

The Gospel of John

1:19-28

Welcome back to this week's study in the book of John.

As we start in this week's verses, you must remember that this is speaking of John the Baptist and not the John who wrote this book.

✠ **John 1:19-23** *Now this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ." And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No." 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?" He said: "I am 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Make straight the way of the LORD, ' as the prophet Isaiah said."*

First thing I notice here is that the Jews sent the priests and religious leaders to question John the Baptist.

Why would they do that and not ask them themselves?

I would say it was because of the message John the Baptist was bringing. And to know what that was we need to look in the book of Luke.

✠ **Luke 3:3-18** *And he went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, saying: "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight. Every valley shall be filled And every mountain and hill brought low; The crooked places shall be made straight And the rough ways smooth; And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.' " Then he said to the multitudes that came out to be baptized by him, "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin 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." So the people asked him, saying, "What shall we do then?" He answered and said to them, "He who has two tunics, let him give to him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise." Then tax collectors also came to be baptized, and said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Collect no more than what is appointed for you." Likewise the soldiers asked him, saying, "And what shall we do?" So he said to them, "Do not intimidate anyone or accuse falsely, and be content with your wages." Now as the people were in expectation, and all reasoned in their*

hearts about John, whether he was the Christ or not, John answered, saying to all, "I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. 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 the wheat into His barn; but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire." And with many other exhortations he preached to the people.

Wow, you can see why the Jews sent the priests to question John the Baptist. You see this was a new thing John the Baptist was preaching. Sure they may have gone to synagogue each Sabbath but the teaching was not like this.

It would be like going to a church today on Sunday and watching them go through the motions of the religious rituals, and listening to some reading, then going home. But when you go to a good bible teaching church, you get the full counsel of God, not rituals, but good teaching in God's word that changes your life. That's what John the Baptist was doing here, he wasn't going through the motions, but lived what he was teaching and preached what the Holy Spirit gave him to preach. We see evidence of this in verse 10 in Luke.

† *So the people asked him, saying, "What shall we do then?"*

You see, when there are only rituals and religion in a church, people just go there because it's the thing to do on Sunday, but there is no change in their life. But when God's word is taught by the leading of the Holy Spirit, that's when people say, "**What shall we do then?**" Or "*How do I change my life style that I am currently living?*"

Kind of makes you stop and look at yourself and ask, "*Am I being taught God's word or am I just going through the motions each Sunday?*"

Sometimes it's not the church or the teaching at the church, but rather the hardness of your own heart.

The more you reject the teaching of God's word, the less it will affect you spiritually. Soon you will get to the point that you start missing church and eventually stop going all together.

If this sounds like you, the question I pray you are asking is, "*What should I do then?*" The answer is a few simple things; the first thing is to always repent and ask forgiveness from the Lord. Ask the Lord to change your heart.

Next start getting into God's word every day and continue to pray every day. Sound pretty simple? Actually it is, but then you will have opposition from satan who will try his best to stop you from praying and reading God's word. But hang in there and just pray more; God will see you through as He sees the sincerity of your heart to return to Him.

So John is being questioned here and the first thing he makes clear to them is: ***He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ."***

Hey guys, I'm not claiming to be the Messiah or the Christ. I am not the Savior of the world.

So they accepted this and asked:

✠ ***John 1:21 And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not."***

Read what Jesus said concerning John the Baptist and Elijah.

✠ ***Matt 17:10-13 And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?" Jesus answered and said to them, "Indeed, Elijah is coming first and will restore all things. But I say to you that Elijah has come already, and they did not know him but did to him whatever they wished. Likewise the Son of Man is also about to suffer at their hands." Then the disciples understood that He spoke to them of John the Baptist.***

So who is right, Jesus or John the Baptist?

The answer is both. Remember back in Luke where John the Baptist's father, Zacharias was visited by the angel Gabriel to tell him that he would have a son in his old age? This is what the angel said about John the Baptist.

✠ ***Luke 1:17 "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."***

Jesus also said, "***Elijah is coming first***" Meaning he hasn't come yet, and John the Baptist had already come, preaching with the spirit and power of Elijah, but he was not the actual Elijah as scripture was speaking about.

So he's not the Messiah and not Elijah. So they ask him the next question.

✠ ***"Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No."***

Who is "***the Prophet***"?

We have to go back to the book of Deuteronomy to find out and read where God was speaking to Moses.

✠ ***Deut 18:18-19 I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him. And it shall be that whoever will not hear My words, which He speaks in My name, I will require it of him.***

This is a reference to Jesus the Messiah. So they already asked John this, are they asking the same thing again?

Yes, and no. Yes, but they didn't know or understand Who this Prophet is.

No, because they figured that it may just be a prophet like Moses, but not the actual Messiah.

Ok, you're not the Messiah, Elijah, nor the Prophet. Then who is John the Baptist?

✠ **John 1:22-23** *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?" He said: "I am 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Make straight the way of the LORD, ' as the prophet Isaiah said."*

As we learned last week, this was referring to the prophecy of Isaiah.

✠ **Isaiah 40:3** *The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the LORD; Make straight in the desert A highway for our God."*

It would be like something big was going to happen in your town, like the president of the USA or someone famous was coming through to speak. So there would be those who would prepare the town to receive him, by letting others know, and seeing that everything was in order.

