



Luke 1:17 *“And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”*

Let’s unravel the life of John the baptizer. As a side note he is not really called “the Baptist.” That is a poor translation introduced through the King James Version. John was a water baptizer. It’s about as silly as saying Jesus last name was Mr. Christ. No, Jesus is the Christ or messiah spoken of in the Old Testament. People two thousand years ago did not generally have last names. However, you may have been labeled by the position or career you have. Hence, John the Baptizer.

Matthew 11:11 *“Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has risen no one greater than John the Baptist.”*

Would you like to be destined for second best. No matter what you did in life you must finish second. To be fair, finishing second to Jesus is not all that shabby. Today we are studying this odd man named John. He is not like Micheal Jordan who rose through poverty into stardom and fame. He is not a king or A list prophet. We are taking a look at the men and women that Paul the Apostle (no last name) mentions having great faith in Hebrews 11. John is not mentioned by name. In-fact Paul might not have talked about John at all. So why include him? Read this portion of Hebrews 11 below.

Hebrews 11: 37-38 *“They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated— the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, living in caves and in holes in the ground.”*

Paul is probably talking about Elijah and those of that time period. Yet, this description fits John so well. John lived in the wilderness. That term is best described as a desert or mountainous place. The Luke 1 verse (at the top of this study) says that John came in the spirit of Elijah. It is an honor to put John near the same level as Jesus or Elijah. That is what Jesus did too! The main point is the Bible has great respect for John the Baptizer. He preached of heaven before Jesus began his ministry. Several disciples of Jesus came from John’s group. In-fact John is credited with baptizing Jesus!

Malachi 4:5-6 *“See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes. 6 He will turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents; or else I will come and strike the land with total destruction.”*

There is Jewish lore or tradition that says Elijah will return. Some of that comes from the verse above. Is it John? Is John Elijah? Jesus says both. John is the spirit of Elijah. The actual spirit? I think it means in the spirit of. John came preaching repentance. That the messiah was coming. His message would turn hearts towards the Lord. That in-turn would bring families back together in love like the verses above suggest.

What does all this history and lore have to do with faith? By faith John came out of the wilderness to preach of the Lord. That God is coming. The messiah was coming. That takes boldness and faith to preach a different word than the religious rulers of the day. By faith John

spoke out against Herod's marriage to his brother's wife. That boldness got him killed. Yet, John believed God. By faith he lived what he was preaching to the masses.

John was to be a Nazarite. Maybe not officially but the Bible says that he would act as a Nazirite would. These Nazarenes were clean people. They lived clean simple lives devoted to the Lord. If you noticed, John probably never married like a Catholic priest. He ate a simple diet and had very few possessions. By faith he probably relied on the Lord for food and shelter. It says he wore rugged garments. If you noticed, John's life looks a lot like the life of Elijah.

There was this guy carrying a cross in Victoria British Columbia in the 80's. He looked a little like Jesus. In a way He basically looked like John. I know people avoided him. Apparently five years later he put the cross down. His job of spreading the gospel was finished. How odd must John have been. But by faith he preached. He spoke out about injustice. It cost him his life. Yet, by faith he is now famous in the Bible. Something he probably would have rejected personally.

Matthew 17:12 *"But I tell you, Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but have done to him everything they wished."*

There must have been something about John. He never waivered from the message that the messiah was coming. He preached many of the same things Jesus did. How many religious rulers ignored John. They tried to ignore Jesus but couldn't. Yet, the Bible said that Elijah would come. Nobody saw the connection when Jesus started doing miracles? The messiah was supposed to be a redeemer. The Jewish community thought that he would come as a military leader. What did they expect of John if he truly was Elijah?

Matthew 16:14 *“They replied (About Jesus), “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”*

Even Herod thought Jesus might have been the risen John. This man affected the whole community. By faith he made the noise of God loud. They even thought Jesus might be him! What is your noise? We are not John or Jesus, but we are able to speak for the Lord. To proclaim the coming kingdom. John is an amazing man who lived a difficult but simple life. He did not live that long. Yet, his legacy is massive. What words about Jesus could you proclaim to change a life? To leave a legacy like John the Baptizer?