

The Testimony of John the Baptist

John 1:19-37 (ESV)—

¹⁹And this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" ²⁰He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ." ²¹And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No." ²²So they said to him, "Who are you? We need to give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" ²³He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as the prophet Isaiah said."

²⁴(Now they had been sent from the Pharisees.) ²⁵They asked him, "Then why are you baptizing, if you are neither the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?" ²⁶John answered them, "I baptize with water, but among you stands one you do not know, ²⁷even he who comes after me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie." ²⁸These things took place in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

²⁹The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" ³⁰This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was before me.' ³¹I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel." ³²And John bore witness: "I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. ³³I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' ³⁴And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son-of-God."

³⁵The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, ³⁶and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" ³⁷The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus.

Related Passages

John 1:6-8—"There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. ⁸ He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light."

Mark 1:1-8—"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. ² As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, 'Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way, ³ the voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,'" ⁴ John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵ And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. ⁶ Now John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷ And he preached, saying, "After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. ⁸ I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

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

Matthew 3:13-17—"Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. ¹⁴ John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" ¹⁵ But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented. ¹⁶ And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; ¹⁷ and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

Discussion Questions

→ Read vs. 19-28

We were introduced to John the Baptist in vs. 6-8. From those verses, we know that he was sent from God as a witness or an official messenger bringing news of the coming Christ. His public ministry of baptism and preaching a message of repentance did not go unnoticed by the Jewish leaders. Identify the two questions that they asked him:

1. _____ (v. 19,22)
2. _____ (v. 25)

1. What was John the Baptist's response to the delegation's initial question, "Who are you?" (vs. 20) (O) Did the delegation stop there? (O) What other identities did they ask him about? (O) Why do you think they were pressing him so hard to answer? (O) What was John's final response (v. 23)? (O) Read Mark 1:1-8, and Isaiah 40:3. From those passages, who do you understand John the Baptist to be? (I) What was he sent to do? (O)

2. The second question the Jewish leaders asked John the Baptist was, "Why are you baptizing?" (v. 25). What was his answer? (O) Look at verses 31 & 33. Why do you think he emphasized that he was just "baptizing with water" and always referenced the One coming after him? (I)

Read vs. 29-34

3. Did John the Baptist know the person of whom he was sent to bear witness? (vs. 31 & 33) (O) What does that say about his character? (I) How then did he know that Jesus was the One of whom he was to bear witness? (vs. 32-34) (O) Read Matthew 3:13-17. How does that increase your understanding of verses 32-33? (A)

4. What title did John the Baptist give to Jesus in verse 29? (O) What is the significance of declaring that Jesus was the “Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world”? (I) Read Isaiah 53:4-7 to get a better understanding.

5. According to v. 33, how does Jesus baptize? (O) How is that different from John’s baptism? (I)

6. According to v. 34, did John fulfill his mission? (O) How? (I)

Read vs. 35-37

7. What is the effect of John the Baptist’s declaration “Behold the Lamb of God!” on his two disciples? (O) Why do you think they did this? (I) How does their action fulfill John’s purpose? (I)

8. Keeping in mind John’s (the author’s) purpose: “but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (John 20:31), how do the verses that you just studied (1-3 & 14-18) impact your understanding of who Jesus Christ is and what He did? (A)

The Testimony of the Disciples

John 1:35-51 (ESV)—

³⁵The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, ³⁶and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God!” ³⁷The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. ³⁸Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, “What are you seeking?” And they said to him, “Rabbi” (which means Teacher), “where are you staying?” ³⁹He said to them, “Come and you will see.” So they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. ⁴⁰One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus^[k] was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. ⁴¹He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which means Christ). ⁴²He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, “You are Simon the son of John. You shall be called Cephas” (which means Peter).

⁴³The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, “Follow me.” ⁴⁴Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. ⁴⁵Philip found Nathanael and said to him, “We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” ⁴⁶Nathanael said to him, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Philip said to him, “Come and see.” ⁴⁷Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!” ⁴⁸Nathanael said to him, “How do you know me?” Jesus answered him, “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.” ⁴⁹Nathanael answered him, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!” ⁵⁰Jesus answered him, “Because I said to you, ‘I saw you under the fig tree,’ do you believe? You will see greater things than these.” ⁵¹And he said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.”

Key Words

“**Disciple**” (v. 35)— a personal follower or student of a teacher

“**Lamb of God**” (v. 36)— John the Baptist used this expression as a reference to the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus on the cross to atone for the sins of the world” (MacArthur).

“**Peter**” (v. 42)— Peter comes from a word meaning “rock.” Jesus knew that Simon was “impetuous, impulsive, and overeager” (MacArthur) by nature, so He gave him a name that perpetually reminded him of what he *should* be, a rock.

“**Moses in the Law & the Prophets**” (v. 45)—Jesus is the fulfillment of the OT scriptures, like Isaiah 53.

“**Nazareth**” (v.45-46)—Galileans (where Nathanael was from) despised Nazareth and viewed it as an insignificant village without prophetic importance.

“**no deceit**” (47)—Nathanael’s bluntness revealed that he was an Israelite without duplicitous motives who was willing to examine for himself the claims being made about Jesus. The term reveals an honest, seeking heart.

“**Son of man**” (v. 51)—this is Jesus’ human and millennial (future & physical) kingdom title.

Related Passages:

Genesis 28:10-12

Study Questions:

Q: Spiritually speaking, what is a testimony?

Q: List the names of the five ordinary men who encountered Jesus:

1. The unnamed disciple of John the Baptist (v. 40) (widely considered to be the author John himself as he never calls himself by name in his writings)
2. _____ (vs. 35-40)
3. _____ (vs. 40-42)
4. _____ (vs. 43-44)
5. _____ (vs. 45-51)
(also known as Bartholomew)

Q: What two things did Jesus do that pointed to His omniscience (all-knowing power) and prompted Nathanael to believe? (O)