

Daniel Perrin – Lesson 4: Witnesses of Christ as the Messiah – Sunday, October 20: The Testimony of John the Baptist

1. Memory Text: **John 3:3** – A PROMISE: *Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”*

2. The word “witness” first shows up in John’s Gospel in 1:7 talking about John the Baptist
 - a. *This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe.*
 - From the Gk. word: *martus* — Giving first-hand testimony & experience
 - Root of the English word martyr –willing to die for what you witnessed.

3. Witnesses are part of the theme of John’s Gospel: **John 20:31** – *...that you may believe...*
 - a. The question is: How many witnesses are we going to need?
 - Some people are NEVER convinced. IAlways waiting for that “clincher” argument.
 - Always holding out for “More Evidence”
 - John invites you to look at the evidence God HAS left for you to examine.
 - b. Sabbath’s Lesson points out that evidence in John’s Gospel comes from “Jew, Gentile / rich, poor / male, female / rulers, commoners / educated, and uneducated”
 - Starting with Lesson 4, there are 5 weeks in the study on the topic of the Witnesses: Goes through John the Baptist / Andrew & Simon Peter / Philip & Nathaneal / Nicodemus / the Samaritans / the Father / the crowd / Mary who anoints Jesus’ feet / Pilate / Thomas / the Old Testament Scriptures
 - The lesson points to Jesus’ many miracles (which John calls “signs”)
 - We have the witness of others who have come before us.
 - And *our* witness speaks to others.

4. **John 1:19-23 tells the Testimony of John the Baptist**
 - a. John is not a side-character
 - He was mentioned in the Prologue (1:6) *There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.*
 - b. John the gospel writer counts on the fact that his audience already knows WHO John the Baptist is and that he QUICKLY got the attention of the Jewish leaders by his popularity.
 - c. The priests and Levites want to know, “WHO ARE YOU?”
 - Answer: “NOT THE CHRIST”
 - Are you Elijah who Malachi predicted? – They’ve been studying the Prophecies // NO
 - Are you the prophet who Moses predicted? – More Prophecies // NO
 - The Priests and Levites have been studying Bible Prophecy
 - BUT, as we find out, they are not looking to find the truth about Jesus
 - This is a reminder to us when we study Bible prophecy – It is all leading to Jesus
 - John takes them back to misunderstood Bible prophecy: *“I am ‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Make straight the way of the LORD,’”*
 - The picture is of clearing a roadway so that it is easy for a King’s Chariot to travel
 - John wanted to make it EASY for people to recognize and listen to Jesus – prepared their hearts.
 - d. John was an Example for Us
 - #1 – He tells them, “The Bible says...” / QUOTES from **Isaiah 40:3**

- #2 – He points all attention to Jesus – Any attention that comes to John or any minister is to be pointed DIRECTLY to Jesus.
 - Pastors don't need your compliments: So important I will include 2 statements
 - Do not flatter and extol your minister, telling him what a fine discourse he has preached. Let him stand in his position as Christ's ambassador. Listen to his words as to one sent from God; heed his instructions, and **show by your life** that you have heard to some purpose. And as a humble Christian, without any parade, let the minister fulfill his duties, ... ST January 27, 1890, par. 10
 - I lift my voice of warning against praising or flattering the ministers. I have seen the evil, the dreadful evil, of this. Never, never speak a word in praise of ministers to their faces. Exalt God. Ever respect a faithful minister, realize his burdens and lighten them if you can; but do not flatter him, for Satan stands ready at his watchtower to do that kind of work himself. 1T 474.1
 - John the Baptist exemplifies this in **John 3:30** – *He must increase, but I must decrease.*

5. THE LESSON POINTS OUT that The Work of John the Baptist is to be OUR WORK TODAY

- a. John was pointing people to Jesus at the time of His first coming.
 - Like John, OUR LIVES are to be a living demonstration of the work of Jesus.
 - Like John, our messages should be clear, direct, and Biblical.
 - WE are to be the "Forerunner" who prepares the way for others to accept Jesus.
 - John didn't get caught up in minor issues of unimportance — He dealt with repentance and looking to Jesus

Spirit of Prophecy Statements comparing the work of John the Baptist to the work of the Seventh-day Adventist Church today.

1. **Testimonies for the Church v.8, p.9** – What is our work? The same as that given to John the Baptist...
2. **Testimonies for the Church v.8, p.329.2** – The experience of Enoch and of John the Baptist represents what ours should be. Far more than we do, we need to study the lives of these men—he who was translated to heaven without seeing death, and he who, before Christ's first advent, was called to prepare the way of the Lord, to make His paths straight.
3. **Testimonies for the Church v.8, p.332-333** – In this age, just prior to the second coming of Christ in the clouds of heaven, such a work as that of John is to be done. God calls for men who will prepare a people to stand in the great day of the Lord. The message preceding the public ministry of Christ was: "Repent, publicans and sinners; repent, Pharisees and Sadducees; 'repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'" As a people who believe in Christ's soon appearing, we have a message to bear—"Prepare to meet thy God." [Amos 4:12](#). Our message must be as direct as was the message of John. He rebuked Kings for their iniquity. Notwithstanding that his life was imperiled, he did not hesitate to declare God's word. And our work in this age must be done as faithfully. In order to give such a message as John gave, we must have a spiritual experience like his. The same work must be wrought in us. We must behold God, and in beholding Him lose sight of self.
4. **Prophets and Kings, p.716.1** – Today, in the spirit and power of Elias and of John the Baptist, messengers of God's appointment are calling the attention of a judgment-bound world to the solemn events soon to take place in connection with the closing hours of probation and the appearance of Christ Jesus as King of kings and Lord of lords.

