

The Witness Of John

Luke 3:1-20

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We come to a new section in the Gospel of Luke. It runs from Luke 3:1 to Luke 4:13. It is the introduction of the Son of Man. So we had the preparation of the Son of Man, and now we have the introduction of the Son of Man. And Luke introduces the Son of Man in four ways, which we will look at over the next three weeks. First, Luke introduces Jesus through John the Baptist in his ministry; second, through the baptism of Jesus at the Jordan River when the Father said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," (Matthew 3:17); third, through His genealogy, which Luke gives us from Adam and traced through the line of Mary; and fourth, through Jesus' temptation. So we will be introduced to Jesus through the witness of John the Baptist, through the witness of Jesus' baptism, through the witness of the Son of Man by His genealogy and through the witness of Jesus in His temptation.

This time we will see the first introduction, through the witness of John the Baptist. What a man John was! Jesus said about John, in Matthew 11:11, "Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist." When Jesus said, "among those born of women," that pretty much covers everyone. Everyone is born of a woman. Jesus is saying that John is the greatest individual who has ever lived; at least up to that point, and I would venture to say, even today. John is second only to Jesus Christ Himself.

John was the last of the Old Testament prophets, and he was the first of the New Testament preachers. Actually, John was born into the tribe of Levi, so he could become a priest. He was called by God to be a prophet, and then he became a preacher. So he was the greatest man who ever lived, born a priest, became a prophet and became a preacher.

And since John was the last of the Old Testament prophets and the first of the New testament preachers, he bridged the gap between the old covenant and the new covenant. Isaiah 40:3 is a marvelous prophecy where it is predicted that John the Baptist would come to prepare the way for Jesus. He is called, "the voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.'"

John's mission was quite simple: number one, he would "prepare the way of the Lord"; number two, he would point people to the Lord; and number three, he would get out of the way of the Lord. John said, "He must increase, but I must decrease," (John 3:30). I like that.

All four Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke and John—record the ministry of John the Baptist. I want to put that ministry into four categories. First, we will look at John's preparation for his ministry, verses 1-2. Luke says, "Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, while Annas and Caiaphas were high priests, the word of God came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness."

Let's first look at John's home, which is hinted at in verse 2. He was "the son of Zacharias." In Luke 1:5-6, it says that John's mother was Elizabeth. And we know the story of how Gabriel came to Zacharias when he was in the Temple doing his priestly duties to say that his prayers had been heard, Elizabeth would give birth to a son named John and he would be great in the Lord's sight.

But the point I want to make is that John was born into a godly home. Luke 1:5-6 says, "There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah. His wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless." John's father was a priest, so they were of the tribe of Levi, and John's parents walked blameless in God's commandments and ordinances. How's that for a godly home! And angels visited his father before John was born to announce his birth.

Homes are the maker of men. Homes are where children are molded, developed and shaped. God uses the cradle of civilization, the home. As goes the home, so goes the nation. As goes our nation, so goes the world. So the home is very important. Nothing can take the place of a godly father and a godly mother and the influence they would have upon their children in that home. So God give us godly families and godly marriages.

Second, notice John's consecration, alluded to in Luke 1:13-15, when it was announced by the angel, Gabriel, to Zacharias that John "will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink." So he would be separated as a Nazarite. "He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb."

How's that for preparation?! John was born into a godly home and filled with the Spirit while he was still in his mother's womb. How marvelous that is! So this is his preparation in the area of his consecration to God.

Third, notice his preparation in Luke 1:80. "So the child grew and became strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his manifestation to Israel." John abandoned the priesthood in the Temple, he went into the wilderness of Judea and God was prepping him, teaching him to not only be a priest but to be a prophet and a preacher.

Think of how many great men of God were called out of the desert. Moses was one great example. He was 40 years in Pharaoh's court becoming somebody, 40 years out on the back side of the desert becoming nobody, then for 40 years God used somebody who became a nobody for His glory and the exodus. God called Moses out of the desert in the burning bush. Moses was 80 years old when God called him. I just want to sit down and rest when I hear that! Moses was just getting started at 80 years of age! Wow! That's amazing. So God help us to trust Him to prepare us and to use us!

