

The Gospel of John

The Testimony of John The Baptist

John 1:19-28

INTRODUCTION

This week we are using some of the same scripture text as we did last week. The difference in the messages is that last week we focused on John the Baptist. This week we will focus on John's testimony concerning the Messiah.

John started his gospel by telling us of the preexistence of the Son of God that was to be revealed here in this gospel. So John begins by acquainting us with the main theme of his gospel. This, of course, is the "logos", the Word of God, the light of the world, Christ the Savior.

Now John is going to depart from the overall description of the Messiah and get into the details of the life of Christ. He does so by the appearance and announcing of the Messiah.

All Stand and Read Scripture

John 1:19-28 (NASB)

¹⁹This is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent to him priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" ²⁰And he confessed and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ." ²¹They asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" And he *said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No." ²²Then they said to him, "Who are you, so that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?" ²³He said, "I am a voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as Isaiah the prophet said."

²⁴Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. ²⁵They asked him, and said to him, "Why then are you baptizing, if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?" ²⁶John answered them saying, "I baptize in water, *but* among you stands One whom you do not know. ²⁷*It is He who comes after me, the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie.*" ²⁸These things took place in Bethany beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

Prayer

When we say that Jesus is the Christ, it is important that we understand what this term means. Many people tend to think that "Christ" is Jesus' last name. But we need to understand that Christ is just a Greek translation of the Hebrew word "Messiah". That word simply means "anointed one".

This is the term that was prophesied in the prediction of the coming deliverer in the Old Testament.

So to say that Jesus is the Christ, we are saying that He is the prophesied Messiah.

BODY:

I. THE PROPHESED FORERUNNER!

I would like for you to consider how we would respond to John the Baptist in today's world. If there was a man today that lived in a desert wearing a garment of camel's hair and ate locusts and wild honey and making bold announcements we would consider him to be a little off in the head. Of course we are in a different point of history. But for the people in John's day, they realized that there was something about this guy. They knew that something was going on.

There were several key figures who were predicted in the Old Testament that were to be arriving before this messianic deliverer. So the Jews were trying to determine if John the Baptist was one of those key figures.

So they asked "Who are you?" ²⁰ And he confessed and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ." This, of course, was asking him if he is the predicted Messiah. He firmly says "I am not the Christ."

²¹ They asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" And he *said, "I am not."

The reference to Elijah came from Malachi.

Malachi 4:5-6 (NASB)

⁵ "Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord. ⁶ He will restore the hearts of the fathers to *their* children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse."

The fulfillment and identity of person mentioned in the prophesy in Malachi is found several places in the New Testament. One scripture is...

Matthew 17:10-13 (NASB)

¹⁰ And His disciples asked Him, "Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?" ¹¹ And He answered and said, "Elijah is coming and will restore all things; ¹² but I say to you that Elijah already came, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they wished. So also the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands." ¹³ Then the disciples understood that He had spoken to them about John the Baptist.

So, John the Baptist was the "Elijah the prophet" that was prophesied in Malachi. So why did John deny that he was Elijah?

There are two explanations for this apparent contradiction.

1. When John denied being Elijah, he could have been disputing the idea that he was the *actual* Elijah who had been taken to heaven.
2. John's words could indicate a difference between John's view of himself and Jesus' view of him. John may not have seen himself as the fulfillment of Malachi 4:5-6. However, Jesus did. There is no contradiction, then, simply a humble prophet giving an honest opinion of himself. John rejected the honor yet Jesus credited John as the fulfillment of Malachi's prophecy regarding the return of Elijah.

“Are you the Prophet?” And he answered, “No.”

Once again, John is being humble. For the scriptures make clear that he was indeed a prophet. Not only that, but Jesus said that he was the greatest of men.

Matthew 11:9-11 (NASB)

⁹ But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and one who is more than a prophet. ¹⁰ This is the one about whom it is written, ‘Behold, I send My messenger ahead of You, Who will prepare Your way before You.’

¹¹ Truly I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen *anyone* greater than John the Baptist! Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

We have to give an answer to the Pharisees that sent us. Well then who are you? He said, “I am a voice of one crying in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’ as Isaiah the prophet said.”

II. THE HUMILITY OF JOHN!

If you were to put yourself in the shoes of those who were there, you can only imagine how much intrigue, how much suspense, how much anticipation is now building. Just put yourself there. It has been **400 years** since the last voice of a prophet. It has been quiet. There has been generation after generation after generation of expectation of hope that these blessings that were promised would come to pass only to be disappointed again, and again, and again. 400 years of expectation and disappointment and now suddenly you have this prophetic voice upon the scene. Saying "**I AM the voice**". I am the voice who is preparing the way. The hope of the ages is set to begin. And He is going to burst onto the scene at any moment.

