

# John the Baptist

by Leonard Ravenhill

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*Leonard Ravenhill's sermon on John the Baptist calls for a genuine pursuit of Christ and a revival of spiritual fervor in today's world.*

**Duration:** 1:55:04

**Scripture:** Malachi 3:1, Luke 1:10-13, John 1:32, John 17:6, Acts 2:2, Ephesians 5:18, Philippians 3:8, Hebrews 1:3, James 1:22, James 3:8

**Topics:** "Holy Spirit", "Revival"

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## Description

This sermon emphasizes the need for a sudden, unexpected visitation of the Holy Spirit to bring revival and transformation. It highlights the importance of seeking Christ above seeking miracles or manifestations, and the necessity of being stripped of self before being filled with the Holy Spirit. The speaker shares powerful testimonies of individuals encountering God's presence and experiencing radical life changes through surrender and seeking God wholeheartedly.

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## Transcript

I may have to hop around a bit here, I've not got my mind in good shape at present. I've been oscillating between two different messages, I was going to switch to a different one but I'm going to stay with the older one. I've preached it once before in my life, only once, and you have to preach a sermon twenty times.

First of all you have to master the sermon, and the sermon has to master you. There's no other way to preach. One of the most fascinating parts of the scripture is that blank between Malachi and Matthew.

It covers a period of four hundred years without any prophetic voice, four hundred years of darkness without any prophetic light, and then suddenly, unexpectedly and unwontedly, there's a break. At the other side of that four hundred years, when Malachi finishes his message, do you remember what he says? He says, the Lord whom ye seek. Do you know why, one reason, we don't have revival, we're not seeking revival, we're seeking miracles, we're seeking manifestations, we're not seeking Christ, and he's a very jealous God.

But you see, the Lord comes suddenly. I was in a meeting last week, I preached to fifteen hundred preachers one night and fifteen hundred the next night, and suddenly in the midst of preaching I said, if your heart begins to burn with conviction, if you're burning with lust, if you're burning with a problem, and

you believe the fire of the Holy Ghost can change it, get up and walk. And while I was preaching, men streamed to the altar, they filled the whole altar up.

And then as we finished I said, you ladies come pray where you are. You men come, pastors come, teachers come, preachers come, Sunday school teachers come, you've no fire, you've no anointing. And they streamed forward about a hundred and fifty, filled the altar.

The next day it was greater, there were three hundred men sought God. It was wall to wall men, you couldn't get, I couldn't get off the platform, I was tied out. But you see, the Lord suddenly came.

If we announced the Lord was coming tomorrow morning at ten o'clock in this church, you'd pack the place out. But he comes suddenly. What does it say? Well, shepherds watch their flocks by night, surely.

And suddenly there's a sound of a heavenly host. They were waiting, countdown. Do you think they were stupid? Those men in the upper room knew the fiftieth day, and they were counting down, this is the forty-eighth, this is the forty-ninth, tomorrow the Holy Ghost will come.

And it says suddenly there was a sound of a heavenly host. Paul and Silas were in prison, and suddenly. I'm looking for God, the Holy Ghost, to come suddenly.

Not any locality, not in any nation, but to fulfill his promise that he'll pour out his spirit and all flesh. The world has never been nearer to judgment than it is now. There are five billion people in the human race, that's too many to fill hell.

We're not going to cure the ills of America by politics, only God can save us. We need a divine intervention. We need God to render heavens and come and disturb us.

And to do that he'll show us our bankruptcy. He'll show us that we have to be stripped before he'll clothe us, empty before he'll fill us, plead our poverty before he'll make us rich. This is a crisis hour not only in America, it's a crisis hour in the world.

One young friend of mine this week has been speaking in the greatest hall in the world, in China, in the People's Hall, which holds maybe 7,000 people. He's speaking there at a banquet. He's a Christian.

He said, I dare him to go to America and they'll kick me out. I'm going as a believer. I'm going to tell them what the answer is.

After all, there's a billion people in that nation. Many are suffering persecution and hardship and great suffering. And he has gone there with a burden, because he wants to see God come.

