

“The Legacy of John the Baptist”

(Luke 3:18-20)

Introduction

- As we have seen, the first few chapters of the Gospel of Luke contain a lot about John the Baptist – much more than any of the other Gospels. Luke alone described: the angelic (Gabriel’s) foretelling of John’s birth (Lk.1:8-17); the supernatural circumstances surrounding John’s conception (i.e., his parents being old and his mother was barren, Lk.1:7, 18); the birth of John the Baptist (Lk.1:57-66); Zechariah’s (John’s father’s) prophecy over John’s life and ministry (Lk.1:67-79); John’s growth into adulthood, and his living in the wilderness (Lk.1:80).

Luke also contains information about John shared by the other Gospel writers: the beginning of John’s public ministry (Lk.3:1-2; Mk.1:1); John’s preaching and baptizing (Lk.3:3-6; Matt.3:1-6; Mk.1:2-6); John’s rebuke of the Pharisees and Sadducees (Lk.3:7-14; Matt.3:7-10); John’s description of the Christ (Lk.3:15-17; Matt.3:11-12; Mk.1:7-8); and John’s baptizing of Jesus (Lk.3:21-23; Matt.3:13-17; Mk.1:9-11).

- Interestingly, however, Luke does not mention the details concerning John the Baptist’s martyrdom (Matt.14:3-12; Mk.6:17-29) – only a brief mention that he was imprisoned (Lk.3:20) and beheaded (Lk.9:9). After detailing John’s preaching of repentance, Luke summarized John’s life and ministry as follows:

Luke 3:18-20 ~ “So with many other exhortations he preached good news to the people. ¹⁹But Herod the tetrarch, who had been reproved by him for Herodias, his brother’s wife, and for all the evil things that Herod had done, ²⁰added this to them all, that he locked up John in prison.”

- From these verses, we can identify three different aspects of John’s preaching, ministry, and life. While this passage has no real interpretive challenges, the application of these truths are incredibly challenging.

1. The faithfulness of John’s preaching (vs.18)

- John was not a one-sermon preacher. But he did not preach social issues, political topics, or psychological themes. Rather, “*he preached good news to the people*” (vs.18). Specifically, the “*preached good news*” (*euangelizō*; lit. announce, proclaim, declare good news) refers to the “Gospel” (*euangelion*) of Jesus Christ. Simply put, the Gospel is the “good news” that God sent His one and only Son to die on the cross for our sins. The crucifixion of Jesus Christ was a sacrificial and substitutionary death which fully paid the penalty for the sins of all who would ever believe in Him as their Lord and Savior. His resurrection from the dead fully and eternally triumphed over sin, death, and Satan.

John 3:16 ~ “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”

Rom 6:23 ~ “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (see Rom.5:8; 8:1; 1Cor.15:3-4; 2Cor.5:21; 1Jn.3:16)

- This is interesting because, at this point, Jesus had not yet been crucified (or resurrected). How could John preach the good news of the Gospel before Jesus died for our sins? The answer is simple, yet profound. This affirms that there is (and has always been) only one Gospel. That is, the requirement for salvation has always been by God’s grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. There was a never a salvation by works, merit, or ethnic heritage.

Everyone who has ever been saved, and will ever be saved, is saved by God’s grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. The Old Testament saints were saved by their faith in the Messiah to come (Rom.4:3; Heb.11), and New Testament saints are saved by their faith in the Messiah who has come.

- In fact, known as the protoevangelium (or protoevangelion; i.e., “the first Gospel”), we first read of the “Gospel” in the book of Genesis as God spoke to Satan immediately after the Fall of Adam and Eve:

Gen 3:15 ~ “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”

- In this verse, God foretold of Satan’s eternal demise. The “**enmity**” (‘*eybah*’; hostility and animosity) is ultimately between Satan and Christ, and extends to all unbelievers who are at enmity with God (see Jn.8:44; Rom.5:10; 8:7; Col.1:21; Jms.4:4; 1Jn.3:8). The “**woman**” here is Eve, and her “**offspring**” (*zera* ‘) is ultimately Jesus Christ (see Rom.5:12-19; 16:20; 1Cor.15:45-49; Heb.2:14-15). Satan’s “**offspring**” is demons and those humans under Satan’s control (i.e., Judas, religious leaders, Roman authorities; see Acts 2:23; 4:27; 1Jn.3:8, 10).

