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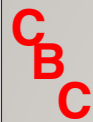
Min. Marossa Davis



Sunday Church School

November 22, 2020

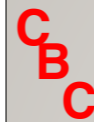
“The Testimony of John”
John 1: 15-28



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“The Testimony of John”
John 1: 15-28 (KJV)

- 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.
- v. 16 And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.
- v. 17 **For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.**
- v. 18 No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.
- v. 19 **And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou?**
- v. 20 And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ.



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“The Testimony of John”
John 1: 15-28

- v. 21 “And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No.
- v. 22 Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself?
- v. 23 **He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias.**
- v. 24. And they which were sent were of the Pharisees.
- v. 25 **And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet?”**

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“The Testimony of John”

John 1: 15-28

v. 26 “John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not;

v. 27 He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose.

v. 28 These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing.”

LESSON OUTLINE

Our lesson outline for today will focus on 1) John's witness about Jesus (vs. 15-18) ; 2) John's clarification about himself (vs. 19-23) ; and 3) John's explanation about baptizing (vs. 24-28).

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“The Testimony of John”

The task of John the Baptist was to prepare the people of Israel for the arrival of Jesus. He would accomplish this by preaching the need for **repentance**. John was very **popular**, and his message attracted great attention. Some apparently believed he was the Messiah Himself. But John taught the people that Jesus was much greater than he was. John the Baptist shows us that it is not about us; **it is all about Jesus!**

Leading up to the description of John the Baptist and his ministry is John 1:14. “ And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.” The emphasis is on the **incarnation** of Jesus Christ, who had already existed in eternity past but now took on a full, sinless human nature. Jesus was not created by God. He is coeternal and coequal with the Father. John 10:30. Without Him, there was no need for John.

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“The Testimony of John”

I. John's Witness About Jesus

An important point in the ministry of John is that he consistently deflected attention away from himself and towards the Messiah. His witness about Jesus was, “ This was He of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me (vs. 15) . John recognized that Jesus outranked him in every way, including in His origins. Humanly speaking, John was born first and Jesus later. But, in reality, because Jesus is eternal, He existed as the eternal Second Person of the Holy Trinity long before John was born.

The words translated ‘preferred before’ means ‘ to have existed prior to’ and indicates superiority in every way. In New Testament Society, the older of two persons would be given priority status, but John was clearly

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“The Testimony of John”

indicating that greater honor should go to Jesus than to himself. The main reason for this was the truth that Jesus is the fullness of God, being the very embodiment of the unseen God in every way (Col 1:15,19) John even implied that Jesus's existence among them had given them the privilege of seeing God.

Jesus came “full of grace and truth” (v. 14) and was a living manifestation of God on earth. He is the source of “ grace for grace” (v.16), in other words , blessings upon blessings, one after another. (as the amplified puts it ‘favor upon favor, and gift heaped upon gift.’) It is through Him that we still receive, as the people of his day, one gracious blessing after another in our lives.

The coming of Jesus was distinct from the giving of the law. A clear difference is declared here. “ For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. Moses was the deliverer through whom God gave

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“ The Testimony of John ”

the law, but a great contrast is presented between this and Jesus’ offer of grace and truth. We as believers today can experience an abundance of blessing that Old Testament believers could not.

The dispensation of law inaugurated through Moses, which was an expression of the **legal requirements** for God’s people, has been superseded by the dispensation of grace inaugurated through Jesus Christ. There has always been grace given by God throughout the ages. Grace was indeed available under the law, and although there are expectations of obedience in this age of grace, the dominant characteristics of each age are what contrast them so vividly.

The only way sinful mankind could fully see God was through the incarnation of Christ. In Exodus 33:20, God tells Moses, “ Thou canst not see

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“ The Testimony of John ”

my face: for there shall no man see me and live.” When we read that Jesus was sent from “ the bosom of the Father” (v. 18), we know that we can have a true relationship with God through the One who has been **one with God** from all eternity, Jesus, referred to as the “ Only Begotten Son” (Monogenes) is one with the very essence of God! Our text affirms the deity of Jesus Christ. In other words, not only is Jesus Christ the Son of God, He is also God the Son.

Jesus declared God in the sense of revealing Him. The Greek word is *exegesato* (from which we get ‘exegete’).The Son has ‘exegeted’ (that is explained, interpreted, or narrated) the Father to humankind. The reference to Jesus being in the bosom of the Father softens and brings affection to the idea of Jesus exegeting the Father. We must remember that the **nature of God** is in view here, not the outward, external physical appearance.

(“Constable’s Notes on John 1:18”, net.Bible.org).

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“ The Testimony of John ”

II. John’s Clarification About Himself

The Gospel of Matthew 3: 5:6 tells us “ Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan, confessing their sins.” John’s **unparalleled popularity** soon caught the attention of the religious leaders, who determined that **he needed to be investigated**. It is likely that the Sanhedrin was behind the sending of the priests and Levites to question him. In their eyes, anyone considered to be a potential threat had to be vetted.

Their immediate question was, “ Who art thou?”(v. 19) The religious leaders were determined to ascertain whether John had any credentials for doing what he was doing, and since he was performing his baptisms apart from their authorization, he was suspect. They were legal guardians of the

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“ The Testimony of John ”

faith so they had a right to find out what was going on relative to their religion. Crowds of people were being influenced by this man, and many were being baptized; so they were **intent on finding out who he was**.

