

JOHN THE BAPTIST: THE PIONEER SOUL-WINNER

by Francis Dixon

John the Baptist's period of service probably covered only six months. He was a unique personality – rugged, severe, yet humble and self-effacing – our Lord's forerunner (Luke 7:27). Notice the following points about this pioneer soul-winner from John 1:19-37 :

HE OBEYED A DIVINE COMMISSION

John's work was undertaken under a strong sense of divine commission, and in verse 33 five words emphasise this: *"the one who*

sent me". He had been sent to do the work of soul-winning. Who had sent him? – see John 1:6. If we are Christians we too have been sent (John 20:21). Jesus was sent by God (John 6:44; 7:16; 9:4, and compare 1 John 4:14), and just as God sent Jesus, so He has sent us – look up Matthew 28:19. So John obeyed a divine commission.



Leonardo da Vinci's
John the Baptist.

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- ★ The positive feedback we have received from a number of churches and individuals who are using the paper as their primary evangelistic tool
- ★ Our fantastic writers who contribute monthly to the Challenge newspaper. Having articles that are engaging as well as informative and challenging are vital
- ★ The many faithful supporters who pray tirelessly for the Challenge ministry and staff
- ★ His constant care and protection of the Challenge building and contents.

HE DESCRIBED A SPECIFIC TASK

Why was John sent? What did he come to do? In verses 19–22, we read of a deputation sent by the Jews to ask John who he was, and in his reply he describes the work to which the Lord had called him. He was *"the voice of one calling in the desert"* v.23. We also are to be a "voice"; we are to speak. How wonderful to be a "voice" for God, a channel through whom He can speak to others! Every Christian can engage in this.

HE INTRODUCED A WONDERFUL PERSON

In the record of John's public ministry (in particular John 1:19–37), we see that he always pointed people away from himself to the Lord Jesus – see verses 24–27. Who was this Christ whom John introduced to people? In verses 30 and 34 we read that Christ was (and is) the eternal, pre-existent Son of God. We too are to speak of the Lord and to introduce Him to others. There is no vocation in the whole wide world to compare with this. But notice what John the Baptist said about the Lord Jesus :

HE PROCLAIMED A GLORIOUS MESSAGE

John proclaimed two special things about Christ. First, that He is the sin-bearer – see

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verses 29 and 36; and second, that He is the one who baptises with the Holy Spirit – see verses 32 and 33. Thus the message that John proclaimed to his hearers was that through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ they could have deliverance from their sins (Acts 13:38,39), and the gift of a new life (1 Corinthians 12:13). This is the glorious message that we have to proclaim and that this poor old world so desperately needs to hear. Christ alone has the true answer to man's need for pardon and the gift of eternal life, because only Christ can give these two great blessings. We as Christians have the privilege and the responsibility of proclaiming this message. Are we doing it? If so, will there be any results from our labours? Yes – for this work bears fruit, as it did in the case of John the Baptist

HE SECURED A RICH HARVEST

At first sight the harvest recorded in John 1:35-37 did not seem very spectacular, but think a moment. Who were these first trophies of grace who were brought to the Saviour directly through the ministry of John? They were Andrew and John; but not only Andrew and John, for verses 40-42 tell us that Andrew found his brother Peter and led him to the Lord. John's brother James would also be an early follower of Jesus. So here was a rich harvest from John the Baptist's ministry – Andrew, John, Peter, James – and the rest ... for think of the multitudes who were led to the Lord through those few!

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