The word translated “**bruise**” (*shuwph*) could also be translated “strike” or “crush.” Here it is used to describe an act of violence resulting in injury. Another important truth to note is the distinction between “**heel**” (*aw-kabe* ‘) and “**head**” (*roshe*). The first (“heel”) denotes a relative minor injury, and the second (“head”) a fatal injury. Christ’s crucifixion was Satan bruising Jesus’ heel, and Christ’s resurrection was bruising Satan’s head.

1 John 3:8 ~ “... The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.” (Rom.16:20)

John 12:31 ~ “Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out.” (see Jn.16:11)

Col 2:13-15 ~ “And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, ¹⁴by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵He disarmed [apekdyomai] the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over [thriambeuō] them in him.” (Rev.12:12; 20:10)

Heb 2:14-18 ~ “Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy [katargeō] the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. ¹⁶For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. ¹⁷Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. ¹⁸For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.”

- There was a great battle between Satan and Christ (of which we, until our glorification, are still feeling the effects; see Eph.6:10-20). In reality, however, Satan is a defeated foe. Christ has already won the victory over sin and Satan through His crucifixion and resurrection (1Cor.15:54-57).

✓ **Illust:** In his profoundly insightful and helpful book, *If God is Good ...*, Rand Alcorn gives us this important reminder:

“Satan is not God’s opposite, fighting a cosmic duel with an uncertain outcome. What’s the opposite of light? Darkness. What’s the opposite of good? Evil. When asked to name the opposite of God, people often answer, ‘Satan.’ But that’s false. Michael, the righteous archangel, is Satan’s opposite. Satan is finite; God is infinite. God has no equal. ...

Satan gathers people for battle and they march. But in the end one suffers not a single casualty, while the other side has not a single survivor. Fire consumes all the enemies of God. The whole conflict ends before it begins. It’s not a battle at all; it’s an execution.

Satan and God do not engage in hand-to-hand combat, with Satan sometimes getting the edge. That’s not the Bible; that’s Star Wars. Many of us make Satan too big, and God too small” (Randy Alcorn, *“If God is Good ...”*; p.51-52).

➤Based on the character and promise of God – His immutability and infallibility (Heb.6:17-18) – John the Baptist knew (as did the prophets; Is.7:14; 9:6-7; 53; Jer.23:5; Ps.22; Mic.5:2) that the Christ would defeat the devil, and that all who (by faith) received Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior would be saved. Again, the Old Testament saints were saved by their faith in the Messiah to come, and New Testament saints are saved by their faith in the Messiah who has come. This is why John could “*preached good news to the people*” (vs.18) at the beginning of Christ’s (three-year) public ministry.

John 1:29 ~ “The next day [John] saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, ‘Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!’”

John 1:35-36 ~ “The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, ³⁶and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, ‘Behold, the Lamb of God!’”

➤In Luke 3:18, we also read that it was “*with many other exhortations he preached good news to the people*” (vs.18). These “*exhortations*” (*parakaleō*; lit. to call alongside) represent different ways John urged (or encouraged, helped, counseled) his listeners to believe the Gospel. John’s preaching was Gospel-centered. He, as did the apostle Paul, preached “*Christ crucified*” (1Cor.1:23; cf. 1Cor.2:2; 9:16). He did not preach “politically correct” or “self-esteem” building messages. He did not preach cultural-affirming sermons, or preach in order to draw a crowd. Rather, in as many biblical ways as he could, “*he preached good news to the people*” (vs.18; Acts 20:20, 27).

1 Cor 2:1-5 ~ “And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. ²For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. ³And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, ⁴and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.”

