

20:20 Vision Ministries – Devotions by Roger Browning Week 6 (February 1-7, 2015)

We will continue to examine the ministry of John the Baptist in this week's devotions.

Sunday, February 1 (read John 3:22-26)

An argument developed between some of John's disciples and a certain Jew over the matter of ceremonial washing. (John 3:25)

The material in today's reading text is so current because people's methods to cause division never change. Be on guard against people who try to pit brother against brother by creating jealousy. The fact that John and Jesus are occupying the same territory (v. 22-23) gives the legalistic Jews the opportunity to try to divide the two men (v. 27). If John has a big ego, this tactic should work to perfection. As I have already pointed out, however, John the Baptist knows from the start that his job is to introduce people to Jesus, so their plan fails. A quote from Henry Varley that Roni has taped to our computer desk reads: "The world has yet to see what God can do **with** and **for** and **through** and **in** a man who is fully and wholly consecrated to Him." I believe that John the Baptist has come closer to this standard than any other man!

Monday, February 2 (read John 3:27-30)

To this John replied, "A man can receive only what is given him from heaven." (John 3:27)

The statement printed above is one of my favorite truths in God's Word. I know the validity of this statement, and yet I still get discouraged when people listening to or reading what I am teaching don't understand concepts from the Bible. No matter how eloquent the speaker may be, however, only the Holy Spirit can teach Biblical truths. The verses of the Bible are merely **words** until the Spirit places the **message** into the heart of the listener. John the Baptist knows that he has taught the Word of God to the best of his Spirit-led ability. He now experiences the joy of knowing that his mission is complete because the bridegroom (Jesus) has arrived. For John (and for Roger), "He must become greater; I must become less" (v. 30).

Tuesday, February 3 (read John 3:31-36)

For the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God gives the Spirit without limit. (John 3:34)

John the Baptist once again separates the heavenly ministry of Jesus Christ from his own earthly ministry (v. 31). Even though Jesus is a witness to everything in heaven, few people accept His testimony (v. 32). The minority who do accept His teachings can certify the validity of His words (v. 33). I hope you are among those who can testify to the truthfulness of the Word of God. The printed verse above (v. 34) refers to Jesus specifically, but it should also apply to any person who receives a call from God. The Lord's calling to me is to "**Preach the Word!**" (2 Timothy 4:2). As a result, in recent years, I have preached fewer popular novelty sermons and have chosen, instead, to use expository (verse by verse) preaching to allow God's Word to teach itself (see Nehemiah 8:8). The bottom line of the gospel is stated in v. 35-36. Everything is placed into the hands of our Lord! Those who believe in Him and receive Him into their hearts have eternal life; those who reject Him have no way of being set free from God's wrath.

Wednesday, February 4 (read John 10:40-42)

“Though John never performed a miraculous sign, all that John said about this man was true. (John 10:41b)

My heart’s desire is to fulfill these words from the mouth of Jesus for the rest of my life. Like John the Baptist, I am not a miracle worker; however, my eyes have seen more miracles than I could record in this space. Sadly, many people who have witnessed these same miracles have written them off as coincidences. The truth is, like John, I have not been sent by God to perform miracles that would bring glory (and money) to me. My job is to fulfill the words in verse 42: “And in that place many believed in Jesus.” As an evangelist, my goal is for those same words to be a testimony about every assignment God gives to me. Everything must be done **by His grace and for His glory!**

Thursday, February 5 (read Luke 3:7-14)

“What should we do then?” the crowd asked. (Luke 3:10)

The material in v. 7-9 was covered from Matthew’s gospel in last week’s devotions. We learned that Jesus is the root (vine) of all born again believers and that no other foundation can ever be laid (see 1 Corinthians 3:10-15). Beyond that fact, however, comes your **personal** and **unique** calling to follow Jesus. The answer to the question, “What should we do then?” has as many answers as there are people (v. 10). John the Baptist is wise because he was filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother’s womb (see Luke 1:15 footnote in NIV), so he understands how to apply God’s Word to the individual cases (v. 11-14). John knows that not everyone is called to be a Nazirite (see Numbers 6:1-8) like he is (Luke 1:15), so he teaches each questioner based on his/her own situation. I cannot overemphasize the importance of this concept. Do not judge anyone on the basis of **your** individual calling! Help them find **their** place in the body of Christ!

Friday, February 6 (read Luke 3:15-20)

And with many other words John exhorted the people and preached the good news to them. (Luke 3:18)

Leaders of successful ministries must learn to deflect all personal praise over to Jesus (v. 15-16). When their followers think too much of them, or worse yet, when the leaders think too much of themselves, problems occur. Memorize and put into practice the second half of John 15:5: “apart from me you can do nothing” and you will not fall to the temptation of thinking too highly of yourself (see Romans 12:3). Judgment Day is coming (v. 17). Be sure that you are among the wheat that will be gathered into His barn (the Kingdom of God). Like John, I will continue to encourage and warn my readers and listeners (v. 18). Also, like John, I expect to spend time in prison for confronting sin that our government has declared to be legal (homosexuality, abortion, pre-marital sex, adultery, euthanasia, and more). “Let God be true, and every man a liar” (Romans 3:4).

Saturday, February 7 (read Matthew 11:1-6)

When John heard in prison what Christ was doing, he sent his disciples to ask him, “Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?” (Matthew 11:2)

Try not to be too hard on John the Baptist for asking the question printed above; after all, he is about to lose his head for confronting the government. When John says, “He must become greater; I must become less (John 3:30),” this is **not** what he has in mind! Jesus commands John’s disciples to report to their leader what they have **seen** and **heard**, thus reassuring His cousin (v. 4). Even today, to those who do not believe that the Bible is the infallible Word of God, the only effective witness will be **your** personal testimony. “But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.” (1 Peter 3:15a). Tell the world what you have seen and heard **by His grace and for His glory!**