I'll tell you why I went to that church. A few weeks ago, I canceled all my preaching for this year except here and one other place. I should have gone to a world conference.

I said, I'm not coming. I should have gone to two state conferences. I said, I'm not coming.

And wouldn't you say that? Of course, everybody wants you. But I've held off so far. I went to this conference not just to preach to 1,500 preachers every night, but the church is unique in America.

Listen, this is America today, not Finney's day, not Wesley's day. There's something happening in that church that does not happen in any other church in America, not even John Wimber's big church, or my

friend Charles Stanley at the First Baptist there in Atlanta, or the First Baptist Dr. Criswell in Dallas. I'll tell you why.

That church has six small churches. They all operate independently during the week. They meet together on Sunday morning.

They meet together Friday night, about 1,400 to 1,500 people. They have five pastors. One of them has a Fulbright scholarship.

In England, everybody wants the Rhodes scholarship. In America, the Fulbright is the highest. You get that? It's open door to millions of dollars.

Open Sesame. Well, he's left it on one side. He's not going to Oxford for that scholarship.

He's come to work for \$18,000 a week. I mean, no, that's what I get. I got wrong there.

I mean, I earn it, but I never get it. \$18,000 a year, isn't that something? Another young man, he took a 500% cut in his wage to take a job at \$18,000 a year. He had a private car with a telephone.

He has a daddy who's a multimillionaire. He has an unlimited credit card, and he put it all on one side. Frank, that's encouraging, isn't it? God, there are some young men who are gold diggers.

You'll tell the evangelists, when you get to heaven, the streets are gold. They'll be digging the streets up. That water's terrible.

But then there's another man in Africa who heard that there's a church. For five years, they've had two hours prayer every morning, two hours prayer every afternoon, two hours prayer every night, plus a night of prayer every week. Well, dear God, we went down, dear Martha and our son David and I, and the Lord just moved on the place again.

So the Saturday night prayer meeting that goes from 7 to 9 went for eight hours, non-stop, in intercession and tears. The morning prayer meetings that start at 6 and finish at 8 went through till half past 10 in the morning. The nights of prayer, they get 50, 60, 70 people praying the whole night through.

They're not praying for the material recovery of the economy. They're praying for the glory of God. You see, our generation, there are not a hundred people in America tonight have ever seen a Holy Ghost revival.

I'm in a meeting where you didn't put the lights out. The sanctuary is alive 24 hours a day. One of the greatest prayer meetings in history started on the 21st of August in, let me see, 1727 in Moravia.

The Holy Spirit came down just at the clock, went to 11 o'clock. The Spirit descended. It all happened to that group of people from 11 o'clock that morning for 100 years.

The prayer meeting never ended. You could go in prayer meeting at 2 o'clock in the morning and children will be praying with tears. The finest young men went and stood on the slave blocks down there in the Caribbean, St. Thomas and St. Croix and so forth and sold themselves into slavery in order that they might get their gifts throughout.

Okay, let me go back a minute here. Jesus said of John the Baptist what? There's no man ever born of woman that was greater than John the Baptist. Let me tell you how it began.

It says in Luke chapter 1 and verse 10 the whole multitude of people were praying in at the time of incense. Isn't that wonderful? They were praying a great prayer meeting in that old temple. What happened? There appeared unto an angel of the Lord, verse 11 standing on the right side of the altar.

I won't go into the details there but he says in verse 13 Fear not, Zacharias, thy prayer is heard. Thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son and thou shalt call his name John. He shall have joy and gladness and many shall rejoice at his birth.

He shall be great in the sight of God. It says in verse 32 He shall be great and he shall be called the Son of the Highest. Oh, that's of Jesus too.

But here is a man What does Zacharias say? Let me quote it, paraphrase it. He says, look, don't talk like that. My wife's old and stricken.

She can't bear children. You've got people in America telling me I'm crazy. I've prayed for revival more than 60 years and I'm more sure than ever now that it's coming.

I'm getting old and frail. You fight the devil, it'll hit you back. I was thinking today when dear Joyce and her precious husband came to see me in hospital I was dying.

In the last five years I've had three strokes different strokes of course and two heart attacks. The devil fought back and he's likely to do that. But you see, revival comes after barrenness.

