

"There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

Notice how abruptly the scene changes. In the first five verses, John takes us into the high, sublime heights of eternity past—revealing the exalted, self-existent, creator God, Jesus Christ, the eternal Word. But then, in verse 6, the narrative steps directly onto the dusty soil of human history: "There appeared a man sent from God, whose name was John."

This herald was John the Baptist. His entire existence was a divine commission, fulfilling centuries of Old Testament prophecy. The prophet Isaiah spoke of him as a voice crying in the wilderness in the Book of Isaiah, chapter 40, verse 3. The Old Testament Scriptures closed with the prophet Malachi foretelling an Elijah-like messenger in the Book of Malachi, chapter 3, verse 1, and chapter 4, verses 5 through 6. The angel of the Lord confirmed this very mission to Zacharias in the Gospel According to Luke, chapter 1, verse 17.

John's arrival was miraculous from start to finish:

- His conception occurred in his parents' advanced age, recorded in the Gospel According to Luke 1:7 and 36.
- An angel announced his birth and mission in the Gospel According to Luke, chapter 1, verses 8 through 17.
- His father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit to prophesy over him in the Gospel According to Luke, chapter 1, verses 67 through 79.
- He stepped into his public ministry at the exact divinely appointed moment in the Gospel According to Luke, chapter 1, verse 80.

After four hundred silent years without a prophetic voice in Israel, John burst onto the scene like a roaring fire. His preaching was bold, confrontational, and uncompromising. As recorded in the Gospel According to Matthew, chapter 3, verse 1, he proclaimed in the wilderness of Judea, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" The impact was massive. The Gospel According to Mark, chapter 1, verse 5, notes that all the land of Judea and those from Jerusalem went out to him, confessing their sins and being baptized in the Jordan River.

John feared no man. He even confronted King Herod for his immoral marriage, as told in the Gospel According to Mark, chapter 6, verses 17 through 18. Though Herod recognized John as a holy and righteous man, the king eventually imprisoned and beheaded him to satisfy a wicked oath, detailed in the Gospel According to Matthew, chapter 14, verses 1 through 12.

Yet, despite his powerful authority, John knew his place. He continually declared in the Gospel According to Mark, chapter 1, verses 7 through 8: "There comes One after me who is mightier than I, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and loose. I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

Sadly, human nature often clings to the messenger instead of the Master. A group of followers grew up around John who elevated him above Jesus. Decades later, in the Book of Acts, chapter 19, verses 1 through 5, the apostle Paul arrived in Ephesus and met disciples who only knew the baptism of John. They had to be taught to place their faith directly in the Lord Jesus Christ. Because this movement persisted, the writer of the Fourth Gospel was careful to remind his readers that John was not the Light—he was simply a witness pointing to the Light.

When Jesus Christ walked the earth, His sinless life, divine authority, and miraculous works demanded a response. People reacted to Him in several distinct ways:

1. **Superficial Admiration:** In the Gospel According to John, chapter 7, verse 12, some casually remarked, "He is a good man." Others viewed Him merely as a prophet, as noted in the Gospel According to Matthew, chapter 16, verse 14. In the Gospel According to John, chapter 6, verses 14 through 15, the crowds wanted to force Him to be an earthly king after He fed them, desiring a political deliverer rather than a spiritual Savior. That same fickle crowd praised Him with "Hosanna!" in the Gospel According to Matthew, chapter 21, verse 9, only to scream "Crucify Him!" days later in the Gospel According to John, chapter 19, verse 15.
2. **Fearful Hesitation:** In the Gospel According to John, chapter 12, verse 42, many rulers actually believed His claims, but refused to confess Him publicly because they loved the praise of men and feared being cast out of the synagogue. The rich young ruler in the Gospel According to Mark, chapter 10, verses 17 through 22, bowed before Jesus, but ultimately walked away sorrowful because he was unwilling to surrender his earthly treasures to follow the King.
3. **Open Hostility and Slander:** Some accused Him of leading the people astray in the Gospel According to Luke, chapter 23, verse 2. Others called Him a deceiver in the Gospel According to Matthew, chapter 27, verses 62 through 63.
4. **Outright Dismissal:** In the Gospel According to John, chapter 10, verse 20, many claimed, "He has a demon and is insane. Why do you listen to Him?" Even His own family temporarily thought He had lost His mind in the Gospel According to Mark, chapter 3, verse 21. The Pharisees committed the terrible blasphemy of attributing His Holy Spirit-empowered miracles to Satan himself in the Gospel According to Matthew, chapter 12, verse 24.

The common thread binding every single one of these wrong responses is unbelief. In the Gospel According to John, chapter 3, verse 18, the Scripture solemnly warns: "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." Over and over, Jesus rebuked those who refused to believe His words, as seen in the Gospel According to John, chapter 5, verse 38; chapter 6, verse 36; chapter 8, verse 45; and chapter 10, verses 25 through 26.

But praise God for the contrast! To those who receive Him—those who cast their full reliance upon Him—He gives the right to become children of God! In the Gospel According to John, chapter 3, verse 16; chapter 6, verse 40; the Book of Acts, chapter 10, verse 43; and the Epistle to the Romans, chapter 1, verse 16, God promises complete forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and spiritual rebirth to everyone who believes.

Living It Out in Our Daily Walk

This passage gives us a clear template for our daily walk as followers of Jesus:

- Embrace your identity as a witness: You are not the Light, but like John the Baptist, your purpose in your family, workplace, and neighborhood is to bear witness to the Light.
- Avoid lukewarm religion: A superficial admiration of Jesus is not saving faith. Examine your heart to ensure you are not holding back like the rich young ruler or hiding your faith like the fearful leaders.
- Rest in your adoption: If you have trusted in Christ, you are born of God. You didn't earn your way into His family through bloodlines, personal effort, or human willpower—it was a gift of His pure grace.

A Challenge for Believers

My challenge to you this week is to examine what kind of witness you are displaying to the world around you. Are you pointing people directly to Jesus Christ, or are you letting your own ego, fears, or pursuit of approval get in the way? Make the decision today to stand boldly for the truth, call sin what it is in your own life, repent daily, and make it your life's goal to glorify the Savior in everything you do and say.

An Invitation to Trust Him Today

If you are reading this and you have never personally received Jesus Christ, please look closely at what the Scripture says: "He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name."

You cannot save yourself through religious tradition, good deeds, or family background. Salvation came at an incredible price. Jesus Christ went to the cross of Calvary, where He shed His precious blood to pay the complete penalty for your sins. Three days later, He broke the power of death and rose bodily from the grave! By His glorious resurrection, God declared beyond all doubt that Jesus is God, Savior, and Lord over all.

Right now, the Savior extends His hand to you. He offers you full forgiveness, spiritual rebirth, and eternal life. You don't have to clean up your life first; you simply need to come to Him in repentance and faith.

If you are ready to turn from your sin and surrender your life to Jesus Christ, you can call out to Him right now in your heart:

"Lord Jesus, I acknowledge that I am a sinner separated from You. I believe that You are God, that You died on the cross and shed Your blood for my sins, and that You rose again from the dead. I turn away from my sin and put my trust completely in You. Receive me today as Your child, forgive my sins, and be the Lord and Savior of my life from this day forward. Amen."

If you have prayed that with a sincere heart, God's Word promises that you are born of God and adopted into His forever family! Begin reading His Holy Word daily, walk in fellowship with other believers, and let His Light shine through your life!