

JOHN 1:19-28
WITNESS TO THE RELIGIOUS!

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to John chapter 1 as we continue our in-depth study of the Gospel of John.

As we have seen, John begins his Gospel with the prologue or introduction. And this is very important because this prologue contains many of the major themes of the Gospel that will be reintroduced and developed more fully in this Gospel.

So John 1:1-18 contain this prologue and as we have seen, they form what we might call a statement of faith concerning Jesus Christ!

What do I mean by that?

What I mean is this. If John is going to be telling us about Jesus and what He has done, then we need to understand who He is before we get into those other details.

And there are many ideas today about who Jesus is from a great teacher, a prophet, and some even say He never existed.

Back in the days of Jesus, they were waiting for the Messiah to come but they saw him as a man and not as Almighty God indwelling a body of flesh, the Incarnation.

And as they read the Old Testament, they saw two Messiahs. Messiah ben Joseph or the suffering servant and Messiah ben David, the reigning King!

One Jewish writer put it like this as he clearly shows that they believed in both aspects of the Messiah.

He wrote,

As the rabbis studied the prophetic writings concerning the Messiah they realized that most Messianic prophecies seem to fall into two categories.

The Messiah was to be both someone who died on our behalf and a Redeemer who would be victorious and rule forever over the Messianic Kingdom.

To explain what seemed like a contradiction they concluded that there must be two different Messiahs.

The one who would suffer and die was given the title Mashiach ben Yosef (Messiah son of Joseph) and one who would reign as king was given the title Mashiach ben David (Messiah son of David).

- <https://bit.ly/2PT13G5>

What they missed is that there would not be two Messiah's but One Messiah who was to come twice.

The first time as the Lamb of God to take away the sins of the world, the suffering servant.

And He is coming again as the Lion from the tribe of Judah to rule and reign as King from the throne of David!

Also, what they missed and the key to what John is writing about concerning Jesus, is that Jesus is Almighty God who became flesh and dwelt among us. He was with God the Father and has always been with God the Father since eternity past. They are equal.

John makes that perfectly clear as he opens up here in John 1:1-2. He wrote, **“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.”**

The Amplified Bible puts these verses like this, **“IN THE beginning [before all time] was the Word (Christ), and the Word was with God, and the Word was God Himself. [Isa 9:6.] He was present originally with God.”**

The Living Bible puts it like this, **“Before anything else existed, there was Christ, with God. He has always been alive and is himself God.”**

The only way you can come to the conclusion that Jesus is not Almighty God is that you have read someone else’s material and not the Bible or you have approached the Bible with preconceived ideas and thus, it does not matter what the Bible says, you have your own ideas, and you will not change!

And John goes on to show us that not only is Jesus God, but everything was created by Him! And not only did Jesus create all things but he also holds everything together and if He ever let go, well, let’s just say the Big Bang has not happened yet! (Colossians 1:16-17, II Peter 3:10)

Listen to what we are told in John 1:3, **“All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.”**

The Amplified Bible puts this verse like this, **“All things were made and came into existence through Him; and without Him was not even one thing made that has come into being.”**

The Living Bible tells us, **“He created everything there is-nothing exists that he didn’t make.”**

Not only is Jesus Almighty God, not only has Jesus always existed or He is eternal, but He created all things, everything that exists! I think that is very clear and, like I have said, He holds everything together and I like that because He is the One who holds my life together!

Not only that, but we see that Almighty God became flesh and dwelt among us.

We see that in John 1:14 where we are told, “**And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.**”

The Amplified Bible puts this verse like this, “**And the Word (Christ) became flesh (human, incarnate) and tabernacled (fixed His tent of flesh, lived awhile) among us; and we [actually] saw His glory (His honor, His majesty), such glory as an only begotten son receives from his father, full of grace (favor, loving-kindness) and truth. [Isa 40:5.]**”

The Living Bible says, “**And Christ became a human being and lived here on earth among us and was full of loving forgiveness and truth. And some of us have seen his glory-the glory of the only Son of the heavenly Father!**”

Again, I don't think it can be much clearer and John is laying this all out for us so we understand who Jesus is and then John will show us what Jesus has done for us!