Can you imagine What's his name now? Abraham's wife, Sarah. You mentioned her this morning. What was she? Eight, ninety? Can you imagine her writing to her mother and saying Mother, I'm expecting a baby.

What? You're crazy, you should never have married a preacher. They're crazy. It's amazing how often God in the Word of God shows us how the impossible is possible and yet we doubt Him.

We're the biggest generation of doubting believers the world's ever had. Joyce said this morning We're almost arrogant to say we're Christians. You see, what happens in meetings usually, I pick up Christian magazines, I don't buy them they're not worth anything but again and again it says know your Bible, take this Bible course take this Bible course, take this Bible course on prophecy, take this Bible course on the blood.

Listen the great need is not to know the Word of God the great need is to know the God of the Word What does Daniel say? Does Daniel say that people who do not know their Bible should be strung into explorance? Of course not! That people who do not know their God Why did Jesus come into the world? He said to save sinners, that's what He said Jesus said, I've come that they may know Thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent Anyhow this young man is like I mean, this man is like others Sarah brought forth a beautiful son You know have you ever discovered this when you try to help God out, you get into trouble the Lord says, you're going to have a son and you quoted, did the Lord say to him were you wrong this morning?

Son? The Lord told him to take the woman? No, no, the woman, who was the other woman? Did the Lord tell him to take her again? Come on now, cough it up If you're wrong confess your sin right here Oh, that's not the King James version Yeah, but you know what happened? After he listened to Sarah, God never spoke to him again for 15 years One for me NASB NASB That's Greek for nasty Because in Hebrews 1 I love that verse in Hebrews 1 God who at sundry times in indiverse manner spake unto the fathers by the prophets hath in these last days spoken unto us these last days 2000 years ago The book of the revelation, these last days 2000 years ago, in God's name, where are we now?

People say it's 10 minutes to 12 on God's clock It isn't, it's 30 seconds to 12 We're on the edge of the greatest events in history But then it says in the NASB Well, let me finish that verse When he had by himself purged our sins You see, there's a propagation One of the popular preachers I'll tell you, James Robinson says every day almost on TV in Dallas Remember, we're all to be one Jesus didn't put his hand on the shoulder of a Pharisee and his hand on the shoulder of a Sadducee and let's all be one He didn't say that He uses John 17 6 But notice what Jesus says there Father, them which thou hast given to me they have kept thy word What did Jesus say to the Pharisees?

You white sepulchres you children of the devil Do you make league with the children of the devil? Of course not I don't believe I have to accept the Virgin Mary as Corydentrix What does it say in Philippians? Paul says, I weep when I think of it You see when the Holy Ghost comes and starts up digging up your life I don't know why I thought of this but this afternoon as I was meditating I thought of a time I preached that great Methodist church in Dublin They have a saying there, Dublin's fair city where the girls are pretty, my precious wife comes from South Ireland and I preached that night on the 51st town and God was present I could tell you a lot of celebrities that were there but I don't name drop So Anyhow, three years afterwards I went to a conference in Northern Ireland and a man said to me, do you remember me?

I said, no I don't He said, do you remember preaching on Psalm 51 in the great Methodist church in Ireland in I forgot the street, in Dublin I said, sure He said, my wife and I, we're good Methodists we tithe, we take communion we help, we give permissions we do everything we can do but Mr. Evelyn aren't saved He said, we got home past midnight and he said, we had a cup of tea and biscuits as we say I said, went to bed my wife sat on one side of the bed, I sat on the other and we sat there for an hour and he said, I said to my wife why don't you go to sleep? and sweetly you know like wives do, she doesn't get to sleep yourself and he said, I can't why can't you?

Well that fellow upset me tonight when he was speaking he said God touched my mind a trap door opened, I saw all my sins sins of youth, sins of manhood sins of the flesh, sins of the spirit they marched round the bedroom like an army and he said, I got terrified and he said, after an hour and a half my wife got down to the side of the bed she got up laughing and rejoicing why?