2 Cor 4:1-6 ~ “Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. ²But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God’s word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone’s conscience in the sight of God. ³And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. ⁴In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. ⁵For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake. ⁶For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”

2 Tim 4:1-5 ~ “I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: ²preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. ³For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, ⁴and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. ⁵As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.”

➤As we will see, however, this does not mean that John’s ministry (nor that of the apostles) was limited to only evangelistic sermons.

2. The courage of John’s ministry (vs.19)

➤First we see the faithfulness of John’s preaching, and second we see the courage of John’s ministry.

“*But Herod the tetrarch, who had been reproved by him for Herodias, his brother’s wife, and for all the evil things that Herod had done*” (vs.19). John was not just a Sunday preacher. His ministry was not limited to office hours or religious events. As ought to be true of every preacher, and every Christian,

he lived out his Christian life every single day. He was faithful to be used by God in any and every situation.

As we have seen, “*Herod the tetrarch*” (vs.19; Lk.3:1), also known as Herod Antipas, was a son of Herod the Great (who ordered the slaughter of all the Jewish boys “*two years old or under*” in his attempt to kill baby Jesus; Matt.2:16-18). The description of Herod (Antipas) being the “*the tetrarch*” (vs.1; cf. 3:1) is in reference to the fact that Herod the Great divided his kingdom between three of his sons, appointing them to govern over different regions of the Roman empire. Herod Antipas ruled over Galilee (Lk.3:1).

As with all the Herods, Herod Antipas was an ungodly/evil man. We know he wanted to “*kill*” Jesus (Lk.13:31). We know that he knew Jesus was innocent (Lk.23:15), but still vehemently accused Jesus, allowing Him to be mocked (Lk.23:10-11), and consented to His crucifixion. Which resulted in him and Pilate becoming friends “*for before this they had been at enmity with each other*” (Lk.23:12). Herod (Antipas) did many “*evil things*” (vs.19; *ponēros*).

➤ Herod also imprisoned John the Baptist (Lk.3:20), and later had him beheaded (Lk.9:9; see Matt.14:1-112; Mk.6:14-29), because John “*reproved*” (*elenchō*; admonished or rebuked) Herod for taking his brother’s Philip’s (Herod Philip I; not Philip the tetrarch, 3:1) wife “*Herodias*” – something for which Herodias never forgave him (Matt.14:8; Mk.6:19). Herodias was an ungodly and ruthless woman (she would have killed John immediately; Mk.6:19).

John’s reproving of Herod’s immoralities could have undermined Herod’s political aspirations. Undoubtedly, Herod saw John as a political threat. Which is why he tried to silence John by throwing him in prison (vs.20).

It is hard to imagine the courage it took for John to confront Herod for his adultery. As the son of king Herod, and Roman ruler over Galilee, Herod was a man of great authority and power; and John was socially/politically a “nobody.” This would be much more than us confronting the sin of the governor of the state of Oregon. It would be much more like rebuking the president of the United States, and perhaps even closer to confronting Hitler or Kim Jong Un.

➤ Like John the Baptist, the apostles proclaimed the Gospel with courage and boldness – preaching to religious and political leaders alike.

Acts 4:12-13 ~ “And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” ¹³Now when they saw the boldness [*parrēsia*] of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus.”

Acts 4:18-20 ~ “So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. ¹⁹But Peter and John answered them, ‘Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, ²⁰for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.’”

Acts 4:29, 31 ~ “And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness [*parrēsia*] ... ³¹And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness [*parrēsia*].”

Acts 5:27-30 ~ “And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest questioned them, ²⁸saying, ‘We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man’s blood upon us.’ ²⁹But Peter and the apostles answered, ‘We must obey God rather than men.’”