If you're old, God may take you to the desert, but He's not through with you yet. David was called from the desert. Jesus was tempted in the wilderness before His public ministry began.

Then, fourth, notice John's calling in his preparation, Luke 3:1-2. He was called during a very dark time. Here we see Luke the historian of the first rate. He didn't just say, "In a land far, far away a long, long time ago lived a king." No; he mentions, using Roman authorities from the top down. He mentions Tiberius Caesar. The Caesar who reigned when Christ was born in chapters 1 and 2 was Caesar Augustus. Now we have Tiberius Caesar. Then there is Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of Judea and then there is Herod. This Herod was Herod Antipas. He was the son of Herod the Great, the one who slaughtered the babies at the birth of Jesus, in Matthew 2. Then there is "Philip, tetrarch of Iturea and the region of Itrachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene."

The word "tetrarch" literally means "fourth part." Keep that in mind. It refers to the fact that there were four divisions of the land. These Roman governors were responsible for different areas that we would call "counties" today. They would rule over a fourth part of the land.

Then there were two high priests, Annas and Caiaphas. That was mentioned to show you how corrupt and in cahoots the priesthood became with Rome. When Annas was the high priest, he was taken out by Rome and replaced by Caiaphas, his nephew. Then we know that Caiaphas was corrupt and in cahoots with Rome. They were kind of like the Mafia of their day; they were placed there by the Roman government. That's the reason there were two high priests. Annas was technically the high priest for life, but Caiaphas was appointed to that position by the Roman government. So the priesthood was corrupt. The point I want to make was that John the Baptist's calling came during a time of darkness in the land.

I have never seen America so dark in all my life as it is now. May God call men to preach His Word! I can't help preach this passage but think about the time today in our own nation and the need for God to raise up men to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Now notice John's call, in verse 2. "The word of God came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness." That is a descriptive term for God's calling to John to go preach. I believe that every man who is called to preach should be called by God, in a clear call of God, that they would hear the call of God and then go preach the Word of God. So God's call came not to the wicked rulers of Rome or even to the priests, but it came to God's chosen man, John the baptizer. The greatest need in our world today is for men of God, who are called by God, to preach the Word of God.

You say, "Well, Pastor John, you just say that because that's your calling, that God has called you to preach the Word." There may be some truth to that, but I'm convinced that the greatest need in the world today, starting with the United States of America, is the need for men of God, who are called by God to preach the Word of God. If you want to transform the United States, transform the pulpits of our nation.

I have a passion that has never waned, and this year I'll be speaking to a lot of different pastor groups. My passion is that pastors preach the Word. Nothing more and nothing less. They need to make that the primary purpose and calling of their ministry. The number one purpose

and priority of the pastor is to be a preacher of God's Word. If every church today had men in their pulpits who preached the Word of God, we would see a transformation of our nation. If only the Word of God was preached from our pulpits and brought back into our nations! Jesus said, "The harvest is truly great, but the laborers are few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest," (Luke 10:2).

I was thinking about the children in our Sunday school. Wouldn't it be awesome if the next Billy Graham was in our Sunday school right now? When I see the kids running around the campus here at church, I say, "Lord, raise up a John the Baptist. Raise up a Billy Graham. Raise up pastors. Raise up missionaries, preachers and teachers of Your Word to preach the good news of Jesus Christ!"

So that was John's preparation. Second, we now see John's preaching. This is the largest section in this passage, verses 3-14. I want to point out three things about John's preaching. Number one, John's preaching was preparatory, verses 3-6. "And he..." that is, "John the Baptist" "...went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins." So Luke records right at the beginning of this section that John came to the wilderness and out of the wilderness preaching. Every time the word "preaching" appears in our text, it is the idea of heralding or proclaiming the good news, the Gospel.

So John preached the "baptism of repentance for the remission of sins." He didn't preach that baptism forgives our sins, but if you repent and are saved, then you are baptized as evidence of your salvation. Baptism is an outward showing of an inward reality. So verse 3 summarizes John's ministry of preaching, which was preparatory.

Verse 4, "...as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet..." He is quoting Isaiah 40:3-5. "...saying: 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord; make His paths straight. Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill brought low; the crooked places shall be made straight and the rough ways smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.'" John was speaking of the universal focus of Luke's Gospel: "All flesh shall see the salvation of God."

Notice the prophecy of Isaiah 40:3-5, quoted here in Luke 3:4. So Isaiah and Malachi 3, both Old Testament prophecies, predicted the forerunner. John was a priest, a prophet, a preacher and he was prophesied in the Old Testament that he would be the forerunner of the Messiah.

John's baptism was interesting, because the Jews would baptize Gentile proselytes. Once a Gentile became Jewish, he had to be baptized and circumcised. But this was a rite of the Jews that would prepare their hearts. John's ministry was to prepare the nation of Israel for the receiving of Messiah. John would point to Jesus and say "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). John was preparing them by their repentance, getting right with the Lord, baptizing them and then he would point them to Jesus.

Now I want to talk about baptism as it relates to repentance and salvation. Baptism is a rite, a

ritual. If you're not born again, or saved or regenerated when you get baptized, it means really nothing; it's just a rite or ritual. You'll get wet but you're not forgiven. Baptism does not save you. Baptism does not forgive your sins. Baptism is an outward showing of an inward reality.

So if anyone has been taught that baptism is necessary or essential for salvation, that's not what the Bible teaches. The Bible says, "By grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast," (Ephesians 2:8-9). So if you say baptism is necessary for you to be saved, you've added works to salvation. Then salvation's no longer by grace.

You say, "Well, don't you have to believe?" Yes; but that's not a work. Trusting in Christ to save you by faith is not a work. But that's the first step.

So the baptism of John was only for those who repented. And repentance was part of believing; you change your mind—the Greek word is "metanoia"—about your sin, and it involves a turning around 180-° You change your mind about your sin, about the Savior, you turn around from the sin and then you begin to pursue a life of following Christ. It is coupled together with believing in Jesus; if you forsake sin, then you must receive the Savior.

Have you removed all the hindrances in your life as you are preparing to follow the Lord?

Notice John's preaching in verses 3 and 5. He preached "a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins." He was "the voice of one crying in the wilderness....'Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill brought low; the crooked places shall be made straight and the rough ways smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.'"

Whenever a king traveled in those days, they had someone go in front of the king to smooth out the rough roads. If there were holes, they filled them up. If there were bumps, they smoothed them out. If the road was crooked, they straightened it out. So they prepared the way for the king.

That's the language that is being used here. John is the forerunner of Jesus, the King. And it's speaking of our hearts, taking away anything that would hinder our trust in Christ or belief in Him. So we need to remove from our hearts any hindrances that would keep us from Christ.

So John's preaching was preparing people for Christ. And number two, John's preaching was powerful, verses 7-9. "Then he said to the multitudes that came out to be baptized by him...." So we have all these hundreds, maybe even thousands of people, in the Jordan Valley near the Jordan River. And John introduced his message by saying, "Brood of vipers!" How's that for an introduction?! He basically called them a bunch of "snakes in the grass." John grew up in the wilderness, and he saw snakes out there. And he knew that when there was a fire in the desert, the snakes would flee from the fire into the river.

He continued, "Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" John was a fiery preacher who eschatologically predicted future events of the judgment or wrath of God to come.

“Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones.” The people boasted that they were Jews, children of Abraham, so they wouldn’t go to hell or be judged. They thought they were saved by the fact they were Jews. But John said, “No, that’s not going to work.”

And in verse 9, John said, “And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.” John’s preaching was powerful.

The thing I like about John the Baptist is that he didn’t hesitate to preach about a future, coming judgment of God. He told them to prepare their hearts, to repent, turn back to God or there will be retribution and judgment for their sins.

I believe the great need in our country today is for fearless, called, Spirit-filled preachers who preach the whole counsel of God. It’s popular today in many evangelical churches to not preach about sin, to not preach about the wrath of God or the judgment of God. But John mentioned the hellfire and judgment. He would be called “a hellfire preacher” today.

And don’t forget what Jesus said of John, “Among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist.” And John would introduce his sermons with “All you serpents!, repent and get right with God.” The people might say, “Oh, this isn’t very positive! This doesn’t make me feel good!” The preacher’s job is not to make you feel good about your sinful lifestyle. It’s to convict you, not comfort you. It’s to comfort the afflicted and to afflict the comfortable. That’s the job of the preacher.

One of my favorite passages—I call it my life verse—is 2 Timothy 4:1-5, where Paul says to Timothy, a pastor, “I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.”

In the Greek, “Preach the word!” is a solemn charge. He says, “I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ.” “Preach the word”; nothing more and nothing less. You don’t add to the Word, and you don’t take away from the Word. You don’t say, “I’m going to take out this wrath part, this judgment part. Repent? No; we don’t use that word.” The Bible says, “Preach the word!” And don’t substitute the Word with something else like a feel-good, happy, life-coach kind of sermon. Be faithful to preach the Word! The word “preach” here actually means “to herald, to proclaim.” The Word is the whole body of Scripture.

And Paul tells Timothy—and us—how to preach the Word. “Be ready...” or faithful to preach “...

in season and out of season” or when it’s popular and when it’s not popular. “Convince, rebuke...” or “reprove,” which means to lay blame “...exhort...” to preach the doctrine “...with all longsuffering and teaching.”

And why should Timothy preach the Word? Verse 3, “For the time will come...” I believe the time has come here starting many years ago in the United States. “...when they will not endure sound doctrine.” And the people in the pews “because they have itching ears, will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth...” which is “the Word” “...and be turned aside to fables.” The “itching ears” are not the preachers’ ears but the people’s ears. “Tell me what I want to hear. Tell me what is pleasant to hear.” But Paul instructed Timothy to fulfill his ministry.

I think one of the reasons, if not the reason, that America is in a mess today is because the church has not faithfully preached the Word. We’ve abandoned the Scriptures. We’ve entertained the people rather than faithfully preaching the Word of God. So my passion and my prayer is, “God, give us more faithful preachers of the Word, like John the Baptist.”

Number three, John’s preaching was also practical, verses 10-14. It was preparatory, powerful and practical. This is what it looks like when a person truly repents and turns back to the Lord. “So the people asked him, saying, ‘What shall we do then?’ He answered and said to them, ‘He who has two tunics...’ a tunic was an undergarment “...let him give to him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise.” So the people were told that if they have two coats, give one away.

How’s that for rubber-meets-the-road preaching? Go home today and check out your closet. If you have clothes you haven’t worn in six years, give them to someone in need. So John told the people to be generous with what they have. And if you have food, give to him who has need.

Verse 12, “Then tax collectors also came to be baptized, and said to him, ‘Teacher, what shall we do?’ And he said to them, ‘Collect no more than what is appointed for you.’” The publicans were the tax collectors. They were like the Mafia of that day. They were corrupt and wicked and ripped people off. They also came to be baptized. Most people would say that this was awesome. In verses 10-11, there was a big crowd of people to be baptized. “Sure, we’ll baptize you.” The publicans were rich, so “Yes sir, we’ll baptize you! You can join our church, as long as you tithe.” But John said to them, “Be honest; don’t rip people off.”

And he also addressed the Jewish soldiers, who had jurisdiction over the Temple precincts. Verse 14, “Likewise the soldiers asked him, saying, ‘And what shall we do?’ So he said to them, ‘Do not intimidate anyone or accuse falsely, and be content with your wages.’”