The priests represented the theological authorities of the nation; the Levites were concerned with the ritual and service of the temple. John did not seem to fit into any ecclesiastical category familiar to the Jewish authorities, and unusual success demanded an explanation. (Longman and Garland, eds.,The Expositors Bible Commentary, Zondervan). John was boldly adamant in affirming that he was not the Christ. John was no threat to their authority or their authority with Rome.

In the minds of the religious leaders, there were other possibilities. If John was not the Messiah. Their second question was, “ What then? Art thou

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“ The Testimony of John ”

Elias?” (v. 21) They were referring to Elijah. The Prophet Malachi had prophesied, “ Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord” (Mal. 4:5) John assured them he was not Elijah. But he was an Elijah like figure in his presence, his ministry and even in his dress (Matt 3:4 and II Kings 1:8) When Jesus said later in His ministry that John had fulfilled the role of Elijah (Matt 17:12) , He was indicating at least a partial fulfillment of Malachi’s prophecy. But John, understanding the authorities literal intent, claimed that he was not the fulfillment of that prophecy.

That led to a third question. “ Art thou that prophet.” (John 1:21). This was evidently a question related to what was stated in Deuteronomy 18:15-18: “ The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of

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“ The Testimony of John ”

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.” **John also denied that he was this prophet.** The context indicates that this refers to the coming Messiah, but the religious leaders may not have understood it that way. They were perhaps expecting a new prophet to come who would bring new revelation from God and maybe lead them out from under the domination of Rome.

John’s denials left the priests and the Levites puzzled and frustrated because they expected to return to the Sanhedrin with some answers. So they repeated their original question. “ Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself?” (v. 22) John’s response

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“ The Testimony of John ”

was to quote from **Isaiah 40:3**. John declared, “ **I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness**, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias.” As always, John deflected the focus from himself to Jesus. John used this verse to proclaim that **His kingdom was now near, and that he was the King’s messenger.**

John was quick to point out that he was no more than **the voice chosen** to announce His coming, and not the Messiah Himself. The Messiah was the **Word made flesh**, living among the people. John’s ministry was one of preparation for the public revelation of Messiah that was about to occur. He therefore had nothing important to say about himself. **He was focused on proclaiming Jesus to them.**

But John’s role was much more important than we might realize.

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“ The Testimony of John ”

We too are expected to introduce the Savior to others, so in some way, our ministries (our lesson teaches) are as important as John’s. No believer is insignificant in God’s eyes in proclaiming the glory of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

III. John’s Explanation about Baptizing

The Pharisees came and they were not satisfied with John’s answers. They were upset that John was not just preaching but he was also **baptizing people without proper credentials.** (Ganges and Andersen, eds., Holman New Testament Commentary, Broadman and Holman). They threw John’s words back at him and asked if you are not the Messiah, nor Elias, nor that

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“ The Testimony of John ”

prophet, then why are you baptizing? They were especially indignant about him baptizing because while it was common for Gentiles to be baptized when they converted to the Jewish faith, **John was mostly baptizing Jews.** They saw him as clearly overstepping his bounds in both his preaching and his baptizing!

Baptism was associated with religious conversion. Jews should have no need for baptism, in their view, since they were already considered children of God as descendants of Abraham. In their eyes, John had no right to be baptizing.

When John explained that he baptized with water, he was contrasting his baptism with the coming baptism of Jesus Christ. Water baptism is a visible expression of repentance in the heart, testifying to

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and resulting from that repentance that has already occurred. John himself was not actually changing anyone, he was just helping them express what God has done in their hearts.

There was a much more authoritative person coming soon whose baptism. (with the Holy Spirit- Matt 3:11, Luke 3: 16) would make John’s pale in comparison. John did not identify Him at this point because He had not been revealed to John. This would occur on the following day, when Jesus came to him and was baptized. In verse 29, **John recognized Jesus as the Lamb of God!** (Next week’s lesson)

John mentioned several things about this Coming One. 1) Although He was already among them, they did not know who He was. 2) He would be coming after John, having been born later and would be far superior to John in every way. 3) So superior to John that John was not worthy to remove his sandals. But all these credentials proved that

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“ The Testimony of John ”

John had a higher authority than theirs behind his preaching and baptism. **Malachi 3:1** says, “ Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me.” **John’s ministry was the fulfillment of this prophecy.**

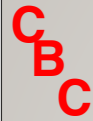
Let us never forget to give thanks to our awesome God for sending His only begotten Son into the world to reveal to undeserving man His amazing grace and His wonderful plan of redemption. **Jesus will come again someday.** While the Bible tells people how to follow Christ, **the Holy Spirit can use us** to guide others to Christ through our proclamation of the gospel. We see how John the Baptist served as a guide for the people of his day. His testimony reminds us that we too can guide the people of our day with godly information and passionate proclamation. May He find us faithfully and boldly witnessing for Him!

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Practical Points

1. Christians should bear witness to the salvation available through Jesus Christ (John 1: 15-17).
2. There is access to God only through Jesus Christ (v. 18).
3. As Christians, we must be prepared to answer questions about who we represent (v. 19).
4. We must live in a way that points others to Jesus (vs. 20-23).
5. When we live out God’s will, people will take notice (v. 24).
6. We should declare Christ to all who do not know Him (vs. 25-26).
7. Comparing ourselves to Jesus will always keep us humble (vs. 27-28).



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For Further Discussion

1. What one thing did John the Baptist consistently do in his ministry?
2. At certain times in our lives, God gives us opportunities to witness for Him. What are some things you can do or say to communicate God’s grace **when** you share your faith?
3. What will it be like to stand before Jesus? Why is it important that we consider this question? Only those who have turned from their sin and trusted in Him alone for salvation will be ready. Are you?

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