God became flesh and He dwelt among us, He took on a body of flesh and thus, in the Incarnation He was fully God and fully man. And the reason for that is that man had sinned and only the perfect sacrifice could take away his sins and Jesus was without sin and thus, being part of the human race, He could pay the penalty for our sins.

And John tells us that if we come to the Light, if we come to Jesus, what happens in our life. He wrote, “**But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.**” John 1:12-13.

Some may have a question here, “*Who is this gift for?*”

And we don’t have to guess on this because we are told that this gift is for, “**as many as received Him . . . to those who believe in His name.**”

In other words, this gift is for everyone, none are excluded, but you must come to Him by faith and ask Him into your life, repenting of your sins!

Now, in saying that, some feel that you can come to God any way that you want but that is not what the Scriptures tell us, not at all! And John gives to us three things that will not get you into heaven and one thing that will, and the thing or person that will get you into heaven is Jesus!

John starts out by telling us that it is *not by blood*, that is, it is not through our parents because they were Christians. It is not because you were born a Catholic or Lutheran or Baptist and so on. It is not passed down through your bloodline. Keep in mind that is what the Jews believed, because they were children of Abraham they were saved. Not true, it is – ***NOT OF BLOOD!***

Secondly, it is not by the *will of our flesh*, you can't work your way into heaven, you can't be good enough to get into heaven. There are those around Resurrection time, in Mexico and in the Philipians and I am sure other parts of the world as well, who will hang on a cross or whip themselves, crawl for miles on their hands and knees hoping to endure the pain and get in good with God so they can earn their salvation. It is not going to happen because it is – ***NOT THE WILL OF THE FLESH!***

And thirdly, it is not by the *will of man* or to put it another way, you can't save anyone, you can share the Word of God, but that is as far as you can go, God will do the rest. As much as I wish my family would turn to Christ, I cannot proclaim that they are Christians apart from receiving Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior! Thus, it is – ***NOT THE WILL OF MAN!***

We must be born of God and thus, we must come to Him on His terms and not what we think is right!

But what if I don't want to come to Him on His terms but I have my own way of coming to God?

Then you have not received Him and thus, you have not received the gift of life that He has for you, it is as simple as that.

And some can get upset with that, but that is just the way it is and for those who do come to Christ, we see that phrase, "**but of God.**"

You see, it is God's sovereign will, and the reality is, God desires all to be saved but not all will receive it, that free gift of life that is found in Jesus!

Peter said in II Peter 3:9, "**The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.**"

And I think Paul makes this very clear when He says in Ephesians 2:8-9, “**For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.**”

We are saved by the grace of God, it is a free gift that is extended to us and that gift is wrapped in Christ and, all we need to do is receive it by faith.

Remember again what John said, “**But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.**” John 1:12.

And that is the whole point of the Gospel of John. He is writing these things down so that you can read them, apply them to your life and come to that saving faith that is only found in Jesus!

That is what John tells us in John 20:30-31, “**And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.**”

We need to keep the main thing the main thing and that is what John will do. ***JESUS IS THE MAIN THING!*** And John will show us throughout this Gospel that Jesus is Almighty God who has come to save us from our sins. In other words – ***THAT YOU MAY BELIEVE!***

This morning we are going to focus on John the Baptist and the Jewish religious leaders, specifically the Pharisees and the Sadducees.

And as we will see, for John, it was all about Jesus but for these religious people, they did not want the message because it took the glory away from them, and we will see that played out even though it is early and they are not that antagonistic against Jesus yet, but that is coming and they are going to come against John the Baptist, as we will see.

I have called this study – ***WITNESS TO THE RELIGIOUS!***

And, as you will see, that is not an easy thing to do because they already see themselves as good, as righteous, but they are not! They have their own way of coming to God and they don't want to hear what anyone has to say, not even God!

I came out of the Roman Catholic Church and they considered themselves Christians, but I have a problem with that. Well, several. But one of them is this. You can talk to Catholics about Mary, the Pope, the saints, and anyone else but you can't talk to them about Jesus. I have seen Catholics get mad as soon as you bring up Jesus. So how can they say that they love God and they are serving God when they don't even want to talk about Jesus but have no problem talking about others, as I have said. Religious people are tough to talk to!