Acts 26:25-29 ~ “But Paul said, ‘I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus [Roman governor / procurator], but I am speaking true and rational words. ²⁶For the king knows about these things, and to him I speak boldly [*parrēsiazomai*]. For I am persuaded that none of these things has escaped his notice, for this has not been done in a corner. ²⁷King Agrippa [Herod Agrippa II, great-nephew of Herod Antipas and

great-grandson of Herod the Great], do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe.’²⁸ And Agrippa said to Paul, ‘In a short time would you persuade me to be a Christian?’²⁹ And Paul said, ‘Whether short or long, I would to God that not only you but also all who hear me this day might become such as I am – except for these chains.’”

Acts 28:30-31 ~ “He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him,³¹ proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness [*parrēsia*] and without hindrance.”

Eph 6:19-20 ~ “and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly [*en parrēsia*] to proclaim the mystery of the gospel,²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly [*parrēsiazomai*], as I ought to speak.”

- As Christians, we too are called to be bold and courageous in our Christian faith. We must not be ashamed of Christ (Lk.9:26), or ashamed of the Gospel of Christ (Rom.1:16), or ashamed of being a follower of Christ (2Tim.1:7-8; 2:15), or ashamed of suffering for Christ (1Pet.4:16).

1 Cor 16:13 ~ “Be alert, stand firm in the faith, be brave and strong.” (HCSB)

1 Cor 16:13 ~ “Stay alert, stand firm in the faith, show courage, be strong.” (NET)

1 Cor 16:13 ~ “Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.” (ESV)

- We must be courageous to declare and defend all of Scripture. We must be ready to speak against the various evils in our world (i.e., sexual immorality, homosexuality, abortion, etc.), and speak up for purity, holiness, and the sanctify of human life. We must never cower nor cave to social or political pressure; we must never give in to fear or compromise biblical truth; we must never abdicate our God-given mission to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Matt.28:28-20; Lk.24:45-58; Acts 1:8) – even if it cost us our comfort and even our lives.

✓ Illust: Martin Luther, the Protestant reformer of the 16th century (1483-1546) once said:

“If I profess with the loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except precisely that little point which the world and the devil are at that moment attacking, I am not confessing Christ, however boldly I may be professing Christ. Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved, and to be steady on all the battlefield besides, is mere flight and disgrace if he flinches at that point” (Luther's Works. Weimar Edition. *Briefwechsel* [Correspondence], vol. 3, pp. 81f.).

- John the Baptist is a tremendous example for us of what it means to have courage (boldness) in ministry.

3. The sufferings of John's life (vs.20)

- With the first two being true, this third characteristic of John is almost a no-brainer. John's courageous faithfulness to God put him directly in the crosshairs of the enemies of God: *“added this to them all, that he locked up John in prison”* (vs.20). Among the *“evil things”* (vs.19) that Herod did, was imprison John the Baptist for speaking the truth (i.e., Herod's unlawful and incestual marriage to Herodias).
- John's uncompromising ministry and biblical message was contrary to the religious and political norms of his day. He therefore suffered opposition and even persecution, from both the Jews (the religious leaders) and the Romans (king Herod Antipas, “the tetrarch”). John's devotion to God's calling upon his life did not result in worldly fame, or even acceptance. He seemed to never enjoy any of the riches or pleasures of this world, and he did not pursue a life of ease and comfort. The religious elite largely rejected him, and the irreligious despised him. And yet, by God's power and grace, John's impact on this world was massive.

Luke 9:7-9 ~ “Now Herod the tetrarch heard about all that was happening, and he was perplexed, because it was said by some that John had been raised from the dead, ⁸by some that Elijah had appeared, and by others that one of the prophets of old had risen. ⁹Herod said, ‘John I beheaded, but who is this about whom I hear such things?’ And he sought to see him.”

