

Sunday Morning Message

March 06, 2022

The Presentation of Christ from John's Perspective – Part Two – John the Baptist The Gospel According to John

Text – John 1:10 - 34

Congregational Reading – John 1:20 - 23

Introduction

Though we are not giving a chronology of all of the events included in the four gospel accounts involving the beginning of Jesus' public ministry, I will give you "a nutshell" account of how it all took place. First of all, let me remind us of what we already discussed: John tells us virtually nothing about the birth of Christ, save only what is rather mysteriously mentioned in verse fourteen. There is also no mention in John's Gospel of Christ's childhood or of his baptism. The actual chronology of events probably went like this.

Christ's Baptism and Inauguration (From my Gospel Synopsis Notes)

A. The Ministry of John the Baptist (Matthew 3:1 – 12; Mark 1:1 – 8; Luke 3:1 – 20; John 1:6 – 8)

B. The Baptism of Jesus in Bethabarah (**Matthew 3:13 – 17**; Mark 1:9 – 11; Luke 3:21 – 23)

"Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Matthew 3:13-17)

Luke tells us that Jesus was about thirty years of age when Jesus was baptized.

C. The Temptation in the Wilderness (Matthew 4:1 – 11; **Mark 1:12 – 13**; Luke 4:1 – 13)

"And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness. And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him." (Mark 1:12-13)

D. John's Testimony Regarding Jesus (John 1:15 – 34)

Transition

In the last message, we examined vs. 10 – 14 and vs. 16 – 18, and we were introduced to the Lord Jesus Christ from the perspective of the writer, John the Apostle. This is what we refer to as the Bible narrative. Today, we will examine the statements made

by another John – John the Baptist – regarding his Jesus, who happened to be John’s second cousin. Jesus’ biological mother, Mary, was cousin to John the Baptist’s mother Elizabeth.

I. **Part Two - The Testimony About Christ from John the Baptist (vs. 15; 19 – 34)**
A. **John was a Witness (v. 15)**

"John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me." (John 1:15)

The word, “witness” (μαρτυρεῖ from μαρτυρέω – *martyreō* – *Verb – Pres. Act. Ind. 3rd Pers. Sing.*) here is the word that we get our English word, martyr.

1. His witness revealed his passion.

John “cried” (κέκραγεν from κράζω – *krazō* – 2nd Perf Act Ind 3rd Pers Sing), meaning he spoke with a loud voice – with passion. He wanted to make sure everyone heard what he has to say. He was bold.

This is quite a contrast to the witnessing methods that are typically employed today. We whisper about Jesus. We are quiet, because we don’t want anyone to think we are nuts.

2. His witness revealed his preference.

Even though John was Jesus’ older cousin, he didn’t consider himself to be superior to him. He stated that though Jesus was later than him, both by birth and in the timing of His ministry, that Jesus was “preferred.” The reason given by John was that though Jesus was humanly younger than John, Jesus was also God, and as God he preceded John (see also vs. 1 – 3).

The Bible plainly teaches that Jesus pre-existed His birth at Bethlehem, and actually co-existed with God the Father prior to Creation.

"And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." (John 17:5)

"And he is before all things, and by him all things consist." (Colossians 1:17)

"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;" (Hebrews 1:1-2)

B. John was a Voice (vs. 19 – 23)

"And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou? And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No. Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself? He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias." (John 1:19-23)

Notice in v. 19 that even in the very early days of John's ministry, the religious leadership are taking notice of him.

1. He was not the Christ (v. 20)

John went to great lengths to overstate the fact that he was not the Messiah. John was very quick to deflect the attention to the Lord (see also v. 27)

"And preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose." (Mark 1:7; see also Luke 3:16)

"Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. ... He must increase, but I must decrease." (John 3:28, 30)

"I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire:" (Matthew 3:11)

2. He was not Elijah (v. 21) – though he was like Elijah

John the Baptist was a type of Elijah, and had a similar prophetic ministry to Elijah.

"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse." (Malachi 4:5-6)

This is one of two prophecies from Malachi that allude to John the Baptist. The other is found in chapter three:

"Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts." (Malachi 3:1)

How is John the Baptist connected to Elijah?

