

## The Questioning of John the Baptist

### John 1: 19-28

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Text -

Joh 1:19 And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou?

Joh 1:20 And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ.

Joh 1:21 And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No.

Joh 1:22 Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself?

Joh 1:23 He said, I *am* the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias.

Joh 1:24 And they which were sent were of the Pharisees.

Joh 1:25 And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet?

Joh 1:26 John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not;

Joh 1:27 He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose.

Joh 1:28 These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing.

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These verses contain a series of questions designed to identify who John the Baptist thought he was and claimed to be in the context of biblical prophecy.

There is no doubt that the motive was sinister by those who questioned.

In effect they were seeking to put John in a position where he would be seen to promote himself and thereby diminish his reputation and ministry.

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Before we get into the questions, look at the last verse in this section; verse 28.

Joh 1:28 These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing.

Modern translations say Bethany. Gill gives some helpful comments why it is not Bethany!

“Bethany was not beyond Jordan, nor in the wilderness of Judea, but near to Jerusalem, about two miles distant from it; nor was it situated by waters convenient for baptizing, unless they went to the brook Kidron, which indeed was not far from it; but it is clear from the history, that John was not so near Jerusalem”

On Bethabara he notes:

“Bethabara signifies "the house of passage", and is thought to be the place where the Israelites passed over Jordan, to go into the land of Canaan, Jos 3:16. And which, as it must be a very convenient place for the administration of baptism by immersion, used by John, so it was very significant of the use of this ordinance; which is, as it were, the passage, or entrance, into the Gospel church state; for persons ought first to be baptized, and then be admitted into a Gospel church, according to the example of the primitive Christians, Act 2:41

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### **Question and Answer one – verses 19-20**

**Joh 1:19 And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou?**

**Joh 1:20 And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ.**

Note 1 - Who asked the question

**“priests and Levites from Jerusalem”**

Note 2 – What was the purpose?

Ans – Identification

“Who art thou” verse 19

Note 3 – John answers emphatically

**Joh 1:20 And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ.**

Note 4 – He answers in the negative and more specifically than the question asked!

**I am not the Christ.**

Why? Because this was the popular opinion!

Luk 3:15 As the people were in expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Christ,

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**Questions two and three are found in verse 21**

**Joh 1:21 And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No.**

Both answers in the negative!

1) Elijah

Why did John deny what other scriptures clearly affirm?

See Luke 1:17

Matthew 11:14

Matthew 17: 10-13

So, why did John not state who he was.

Ans – He was not sent by God to bring attention to himself! But to bring all the focus of men's minds upon Christ!!

2) That Prophet

Who was that Prophet? Read Duet 18: 15, 18-19

**Question 4 and the answer is in verses 22-24**

**Joh 1:22** Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself?

**Joh 1:23** He said, I *am* the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias.

**Joh 1:24** And they which were sent were of the Pharisees.

**Note 1 – Their reasons for Persistence**

1) They were messengers

**Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us**

2) They were Pharisees

And hence they did not like to be outside the “know” with regard to anything happening in the nation.

**Note 2 – John’s Answer**

**Joh 1:23** He said, I *am* the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias.

Which is from Isaiah 40:3

Isa 40:3 A voice cries: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

Isa 40:4 Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain.

Isa 40:5 And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

Matthew confirms:

Mat 3:3 For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight.'"

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**Question Five and answer is in verses 25-27**

Note,

The question is a direct challenge to John!

**Joh 1:25 And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet?**

Consider,

They think they have him!

They think they have exposed him!

But, what an answer he gives!

**Joh 1:26 John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not;**

**Joh 1:27 He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose.**

Note 1,

He removes all mysticism from their view of his baptism!

**“I baptize with water”**

Note 2,

He shows their ignorance

**but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not**

They tried to expose him but he turns the tables!!

Note 3,

He exalts Christ!

**He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me**

Note 4,

He humbles himself!

**whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose.**

May the Lord bless His Word to our souls.

Amen.