Mark 6:14-29 ~ “King Herod heard of it, for Jesus’ name had become known. Some said, ‘John the Baptist has been raised from the dead. That is why these miraculous powers are at work in him.’ ¹⁵But others said, ‘He is Elijah.’ And others said, ‘He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old.’ ¹⁶But when Herod heard of it, he said, ‘John, whom I beheaded, has been raised.’ ¹⁷For it was Herod who had sent and seized John and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife, because he had married her. ¹⁸For John had been saying to Herod, ‘It is not lawful for you to have your brother’s wife.’ ¹⁹And Herodias had a grudge against him and wanted to put him to death. But she could not, ²⁰for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he kept him safe. When he heard him, he was greatly perplexed, and yet he heard him gladly.

²¹But an opportunity came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his nobles and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee. ²²For when Herodias’s daughter came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his guests. And the king said to the girl, ‘Ask me for whatever you wish, and I will give it to you.’ ²³And he vowed to her, ‘Whatever you ask me, I will give you, up to half of my kingdom.’ ²⁴And she went out and said to her mother, ‘For what should I ask?’ And she said, ‘The head of John the Baptist.’ ²⁵And she came in immediately with haste to the king and asked, saying, ‘I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter.’ ²⁶And the king was exceedingly sorry, but because of his oaths and his guests he did not want to break his word to her. ²⁷And immediately the king sent an executioner with orders to bring John’s head. He went and beheaded him in the prison ²⁸and brought his head on a platter and gave it to the girl, and the girl gave it to her mother. ²⁹When his disciples heard of it, they came and took his body and laid it in a tomb.”

Matt 14:1-12 ~ “At that time Herod the tetrarch heard about the fame of Jesus, ²and he said to his servants, ‘This is John the Baptist. He has been raised from the dead; that is why these miraculous powers are at work in him.’ ³For Herod had seized John and bound him and put him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife, ⁴because John had been saying to him, ‘It is not lawful for you to have her.’ ⁵And though he wanted to put him to death, he feared the people, because they held him to be a prophet. ⁶But when Herod’s birthday came, the daughter of Herodias danced before the company and pleased Herod, ⁷so that he promised with an oath to give her whatever she might ask. ⁸Prompted by her mother, she said, ‘Give me the head of John the Baptist here on a platter.’ ⁹And the king was sorry, but because of his oaths and his guests he commanded it to be given. ¹⁰He sent and had John beheaded in the prison, ¹¹and his head was brought on a platter and given to the girl, and she brought it to her mother. ¹²And his disciples came and took the body and buried it, and they went and told Jesus.”

- John’s faithfulness and courage – to say what God called him to say, do what God called him to do, and be who God called him to be – cost him his life. He did not flinch in the face of difficulty or adversity. He did not cave to social or political pressure. Rather, he remained resolutely focused on his mission and message from God. He was, first and foremost, a devoted follower of Christ. He lived his life before an Audience of One. Before others he had nothing to prove, nothing to gain, nothing to lose.
- The faithful and courageous Christian does not have a death-wish, but an insatiable desire to be used by God even unto death. I call this “a willing attitude toward martyrdom.” The Christian does not desire to be honored in death, but desires to see God honored even unto death!

Phil 1:20-21 ~ “as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. ²¹For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”

➤ The Christian who faithfully lives for Christ, will also be willing to die for Christ.

✓ **Illust:** John Rogers (1505-1555), a London minister, has the honorable distinction of being the first Christian martyred by England's Queen "Bloody" Mary on February 4, 1555. In total number who were burnt at the stake under Mary's four-year reign were no less than 288 (71 in 1555 alone). "Up to that day men could not tell how English Reformers would behave in the face of death, and could hardly believe that prebendaries [paid clergymen] and dignitaries would actually give the bodies to be burned for their religion. But when they saw John Rogers, the first martyr, walking steadily and unflinchingly into a fiery grave, the enthusiasm of the crowd knew no bounds. They rend the air with thunders of applause. Even Noailles, the French Ambassador, wrote home a description of the scene and said that Rogers went to death "as if he was walking to his wedding" (adapted from J.C. Ryle; *Light from Old Times*, p.39-40).

