

The Gospel of John: Part 4 The Baptizer John 1:19-27

And this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ." And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No." 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?"

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."

*(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?"*

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

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

We are now to the testimony of John the Baptizer. Before we get started I want to help you get an image of John in your head. We have to look into the other Gospel accounts to get that picture because John the author doesn't give us details about John the Baptizer, because he expects the readers to already have encountered John in the other gospels and also he doesn't want to overemphasize the Baptizer because he is just a messenger.

John comes from Godly parents. His father was a priest named Zechariah. His mother was a godly woman named Elizabeth. She also was from the priestly line being

The Gospel of John: Part 4 The Baptizer

John 1:19-27

able to trace her family back to Aaron. (The brother of Moses.)¹ Elizabeth also happens to be related to Mary the mother of Jesus. While the bible doesn't tell us their age it does tell us that they were elderly and Elizabeth was barren. So for what ever medical reason Elizabeth was unable to bare children, plus she was at an age were it was impossible.

One day dad Zechariah went to the temple to burn incense. This was a special privilege that rotated around. This is where you would go into the Holy of Holies and burn incense. Only a priest properly purified could enter. If the priest did something wrong then he would die and have to be drug out of the temple by ropes, since no one else could enter to retrieve him. As Zechariah is doing his duties an angel appeared.

Now realize this is a big thing, if you mess up you die. This old man suddenly glances over and an angel is standing there watching him. He probably thought he was about to be turned into a human fireball. The angel tells him it's cool the boss has heard your prayers and your gonna be a daddy. You need to name him John and don't let him drink or get drunk cause he is going to do some great things for God. As a matter of fact he is going to bring a whole bunch of people who aren't living right, back to God.

He is going to be in a sense like the prophet Elijah. You know, the guy that predicted a famine then called on God to send fire down to set a water soaked bull on fire. Heck, that guy even walked on water.

So Zechariah is standing there thinking; Wow, I'm still alive. Wait there hasn't been a prophet in 400 years and you are telling me that I'm going to have a child with my elderly wife that's been barren since she was young and he is going to be a prophet.

That's a good one. Where is the camera?

¹ Luke 1:5

The Gospel of John: Part 4 The Baptizer

John 1:19-27

Gabriel the angel isn't finding the disbelief amusing so he says I'll prove it to you, right here, right now. Shut up! All of a sudden old Zechariah is deaf and mute. Gabriel tells him he will be that way to everything he said happens. 9 months later Zechariah is pappy to a bouncing baby boy named John.

I tell you this so you can see that John would have been amazing to everybody. The people standing outside the temple would be wondering if Zechariah was dead, because no one stays that long and comes out alive. He walks out and can't speak or hear. He writes a letter telling everyone what the angel said. He probably was the butt of a lot of temple jokes until Elizabeth started getting that baby bump. Then everyone would be going, wow!

John would have been that boy that was heading down the road to instant celebrity hood. His mother and father were priest. He would be in line to be a priest. He was born under miraculous conditions that just so happened to be prophesied by an angel, which was followed by the sign of deafness and muteness for Zechariah.

All eyes would be on John. Then he snapped. Told them he didn't want to be a priest at a corrupt temple with a bunch of godless thieves. God told him to go out to the wilderness and proclaim a baptism of repentance for forgiveness of sins. He got rid of his fancy robes wrapped a camel skin around him tied it on with a belt and went to preaching to the poor. The boy preacher who had everything going for him is now the homeless bum standing on a soapbox with the sign that says turn and burn.

That's the picture you kinda of get of him. But it's only partly correct. His sign didn't just say turn or burn. John wasn't holding up a sign that said God hates fags or God loves dead soldiers. John was the one saying to the man with those types of signs,

The Gospel of John: Part 4 The Baptizer

John 1:19-27

“I’ll tell you what God hates. God hates the self righteous jerk that condemns in His name when they don’t even know Him. God hates the man that yells God hates fags, then goes home ignores his wife and kids and looks at porno. God hates the church lady that spends all her time gossiping about what horrible kids everyone else has, she even overheard that so’s and so’s daughter got knocked up. I always knew their kids would turn out to be a bunch of hoodlums.”

Then John would look at the homosexual and say, “God loves you and wants to make you pure. He is sending His Son to help you.” John would look at the drunkard, “God loves you and wants to help clean you up.” The pregnant teen he would tell, “God loves you and He wants you to come back to him so he can lead you and your child to great things.”

You see just like in John’s day people are getting religion mixed up with following God. God doesn’t hate people. He created them. He knit them together in the womb. He hates the sin we commit. He hates the things we do. And He hates it when we try to please Him with religion without love.

So there is John on the banks of the Jordan river looking like a crazy man and baptizing Jewish people. The man that should have been so great. So the priest and levities come to see him.

The Jews here could be considered the congregation of a church. The religious rulers, would be like the ones that think because they tithe the preacher answers to them first and God second. The priest could be considered like the preachers today. Their congregation told them this crazy man is saying stuff we don’t like go and stop him. The

The Gospel of John: Part 4 The Baptizer

John 1:19-27

Levites I don't know what to compare them to but they were the workers. I guess they could be the deacons.

They actually did most of the grunt work and even acted as a security force for the temple, which is probably why they came along. They were the men in black suits just looking for a reason to pull their Glocks.

Everybody picturing this like me. Well let's step back 2000 years, now that we understand the scene. *When the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ." And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No."*

They were waiting on the messiah that scripture promised. They knew John was special and they had high hopes for him, so maybe just maybe he was here as the messiah. After all the messiah's coming had something to do with purification rites. Maybe that's why John's out here dipping Jews.