I have broken these verses down into three main points and they are as follows,

RELIGIOUS INQUIRY – JOHN 1:19-22

THE WITNESS OF THE WORD – JOHN 1:23-24

THE WITNESS OF CHRIST – JOHN 1:25-28

So let's begin reading in John chapter 1, beginning in verse 19, I bet you thought we would never get here, but we made it, and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study through the Gospel of John and look at this topic - ***WITNESS TO THE RELIGIOUS!***

JOHN 1**VERSES 19-22**

Let me set the stage for what is going on here. From John 1:19 through into John chapter 2, John is recording the events of about a week, all the way through the wedding in Cana that we find in John chapter 2.

Let me show you what I mean.

Day one is what we see here in John 1:19-28.

Then we see day two in John 1:29-34.

Day three is seen in John 1:35-42.

Day four is found in John 1:43-51.

And then in John 2:1 we are told, **“On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee . . .”**

That would put us at seven days or one week.

And what we see happening here in John chapter 1 is a changing of the guard you might say.

We are going to be moving from John the Baptist to Jesus, which is the focus of the Gospel of John.

John is going to move off the scene and Jesus is going to enter, and we will see that played out as Jesus gathers some of John’s disciples and they will follow Him now!

But this morning, as I have said, we are going to be looking at John the Baptist and these Jewish religious leaders, specifically the Pharisees and the Sadducees.

Keep in mind that John the Baptist is not in Jerusalem preparing the way for the Messiah, but he is in the wilderness, around the Jordan River.

And there he is baptizing people, calling for them to repent of their sins and turn back to God.

And it seems like many were out there listening to John and his message of repentance and turning back to God. He had a following and many were being baptized as they were giving their lives back to God.

Listen to how Matthew fills in some of the details of this period of time. In Matthew 3:1-6 we are told, **“In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!’ For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying: ‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness: “Prepare the way of the Lord; Make His paths straight.”’ Now John himself was clothed in camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins.”**

Notice the message that John the Baptist is giving them is this - ***REPENT!***

Today we would say that the message is too negative, we need to give a more positive message, or the people are going to run away, they won’t listen.

Did you see that the people came from all over the place to hear the message, to repent of their sins and to turn back to God! And when they did, they were baptized in the Jordan River by John!

And this is a baptism of repentance, Jesus had not died and rose from the grave yet. It is not the baptism that we partake of!

Also, when God is working and He touches a person's heart, you see true repentance that leads to actions, it is not empty.

J. R. Miller put it this way in regard to true repentance. He said that true repentance ***“amounts to nothing whatever if it produces only a few tears, a spasm of regret, a little freight. We must leave the sins we repent of and walk in the new, clean way of holiness.”***

Things were happening there by the Jordan River and this news spread quickly, reaching the ears of the Jewish religious leaders!

Keep in mind they did not have the Internet, they did not have phones, their communication, for the most part, was word of mouth. And there in Jerusalem they heard about this guy in the wilderness named John who was baptizing people, calling for them to repent of their sins.

Now we might not think too much of this but as much as baptism was practiced by the Jews for a form of ceremonial cleansing, it was usually Gentiles who wished to become Jews who were baptized.

And the point I want you to see is that these Jews who came to John were basically saying, ***“I am a sinner, and my sin has brought me as far from God as a Gentile is and I need to get right with Him.”***

God was working on their hearts to do something like that!

Again, this is something that as we share our faith, as we teach the Word of God, we must make sure that there is the exposure of the sin of the person's life so that they will see their need for a Savior, a need for Jesus! Repent, receive, believe and be baptized into the faith!

Not only that but John had a following, a big following as people from Jerusalem and Judea and all around the Jordan River came to hear John.

And I am sure that as these Jewish religious leaders heard about this it made them very mad. They were the authorities on the Law and yet they did not have a following like John did. They did not have that excitement and they did not see that desire for people to change their lives and to turn back to God.

So as they are hearing the people returning to Jerusalem on fire for God, we are told that they “**. . . sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, ‘Who are you?’**” John 1:19.

We are also told that this group of religious leaders were Pharisees in John 1:24, as John tells us, “**Now those who were sent were from the Pharisees.**”

Matthew tells us that there was also another group of religious men with them. He tells us, “**But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism . . .**” Matthew 3:7.

