

**John the baptist**

The angel told Zacharias about his child to be born whose name would be John <sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> 1:14-17

*'For he shall be great before the Lord, and wine and fermented drink he shall not take; and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb. And many of the people of Israel he will bring back to the Lord their God. And he will go on before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.'* <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 1:15-17

• **A great man who will bring people to God**

John the Baptist was a very great man. 'He shall be great before the Lord', said the angel. Not only would Zacharias and Elizabeth rejoice to have their prayers answered, many people would thank God that John the Baptist had been born. 'And you shall have joy and exultation...' said the angel, 'and many will rejoice over his birth' <sup>1</sup>. John the Baptist would bring many people to repentance; many would rejoice because he had brought them to know God.

<sup>1</sup> 1:14

• **Greatness is 'achieving something for God'**

They would rejoice because of the greatness of John's ministry. 'For he shall be great before the Lord' <sup>1</sup>. But what is greatness? Is it wealth? Is it popularity? An easy life? Greatness is living for God and achieving something for God.

<sup>1</sup> 1:15

**1. John's unusual life would require unusual discipline.**

• **A particular call**

1. **John's unusual life would require unusual discipline.** He would be called to avoid the weak diluted wine that was generally used by the people of Jesus' day. Jesus' first miracle involved making hundreds of litres of this diluted wine, but John's ministry would require the total avoidance of any kind of wine. 'For he shall be great before the Lord, and wine and fermented drink he shall not take...'. Some believers are called to go beyond others in their discipline or their abstinence from the ordinary blessings of life.

**2. John's ministry would involve the power of the Holy Spirit**

• **The Holy Spirit is never totally within our control**

2. **John's ministry would involve the power of the Holy Spirit.** It was a very unusual blessing for John when it was said '...and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb'. John seems to have come to salvation in the womb. He was born believing! This seems to be entirely unique in the story of the Bible. It certainly teaches us that the Holy Spirit is totally sovereign in the way He does things. From the earliest days John grew up conscious of the power of the Holy Spirit upon him.

• **The great proof**

The Holy Spirit is never totally within our control. No one can 'switch on' the gift of the Holy Spirit. Even Jesus waited thirty years before He received the Spirit. The Spirit can be asked for in faith but you are never entirely in control.

**3. John had an 'Elijah ministry'**

The great proof of the sovereignty of the Spirit in this matter is John the Baptist. He knew the power of the Spirit from infancy!

3. **John had an 'Elijah ministry'.** He would have 'the spirit and power of Elijah'. He would bring spiritual awakening to Judea, and this would overcome the barriers between children and their fathers. He would 'turn the hearts of the fathers to their children'. It would overcome the barrier between ungodliness and godliness in the land. He would turn

• *Thousands of ordinary people brought out of darkness*

'the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous'. Elijah was able to swing an entire nation around for God. John had a similar calling. Some people have this special ministry. John would one day preach in the desert of Judea not far from Jerusalem. Hundreds of people would come under conviction and would seek forgiveness from God. John was able to bring thousands of the common people out of spiritual deadness and formality into liveliness and eagerness for the coming of the Messiah, Jesus.

**4. Spiritual power consists of being able to bring people to repentance.**

**4. Spiritual power consists of being able to bring people to repentance.** John was a 'charismatic' even before he was born! <sup>1</sup> But what did his power consist of? Healings? Prophecies? Miracles? No, none of these things. But he was able to bring men and women to a conviction of sin. He was able to bring them to repentance. Even Pharisees would come seeking forgiveness from God. One has to have spiritual power to convict Pharisees! Yet John would be able to touch hardened fathers, backslidden children, soldiers, Pharisees, religious people, and wicked people.

<sup>1</sup> See 1:44

**5. The mark of John's revival was that it bridged the generations.**

**5. The mark of John's revival was that it bridged the generations.** When there is spiritual backsliding, the fathers and the children become distant from each other. Spiritual awakening changes that. This is one of the marks of spiritual revival. All ages are reached with the preaching of God's Word. In times of spiritual decline the churches reach only women and children. Certain types of preaching only reach intellectuals, and yet those intellectuals do nothing for God. But when God is moving powerfully every kind of person is touched, and it would be this way in the ministry of John the Baptist.

• God's

**6. John had a ministry of preparation.**

**6. John had a ministry of preparation.** He would lead a great spiritual movement but it would be only the beginning of what God was about to do. He would bring into being a 'people prepared'. Then some months after the spiritual awakening led by John the Baptist, Jesus Himself would come. Jesus would have only a short ministry of just over three years. Yet the people were ready for Jesus to come. They had been prepared by John. Sometimes there is a preparatory movement of the Spirit before God works in great blessing. We do not have to prepare ourselves to believe in Jesus. Not at all! But in movements of revival God often does a work of preparation. One movement of the Holy Spirit is followed by something yet greater. John was followed by Jesus.

• God's

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