So they ask, "Are you Elijah?" Malachi² said that Elijah would come back before the messiah so this must be Elijah. Again John said, "I am not."

"Oh, okay, well you must be the prophet." The prophet is referring to a promise made by Moses in Deuteronomy 18. In Verse 15 Moses tells the Israelites that a prophet like him will come and they should do what he says. Again the answer is no.

² Malachi 4:5

The Gospel of John: Part 4 The Baptizer John 1:19-27

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?"

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."

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

Okay they have exhausted every option on who they thought John could be so now they are just going to ask him. Who are you? Our congregation is screaming wanting to know what is going on!

John's answer. I'm nobody. I'm no one. That's me. I am just a voice. That's all! Just a messenger sent. It doesn't matter who or what I am, just my message. Just my voice! You see John understood what we have a hard time grasping. We are just a voice. Nothing more. This life is for the purpose of being that voice. John gave up his office as priest. He gave up having his every need taken care of by the Jewish people so that he could stand out in the wilderness preaching what people needed to hear. Not what they wanted to hear.

Our churches are filled with people serving them so that they can be known. They teach a class in church not so that they can be the voice spreading the message, but so that people will know them. They become deacons so that people will look up to them and say, he sure is a good man. We long to hear people praise us. We long to be told you

The Gospel of John: Part 4 The Baptizer

John 1:19-27

sure are a powerful man in that church. We want to be able to control and see things done our way.

Church should never be about our glory! It should be about God's glory. We should teach classes so that we can be the voice, the message. We should greet people at the door so that we can be the voice, the message. Our purpose in this life should be to be a voice bringing glory to God. Our goal in life should be when we die and someone asks, what did he do with his life? Someone looks at them and says, "He told people about Christ." "She told people about Christ." Their life told people about Christ. Our lives should be a message.

John gave up an easy and celebrated life as a priest so people could be saved. Imagine someone looking at John and saying, "Why did he do that?" John's life was a message. This life should be a sacrifice to the Lord because it is just the beginning. Think about it this way. If I told everyone here they needed to walk to California and then back, you get up walk to the door. That would be nothing compared to the walk ahead of you. This life is nothing compared to the life ahead of us. If Christ is your saviour then when you die, your life is just getting started. Eternity will be ahead of you. Let's be the message. Let's all become nobody's.

But these men need an answer, so John tells them, "*I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as the prophet Isaiah said.*"

John is quoting Isaiah 40:3.

It's hard for us to understand the meaning of this because we live in America and a democracy. You have to look at this statement in light of kings and kingdoms. When a king would be going out to visit the towns in his kingdom a messenger would be sent out

The Gospel of John: Part 4 The Baptizer

John 1:19-27

before him. This messenger would go to each town saying that the king is coming. In turn the towns would send out a crew to make sure the roads were clear and in good repair so that when the king came it would be easy for him to travel. The messenger was telling everyone to prepare for the coming King.

So what John is saying is all I am is the messenger telling you to get ready for the coming King. The priest still aren't getting it because they ask next, "then why are you baptizing?" At this time the Jews do not baptize Jewish people. Baptism is a ritual done to pagans that are becoming Jewish. What John is doing is offensive to the priest. They want to know why he feels he needs to baptize Jewish people. They want to know by what authority he is baptizing.

John tells them that he is just baptizing with water. All he is doing is symbolically cleansing them, but there is more to come. He makes the next statement, "*but among you stands one you do not know, even he who comes after me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie*". This statement is made in light of the fact that he just told them the King is coming.

I imagine John is about ready to pull his hair out. "Do you not understand what I'm saying? God is coming!" "I'm getting you ready. I'm preparing you to stand in the presence of the king. He is here! He stands among you. And let me tell you. You ask what authority I have to serve Him. I am such a lowly servant that I am not even qualified to do the most demeaning task a servant could do.

The task of unstrapping a sandal is something even a master would not ask his servant to do. John says I am not even worthy of that, yet the king sent me to prepare you to come into His house.

The Gospel of John: Part 4 The Baptizer John 1:19-27

That is humbling. John, miraculous birth, foretold by the prophecy of an angel, feels he is not worthy to even call himself a servant. Yet God has called me to stand here and teach. God has called you to go out and be the voice. That should show you the love God has for you.

These men want to know why John suddenly has so much authority. He has the authority because he is the messenger letting the world know the King is coming. Now you are that voice. You are that messenger. You have that importance, that authority. So what are you going to do with it? Are you going to be quiet and let the King arrive realizing you did not tell people of his coming or are you going to be the voice that proclaims Jesus Loves you and died for you.

We always hear people talk about how offensive the Gospel of Christ is. You are to tell people that they are sinners and deserve hell. You are supposed to tell them that there is nothing they can do about it. That if they don't trust in Jesus They will die and go to hell. Jesus is the only way and we treat that as if it is offensive. Someone might be thinking, well the way you said it, it did seem offensive.

No, it is not offensive. That is beautiful. The God that you have sinned against. The God that has every right to allow you to go to hell in your sin chose to save you. He chose to send His son to die for you. That is beautiful. That is Love. There is no greater Love than to die for a stranger. You were separated from God. You did not know Jesus you did not have a relationship with Jesus, yet He chose to die so that you could live. That is not offensive that is the most beautiful love there ever was.

The Gospel of John: Part 4 The Baptizer

John 1:19-27

So what are you going to do with it? Are you going to tell someone about Christ's love? Are you going to bring them to church? Are you going to bring them to this bible study? Or are you going to be found guilty of not making straight the way of the Lord.