

Pt 6 The Record of John – John 1:19-28

A sermon series in the Gospel of John, by Pastor Byron Chesney at Porchlight Baptist Church www.pbcknox.com

John 1:19-28

19 And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou?
20 And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ.
21 And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No.
22 Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself?
23 He said, I *am* the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias.
24 And they which were sent were of the Pharisees.
25 And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet?
26 John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not;
27 He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose.
28 These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing.

Back in October of last year we covered verses 6-9 and focused on John the Baptist. This morning as we look at verses 19-28, we will be looking at John's testimony, or record, as it states in our opening text. Look at it again:

19 And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou?

And this is the record of John The word **record** here is not talking about a vinyl record album. The Greek word it is translated from is "marturia" **mar-too-ree'-ah**, and it means **evidence given - record, report, testimony, witness.**

when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem At this time, John the Baptist's ministry was at its peak. We can get an idea of how long John had been preaching by looking at **Luke 3:1-3**

1 Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judaea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituraea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene,

2 Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness.

3 And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins;

Tiberius Caesar reigned from AD 14 until AD 37. AD meaning "**Anno Domini**," meaning "**The year of our Lord**," which would be the year the Lord Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Therefore, the 15th year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar would be about AD 29.

So, we can say the ministry of John the Baptist started around AD 29. Remember, John is 6-months older than his cousin Jesus. We have no way of knowing exact dates or timelines, but we can say that John's ministry began at least 6-months before Jesus came to be baptized by him.

We do know by the time Jesus came that John's ministry was wildly popular. It had drawn the attention of the religious leaders of Jerusalem. That's why it says, "**the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem.**"

The "**Jews**" mentioned here is most likely the Sanhedrin. They were the "**council**" of the Jewish nation and "**in charge**" of all things "**religious.**" They especially thought it was their business to test anyone who claimed to be a **Prophet or appeared to be a Prophet**, such as John. The Sanhedrin were run by the family of Priests; therefore, they sent Priests and Levites out into the wilderness to find out exactly who this "John the Baptist" was and what he was doing.

Who art thou? They did not beat around the bush. They were determined to find out who John was. No doubt if John professed to be something and they didn't believe him, they would have taken him before the council to be tried. But look at what John replied with:

20 And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ.

It may seem strange that the very first thing John tells them is that he is not the Christ. They didn't ask him if he was the Christ, they only asked him who he was. Well, the reason John responded the way he did was because there were a lot of people that thought John was the promised Messiah. We see that in **Luke 3:15 And as the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ, or not;**

The Jews were expecting the Messiah and John seemed to fit the fulfilment of the prophecy concerning him. His birth was miraculous being born to parents past the usual age of having children and his mother had been barren all her life. He was also the first to come along who resembled the Old Testament prophets. So many people "mused in their hearts," that John was perhaps the Messiah.

John is quick to tell them; **I am not the Christ.**

21 And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias?...

Elias is the Greek rendering of the Hebrew name Elijah. So, they are asking John if he is the Prophet Elijah. The reason they are asking him this is because of what is written in **Malachi 4:5-6 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: 6 And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.**

If John says he isn't the Messiah, then surely, he must be Elijah who was prophesied to come. And, don't forget, when Gabriel announced to John's father, Zacharias, he said this: **Luke 1:17 And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.**

John's answer to them was: **And he saith, I am not.**

Indeed, John was NOT Elijah; however, just as Gabriel said, "**he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias.**" So not Elijah himself, but one in his spirit and power

John was very much like Elijah in his manner, his dress, and the power he exhibited in the Word of God.

Which brings us to what Jesus said about John:

Matthew 11:7-14

7 And as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind?

8 But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? behold, they that wear soft *clothing* are in kings' houses.

9 But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet.

10 For this is *he*, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

11 Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

12 And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.

13 For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.

14 And if ye will receive *it*, this is Elias, which was for to come.

Notice Jesus told them "**if ye will receive it**, this is Elias which was to come.

In other words, if you will believe, then John is the fulfilment of Elijah, not Elijah himself but the fulfilment of one like Elijah. Of course, they did not believe, they did not receive it.

Then the Priests and Levites continue asking him: **Art thou that prophet?**

"That Prophet," is referring to Jeremiah. If John is not the Christ, and he's not Elijah, then perhaps he is the one spoken of in **Deuteronomy 18:15** The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken;

The Jews believed that Jeremiah was the Prophet that fulfilled that prophecy; however, it was not Jeremiah, it was actually the Lord Jesus Christ. Again John's answer was: **And he answered, No.**

Now the Jews are really confused. Look what they ask him next:

22 Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself?

They seem to be getting frustrated. They wanted an answer so they could go back to the Sanhedrin and give a report of who John was.

23 He said, I *am* the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias.

Here John takes a quote from the Prophet Isaiah 40:3. For context sake, let's read: **Isaiah 40:1-5** Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.

2 Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD'S hand double for all her sins.

3 **The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD**, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

4 Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain:

5 And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see *it* together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken *it*.

John takes the focus off of himself and identifying with any man and places upon the voice that was crying out to prepare the way for the Messiah. John wasn't looking to be exalted, he was looking to exalt Christ and that's exactly what he did.

24 And they which were sent were of the Pharisees.

Here we see the Pharisees were also among this group of religious men. We are very familiar with them. They were some of the strictest of all of them and the Sanhedrin court was filled with many of them. They were very caught up in customs, traditions, and ceremonies. They would like nothing better than to find some problem with John.

25 And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet?

In other words, what gives you the right or authority to go around baptizing people if you aren't the Christ, Elijah, or Jeremiah? We need to get to the bottom of this! John was practicing a religious practice and baptizing not only Gentiles but Jews as well. It was not common for Jews to undergo baptism. They did practice ceremonial cleansing called "Mikvah," but this was not the same as what John was doing. Typically baptism was performed on proselytes from a Pagan to Judaism. John was being radical, and the Pharisees were the guardians of all religious practices, so they demanded to know what he is up to.

26 John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not; 27 He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose.

John is not shy to let them know exactly what he's up to. Yes, he is baptizing people with water as a symbol they have repented of their sins and believed upon the Messiah who was to come. John also informs the religious crowd that they do not know Him. He is coming and is preferred above John.

Over in the Gospel of Matthew we are told when the Sadducees and Pharisees came to him asking him what he was doing, he called them a "**generation of vipers**," and he said the following: **Matthew 3:11-12** I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and *with fire*: 12 Whose fan *is* in his hand, and he will throughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

It's too bad the Jews would not believe or accept Christ as their Messiah. All fulfilment of Scripture was given, and everything was in place for them, yet they rejected it.

28 These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing.

Here we are told of the location of where John was baptizing: "in Bethabara beyond Jordan." This was on the East bank of the Jordan River. This is the same location near where Joshua led the Children of Israel across the Jordan river to enter into the Promised Land. We have a painting of it on the wall behind me.

We will stop here this morning and pick back up next time with the Baptism of Jesus.