"Now when the time came that he, being delivered to the Sheriffs, should be brought out of Newgate to Smithfield, the place of his execution, first came to him Master Woodroffe, one of the aforesaid Sheriffs, and calling Master Rogers unto him, asked him if he would revoke his abominable doctrine, and his evil opinion of the sacrament of the altar. Master Rogers answered and said, 'That which I have preached I will seal with my blood.' ... And there ... the fire was put unto him. ... And, after lifting up his hands unto heaven, not removing the same until such time as the devouring fire had consumed them, most mildly this happy martyr yielded up his spirit into the hands of his heavenly Father" (J.C. Ryle; *Light from Old Times*, p.74).

➤ Suffering persecution has always a part of what it means to be faithful to God. This was true of the Old Testament saints as well as New Testament saints, and it definitely true for those who are followers of Christ. This is clearly and repeatedly stated in the Bible. Without any ambiguity, Jesus warned His disciples that they would suffer opposition, animosity, persecution, and even martyrdom for His name's sake. And, in turn, the apostles warned other Christians of the same reality.

Matt 10:16-18 ~ "Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. ¹⁷Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, ¹⁸and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles."

Luke 6:22-24 ~ "Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man! ²³Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets."

John 15:20 ~ "Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted [*diōkō*] me, they will also persecute [*diōkō*] you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours."

John 16:1-2 ~ "I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away. ²They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God."

John 16:33 ~ "I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation [*thlipsis*]. But take heart; I have overcome the world."

John 17:14 ~ "I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world."

Acts 14:21-22 ~ "When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, ²²strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God."

2 Tim 3:12 ~ “Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted”

1 Peter 4:12 ~ “Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.”

- As you may know, most of Christ’s apostles were martyred for their faith in and faithfulness to Christ (including the apostle Paul). The reason for this hatred and hostility from the world – that is, from unbelievers – is that they ultimately hate God and the things of God (Matt.10:16, 22; Jn.3:19-21; Rom.1:30; 8:7; Jms.4:4). Even if non-Christians do not conspicuously hate Christians, we know that they fundamentally hate all that the Christian worships, believes, and does in their pursuit of knowing Christ and making Christ known. Christians will be hated by those who hate Jesus Christ; they will be rejected by those who reject Christ; they will be persecuted by those who would persecute Christ.
- ✓ Illust: “No Christian is in a healthy state of mind who is not prepared for trouble and persecution. He that expects to cross the troubled waters of this world, and to reach heaven with wind and tide always in his favor, knows nothing yet as he ought to know. We never can tell what is before us in life. But of one thing we may be very sure – we must carry the cross if we would wear the crown. Let us grasp this principle firmly, and never forget it. Then, when the hour of trial comes, we shall ‘not be offended’” (J.C. Ryle; *Expository thoughts on the Gospel: John*; 16:1-7).

Conclusion

- As Christians, we are told to count the cost of following Jesus. Which implies, among other things, that there IS a cost in following Jesus.

Luke 9:23-27 ~ “And he said to all, ‘If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. ²⁴For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. ²⁵For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself? ²⁶For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. ²⁷But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God.”

Luke 14:25-33 ~ “Now great crowds accompanied him, and he turned and said to them, ²⁶‘If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. ²⁷Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. ²⁸For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? ²⁹Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, ³⁰saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’ ³¹Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? ³²And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. ³³So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.”

- The Son of God did not come to earth – to be born in the flesh, to suffer blasphemies and torture, to be crucified on a cross – so that we could have easy and enjoyable lives. Jesus did not die on the cross to make us safe and comfortable in this world. He did not wear a crown of thorns, have nails pierced through His hands and feet, so that we could be wealthy and healthy.

While we should not run after persecution, we should not run from it either. Studying the life and ministry of John the Baptist should serve as a mirror to our own lives. It should lead us to examine ourselves to see if we are truly faithful and courageous in our faith, or to discover that we are too much like the world or trying too hard to be liked by the world. May God use the truth of His Word to make us more like Christ – faithful in our proclamation of the Gospel of Christ, courageous in our ministry for Christ, and willing to suffer for the glory of Christ.