Yet John is humble and quietly states "That is who I am" and if you want to know something else "**among you stands One whom you do not know. 27 It is He who comes after me, the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie.**" I am a part of something that is much bigger than myself.

This is one of the most egoless statements in the scripture. Jesus called John the greatest of all men, yet John considered himself just a forerunner for the Messiah.

III. LESSONS TO BE LEARNED FROM JOHN.

ILLUSTRATION:

How would we react if we were considered the greatest of all men by Jesus? Do you think you could remain humble? We are living in an age of massive self promotion.

Like dancing in an end zone after a touchdown, or crawling on all fours after sacking a quarterback, beating your chest when you make a tackle. Whatever it is, in an age of such self promotion, John's humility is not only refreshing, but it is something that we all can learn from.

Each of us, if we are honest, know that our tendency is to focus on ourselves. The more I walk with Christ, the more I realize that this family of sins...this family of sins that I call

"sins of self" (such as self-centeredness, greed, selfishness...) you know the ones I am talking about! These are the ones that plague me the deepest. These are the ones that are so hard to avoid.

LISTEN CAREFULLY:

These "Sins of Self" are the ones that give life to so many other sins. Sins such as **anger** and **impatience**. Not only to people around me but sometimes even with God. Do you find yourself angry and impatient with God? Is it because **YOU** think that things should always go the way that **YOU** want them to go?

We struggle with sins of **greed** and **covetousness** and **lust** because **I** want what **I** desire. At the heart of so many of the sins that we wrestle with, is this family of sins that we call **"sins of self"**. Let me remind you that these sins should NOT make you angry with God, God loves us and desires that we live righteously. God wants us to have what is best for us. Despite how it may appear to us, He is not trying to keep us away from the "good things in life". This is exactly like Satan's temptation was to Adam and Eve. Satan got them to listen to the wrong voice. They thought they were missing out on something that was really special. But when they ate of the Tree of Good and Evil they found it they had been deceived. That is the way Satan works. He wraps up our desires and lusts into what appears to be a very attractive package and tells you how wonderful the gift is that is inside. It is only when we open that package, or give in to the temptation, that we discover that we were deceived.

These sins plague us all. Whether consciously or not our tendency is to think primarily about ourselves. And yet the thing is: It is such a shallow way to live. If you think about it...to put yourself center stage of your own little world is so meaningless. It is so vain to think that life is all about me. Especially in light of the fact that God has so graciously written our names as cast members in this historical plan of redemption that we call "life on earth". He has put us on stage. Involving us in this ultimate living drama that is the history of redemption. It marches us toward the end of the final chapter. But instead I want this little Wayne-centered episode. I want to write my own history on my own little stage. I want to be a big fish in a little pond. How vain! How absurd! We have been written into a script that is **so much bigger!**

So much greater, so much grander than ourselves. God's plan of redemption is continuing to advance His kingdom by calling men and women who are lost in their sins to follow HIM.

You know! **My** sheep **Hear MY voice** and they follow **me**. Jesus knows His sheep and He gives them eternal life with Him in heaven.

That is meaningful! That is purposeful! That is the script that I want to be written into. That is the script that I want to be part of!

Not my story...

- Wake Up
- Go to Work or School
- Take a Lunch Break
- Come Home

- Eat Dinner
- Watch TV
- Go to Bed
- Wake Up
- Go to Work or School...

I want to be part of a bigger story than that. God has so graciously written us in to a much more purposeful story. A story of redemption.

See, Paul tells us that God has placed within each of us this marvelous treasure of the gospel through His Holy Spirit. He has done so in order that we would be the bearers, the carriers, of that message. A message that seems so foolish to the unbeliever, yet the exceeding greatness of its power will be seen as coming from God.

So it is for John the Baptist. That is what he was sent for. He was sent to bear witness about the Light, who is Christ, that all might come to believe through Him.

“I am a voice of one crying in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’ as Isaiah the prophet said.”

John was out in the wilderness, as he had been for months or years, baptizing and proclaiming the arrival of the Messiah.

Then the Jews who had been sent by the Pharisees asked the following question...

“Why then are you baptizing, if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?”

Among other scriptures, Paul tells us why.

Acts 19:4 (NASB)

4 Paul said, “John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus.”

CONCLUSION:

The wisest words that anyone can ever tell you is this: **Turn in faith to the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved from your sins.**

This faith requires that we not only **believe** God's word, but that we **live** according to God's word surrendering our **anger, our selfishness, and our lusts.**

This "wisest message that anyone can ever tell you" may sound very foolish..."To place your faith on a Man Who was crucified on a cross almost 2000 years ago and left for dead".

It sounds foolish, yet there is nothing wiser that you can do. That is the drama that God has written our lives into. To be a cast member of that story. He wants us to be a part of that redemptive story.

This is the Day!