Please keep in mind that these two groups of religious leaders did not get along with each other, they were on opposite ends of the religious spectrum you might say.

But the one thing that they have in common is their hatred of John the Baptist and later on their hatred of Jesus!

Now some of you might not understand what these two groups believed, who they are, these two groups of Jewish religious leaders, so let me take a minute and explain what they believed to you.

First of all, the Pharisees were the conservative group, the legalists.

The word “**Pharisee**” means “*separated ones*” and that is how they tried to live. They separated themselves from the common people, the sinners, and when they returned home from the marketplace or any public gathering where someone may have touched them, they would go and perform a ceremonial washing.

Thus, you can understand why they were so upset with Jesus when He ate with sinners.

You see, they were self-righteous, legalistic and isolated themselves from others.

And we can read of the martyrdom of Christians as the church began, but you will not read of the death of any Pharisee.

Do you know why?

Because they didn't die, they are still alive and well and living today as many Christians have become Pharisaical in their actions, looking down upon others and straining the gnat from the cup instead of hearing the message and applying it to their lives.

The other Jewish religious group that came out to see John the Baptist were the Sadducees and they were on the other end of the spectrum, they were the liberals.

Yes, even religious groups can be liberal in their theology and this group was very liberal.

They only accepted the Law of Moses and yet they cared little for doctrine. They saw themselves as masters of their destiny, in control with unlimited freedom to do as they pleased.

They deny the existence of angels, spirits or the resurrection from the dead.

And I know I have said this before, but the best way to remember this group and what they are for is that they deny the resurrection and thus, they are **SAD - U - SEE!**

I know, the groans, but it will help you remember what they believed and who they were!

Also, as I have said, religious people are some of the hardest people to talk to about the Lord because they know it all, they don't care what you show them, they have their minds made up, this is what their church has taught them for years and they are going to hold onto that.

The problem is that if it goes against what the Word of God has to say, then they are wrong, and you don't follow what they are teaching if they are leading you away from God! Be careful who you are following, God or a religious system!

And listen to what John the Baptist said to these religious leaders who came to check him out and report back to the High Priest and the Sanhedrin back in Jerusalem. In Matthew 3:7-12 we are told, “**... he said to them [John the Baptist], ‘Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not think to say to yourselves, “We have Abraham as our father.” For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.’**”

I guess John did not read the book, “*How to win friends and influence people!*” yet.

And keep in mind that these are the heavy hitters of the Jewish faith and John the Baptist did not mess around, he called it as he saw it and he calls them *children of vipers* or small poisonous desert snakes!

Why?

Because, as Jesus said in Matthew 23:13 “**But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.**”

They were responsible for keeping people from God because of their ungodly, unbiblical views!

Thus, John tells them that if they truly want to repent, if this is not just for show, bear fruits in your life of true repentance!

It is as Acts 26:20 says “**. . . that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance.**”

In other words, live what you say you believe.

But for them, these religious leaders, they saw themselves as good, there was no need to repent, and they kept God from their lives and their actions reflected that!

They were basically saying to John, “*What’s going on here? We didn’t authorize any religious activity of this sort. Where’s your permit? Who do you think you are?*”

This kind of thing happens all the time when dead orthodoxy challenges a fresh work of God!

May we always be open to what God is doing and not become dead in our faith!

So these religious leaders came to John with this question – “**Who are you?**”

That is the question that they had for John, as these religious leaders sent these priests and Levites to inquire of John and like I have said, I have called these verses – ***RELIGIOUS INQUIRY!***

Now don’t believe for a minute that they were there to hear the truth, they just wanted to know what was going on and report back to the leaders in Jerusalem. They were not interested in the truth because they could not handle the truth!

So as they come to John by the Jordan River, they are all prim and proper, dressed in their religious attire and then there is John!

His appearance was kind of like the hippies from the 70's. Long hair. He had a big old leather belt around his waist. He ate healthy, locust and wild honey.

This is someone who, if you had a daughter and she brought this boy home, you would try to put a stop to it. He did not look like someone you would want your daughter to marry or even date.

But looks are deceiving, aren't they? You bet they are. John was a righteous man while these religious people, even though they looked very holy, they were not, not at all!