These answers by John are all characteristics of true repentance. Be generous, be honest, be kind, be truthful and be content. All of these are evidence of genuine repentance. If you say that you believe in Jesus and you’ve turned from your sin to Christ, then you should be generous, honest, kind, truthful and content.

But this is not what saves you. Too many times today we hear preaching that says, “Just live good, love people, be nice. ‘Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.’” That’s all fine, but that’s not what saves you. Only the blood of Christ can save you. You must be born again to enter the kingdom of God. You must repent and believe in Jesus Christ. Our good works are the fruit or result of repentance, not the cause.

Ask yourself, has your life been showing evidence of true repentance?

The third thing about John’s ministry was the promise he made, verses 15-18. “Now as the people were in expectation...” that means they were all wondering if John was the Messiah “... and all reasoned in their hearts about John, whether he was the Christ or not.” That shows how ignorant the people were of their own Scriptures as to who the Messiah would be. John was from the tribe of Levi, but the Messiah would be from the tribe of Judah. All they had to do was ask John what tribe he was from. Right away they would have known John was not the Messiah.

Verse 16, “John answered, saying to all, ‘I indeed baptize you with water....’” That would be an outward rite or ritual. “‘But One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose.’” Notice John’s promise was of a mightier Person; he was pointing to Jesus. J.C. Ryle said, “We learn from this text that a faithful minister will always exalt Christ.”

One of my favorite Black preachers in America, who has long since gone to heaven, E.V. Hill, pastored Mt. Zion Missionary Baptist Church in Los Angeles, California. You want to get blessed? Go on YouTube and type in “E.V. Hill.” Listen to some of his sermons. He said there was a woman who sat in the front row of his church who would say, “Get Him up!” (I’ve preached in Black churches; it’s fun.) At first he didn’t know what she was talking about. Finally he asked her what she meant. She said, “Get Jesus up! When you preach, pastor, lift Christ up!” I never forgot that in my preaching.

And John the Baptist “Got Him up”; he preached Christ. John said that Jesus was greater than him. John said that Jesus was mightier than him, He was to be preferred before him, He must increase while John decreases and He is “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). So John promised a mightier Person.

John also promised a mighty power, verse 16. “One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose.” John recognized his humility. “He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.” This is powerful. John was saying that he could only baptize in water, but Jesus would baptize “with the Holy Spirit and fire.” John promised that Christ, who was mightier than him, would send the power of the Holy Spirit; that He would baptize them in the Holy Spirit and fire.

In Acts 1:6, the disciples had asked Jesus if He would now restore the kingdom of Israel. He had died, He was now risen and ready to ascend back to heaven. They wanted to know if now the kingdom would start. But in verses 7-8, Jesus said, “It is not for you to know times or

seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” This happened in Acts 2.

But what we fail to note quite often is that this was the birth of the church. Pentecost was the day the church was born and formed, the disciples were baptized by the Spirit into one body and they were united and identified with Christ, the Head. Now when we believe in Jesus Christ and trust Him, we are taken out of Adam and placed in Christ, we are the church and we are united to Him, the Head. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12:13, “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.” And Jesus promised the Paraklétos, the Comforter, in John’s Gospel; that He would come, so Jesus would send the Spirit and would baptize them into one body, one church and He would fill them.

Now if you’re a believer, you can’t become a Christian without the Holy Spirit. He convicts or convinces you of sin. If you just come to Jesus and weren’t convinced that you’re a sinner, then you’re not really going to come to Christ in true repentance. So the Spirit of God convicts or convinces you, draws you and then you, by faith, trust Him to save you. At that very moment, you are regenerated or born again, you are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, you are sealed by the Holy Spirit, you are baptized in the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit fills you, empowers you, guides you and directs you. So He is mightier and will send the power of the Spirit.

And John also promised a mighty purge, verses 17-18. “His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather the wheat into His barn; but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire.” And with many other exhortations he preached to the people.”

