

" True Testimony Points to Jesus"

Scripture: *John 1:15-28*

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Biblical Context: John 1:6-10

I. Introduction

- a. When a person writes or speaks their experience (testimony), the words used can be an indication of who they really are and what it is in which they believe. The thoughts may have been in mind for years, but they remain unknown unless written or spoken. If the eternal Word remained with God in the unseen heavenly world, he was to a large extent hidden and unknown, but when God became a human being (flesh) in the person of Jesus Christ, the Word could be seen and heard by all.
- b. Although John preceded Jesus, in both his birth and his ministry, Jesus preceded John in that he is the ***Infinite Word***. The One who had always existed as God now took upon himself human form and made God known to humankind. He showed people what God was like, not by commanding them to keep the law given to Israel, but by supplying grace and truth in unlimited supply to meet all their needs.
- c. John testifies as to who he is not and humbly testifies to who he is. His testimony makes it clear, Jesus is the Messiah.

Definitions:

Deity – the essential nature of God: Divinity; Kingship, God as the Supreme Being.

Incarnation - That act of grace whereby Christ took our human nature into union with his Divine Person and became man. Christ is both God and man. Human attributes and actions are predicated of him, and he of whom they are predicated is God.

Glory - The glorious moral attributes, the **infinite** perfections of God (Isaiah 40:5; Acts 7:2; Romans 1:23; 9:23; Ephesians 1:12). Jesus is the "brightness of the Father's glory" (Hebrews 1:3).

II. Conclusion of the Prologue

Vv. 15 In a society steeped in traditionalism, John the Baptist humbly proclaims the deity and the divine and infinite greatness of Jesus over and above any greatness ascribed to himself. The Baptist expresses in John 3:30 when speaking of Jesus, "He must become greater; I must become less." This is a society in which the age of, or the societal involvement of a man might be superficially construed as the depth or height of his wisdom importance or status (sounds familiar, huh?). John the Baptist whom many considered and even proclaimed to be a prophet readily expresses that Jesus, though by way of human birth was six months younger than himself, and whose ministry began following that of the Baptist, was of greater measure and existed before him (**Col. 1: 15-**

18). John the Baptist testifies to Jesus' "Eternal Existence, and Preeminence (Superiority) and Deity". This also speaks to the Baptist's revelation of his ministerial role. John's mandate from the very beginning of his ministry of repentance was to prepare a people for the coming of Christ.

Vv.16 The fullness of Christ being expressed here speaks to both his human nature and his Divine attributes. As to his humanity, Jesus was fully and completely human with all the physical limitations, frailties, and temptations of humanity. As to his Divine attributes, he was fully and completely God, whereby encompassed in him is the immeasurable, inexhaustible character, compassion, deity, and glory of God given by God (**Col.1:19**). All that God the Father is, Jesus is! Does God clothing himself in flesh make him any less God? No. Therefore, to those that believe on him, graces are given one upon/in place of another. This tells us that our belief in Jesus as the Son of God insures infinite blessings, blessings without measure! We may stumble, we may fall, we may feel inadequate, may endure pain, illness, or despair but we can be assured that Jesus has in abundance all that is needed to restore, to reconcile, to comfort, or to heal us and that he freely imparts those graces to all that believe on him.

Vv.17, 18 The Law, in all its perfection, was given in order that we might know the desires of the Father for righteous and obedient living. However, the Law was not given to impart salvation or to redeem mankind to the Father. It fell well short of accomplishing either. Grace came by the shedding of blood, of God's own "Sacrificial Lamb", the blood of Jesus. The one and "**ONLY**" Son. The sacrificial offerings that were given by the Jews throughout their history were incapable of such redemption and reconciliation. Only by believing in the Son (Jesus) can one know the Father (God). Only by the One that has seen the Father and is intimately present with the Father can we come to know the Father (**Ex. 33:20**). It is the intimacy of the Son towards the Father that allows the Son to present the Father to us. The truth of who God is, is revealed by first believing in the Son (**Jn.8:31-32, 14:6**). We cannot know one without the presence of the other (**Jn. 14:9**). By Christ's incarnation mankind was given a glimpse at God. It is by his living as man that Jesus has revealed God the Father and brought him out for all to see. Note also that this is the first time the name Jesus is mentioned in the Apostle John's writing. This offers even more clarity as to whom the Apostle is referring to as the "WORD" that was present in the beginning.

III: The Deposition (see Luke 1:11-17,3:15)

Vv.19 The responsibility of the priests and Levites here was to inquire into or examine the legitimacy of those claiming to be prophets. Their primary reason for being sent by the Jewish leadership was to hear John's affirmation of himself. Surely, they were aware of the Baptist's Levitical heritage and miraculous conception and now some were even thinking that he might be the Messiah. But who does this baptizer perceive himself to be? By direction of their leaders, they were sent for the sole purpose of checking out this unauthorized, untrained, teacher/preacher. Is he one of those... false prophets? Or might this Baptizer be the fulfillment of prophecy from long ago?

Vv. 20-21 John the Baptist was certain of what his divine assignment was not. “I am not the Messiah”. John renounces himself so that Jesus might be elevated. Verse 8 of this chapter is clear in its declaration that John the Baptist was not the “Light”, but a witness to the Light. Luke 3:2 tells us that the “Word” of God came to John the Baptist in the desert. It is evidenced that by the “Word” of God, John’s divine assignment was revealed to him there. John is careful to direct honor to the giver of the assignment. John was made aware that the Messiah was coming, and he was to work towards preparing the people for His arrival. John makes it emphatically clear that he is not the “One” coming to save the nation.

- **Elijah? “I am not”.** The Jews knew of the prophecy stated in **Malachi 4:5**. Their expectation was that this same Elijah who never died (II Kings 2:11) would return to announce the end times. In this sense John is correct in his answer. However, even before his conception or birth, the Angel of the Lord informed his father Zachariah that John would go on before the Lord in the spirit and power of Elijah (Lk. 1:17). This is the same sense in which Jesus proclaimed John to be Elijah (Matt. 11:14).
- **The prophet? “No”.** (see Deut. 18 :15,18)

Vv. 22-23 John is certain of his divine assignment. “The Voice”. John had come to testify about Jesus. However, the priests and Levites kept asking him about himself. The Baptist applies the prophecy of Isaiah 40:3 as his ministry purpose/divine assignment. John came with a proclamation of repentance of sin in preparation for the coming of the Messiah. But he was not the Messiah. This was his divine assignment, the purpose of his ministry. John is clear that his position is only that of a “Cryer”. He is the voice used by God to announce the coming of the Messiah and to warn of the need for repentance. “Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven has come near”! Get your house in order!

Vv. 24-27 Here the narrative changes. **By what authority do you baptize?** Jews were not accustomed to being baptized because they were considered children of the covenant. By ordinance of the Sanhedrin, baptism was required only for those converting to Judaism. John was shaking up the establishment by baptizing Jews! The Sanhedrin was convinced that only the Messiah, or Elijah, or the prophet had the authority to take such action. John is quick to direct their attention away from himself and towards Jesus. Herein lies a lesson for us. John did not argue his authority to baptize, but instead gave reason for his baptism. He pointed to the One who gave him charge to baptize. John directed their attention to Jesus, the Messiah, and the ever present Christ, the Savior whom he was preparing a people to meet. Verse 10 of this chapter sets the stage for John’s answer as to why he baptizes. **“He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him”.** John will continue to preach repentance for the remittance of sin and offer baptism until Jesus is revealed to the world. John closes out this interrogation by again admonishing the preeminence of Jesus by noting his unworthiness in performing even the most menial tasks on his behalf.