So we see that these religious leaders traveled to see what this long-haired hippie freak was all about. He didn't have their credentials, he didn't go to Old Rabbi University, and they wanted to know who he was and who gave him the authority to do what he was doing!

We still do that today. I can't tell you the number of people who ask me what seminary I went to and I tell them that I did not go to the cemetery, I mean seminary, the Lord has taught me!

And they can't accept that many times and they leave. In the eyes of the religious elite, John was nothing, but in the eyes of God, he was precious!

Let me show you how crazy it is as we use the worlds standards to judge people instead of looking at the fruit in their lives and seeing what God is doing in their lives. As I read this you will see what I mean.

MEMORANDUM

TO: Jesus, son of Joseph, Woodcrafter, Carpenter's shop, Nazareth

FROM: Jordan Management Consultants, Jerusalem

Dear Sir:

Thank you for submitting the resumes of the twelve men you have picked for management positions in your new organization. All of them have now taken our battery of tests.

We have not only run the results through our computer, but also arranged personal interviews for each of them with our psychologist and vocational aptitude consultant. It is the staff's opinion that most of the nominees are lacking in background, education and vocational aptitude for the type of enterprise you are undertaking. They do not have the team concept. We would recommend that you continue your search for persons of experience in managerial ability and proven capability.

Simon Peter is emotionally unstable and given to fits of temper.

Andrew has absolutely no qualities of leadership.

The two brothers James and John, the sons of Zebedee, place personal interest above company loyalty.

Thomas demonstrates a questioning attitude that would tend to undermine morale.

We feel that it is our duty to tell you that Matthew has been blacklisted by the greater Jerusalem Better Business Bureau.

James, the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus definitely have radical leanings and they both registered a high score on the manic-depressive scale.

One of the candidates, however, shows great potential. He is a man of ability and resourcefulness, meets people well, has a keen business mind and has contacts in high places. He is highly motivated, ambitious and responsible.

We recommend Judas Iscariot as your controller and right-hand man.

All of the other profiles are self-explanatory.

We wish you every success in your new venture.

Sincerely yours,
Jordan Management Consultants

Now we laugh at the foolishness of that but that is what we see even today. We need to be careful. John did not look the part, outwardly speaking but his heart was right with God and he was the spokesperson for God, preparing the way for the Messiah to come!

These religious leaders were not looking to come to God, they were just inquiring what John the Baptist was doing or as John 1:22 tells us, **“Then they said to him, ‘Who are you, that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?’”**

Again, what John spoke did not pierce their heart, it bounced off because they closed themselves to the things that God was saying to them and thus, they did not repent and get right with God. They wanted the information to report back but it did nothing in their lives!

And that will lead us to our next point, and that question, ***“What do you say about yourself?”*** You see, the next point is going to deal with – ***THE WITNESS OF THE WORD!***

And, as we will see, it is not about John, but it is about the work that God has called him to do and that will bring us to the last point then – ***THE WITNESS OF CHRIST!***

You see, it was not about John, but it is about Jesus and may we never lose sight of that fact!

VERSES 23-24

I like what John does here. They ask him who is he, and he tells them I am a nobody, but I am here to prepare the way of somebody, the **LORD!**

Today in the church many like to draw people to themselves, but John spoke up and said to them, “**I am not the Christ!**”

That is the question that these religious men will have for John in John 1:25, “**And they asked him, saying, ‘Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?’**”

And we will deal more with this when we come to that verse, but I want you to understand that the Jewish religious leaders clearly understood that John was not claiming to be the Messiah, he was not claiming to be even Elijah or the Prophet that was spoken of in Deuteronomy chapter 18.

All that John says is that he is a voice crying in the wilderness to make straight the way of the **LORD!**

What John is showing them is that he is the fulfillment of what Isaiah the prophet spoke of and he quotes the verse for them. He brings them to the Word of God to show that what he is doing is not something born out of the imagination of his own heart!

Again, what we see here is – ***THE WITNESS OF THE WORD!***

Now we read these stories in the Bible and we think, “***That was then but now we don’t do those kinds of things!***”

Let’s think about that for a minute. What are you doing for the Lord?

Now you may be thinking that you are not John the Baptist and that is true, none of us are John the Baptist, but what has God called you to do?