I'm born again I'm saved, I have the witness of the spirit God now doesn't condemn me, he's cleansed me and lifted me, and he's living in me boy, he said that made me angry she got into bed left me to get rid of my load of sins and I'm walking round the room tormented she's ignoring, she's dreaming fairy tales and he said, here I am going round, and finally he said it suddenly hit me right there he remembered that Martin Luther one day he was in prison where Wittenberg and he said, the devil got a record and he said, he wrote all my sins on the wall and he wrote them on the other wall and he wrote them on the ceiling and he said go on, Satan keep going, keep writing the sins and he said, Satan said there's nothing else to write, he said there is, he said there isn't he said there is, he

said your record is here, every sin you've ever committed since you were a child is on record on the walls there's nothing else to record he said there is, what shall I put on he says, right over all of them the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son cleanses us from all sin if you had a hundred pounds weight on your back and somebody took it off, do you think you'd know if you were in debt for fifty thousand dollars and somebody gave you fifty thousand, another fifty to spend would you know, well sin is a burden, sin is a disease sin is rebellion against God, when the fire goes out, and the fire of the Holy Ghost comes in, it's a total transformation let me rush through this so here this man's preaching his heart, look what it says in verse 7 it says, the multitude came to be baptized, and

this is nice language isn't it, it says oh you generation of diapers that's my, like me going west in West Wing Travelling and say, you swine you need to be saved, what do you think they'd do, vote me the best man of the year not on your life but listen while he's pouring this, you see this man is on fire, I used to say he has a tongue like the tail of a scorpion, I'll tell you what he had, he had a heart and a tongue like a laser beam, every time he spoke he left blisters on people's souls and minds, he dug up their past, they saw every damnable thing that was hindering them from coming to God this this message of salvation is not for bums and cripples, moral cripples and folk that fill the prostitution places and read Playboy more than the Bible, it's for very fine fellows here's two of

them, the greatest men in England the most famous brothers maybe in England, John Wesley and Charles Wesley and Charles Wesley was born again of the spirit of God, how his mother, his godly mother came with a copy of a book called The Life of God in the Soul of Man, dear God these men got up to pray at four o'clock in the morning weren't even saved they spent all night singing psalms they were so anxious to find God in one of his greatest hymns, and can it be that I should gain an interest in the Saviour's blood he says in the second verse, this is a gentleman, a scholar a man of impeccable morality you couldn't find a thing wrong with his life, he gave alms to the poor he built homes for the poor he did every blessed thing he could to prove his love for humanity, and then he wrote this

verse, long my imprisoned spirit lay fast bound in sin and nature's night, thine eye diffused a quickening way, I woke the dungeon flame with light, my chains fell off, if a man's chain does he know when the chains go off his chains have gone he'd been imprisoned in what? legality doing good works, taking communion, beating his body by fasting, and yet he never found the living Christ, but when he found him, do you know what he wrote later?

Oh for a trumpet voice on all the world to call but before he wrote that he wrote this, my heart is full of Christ, listen not my head is full of theology my heart is full of Christ and longs this glorious message to declare no wonder he could say, honestly before God thou O Christ art all I want, is that true of you? or do you want Christ plus something else?

I'll tell you what Christianity is Christianity is Christ plus nothing he doesn't have to do wonderful things for me, he snatched me from hell my body, soul and spirit belongs to him he gave his all for me, I give my all to him, okay we've got to rush on here a minute do you mind? let's go to the second chapter where do you want to be now? let's go to the second chapter in John I think it's there I want to be Rabbi Malachi said there's somebody coming and who shall abide the day of his coming? do you know the most dangerous place in the world? is to be in a church where the Holy Ghost is in residence you feel uncleanness, you feel I'm vile you wonder why God hasn't taken you off years ago, you've rebelled against him you've vowed and you've broken your vows you've made commitments and

commitments and never kept them and then you suddenly realize what a merciful God he is well people began to ask this man, look at John chapter 1 this is the record verse 19 of John listen, the Jews the priests and the Levites came from Jerusalem if you read the account in Matthew it will tell you they came from Judea and Samaria and everywhere so John Baptist without any sponsors, without any money listen the scripture clearly says John did no miracle he never raised the dead man, he raised the dead nation he didn't have any help he wasn't name dropping he could have said I come from one of the greatest families, my father is one of the best priests he could have said I have the best backing, I have an old lady a hundred years of age by the name of Anna Simeon is a personal friend of

