be able to get to all eight today. So plan to be back with us next time for the others.

Let me also preface this by saying that I have a reason for why I want you to know the following about John. So you should not hear the following as some sort of list that I am just checking off. Each insight is valuable, and together they form the spiritual DNA of the man. And this will have bearing on what John says about Jesus. Furthermore, listen for God in the following. Hear how intentional God is about sending just the right witness to testify at just the right time. OK, let's begin.

The first element in the character of John is found in his name. His full name distinguishes his ministry. This man John is John *the Baptist*. And why do we call him "the Baptist"? We do this for three primary reasons: first, all of the other Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) give him the full name "John the Baptist." When you read the other Gospels you will see that he is called "John the Baptist."

Second, "the Baptist" distinguishes him from the author and Apostle John. John was a popular New Testament name. So how do you tell the difference between one John and another John? You give one the name "the Baptist." And third, he's named "the Baptist" because that was his signature ministry: baptizing new believers! We can call him John the Baptizer, if that is helpful to you. And as we shall soon see, this John definitely baptizes. In fact – listen to this! – John will baptize *Jesus*! That true story is told also in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. That's the first element. The character of John is found in his name. His full name distinguishes his ministry. He is *the Baptist*.

Second, please notice that he was "sent from God." Let me re-read John chapter 1, and verse 6. **"There came a man sent from God, whose name was John."** This speaks to the point I was making last time. God intentionally and purposefully sends His witnesses out into the world to testify about Jesus. John is such a witness. And how do we know that God sent him? Well, you say "the writer John said it and that is good enough for me." Fair enough. But that phrase **"There came a man sent from God"** is loaded with meaning. Here, I want to give you three further insights. The *big* element is that John is "sent from God." And here are three points that support this reality.

First, John's roots are actually far back in the wisdom and design of God found in the Old Testament. The prophets – whom God also sent – predicted (prophesied) of John. Let me read to you one as an example. The prophet Isaiah in Isaiah 40, verse 3, **"A voice is calling, 'Clear the way for the Lord in the wilderness; make smooth in the desert a highway for our God.'" That is Isaiah 40, verse 3. When we come to the New Testament Matthew makes it clear this "voice" is John. Referring to John, Matthew chapter 3 and verse 3 says, "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!'"**

Second, the miraculous conception and birth of John proves that God sent him. John's mother, Elizabeth, was old and she was barren. She was unable to have children. That is, until an angel appeared to Zacharias, the husband of Elizabeth, and said that John would be born to them. And sure enough, here's John. Notice on this point that barrenness and old age are no obstacles for God to accomplish what is within His will and wisdom to accomplish. God easily gets what God wants. And why is it that we often still find it so shocking that with God all things are possible? God wanted John to be His witness, and so John experiences a miraculous birth.

And then let me give you this as support that John was "sent from God": the angel who appeared to Zacharias said plainly that John will go **"as a forerunner,"** John will go ahead of and come before Christ and **"make ready a people prepared for the Lord."** The angel delivers the same message about John that Isaiah had given long before. This is the life God designed for John the Baptist. It is prophesied in the Old and New Testaments and then becomes a reality. Late in Luke chapter 1 the Holy Spirit fills Zacharias so that he prophesies this about his own son John, **"And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare His ways."**

And finally, John was sent from God because God decided when John should begin his public ministry as the one who prepared the way for Jesus. These three points support the big character element that John is sent from God. Next time we will pick up here and continue to look into the character of John the Baptist. Please be with us for God Is! ---END---