For me, to be a pastor, I know for certain what God has called me to do. And I can tell you it is not because I am such a great teacher, I am not such a great speaker, I am not that intelligent! And I can go on, but you get the picture.

Then how in the world can I do what I am doing?

Please understand that it is not about me, never has been and it will never be about me. It is what the Lord has called me to do, and He has confirmed it to me in His Word! It is because I have been and am still with Jesus!

John the Baptist knew exactly what God had called him to do and he stepped out in faith and did it. But he did not exalt himself or think that it was because he was so special. It was the Lord and the Lord called him to do it and it was confirmed in the Word of God!

I know for certain that the Lord called me to be a pastor and He spoke to my heart about this and then He confirmed it through His Word.

The verse He gave to me as a pastor and what the church was to be about that He called me to oversee is found in Acts 2:42 and that was the first message I gave some twenty-six years ago here at Calvary, sharing what God had placed upon my heart for this church.

Most if not all of you know this verse, it goes like this, “**And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.**”

What God had shown me is that he wants me to teach the people He has entrusted to me the Word of God and not to just teach it but live it, so that you can grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

He had shown me that we are to be there for each other, that koinonia or that close fellowship with each other so we can help each other in our walk with the Lord. And I can honestly tell you that I am so blessed when I hear new people say that they feel so welcomed here at Calvary, that is what we are to be about!

He had shown me that we are to share in communion and share meals together. Why is that? Because it draws us close together.

And he had shown me that we are to be a church of prayer. And we have prayer on Saturday, we have prayer twice a month for the women and we have prayer at the end of each of our Men's Bible Studies. And I am speaking of corporate prayer or praying together as a body of believers. Obviously, that is not the only time we pray!

We have a prayer chain where people can call or email me prayer requests and I will send them out to the prayer team. And we send out weekly prayer requests that people write on Sunday's as well. And we have a group of people praying over these prayer requests!

And that has truly been my passion for the last twenty-six years I have been here and if the Lord had not called me, if He had not shown me through His Word, then I should not be here because I would be doing this out of the desires of my own heart. And if that was the reason, because I just wanted to, I would never have lasted twenty-six years!

So what has God shown you or spoken to you about serving Him?

I know many of you are involved in ministries here at Calvary. You are on the worship team. You are working in the sound room. You are involved in the Sunday School and Infant and Toddler Ministry. You are cleaning the church or working outside cutting the grass. You are an usher. And the list goes on.

And keep in mind that as you serve the Lord, there will always be opposition, there will be those who come against you, but if that is where God has called you, then nothing will move you from that work!

We see that in the life of John the Baptist.

But what happens many times today is that many want to do something, and they dive in and they really are unsure what God wants them to do. And for many, as the Word of God is put down, they go by feelings rather than God's Word. Let me show you what I mean. We are told,

Two generations of postmodern thought has led to growing cynicism about truth claims, institutional authorities, and even history.

Among revisionists, the historical record is a product of oppression and coercion written by the ruling class.

At best, history is unreliable; at worst, it is propaganda - a story written by the winners in the perpetual struggle for power.

That also goes for the biblical record, which many dismiss as myth or legend.

A person who was eminently qualified to answer that charge was C. S. Lewis. As a literary historian and scholar in ancient literature, Lewis wrote, ***"I am perfectly convinced that whatever else the Gospels are, they are not legends. I have read a great deal of legend (myth) and I am quite clear that they are not the same sort of thing."***

Lewis went on to explain why he came to that conclusion: ***"They are not artistic enough . . . Most of the life of Jesus is totally unknown to us. . . . and no people building up a legend would allow that to be so."***

In other words, they lack the drama, the colorful detail and rich imagination of the ancient storytellers.

John the Baptist heard the calling of God upon His life and then he acted upon it in accordance to the Word of God.

And that is what he told these Jewish religious leaders, that this is what Isaiah spoke of me and I am not the one to be looked too but I am the one to point you to the Messiah!

So we have seen – ***THE WITNESS OF THE WORD!***

And now we will finish up by looking at – ***THE WITNESS OF CHRIST!***

VERSES 25-28

This is interesting to me because John just told them who he was and he used the Scriptures, Isaiah 40:3 to prove his point.

And after he shares that with them, they ask him, “... **‘Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?’**” John 1:25.