Additional Spirit of Prophecy Statements on Flattering Ministers

*My heart was made glad as I heard the testimonies borne after the discourse on Sabbath. These testimonies made no reference to the speaker, but to the light and truth; and this is the way it should ever be. Praise no man; flatter no man; and permit no man to praise or flatter you. Satan will do enough of this work. Lose sight of the instrument, and think of Jesus. Praise the Lord. Give glory to God. **1888 Materials, p.143.3***

*If a minister preaches with freedom, some will praise him to his face. Instead of dwelling upon the truths he uttered, and improving upon them, thus showing themselves to be not forgetful hearers, but doers of the work, they exalt him by referring to what he has done. They dwell upon the virtues of the poor instrument, but forget Christ who employed the instrument. Ever since the fall of Satan, who was once an exalted angel in glory, ministers have fallen through exaltation. Unwise Sabbathkeepers have pleased the devil well by praising their ministers. Were they aware that they were aiding Satan in his work? They would have been alarmed had they realized what they were doing. They were blinded, they were not standing in the counsel of God. I lift my voice of warning against praising or flattering the ministers. I have seen the evil, the dreadful evil, of this. Never, never speak a word in praise of ministers to their faces. Exalt God. Ever respect a faithful minister, realize his burdens and lighten them if you can; but do not flatter him, for Satan stands ready at his watchtower to do that kind of work himself. **Testimonies for the Church v.1, p.474.1***

*All lightness and trifling is positively forbidden in the word of God. His conversation should be in heaven, his words seasoned with grace. All flattery should be put away, for it is Satan's work to flatter. Poor, weak, fallen men generally think enough of themselves and need no help in this direction. Flattering your ministers is out of place. It perverts the mind and does not lead to meekness and humility; yet men and women love to be praised, and it is too frequently the case that ministers love it. Their vanity is gratified by it, but it has proved a curse to many. Reproof is more to be prized than flattery. **Testimonies for the Church v.2, p.338.1***

*You have the example of ministers who have exalted themselves and who have coveted praise from the people. They were petted and flattered by the indiscreet until they became exalted and self-sufficient, and, trusting in their own wisdom, made shipwreck of faith. They thought that they were so popular that they could take almost any course and yet retain their popularity. **Testimonies for the Church v.3, p.236.1***

*There are many who are always ready to flatter and praise a minister who can talk. A young minister is ever in danger of being petted and applauded to his own injury, while at the same time he may be deficient in the essentials which God requires of everyone who professes to be a mouthpiece for Him. **Testimonies for the Church v.4, p.376.1***

*Then come the same things which have been the curse of some of our ministers: praise, flattery, and gifts which blind the eyes and tend to ruin the man. When he needs reproof or correction, all this kind of flattery and exaltation are just so many barriers to hinder reproof from taking effect. He feels his importance, that he is a necessity and that they can afford to give to him liberally. The Lord is dishonored and man is petted and glorified. **5LtMs, Lt 59, 1888, par. 5***

*They should seek to derive all the benefit possible from the instruction which ministers may give them from the word of God. But the ministers themselves are not to be idolized; there should be no religious pets and favorites among the people; it is the truths they bring which are to be accepted and appreciated in the meekness of humility. **Sketches from the Life of Paul, p.127.2***

Many church members act unwisely toward the minister. Often when a teacher of truth has a measure of success in his labor, he is spoiled by those for whom he has worked. Petted and praised, he begins to cherish self-admiration. Thinking that he has superior qualifications, he grows careless in regard to asking God for help. He does not watch unto prayer; and Satan obtains an easy victory over him. **Review and Herald, April 15, 1902, par. 9**

The success of a church does not depend on the efforts and labor of the living preacher, but it depends upon the piety of the individual members. When the members depend upon the minister as their source of power and efficiency, they will be utterly powerless. They will imbibe his impulses, and be stimulated by his ideas, but when he leaves them, they will find themselves in a more hopeless condition than before they had his labors. I hope that none of the churches in our land will depend upon a minister for support in spiritual things; for this is dangerous. When God gives you light, you should praise him for it. If you extol the messenger, you will be left to barrenness of soul. Just as soon as the members of a church call for the labors of a certain minister, and feel that he must remain with them, it is time that he was removed to another field, that they may learn to exercise the ability which God has given them.

*I would warn the churches everywhere to respect your ministers, but do not make idols of them; for you not only imperil your own souls, but the souls of God's messengers. Do not flatter and extol your minister, telling him what a fine discourse he has preached. Let him stand in his position as Christ's ambassador. Listen to his words as to one sent from God; heed his instructions, and show by your life that you have heard to some purpose. And as a humble Christian, without any parade, let the minister fulfill his duties, and give to others what he has received of God. We are nearing the judgment, and the Lord has set watchmen upon the walls of Zion, who are never to hold their peace day or night. They are to watch for souls as they who must give an account. **Signs of the Times, January 27, 1890, par. 9-10***