

2. John the Baptist Introduced Jesus

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that Jesus is the Creator of all things. We also want to help them understand that He became a man so that He could pay the penalty for our sins so we could be forgiven. Here, we see that Jesus is the God-man who is one hundred percent God and one hundred percent man. In this topic, we are going to see that the Father sent John the Baptist to the world to introduce Jesus to the world.

John 1:14 said that Jesus is the One who is full of grace and truth. Now, we see that John 1:15-18 goes on to say, “John bore witness of Him and cried out, saying, ‘This was He of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me.’”” And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. For the law was given through Moses, *but* grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared *Him*.” John wanted to make it clear that he was sent to introduce someone who was much greater than he. John said that this One was preferred before him. John also said that the One that he was introducing existed before him.

John understood the fact that Jesus is God. Even though Jesus was born into this world six months after the birth of John the Baptist, John understood that Jesus had always existed. That was why John said that Jesus was before him. The word translated “fullness” means *to be filled and several places speaks of the fact that Jesus is filled with all of the fullness of the Father*. Colossians 1:19-20 says, “For it pleased *the Father* that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.” Paul then warned in Colossians 2:8-9, “Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” John said that we now have the fullness of God through Christ.

We have also received the abundance of His grace. The law was given to Israel at the time of Moses. The law had as its purpose to show that all people are guilty before God. Romans 3:19-20 says, “Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.” In contrast, grace and truth came to all people through Jesus. Paul explained the abundance of grace when he said in 1 Timothy 1:14-15, “And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.” Grace was shown by the fact that Jesus came to save sinners.

Jesus is also the source of all truth. In John 14:6, we read, “Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’” Jesus also said that He would send the Spirit of truth so that the disciples could bear witness of the resurrection of Jesus. John 15:26-27 says, “‘But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. And you also will bear witness,

because you have been with Me from the beginning.” The Spirit also gives us power to witness with boldness.

John the Baptist went on to describe his ministry in John 1:19-23. Those verses say, “Now this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, ‘Who are you?’ He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, ‘I am not the Christ.’ And they asked him, ‘What then? Are you Elijah?’ He said, ‘I am not.’ ‘Are you the Prophet?’ And he answered, ‘No.’ Then they said to him, ‘Who are you, that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?’ He said: ‘I am “The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘make straight the way of the LORD,”’ as the prophet Isaiah said.” Here, we see that John said that he was just a voice.

John was preaching and baptizing people in the wilderness. Mark 1:4-5 says, “John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. Then all the land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem, went out to him and were all baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins.” The word translated “remission” is also translated “forgiveness” and means *release from bondage or imprisonment*. Ephesians 1:7 says, “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.” The fact that John was a priest and was both baptizing and preaching about the forgiveness of sins immediately caused the religious leaders in Jerusalem to react.

The high priest and the Jewish Sanhedrin wanted to know who John thought that he was to both baptize and to preach about the forgiveness of sins. As a result, they sent priests and Levites to question John. These men wanted to know if John thought that he was the Christ because that was what some of the people were beginning to think. Luke 3:15 says, “Now as the people were in expectation, and all reasoned in their hearts about John, whether he was the Christ *or* not.” John immediately told them that he was not the Christ. Then, they wanted to know if he was Elijah or the Prophet. Malachi 4:5 says that Elijah will come before the Great Tribulation, “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.” Moses had written in Deuteronomy 18:15, ““The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear.”” The Jewish religious leaders wanted to know if John thought that he was one of these men.

When John said that he was not Elijah or the Prophet, the men from Jerusalem asked him who he was then. John answered their question by quoting from Isaiah 40:3 which says, “The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.’” Here, we see that John said that he was just a voice preparing people for the coming of the Lord. In that day, when a king was going to travel, he would send messengers ahead to tell the people of each town to prepare the road so that the king could ride into their town on a smooth road. Instead of telling people to prepare the road, John said that he was just a voice telling people to prepare their hearts for the coming of the Lord. The focus was on the Lord and not on himself.

That statement caused the priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask John another question. John 1:24-28 says, “Now those who were sent were from the Pharisees. And they asked him, saying,

‘Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?’ John answered them, saying, ‘I baptize with water, but there stands One among you whom you do not know. It is He who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose.’ These things were done in Bethabara beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing.” The particular priests and Levites that had been sent were Pharisees. They wanted to know who gave John the authority to baptize since he was not the Christ, Elijah or the Prophet.

John explained that His baptism was a baptism with water. In Mark 1:4-5, we also see that John baptized those who had repented of their sins and received the forgiveness that God gives to all those who repent of their sins. Many years later, Paul met some men who had been baptized by John. Acts 19:4-5 says, “Then Paul said, ‘John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.’ When they heard *this*, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.” Here, we see the men were rebaptized in the name of Jesus.

John said that there was a man standing among them that they did not know. He said that although that One came after him, He was actually preferred before John. The word translated “preferred” in this verse is normally translated “to be” or “to become”. By this statement, John spoke of the fact that Jesus had existed before John was born. John said that this One was much greater than John. In fact, John said that he did not even feel worthy to untie the sandal that this Person wore. John was not the Messiah, Elijah or that Prophet. However, he was actually going before and introducing the Messiah so he felt unworthy to even untie the sandal of that One. John wanted to make it clear he was just a voice who was introducing the promised Messiah.

The place where John was baptizing was Bethabara (Bethany). This particular Bethany was the one on the other side of the Jordan south of the area of Galilee and not the Bethany near Jerusalem. This Bethany was near the Jordan River so there was plenty of water where he could baptize those who repented of their sins. That is why the verse says that John was baptizing in Bethabara which was beyond the Jordan River.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand why John was sent before Jesus to introduce Jesus. That way they will be able to explain to others why John said that he preached a baptism of repentance to those who repented of their sins. We also see that such individuals also received the forgiveness of sins. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand the ministry of John the Baptist.