The angel Gabriel told Zacharias:

"And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, 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." (Luke 1:17)

Jesus stated that John the Baptist fulfilled the prophecy regarding the coming of Elijah before the coming of the Messiah:

"Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." (Matthew 11:11-15)

By the way, Elijah will likely also come as one of the two witnesses from Revelation before the 2nd coming of the Lord Jesus. (Revelation 11:3)

3. He was not "that prophet" (v. 21)

This is likely a reference to the prophecy by Moses from Deuteronomy 18:

"The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken; ... I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him." (Deuteronomy 18:15, 18)

The prophecy in Deuteronomy was a reference to Christ, but it was obvious that the Jews did not understand it. They distinguished "that prophet" from the Messiah.

"For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people." (Acts 3:22-23)

4. He was merely "the voice" (v. 23)

"The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God." (Isaiah 40:3)

According to McArthur:

In the original context of Is. 40:3, the prophet heard a voice calling for the leveling of a path through the eastern desert so that the God of Israel could lead His people home from Babylonian exile. This call was a prophetic picture that foreshadowed the final and greatest return of Israel to their God from spiritual darkness and alienation through the spiritual redemption accomplished by the Messiah.¹

John's message was for the people to prepare themselves for the coming of the Lord. The time that they had all been waiting for, for thousands of years had finally come. The Messiah was here.

C. He Was a Testifier (An Attestor - vs. 24 – 34)

"And they which were sent were of the Pharisees. And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet? John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not; He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose. These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing. The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me. And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God." (John 1:24-34)

Notice that it was the Pharisees who came to question John. The following is from my NT Survey notes:

The Pharisees were a very legalistic sect of the Jews that seemed to have originated in the period of time between the Old and New Testaments, possibly during the revolt of the Maccabees against Antiochus Epiphenes. They are not mentioned at all in the Old Testament. This group held to a strict code of ceremonial laws, and

¹ John MacArthur Jr., ed., *The MacArthur Study Bible*, electronic ed. (Nashville, TN: Word Pub., 1997), 1575.

consisted of about 6000 members. They were bitter enemies of the Lord. The name Pharisee means separated ones. Jesus often rebuked them for placing their traditions above the word and will of God. (See Matthew 15:3 – 9; 22:18; 23:13, 23, 25, 29; Luke 12:1)

The other religious group that were part of the religious leadership of Israel were the Sadducees. They were the liberals of the day. They denied the existence of angels, and the possibility of a resurrection. Though the Sadducees and Pharisees were almost opposite of each other, Jesus warned His followers to beware of the “leaven” of both groups. (See Matthew 22:23; Acts 23:8)

Another contextual note from the passage is found in v. 28, which gives us the location of John’s ministry, which is Bethabara, not Bethany as some of the modern versions say. Exactly where Bethabara was located is a mystery, but it was close to the Sea of Galilee on or near the Jordan River. It could have been in one of the streams that flow into the Jordan; but it was close to Nazareth, and close to Cana. It could not have been in Bethany, which is near Jerusalem, because it was too far from Galilee and it only took Jesus a day or less to get to Galilee from Bethabara.

Notice the phrase in v. 26 – “*ye know not,*” and also in vs. 31 and 33 “*I knew him not.*”

The Pharisees didn’t know who Jesus was, and there was also a time when John did not know who Jesus was. But, there came a time when God revealed to John who Jesus was. God told John that the one he was looking for would be the one whom the Spirit descended upon.

The phrase “bear record” (μεμαρτύρηκα from μαρτυρέω – *martyreō* – Verb Aorist in v. 32; Perfect in v. 34) This is the same word that was used for “witness” in v. 15)

John testified of what he saw, what he heard, and what he knew. He saw the Spirit of God descend upon Jesus like a dove. He heard the voice of the Father boom out of Heaven, saying, “*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*” (Matthew 3:17)

Conclusion

John knew what he saw; he knew what he experienced, and he testified about it. John was a Witness, a Voice (a loud voice), and an Attestor (a Testifier). Isn’t that the same thing that we are called to do. We are called to be a voice that cries out in this dark world that Jesus is the Christ.