mine I've got the greatest prayer people in the world, he didn't say that all he cared was he had a commission and anointing from God look at verse 27 as I hurry verse 26 John said I baptize with water, there stands among me one whom ye know not he it is who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoes I am not worthy to lose, now verse 29 the next day, notice that the next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him and saith the most amazing thing it's never been said before it's never been said since in the history of the world like it was said of John in front of him were the frowning Pharisees, on the other side were the scorning scribes, on the other side were the sad Sadducees and he lifts his hand up and he didn't know who it was he said I didn't know him but the Lord said in

verse 32, jumping a minute here of verse 31 I knew him not, but he should be made manifest to Israel and verse 32 says John bare record saying I saw the Spirit descending upon him like a dove I knew him not, but he that sent me to baptize with water saith upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, listen and remaining upon him you got filled with the Holy Ghost is he there tonight has he remained upon you has he brought forth all his fruits is he giving you energy you say I pray in tongues, forget it don't literally forget it, but forget it I'll tell you why I want to be filled not with God, with all the fullness of God, filled so there's no room for anything else in my heart but God, no room for pleasure, no room for this world, it's customs, just Christ all in all I very often say

to people come forward and I'll pray for you, I won't do that I'm not going to sing some emotional folk song to get you down here weeping I'm going to ask you if you mean business with God, go home get a sheet of paper, clean sheet put your name on top, put the date on top then write out what you know is wrong with your life, I'm lazy I'm indifferent to the lost, I have no compassion, I have no vision life has no power go down the list and then put a line underneath and say Lord you show me what's wrong, you'll be amazed what he shows you, things that offend him in your life, you're not always truthful you're very erratic in your reading of the word you're very inconsiderate of the lost and then put it down, stick your name on it and say Lord tonight I want to be crucified with Christ put

to death everything in me that's unholy and fill me as full as a human being can be with the Holy Spirit of God, and if you live if he fills you with the Holy Spirit you'll have a holy life, you'll have holy language it doesn't necessarily mean tongues it means you'll be pure, you'll be uncritical it's interesting there were tongues of fire in the upper room because in the third chapter of James he says the tongue of a man is uncontrollable, if you can control your tongue he says you're a perfect man, but a tongue that's been a lying tongue becomes a truthful tongue it becomes a holy tongue and I make God happy you can't make him rich he owns the world, the only way you can make God happy is living a Christ like life with victory over sin and joy in the Holy Ghost don't do it because

somebody else does it I'm going to be praying as we drive home, I'm going to ask you tonight, and you're not making a covenant with me your dear Joyce here, you're making a covenant with God, I'm going to get

rid of this bondage tonight whatever it costs we say come and live, Jesus says come and die, take up your cross you knew this, if a man was going out with a cross he wasn't coming back and as soon as he nailed to the cross he had no rights, lose all your rights your right to criticize, your right to be a failure, the right to be dry eyed, say God I must be filled with yourself, I want to be a true Bible Christian, are you going to make that vow? if so stand as a pledge that you'll do it and then go home and do it now pray and close the meeting are you going to meet God tonight?

Amen Father I thank you tonight that while the world outside is drinking and sinning and lusting, you've given these precious people a desire for God and you said, blessed are they who hunger and thirst, Lord I pray that some people here may go to their own funeral tonight really die to sin and to self die to failure and take Christ in his fullness take the Holy Spirit to come and work his purpose in their lives Lord bless them, bless the preachers here, bless the Sunday school teachers bless the young people, they've never seen the glory of God Lord let some parents radiate with God as they go home let homes be different after tonight bless this fellowship we thank you dear Joyce bless her and the others here help us to do your will, continue Lord make us zealous lovers of God, lovers of the word, lovers of prayer, lovers of the will of God you give us the Holy Ghost with all the energy to do that, as long as we're obedient teach us more and more to be submissive and bring joy to your heart, in Jesus name Amen

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