

It Is Written

*A weekly publication of the
Junction Highway church of Christ in Kerrville, TX.*

Vol. 7

September 7

No. 36

You Wouldn't Have Liked John The Baptist If...

By David Diestelkamp

- If you struggle to listen to a preacher because of the way he dresses, you wouldn't have liked John the Baptist. His clothing was rough and was neither stylish nor formal (Matthew 3:4; 11:8).
- If you don't like a preacher because of his awkward social habits, you wouldn't have liked John the Baptist. He ate an odd diet of locusts and wild honey (Matthew 3:4; Mark 1:6), "*neither eating bread nor drinking wine*" (Luke 7:33), and his disciples fasted often (Luke 5:33).
- If you don't like the inconvenience of traveling to hear preaching, you wouldn't have liked John the Baptist. He preached in the wilderness and not in urban areas (Matthew 3:1).
- If you insist that a preacher be from a certain region of the country or have a special education, you wouldn't have liked John the Baptist. He "*was in the deserts till the day of his manifestation to Israel*" (Luke 1:80).
- If you don't like lessons about real repentance that hold people's feet to the fire, you wouldn't have liked John the Baptist. He primarily preached on repentance and even refused to baptize those who had not repented (Mark 1:4; Matthew 3:2-3, 7-9).
- If you don't want to study about divorce or have unscripturally married people told they are wrong, you wouldn't have liked John the Baptist. He did exactly that with Herod (Matthew 14:3-4).
- If you want preaching to be politically correct and never offend anyone (including the government), you wouldn't have liked John the Baptist. His preaching offended the king (Mark 6:17-18) and addressed social, tax, and military issues (Luke 3:10-14).
- If you don't want to hear about caring for the poor, you wouldn't have liked John the Baptist. He taught about giving your second shirt to one who has none and sharing your food with the hungry (Luke 3:11).
- If you aren't comfortable with people confessing their sins, you wouldn't have liked John the Baptist. People regularly came to him to confess their sins (Matthew 3:5-6).
- If you are resisting being baptized for the forgiveness of your sins, you wouldn't have liked John the Baptist. He preached "*a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins*" (Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3).
- If you don't want to be baptized by immersion, you wouldn't have liked John the Baptist (literally John the Immerser) because John immersed people (John 3:6, 16; Mark 1:5, 9; John 3:23).
- If you don't like to think about God's coming judgment, you wouldn't have liked John the Baptist. He warned of the wrath to come as an ax that is ready to cut down a tree (Matthew 3:7-9).
- If you aren't interested in the kingdom of God, you wouldn't have liked John the Baptist's primary kingdom theme (Matthew 3:2).
- If you don't want criticism of religious leaders and false teachers, you wouldn't have liked John the Baptist, who called them a "*Brood of vipers!*" (Matthew 3:7-9).
- If you insist on miracles to believe, you wouldn't have liked John the Baptist, who "*did no sign*" (John 10:41).
- If you are impressed with leaders, preachers, or writers because they are popular with other leaders, preachers, or writers, you wouldn't have liked John the Baptist, who was rejected by the

Pharisees and the experts in the law (Luke 7:30).

We think, "No, no, I would have gone to John and listened to him." But if you let even one of the above things stop you now from listening to the gospel preached, you would have let it stop you when you smelled John, had to walk to hear him, or got wet in the muddy Jordan River.

Jesus said, "...among those born of women there is not risen one greater than John the Baptist" (Matthew 11:11). Jesus said John "...has borne witness to the truth" (John 5:33) and was "...the burning and shining lamp" (John 5:35). How could anyone not have liked this guy? How could anyone not have listened to him? However, it remains the same today. People won't look past the man to see the message. Jesus said there was no greater prophet, but I'm not optimistic that we would like him.

Without Me, You Can Do Nothing

By Terry Wane Benton

"I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

- Without Jesus, we cannot be saved from a useless and aimless life. With Jesus, we can.
- Without Jesus, we cannot ask God for forgiveness and get it. With Jesus, we can.
- Without Jesus, we cannot even pray to God, and God respects our prayers. With Jesus, we can.
- Without Jesus, we cannot overcome the power of the devil to get us to sin and set us on the road to hell with him. With Jesus, we can.
- Without Jesus, we cannot bear fruit and have spiritual life within us. With Jesus we can!
- Without Jesus, we cannot have the inward satisfaction and peace that all is well with our soul, and we lack a good reason for it. With Jesus, we can.

When people tell us that they cannot live the Christian life, it is because they are thinking of trying to walk that road alone. Such a life would not be the Christian life, because the Christian life is based on knowing Jesus has all we will ever need, and He wants to form a partnership, a union where we are not planning to walk alone and relying on our strength.

Knowing Christ first involves knowing that the one who is the author of our faith can be the finisher of our faith. It is knowing that "*greater is He Who is in us than he that is in the world.*" It is knowing that "*I **can** do all things through Christ Who strengthens me*" (Philippians 4:13).

If you plan to walk without Christ as your constant companion, teacher, and provider of strength, then you cannot be a Christian, period! But, if you wonder if it is possible to form a union with Christ, the answer is **yes**! He is bringing that union within reach of all of us, no matter how dark our past may have been (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; Galatians 3:26-28). No, you cannot live the Christian life without uniting with Christ, but with that union, you can. Without Jesus as the center of our camp, we set ourselves up for failure. With Jesus, you can feed and strengthen your faith daily and take on the challenge of one day at a time, but without Him, you would be aiming to fail and reap misery. You can yoke to Him and find rest for your soul, so that you **can** succeed and reap eternal life with Him.

Are you trying to go it alone? There's the trouble!