Notice the problem for these religious leaders. They want more information because the Word of God was not enough for them. Or, I should say that the Word of God did not fit into the picture that they had painted and thus, John should not be doing what he was doing!

How sad that we see this even today when people want more than the Word of God to satisfy them, to make them understand God more and thus, we have books, movies and-so-on that we will turn to and do studies off of instead of the Word of God.

And, like I have said, many times it is because the Word of God does not fit what we want to do or what we want to believe!

John was baptizing in the Jordan River those who had repented, those who turned back to God. And thus, these religious leaders wanted to know why he was doing that if he was basically a nobody.

He was not the Christ.

He was not the Prophet.

He was not Elijah.

Thus, they could not understand who gave him this authority to do what he was doing!

Let me ask you that question, “*Who gave John that authority to do what he was doing?*”

God did and He verified it with the Word of God and thus, the Word of God gave John that authority, not man, not any religious leader!

And you have to love John because he is humble in that once again he tells them he is nobody but the lowliest of slaves compared to the One who is coming, the Messiah.

Yes, John baptized with water but that was only a superficial cleansing, symbolic, it didn't cleanse you of your sins.

But when the Messiah comes, He will cleanse you completely from your sins, casting them as far as the east is from the west to be remembered no more!

Of this Leon Morris makes this observation. He wrote, “The point of the quotation is that it gives no prominence to the preacher whatever. He is not an important person, like a prophet or the Messiah. He is no more than a voice (contrast the reference to Jesus as ‘the Word’). He is a voice, moreover, with but one thing to say. . . . ‘Make straight the way of the Lord’ is a call to be ready, for the coming of the Messiah is near.” (The Gospel According to John, 137)

Isn't that what we are in a nutshell. We are nobodies but we are telling people to prepare for the Messiah is coming! And people want to know who has given to us this authority? What school did you go to? What credentials do you have?

And all I can say is that I have the Word of God as my authority and Jesus as my Savior and that is all I need.

If you reject the Word of God, then you are rejecting the Savior and if you are rejecting the Savior you will die in your sins.

In other words, judgment is coming!

Look at our nation and this world today. Wickedness is lifted up and holiness is looked down upon. Every sin seems to be in the face of God, and people are not even embarrassed by what they see, they do not even blush anymore because they have become accustomed to it!

And that means we, like John the Baptist are to prepare the people for the coming of the Lord, as I have said.

And the work is simple. Yes, we tend to make it very complicated, it is not.

Keep in mind that in those days, before a King came to town, they would send a forerunner to prepare the roads, fix things up for the King.

Thus, John came not to fix up the roads and make things look nice, but to prepare the hearts of the people to receive Jesus, telling them to repent of their sins and turn back to God; He was preparing the people to receive Jesus!

John was a witness of Jesus and how important that is for us to remember, we need to point people to Jesus and not ourselves, just as John the Baptist has done.

Now keep in mind that “**Christ**” is not His last name, it means “*the Anointed One*” or “*the Messiah.*”

Jesus, or really Joshua or Yehoshua means, “**Yahweh is our salvation.**” How true that is!

So John, not wanting to draw attention to himself but to focus them back on the One who is greater than Himself. He also says that he is not Elijah either. And yet, in the New Testament it seems to say that he is. What is up with that?

In the Old Testament, Malachi 4:5-6 we are told, **“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. And he will turn The hearts of the fathers to the children, And the hearts of the children to their fathers, Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.”**

So, Elijah will come before the Lord returns, and I believe this is speaking of the Lord’s Second Coming.

Now this does also point to the near fulfillment, to John the Baptist. And we are told in Luke 1:17 what his life would be all about.

In Luke 1:17 we are told of John the Baptist that, **“He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, ‘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.”**

Also, in Matthew 11:13-14 we are told, **“For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come.”**

You see, he was not Elijah, but he came in the spirit and the power of Elijah. But before the Lord returns, Elijah will come!

There is nothing wrong with inquiring about God but if you are looking to fight with God or His representative, just like these religious leaders, you are wrong, and the Word of God shows that point very clearly.

Also, we are to allow the Word of God to lead us in all that we do, and we then are to be a witness of Jesus! Let your light shine brightly because the Lamb of God has come to take away the sins of the world!