

John—Whom the Lord Called “None Greater”

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Jesus gave unparalleled commendation to his kinsman, the prophet John: “Among them that are born of women there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist” (Mat. 11:11). Let us explore some possible reasons for this unique accolade.

- **John knew his role and filled it:** When some thought He was the Messiah, he quickly denied it (John 1:20). He understood himself to be the “trail blazer,” the forerunner for the Christ, Whose shoes he was not worthy to untie (vv. 23, 27). He said of Jesus, “He must increase, but I must decrease” (3:30). Contrary to the claims of some, he did not build a church, but he was the first to announce that Jesus’ kingdom/church was soon to make its appearance (Mat. 3:2; 16:18–19). He did not seek to usurp a role not his.
- **John preached what he was sent to preach:** He preached repentance, a change of mind that could be seen in a change of behavior (Mat. 3:2, 8). He preached, “the kingdom...is at hand” (3:2), meaning its beginning was very near. Jesus said it would come in the lifetime of His contemporaries (Mark 9:1). Contrast their message with that of the majority of modern Protestant preachers who imply that John and Jesus were wrong, as they preach their heretical future kingdom theories. He preached and practiced “baptism” (Mark 1:4; John 1:33). From this important facet of his work alone came the epithet, *the baptist*. John’s baptism was “unto remission of sins” (Mark 1:4), that is, it preceded and procured forgiveness of sins—which would be secured with the shedding of Jesus’ blood on the cross (cf. Acts 2:38; Heb. 9:15–22). Most modern preachers deny this clear teaching of the purpose of baptism. Also, unlike most modern “baptisms,” John’s baptism involved “much” water (John 3:23).
- **John was a humble and spiritual man:** He knew nothing of self-promotion. He dwelt in the wilderness, the fruits of which provided his food and clothing and where the crowds came to hear him preach (Mat. 3:1, 4–5). He knew nothing of the gross materialism seen in so many who fill pulpits presently, especially among the “televangelists.”
- **John confronted error and evil without partiality:** He sought no praise of men, but he called the religious/political leaders of his day the “offspring of vipers” (Mat. 3:7). He dared tell a king he was unlawfully married, which led to imprisonment and eventually to his death (14:3–12). A marked contrast exists between John’s bold and fearless preaching of the Truth. Modern pulpiteers are all too often governed more by “political correctness,” creedal

statements, yearning to be popular, and/or fear of losing a paycheck than by the obligation to “preach the word” (2 Tim. 4:2).

[Note: I wrote this article for and it appeared in the *Denton Record-Chronicle*, Denton, TX, February 25, 2011.]

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