At the end of verse 16, John said that Jesus “will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.” This perplexes Bible students. What do we mean by “fire”? We assume—and it’s possible—that the fire is related to the Spirit of God. On the day of Pentecost, there were cloven tongues of fire. Fire purifies that which is valuable and destroys that which is worthless. So it could be that John is referring to the Spirit purging us with that burning fire.

But notice verse 17—there are no chapter and verse divisions in the original—whose “fan is in His hand.” The word “fan” here means “fork,” and it is a “winnowing fork” that was used to separate the grain from the chaff at harvest time. At the end of verse 16 he mentions fire, and now in verse 17, he mentions burning the chaff with “unquenchable fire.” Verse 18, “And with many other exhortations he preached to the people.”

I believe—I could be wrong, so I’m not dogmatic about it—that the fire is mentioned in reference to the baptism and is to be tied into verse 17. And that will take place at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. It will be a fire of judgment upon unbelievers. Jesus came the first time to save us from sin by the Holy Spirit to those who repent and believe in Jesus Christ; He’ll come back the second time with a winnowing fork in His hand and will thoroughly purge His

floor.

This imagery is taken from when the harvester would want to separate the chaff from the wheat. They would have a threshing floor located in a high area and would do this on a windy day. With the fork, they would toss the grain in the air repeatedly, and the wind would blow off the lighter chaff, the outside skin or husk of the wheat, to a pile next to the grain. They would gather the chaff and burn it, because it was worthless. So this is a picture of end-times judgment.

So Jesus came the first time to baptize with the Spirit of God; He'll come the second time to baptize with the judgment of God. Notice how John describes it: "He will burn with unquenchable fire." Psalm 1:6 says, "The way of the ungodly shall perish." They are like the chaff, which the wind drives away. They'll not stand on the day of judgment. So the chaff is a picture of judgment. It's interesting that in Matthew 25:41, Jesus said, "Then He will also say to those on the left hand..." the goats "...Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels."

Here you have a preacher, who is preaching hellfire and judgment, and Jesus said of John the Baptist that he was the greatest of those who were born of women. Yet so many pastors today avoid that subject. Be faithful to rightly preach the Word, 2 Timothy 2:15. "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." Don't compromise the Word.

Now here is my last point, in verses 19-20. It's John's imprisonment. "But Herod the tetrarch..." also known as Herod Antipas "...being rebuked by him..." that is, "John." Talk about "winning friends and influencing people!"—John called them snakes, tells them that whoever doesn't repent is going to hell and that Herod imprisoned John "...concerning Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done, also added this, above all, that he shut John up in prison." Wow!

If you're ready to preach like John the Baptist, be ready to lose your head. I have seen leading, evangelical preachers and pastors interviewed on TV asked about homosexuality and gay marriage. They waffle on the subject. They won't take a stand. They won't speak up. They won't "[speak] the truth in love," (Ephesians 4:15). It's tragic and sad.

Here you have Herod, this great and powerful ruler, who divorced his wife, then seduced and stole his brother's wife. Then he married Herodias, who was his niece. John pointed right into Herod's face—doesn't say it in the Bible; I'm just being John the Baptist—and called Herod an adulterer, a sinner and told him to repent. So Herod put him in jail to silence John. And eventually Herod had John's head taken off, because Herodias' daughter seduced Herod with her dancing, went back to her mother and said, "What shall I ask for?" because Herod will give her anything she wants. So she said to Herod, "Give me John the Baptist's head here on a platter" (Matthew 14:8). His head was actually brought back to Herodias' mother on a platter. And when Jesus heard that John was executed, He became sad. He went away to pray for a

while.

If you preach the Word of God faithfully and uncompromisingly, then it will be “Off with his head! Throw him into prison!” John the Baptist was part of the long line of faithful preachers, who have been put to death for simply preaching the truth of the Gospel.

May God give us more John the Baptists today!