

John the Baptist

Malachi 3:1-5 Ephesians 5:5-20 Mark 1:1-8

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In the Gospel of John, the Christmas story begins “**IN THE BEGINNING**” ---

- 1 *In the beginning* the **Word**, was
and the **Word** was with God,
and the **Word** was God.
- 2 *In the beginning* **He** was with God.
- 3 **Through Him** all things were **made**;
without Him nothing was **made**
that has been **made**.

This “*beginning*” is the beginning of creation and *even before in eternity!*

John teaches us that Jesus is the eternal, all-powerful Lord of all creation. Jesus is God the creator of the heavens and the earth and everything in them. **The Christmas story is pictured as God the creator coming into the world to bring life and light to His sin-darkened, lifeless world.** The light of salvation in Christ goes into all corners of the world, and the darkness of evil cannot stop it. **Christ gives life and light to all people, nations, tribes and languages ... and you are included in that!**

Today as we continue to study the Christmas story in the Gospel of John, the apostle introduces **John the Baptist** to us. John the Baptist was the promised forerunner of the Messiah, the one prophesied in the Old Testament who will come and prepare the way. Here is the Old Testament prophecy, and its fulfilment.

"Behold, I send my messenger, and **he will prepare the way before me**. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, He is coming, says the LORD of Hosts. MALACHI 3:1

There was a man sent from God, whose name was **John**. **7** He came as a **witness**, to bear **witness** about the **LIGHT**, that all might believe through him. **8** He was not the **LIGHT**, but **he came to bear witness** about the **LIGHT**. **9** The true **LIGHT**, which **ENLIGHTENS** everyone, was coming into the world. JOHN 1:6-9

John the Baptist's work is described three times as a **witness**; he **bore witness** to the Israelites that Jesus is the Messiah, who brings them the light and life of salvation.

John the Baptist *prepared the way* by preaching **REPENTANCE** to the people. John **convicted people of sin**, and told them to **trust in the coming Savior for forgiveness**. John the Baptist was the first one to point to Jesus and say, **“Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!”**

Our Advent preparation includes **REPENTANCE** as well.

Repentance is one of the most important terms to understand in the Kingdom of God. Repentance is the only way to meet the Lord; it is the only way to understand the upcoming Christmas season.

**Repentance includes two parts:
that you are sorry for your sin,
and that you trust in Christ to forgive you.**

Sorrow for sin is a work of the Holy Spirit in your heart. The Holy Spirit works through God's powerful Word of Law, showing you where you have disobeyed the Ten Commandments. He shows you where you have rebelled against God and sinned against other people. The Holy Spirit convicts you for living in the darkness of sin. Guilt is the feeling of sorrow. Confession is the action of sorrow.

But the same Holy Spirit who **convicts** you of the darkness of sin also **comforts** you with light of forgiveness. Forgiveness of sins comes through God's powerful Word of Gospel. The “Good News” is that Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. God the creator came into the world to take your place under sin and its punishment; He was your substitute in life, and your sacrifice in death. **This is the light and life of Christ!** All of your sin and guilt was placed on Him – **every single sin – great or small** – died with Christ on the cross. In His life, death and resurrection, you are forgiven and accepted by God! In Christ, your God and Creator, you have the light and the life of salvation!

**Repentance includes two parts:
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John the Baptist's work was to preach repentance and faith to Israel in preparation for the coming Savior. He told people to repent of their sins and believe in the Messiah, who gives them the Light and Life of Salvation! **John the Baptist was the promised forerunner who testified that Jesus is the Light of the World!**

But people **rejected** John and his witness; and they **rejected** Jesus, the Light of the world.

10 He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, yet **the world did not know Him**.
11 He came to His own, and **His own people did not receive Him**. JOHN 1:10-11

Jesus was rejected as both
the **Creator of the World**, and as the **Messiah of Israel**.

The Apostle John will later explain that *people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil HATES the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed.* John 3:19-20

This is a strong warning!

It is easy to see in the world around us that *people love darkness instead of light because their deeds are evil. But don't let it happen to you!*

- ✓ Don't get lost in the darkness of this world and its ways.
- ✓ Don't reject the Light of the World!
- ✓ Don't deceive yourself that you can live in the darkness and still have faith in Christ
- ✓ Don't dismiss Jesus as just a "good man"
- ✓ Don't discard Him as just "one teacher among many."
- ✓ Don't procrastinate and say to yourself, "I'll take this seriously when I get older."

When you harden your heart towards Jesus and His Word, then you are pushing the Light aside, and you will die in the darkness of your sin, guilt and unbelief. ***If you love the darkness, then you have rejected Christ and you will be exposed and condemned on Judgment Day.***

Listen to John the Baptist!

Repent of your sin and trust Jesus to forgive you!

Let the light of Christ shine into every area of your life!

Believe that He really is the Light of the World!

Believe that that His Words reveal God to you!

Jesus is the Creator of the world Who has come into the world to bring the life and light of eternal salvation to you!

But to all who did **receive** Him, who **believed** in His name, He gave the right to become children of God, children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision nor a husband's will, but born of God JOHN 1:12-13

In Christ, you belong to God; you are a **child of God; God is your Father, Heaven is your Home**, and **you belong to His Family**. Using these **FAMILY IMAGES**, God invites you to believe that you are reconciled to Him, your sins are forgiven, and you have a restored relationship with your Creator.

**The Christmas Gospel is that God Himself, the creator of the Heavens and the earth, came into the world to bring you the light and life of salvation!
You belong to Him!**

One other thing ...

The mission of John the Baptist continues in your own life. You are like John the Baptist in other people's lives. Our witness to Christ is simple: **we just point people to Jesus and tell them who He is and what He did: Jesus is**
"the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world" .

You can do that.

You know sorrow for sin.

You know forgiveness of sins.

You can point people to Jesus and tell them that He is

"the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world" .

We live in dark times; people need the light of your witness for Christ! Most of the people in your life do not know the truth about Jesus; what they do know is warped and untrue. So many who claim to "believe in Jesus" yet live in the darkness. They neither worship Him nor obey His Word.

We live in dark times --- everyone of us could be described the way John the Baptist was described:

**"A voice of one calling in the wilderness,
'Make straight the way for the Lord.'"**

**People need you to point to Jesus
and tell them that He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!**

As we continue our **Advent preparation**, make sure you understand what **REPENTANCE** means! It is one of the most important terms to understand in the Kingdom of God. Repentance is the only way to meet the Lord!

**Repentance means that you are sorry for your sin;
and that you trust in Christ to forgive you.**

Amen!