

John the Baptist

John 1:19-34

The priests and Levites were religious leaders in Jerusalem. Priests served in the temple, and the Levites assisted them. Many of them outwardly obeyed God's laws to look holy while inwardly their hearts were full of pride, greed and all kinds of self-interests. These leaders came to see John the Baptist for several reasons: (1) Their duty as guardians of the faith caused them to investigate any new preaching (Deut 13:1-5). (2) They wanted to find out if John had the credentials of a prophet. (3) John had a growing following and their jealous fear was increasing.

Begin by reading the words of John the Baptist's father who filled with the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:67) prophesied about his son. Look up: Luke 1:76-80

Read John 1:19-28

v.19 – Who was it that went out to see John? By who were they sent?

The Jews of Jerusalem were not interested enough to come themselves, and those who went were not truly seeking truth, otherwise they would have went on their own; so even when they ask what seems to be an open question (v. 22), they do so with a closed attitude of indifference and cynicism. Have you ever received such “inquiries” about Christ?

v.19-23 – In the minds of these religious leaders there were four possibilities regarding this man's identity: (1) The prophet foretold by Moses (Deut 18:15), (2) Elijah (Malachi 4:5), (3) the Messiah, or (4) a false prophet. John however referred to himself in the words of the Old Testament prophet Isaiah, “*A voice of one calling: In the wilderness prepare the way for the Lord*” (Isaiah 40:3). Look up: Malachi 3:1

v.21 - A prophet speaks God's words. He's an anointed messenger qualified to receive and communicate relevant words from God. John was handpicked by the Lord to announce the dawning of the Kingdom of God and the Messiah. John announced the coming of One greater than all the kings and prophets that had ever lived. This Messiah was coming with transformational power. Look up: Luke 7:24-28

v.24-27 - What question did the Pharisees ask next? How did John describe himself in relation to Jesus?

Look up: Matthew 3:11

One who was baptized became a follower of the one whose baptism he received. So they wondered why John would baptize, and by what authority he would introduce such a new practice, unless he was one of those great men whom he had denied being. With the arrival of Jesus baptisms were performed by disciples of Christ, in the name of Christ. Look up: John 4:1-2

v. 27 - Among Rabbis and their disciples, there was a teacher-student relationship that had the potential for abuse. It was entirely possible that a Rabbi might expect unreasonable service from their disciples. One of the things which was considered "too low" for a Rabbi to expect from his disciples was the untying of the Rabbi's filthy sandal strap. John says that in regard to the One he is announcing, he is unworthy to do even this.

Read John 1:29-34

“John the Baptist Proclaims Jesus as the Messiah”

v. 29 - At the very dawn of His ministry Jesus is greeted by John with the declaration of His destiny: His sacrificial agony on the cross for the sin of mankind. The shadow of the cross was cast over the entire ministry of Jesus.

Look up: Isaiah 53:7, 1 Peter 1:18-20

v. 30 - John the Baptist was actually born before Jesus and John knew this (Luke 1). So, when John says “*He was before me*”, he refers to the eternal pre-existence of Jesus (John 8:58). John now knows very well that Jesus is God.

v.33 – John's baptism with water symbolized the washing away of sins. Jesus by contrast would baptize with the Holy Spirit. He would send the Holy Spirit upon all believers, empowering them to live and to teach the message of salvation. This outpouring of the Spirit came after Jesus had risen from the dead and ascended into Heaven (Acts 2). Look up: John 20:21-22

v. 32-34 - God gave John the Baptist the sure sign to know the Messiah. He would be the one on whom the Holy Spirit descended upon from heaven. John is a reliable witness regarding who Jesus is, because he has had confirming evidence from God. Look up: Luke 3:21-22

For more about John the Baptist read Matthew 3:1-12; 14:1-12; Luke 1:5-80