

THE QUESTION OF THE WEEK

John the Baptist was a wild man. He came out of the desert wilderness of the southwest of Israel. He called the Jews of his day to repent of the sins they had committed. There was no such thing as Confession. John called the Israelites to undergo a cleansing bath in the Jordan River so as to be washed clean of the sin for which they asked forgiveness. John made the claim of speaking for God and offering God's forgiveness to people. John was the Prophet of the Second Chance, representing the God of the second chance—and the third chance. Any number of chances. Over and over again. Be sorry. Repent. Come to be washed clean. Start over. Start anew with the help and support of God.

John's message was new and radical and controversial. The Religious leaders were not sold on John but the people were and they went out to see John in great numbers and they underwent baptism of repentance. The people of Israel had lost their way at times and been carried off at times. Always they returned—from Egypt, from Assyria, from Babylonia. Always God reconstituted them as his people despite their failures and their unfaithfulness. God renews his people despite their sin. That is the message all throughout the history of Israel.

John the Baptist's ministry is not an end in itself. His ministry is preparatory. It points to another. He comes as a voice crying out to people to be on the lookout. For what? For whom? For the Holy One of God. Why? What will the Holy One do? He will save his people. From? From their sins and selfishness and failures. The Holy One of God will give his own life as a ransom for all those who are held bound by the chains of sin and death. The Holy One of God has a name. It is Jesus. Jesus of Nazareth. Those who knew him believed him to be the Messiah, the long awaited Holy One of God. Messiah is the Hebrew word. The Greek Word for Messiah (Anointed One) is Christos. Jesus Christos. Jesus the Christ, Jesus Christ. Without Him we would have no power and we would have no hope. Have you come to realize that? That is the question of the week.

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