

**CHRIST COMMENDS A CHAMPION**  
**September 3, 2017**  
**Matthew 11:1-30**

**“Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist.”**  
**Matthew 11:11**

God sent Jesus Christ into the world to save men and women from sin and hell. He sent John the Baptist to introduce Jesus Christ as the one who would take away sin. John preached, confronting men with their sin so that he might then show them the “Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29, 36). He was imprisoned and martyred, and was faithful unto death.

While imprisoned, John sent his disciples to inquire regarding Jesus’ ministry. In response, Jesus conferred upon him the highest compliment ever given. Thereby Jesus affirmed John’s message, and rebuked all who heard John but did not believe him (Matthew 11:16-19). Why did people reject John the Baptist? Christ’s commendation of John helps to answer that question.

**1. They did not like John’s manners.** John was a “wilderness man,” wearing rough clothing and eating an austere diet—insects and that which grew naturally. This was unusual, prompting Matthew (3:4) and Mark (1:6) to report it. People faulted him, “for John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, he hath a devil” (Matthew 11:18). In sarcasm, Christ asked, “What went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment?”—some soft, palace-spoiled prince? (Matthew 11:8). Like Elijah (II Kings 1:7, 8), John did not fit in with self-commending society. His lifestyle rebuked the faithless. Jesus taught, “Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. . . . Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them” (Matthew 6:25, 26). Before Jesus taught this to His disciples, John modeled it. But according to man’s standards, this has never been deemed the way of reasonable, sensible men.

**2. They did not like John’s message.** Today John would be rejected for being too negative. He preached to the multitudes, “Repent!” He told tax collectors to stop their greedy, dishonest practices (Luke 3:13). He told soldiers to stop their violence and false accusations, and to be content with their wages (3:13-14). In front of multitudes, he humiliated religious leaders, calling them a “generation of vipers,” and asking, “who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?” (Matthew 3:7). He rebuked the king for adultery, and was imprisoned then beheaded. People do not like direct, indicting preaching, unless a special work of God has changed their thinking.

**3. They did not like John’s Master.** Opposition to God is often disguised as fault-finding in God’s anointed servants. When Christ commended John, He cited opposition that both He and John received. Those who said John was demon possessed because he dined simply called Jesus a “gluttonous and a wine-bibber” because he ate and drank with people they deemed to be sinners. John’s beheading was simply a harbinger of Christ’s approaching crucifixion. But in God’s judgment, those who suffer for Christ’s sake will be greatly rewarded in heaven (Matthew 5:10-12). And when they suffer, their persecutors are in fact persecuting Christ (Acts 9:4; 22:7; 26:14). John, rejected by man, was given the highest commendation by God.

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1. He was foretold by Old Testament Scriptures (Isaiah 40:3-8, Malachi 3:1, 4:5).
2. His birth was foretold by Gabriel (Luke 1:19).
3. His birth was miraculous: his parents were “well stricken in years” (Luke 1:7b).
4. His naming was notable, also connected to a miracle (Luke 1:13, 57-65).
5. He was anointed with the Holy Spirit from his mother’s womb (Luke 1:15).
6. He leaped within his mother’s womb upon learning of Jesus’ conception (Luke 1:41).
7. Amazement surrounded his birth: “what manner of child shall this be” (Luke 1:66)
8. “The hand of the Lord was upon him” (Luke 1:66)
9. He preached boldly, “in your face” to publicans, soldiers, professional religionists and King Herod (Matthew 3:1-12; 11:7-19; 14:1-12).
10. He prepared the way before the Savior (Matthew 11:10, 11).
11. He baptized the Son of God (Matthew 3:13-17).
12. He witnessed the Holy Spirit descending upon Jesus (John 1:32-34).
13. He introduced mankind’s Savior to the human race (John 1:15-27).
14. He proclaimed Christ as the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world (John 1:29).
15. He only ministered in the spirit of Elijah (Malachi 4:5; Luke 1:17; Matthew 11:14).
16. He was persecuted for righteousness sake (Matthew 14:1-12).
17. He was martyred for proclaiming righteousness (Matthew 14:10).
18. John stood between the testaments, under the law yet in Christ was followed by redemption from the curse of the law.
19. He was created and ordained for a specific task that could be performed only once, never repeated nor preceded.
20. He was unique in that he was the only prophet to whom was revealed the unique identity of Christ as Savior. Others “inquired and searched diligently,” without knowing in their lifetimes (I Peter 1:10).