

The Testimony of John the Baptist

John 1:19-28

Thought for the Day: Just like John the Baptist, God has called us: 1) To point people to Jesus Christ as the spiritual Light of the world; 2) To prepare them for His coming; and 3) To encourage them to put their faith in Him as Savior and Lord.

John 1:1-18 is the Introduction and Foundation of the Gospel of John. These verses set forth the primary message of the book: That Jesus Christ is God, the Creator of the universe, who became a Man, so that He might reveal God to us, and that through Him, we might have a personal, saving relationship with God. (John 1:10-12; 20:31)

In John 1:19-34, we find the first of several testimonies that John is going to share with us throughout his Gospel, all for the purpose of helping us to reach the conclusion that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God, and place our faith in Him for salvation.

John 1:6-8 – John was sent by God: 1) to point people to Jesus Christ as the spiritual Light of the world; 2) to prepare them for His arrival; and 3) to encourage them to put their faith in Him as their Savior and Lord. His mission is our mission!

John 1:15 – 1) Jesus was spiritually superior to John the Baptist; and 2) Jesus is the eternal God who, even though born six months *after* John, nevertheless existed from all eternity *before* John.

John 1:19-34 – The Apostle John reveals the content of John's testimony concerning Jesus.

19 And this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?"

- John's ministry had gained the attention of the Jewish religious leaders some 20-25 miles away in Jerusalem. (Matthew 3:1-6)
 - Our message is the same: "Repent of your sins because Jesus is coming soon!"
 - We "prepare the way of the Lord" by preparing our hearts for the Lord by confessing and repenting of our sins.
- "The Jews" are the Pharisees of verse 24, members of the Jewish Sanhedrin who were responsible to examine anyone who claimed to be a prophet of God.
- The "priests" were the men who performed the primary functions related to the temple and the Levites were men who performed the more menial but necessary tasks in support of the priestly duties.
- "Who are you?" = By what authority are you doing this?

20 He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ."

- It may have been tempting for John to identify as the Messiah, but he remained true to his calling and faithful in his service to God.

21 And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not."

- On the basis of Malachi 4:5-6, the final verses of the OT, the Jews expected the prophet Elijah to return to the earth prior to the coming of the Messiah.

"Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No." (Deuteronomy 18:15, 18)

22 So they said to him, "Who are you? We need to give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?"

23 He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as the prophet Isaiah said."

- John's humility is a practical example and model for all of us. But he also shows us that God wants to use all of us to point people to Jesus Christ.
- "Because of their sin and departure from God, the people had become dry and barren, like a desert. John spoke of himself simply as a **voice**. He did not pose as a great man to be praised and admired, but as a **voice**—not to be seen, but only to be heard. John was **the voice**, but Christ was the Word. The word needs a voice to make it known, and the voice is of no value without a word. The Word is infinitely greater than the voice, but it can be our privilege, too, to be a voice for Him." (*MacDonald, p. 1423*)
- "John's message was, **"Make straight the way of the Lord."** In other words, 'The Messiah is coming. Remove everything in your life that would hinder you from receiving Him. Repent of your sins, so that He can come and reign over you as the King of [your life.]'" (*MacDonald, p. 1423*)
- John knew exactly who he was and what he was there to do (Isaiah 40:3). He was the prophesied forerunner of the Messiah, sent to prepare the people for His arrival—nothing more, nothing less!
- There is something very liberating and empowering in knowing who you are and what it is that God has called you to do. (Romans 12:3)
 - The Spiritual Priorities of a Disciple of Jesus Christ (*Know, Grow, and Show*).
 - God created us: 1) To Know & Love Him; 2) To Grow & Become like Him; and 3) To Go & Show Him to others.
 - He created us for: 1) Relation; 2) Reflection; and 3) Representation.
 - We fulfill these purposes by: 1) Pursuing intimate fellowship with God; 2) Cultivating Christlike character & conduct; and 3) Offering ourselves to God in faithful and fruitful service for His glory and the advancement of His kingdom.
 - These statements summarize the biblical teaching on God's purpose for every believer.

24 (Now they had been sent from the Pharisees.) 25 They asked him, "Then why are you baptizing, if you are neither the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?"

- Gentiles that converted to Judaism were baptized as a rite of initiation—a public announcement that they were now adherents to Judaism.
- But John was baptizing Jews; this was something new and different, so these religious leaders demanded an explanation: "What does this mean?"

26 John answered them, "I baptize with water, but among you stands one you do not know, 27 even he who comes after me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie."

- "In effect John was saying to the Pharisees, 'Do not think of me as a great man. The **One** you should be paying attention to is the Lord Jesus; yet **you do not know** who He really is.' He is the One who is worthy." (*MacDonald, p. 1423*)

28 These things took place in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptizing.