

Series: John the Baptist #1696

Title: John 1; Matthew 11.11
John Exalts Jesus

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. I hope you are well. Are you? Please do not forget that if you would like prayer or an objective person to listen to what is going on with you, you can write to me. My email address: mark@godisministry.org, that's m-a-r-k (mark)@godisministry.o-r-g. And my mailing address: God Is, PO Box 802, Winchester Massachusetts 01890. I will be happy to hear from you, to pray for you, and to listen to what you have to say. We all need friends, someone who will help us bear our burdens. Perhaps I could be a friend to you? Reach out to me today at these addresses, which will be repeated as we close.

As you know if you have been with us, we are exploring the biography of the man John the Baptist. We've chosen a few verses from the first chapter of John the Apostle's Gospel. John 1, verses 6 and 7 reads like this: **"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."** In those verses we found five facts true about the Baptist, and we saw that the Greek words for witness and testify reveal how John the Baptist will tell the truth, he will give *facts, not opinions* about Jesus. John is a credible witness to the Christ.

And then we began to look at eight elements in the character of this man John. Thus far I have given you two. We saw what his name reveals about him and we saw that he was "sent from God." For a good summary of what we've learned let me encourage you to spend some time reading Luke chapter 1. That's the Gospel According to Luke, chapter 1, which will give you many rich details about the roots of John the Baptist way back in the Old Testament, about his miraculous conception and birth, and will show you how God decided when John should begin his public ministry. Luke 1 is a beautiful and necessary chapter.

We will not take time to explore that here, rather let's move on to the third element in the godly character of John the Baptist. Third, John the Baptist was a prophet. John was predicted by the Old Testament prophets and John the Baptist is himself a prophet. And he was a true prophet. This is important to grasp since we have false prophets in the Bible and we have people who claim to be prophets today, but who cannot live up to their claim. When we come to the topic of prophecy we could spend a lot of valuable time here. But I do not want to get too far away from our biography of John, so let me discipline myself. And say this.

I will pick up on an excellent definition John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue give the prophet's message over in their excellent book *Biblical Doctrine*. I'm going to amend their definition a little for our purposes. Prophecy is – I am quoting now – "the authoritative speaking on behalf of God, the infallible declaration of divine revelation, often but not restricted to predicting what will come to pass (*Biblical Doctrine*, 935)." Let me give that to you a second time. Prophecy is the authoritative speaking on behalf of God, the infallible declaration of divine revelation, often but not restricted to predicting what will come to pass.

Now I say that to say this: John the Baptist was a prophet, because this is what He did regarding Jesus Christ. He was an authoritative voice speaking on behalf of God, He declared that Jesus is God, and He accurately predicted what Jesus will do in the future (long after John the Baptist was dead, by the way). John the Baptist was a prophet, because this is what He did regarding Jesus Christ. He was an authoritative voice speaking on behalf of God, He declared that Jesus is God, and He accurately predicted what Jesus will do in the future.

So you believe me, let me feed you one example here and we will pick up on this when we get to John's message. Listen to the Baptist prophecy who Jesus is. I am reading John chapter 1, verse 29, **"The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, 'Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!'"** We know John was right. Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

We know this because we look far back on Christ's crucifixion and resurrection. But at the time when John said this about Jesus, the Lord had just begun His earthly ministry. The Lord's sacrificial and atoning death was still years *ahead*. You see, John the Baptist was a true prophet.

John the Baptist was a prophet, predicted by the Old Testament prophets. He was the last of the Old Testament prophets even though He lived in the New Testament time. And what is so amazing about John is that He lived to see Jesus, the one he prophesied about. None of the other Old Testament prophets had this privilege. Think about what an honor it must have been for John to see Jesus, in the flesh. This is what our hearts yearn for, isn't it? To see Christ face to face, to behold His beauty. And one day all of us who believe in Him, our faith will turn to sight. Amen.

We are looking at the elements that make up the Christ-like character of this man John and so far we have three. We can summarize these in this statement: John the Baptist is a God sent prophet. Did you catch it? John the Baptist is a God sent prophet. Let's get to our fourth element.

The fourth element in the character of John the Baptist: he was the greatest man who ever lived until Jesus Christ. We talked about this already, off the top, but I do want to re-iterate this here. Jesus Himself says this in Matthew 11, and the first part of verse 11. **"Truly I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist!"** Why does Jesus say this? Simply put: John the Baptist was greater than the Old Testament prophets because John witnessed with his own two eyes Jesus in-person. John saw who he prophesied about. John witnessed the realization of the promised Messiah (Jesus). And that made him a great man indeed. *But*, once Jesus comes into the world in human flesh, then no man or woman is greater than Jesus! Jesus is always and forever the greatest person to ever live.

Jesus is not saying in Matthew 11:11 that John was even greater than Jesus. He is only saying that up until the time of Christ's coming *in the flesh (in a physical body)* John was the greatest man to live on planet earth. By the way, read the end of verse 11. Now you have another small assignment. Read all of Matthew 11, verse 11. Read that and you'll see that *now* John is not even as great as you or me! Really. It's a stunner. Read it. Matthew 11, verse 11. I'm not going to do all the reading and research for you, friends! My fourth insight into John the Baptist: he was the greatest man who ever lived *until* Jesus Christ.

And let's get our foot in the door on the fifth element in this man's character. John the Baptist exalts Jesus by humbling himself. John exalts Jesus by intentionally humbling himself. John and Jesus are actually cousins (there is another fact about him that I am slipping in here). And John is older than Jesus by about six months. *But* let's see how John exalts Jesus! The older in age exalts the younger, which was very counter-cultural.

This is what all the true and genuine prophets did and John the Baptist is no exception. My, this comes through clearly again and again in the Bible. Let's look at a few examples together. Let's start at John chapter 1 and verse 15. The Bible says, **"John testified about Him and cried out, saying, 'This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.'"** In that one sentence John is saying that Jesus is to be exalted far above John. Jesus has the highest rank that can ever be given a human being. No four star general can ever compete with Jesus!

And as we have already learned and affirmed many times on God Is, Jesus is God. Since Jesus is God, Jesus existed from before the beginning described in Genesis chapter 1 and verse 1. John the Baptist knows this and so John says, **"He existed before me."** The writer and Apostle John has also affirmed this deeply in John 1, and verses 1-3 where "the Word (capital W) is Jesus Christ. The text reads like this, **"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being."** John 1, verses 1-3.

John exalts Jesus, and I will have more examples of this when we next get together. But here is definitely a good time to ask those of us who are Christians: are we exalting Jesus in our lives? Let's commit to an honest evaluation today. Do we exalt Christ? As with John, this requires that we humble ourselves. We are not the center of the universe, our Lord is.

We are His people whom He has redeemed from sin, the sin of selfishness, pride, and fighting for our own glory and praise. Will you and I lower ourselves so that Jesus will be lifted up? How can we do that? Think practically and make some changes to how we live. And then join us again next time as we continue to get to know who John the Baptist was right here on God Is. ---END---