

# POWERFUL PREACHING #1

## John The Immerser

In the first chapter of Luke, we read of the priest Zacharias being visited by an angel and told of the future birth of a son (Lk. 1:13). The angel told Zacharias what type of man John would become. He said,

For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord (Lk. 1:15-17).

John was to be a powerful preacher!

## John's Forerunner: Elijah

John's predecessor in the Old Testament was Elijah the prophet. And, inasmuch as John was to come in the "spirit and power" of this great prophet, it behooves us to examine his life a little closer.

Elijah was not without his moments of weakness, but by far his life is characterized as one who fearlessly fought for the Lord (1 Kgs. 19:1-4). Elijah was the man who faced wicked king Ahab and delivered the message that famine would come upon the land of Israel (1 Kgs. 17:1). Later, as God was unfolding His plan, Elijah met Ahab and was accused of troubling Israel. However, Elijah plainly pointed out, "I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou has followed Baalim" (1 Kgs. 18:17). As events unfold, Elijah challenges the prophets of Baal to a contest to see who is the true God, Jehovah or Baal (1 Kgs. 18:21-24). They foolishly accepted and were shown to be frauds. In fact, during the course of the contest, Elijah mocked the men in their religious vanity. As the false prophets were trying to invoke a response out of Baal, Elijah said, "Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked" (1 Kgs. 18:27). They responded by doing what Elijah sarcastically jeered (1 Kgs. 18:28). When the contest was finally over, and Jehovah was shown to be the true God, Elijah killed the prophets of Baal--all 450 of them (1

Kgs. 18:40, 22).

Moreover, as time progressed, Ahab and his wife, Jezebel, killed Naboth for his vineyard (1 Kgs. 21:1-14). It was Elijah's duty to pronounce punishment. He told Ahab, "Thus saith the Lord, Hast thou killed, and also taken possession?...Thus saith the Lord, In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine" (1 Kgs. 21:19). Concerning the evil queen, it was said, "And of Jezebel, also spake the Lord, saying, The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel" (1 Kgs. 21:23). Elijah spoke plainly and forcefully, even to the king and queen of Israel.

### **The Likeness of Elijah In John**

When we turn to the New Testament of Jesus Christ, we see that what the angel told Zacharias, came true. John truly came in the "spirit and power" of Elijah! Notice John and his preaching among the Jews of his day.

But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire (Matt. 3:7-12).

John was a common man. He wore camel's hair and a leathern girdle for clothing, and ate locusts and wild honey for nourishment (Matt. 3:4). Like his plain way of living, John had a plain way of preaching. He did not use flowery speech, full of "sweet-nothings." When people asked him questions, he did not "hem" and "haw" about the answer, but gave a clear and distinct response (Lk. 3:10-14). In his preaching, he followed the example of his prototype, Elijah. John got the message across, leaving no room for doubt.

### **Jesus' Thoughts About John**

Even though John was a "rough" man, Jesus gave him a high commendation.

Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind? But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? behold, they that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet. For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist (Matt. 11:7-11).

Jesus said that John was not a man who felt the breeze and bent that way. He was not one who catered to the rich and influential. John was a man of God, true and faithful to his calling, and Jesus said that "among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist!" What powerful praise for a powerful preacher! Would to God there were more like unto John.

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