But John the Baptist was doing more than just making sure things were in order, in fact he started to bring things out of order, according to the religious leaders of the day.

Little did they know it was only the beginning, because Jesus was on His way to preach the same thing as John the Baptist was, which was to repent and seek the kingdom of God.

But Jesus did more than tell them, He made the way for us all to repent and enter the kingdom of God, and that was through His death and resurrection from the dead.

So how do you prepare the way of the Lord? Basically the same way we prepare others to enter heaven, and that's through preaching and teach God's word.

✠ **John 1:24-28** *Now those who were sent were from the Pharisees. And they asked him, saying, "Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?" John answered them, saying, "I baptize with water, but there stands One among you whom you do not know. It is He who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose." These things were done in Bethabara beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing.*

Who were these Pharisee's anyway?

Jesus lets us see them as He gives an example of the way they pray.

† **Luke 18:11-12** *The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men--extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.'*

They were self-righteous and proud, and they were quick to judge. As you read through the four gospels you read of them judging Jesus because He ate with sinners, tax collectors and even allowed a prostitute to touch Him.

So these men ask John the Baptist.

✎ *"Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?"*

The interesting thing about baptism is, you don't read of it in the Old Testament. So what was John the Baptist doing and how did these Pharisee's understand what he was doing? If we look further ahead in John we read that the baptism was a purification process in a sense.

† **John 3:25-26** *Then there arose a dispute between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purification. And they came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have testified--behold, He is baptizing, and all are coming to Him!"*

And in Acts Paul tells us more about John's baptism and what it meant.

† **Acts 19:4** *Then Paul said, "John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus."*

And even though the word baptism is not in the Old Testament there are various references to washing your body completely to be cleansed from a sin.

† **Lev 15:16** *If any man has an emission of semen, then he shall wash all his body in water, and be unclean until evening.*

† **2 Kings 5:14** *So he went down and dipped seven times in the Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.*

† **Psalms 51:2** *Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, And cleanse me from my sin.*

† **Isaiah 1:16** *Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes. Cease to do evil.*

At this point let's talk a little about baptism.

A few things we will look at are:

- **What is it today and how was it used in the New Testament?**
- **If you are not baptized are you still saved?**
- **Should I get baptized if I am a Christian even if I got baptized when I was a baby?**
- **Do you go completely under water or will a sprinkling do?**

Simply put, baptism is burying your old self and coming up as a new creation in Jesus Christ. But you must also understand that baptism is the outward expression of your faith in Jesus Christ, and baptism does not save you. It's only a testimony to others of your faith and belief in Jesus Christ, and the washing away of your sins.

† **2 Cor 5:17** *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*

So you are also that new creation in Jesus Christ, when you pray the sinner's prayer and choose to repent from your sins. Notice Paul says here that *if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation* not if you are baptized are you a new creation.

The question comes up some times about being baptized and saved.

Say you except Jesus as your Lord and Savior, and as you leave from where you just got saved and you were not baptized yet, and got hit by a car and died, does that mean you weren't saved because you weren't baptized? Will God keep you out of heaven because you accepted His Son Jesus but were not baptized?

Here is the answer from Jesus and Paul.

† **John 3:16** *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*

† **Eph 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.*

Salvation is a gift from God to all who will believe in His Son Jesus.

If you think you have to be baptized to be saved, you are now adding works to your salvation and saying that Jesus' death on the cross was not enough to get you into heaven.

Remember the thief on the cross next to Jesus and what Jesus said to him?

† **Luke 23:41-43** *"And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong." Then he said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise."*

Jesus didn't say, I'm sorry I really want you in heaven with Me, but you are going to die before you can be baptized. You almost made it too.

I know it sounds crazy, but so does putting your faith in your works and not Jesus.

If baptism were required to be saved, then Paul would have baptized everyone, but instead Paul says.

† **1 Cor 1:16-17** *Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas. Besides, I do not know whether I baptized any other. For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect.*

Paul only baptized a few people, and we know Paul preached the way to salvation. If baptism were required, Paul would have baptized everyone who was saved.

Should you get baptized as a Christian, and what if you were already baptized as a baby, should you get baptized again?

The answer is yes and yes!

Yes, you should get baptized, not to be saved, because you are already saved, but to testify to the world that you now have a new life in Jesus Christ, and you are burying the old man (or woman), which means you have chosen not to live the way you used to live, but live the way Christ wants you to.

Also Jesus told us to get baptized.

Mark 16:15-18 *And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."*

Notice Jesus only mentions baptism once here, meaning that He wants us all to do it. But Jesus' emphasis was on believing, not baptism.

So why do you need to be baptized again if you were baptized as a baby?

As a baby you were not a Christian and had no say so in the matter. You were not being baptized for the reasons we just talked about, but instead it was a ritual brought on by man.

The final question is, should you be completely immersed in water or can I be sprinkled?

† **Romans 6:4** *Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*

When people die, do you sprinkle dirt on them and say they are buried? No, you put them six feet under, covering them completely in dirt.

In order to bury the old man (in a sense) you can't just sprinkle him; you must dunk him. Also the word baptism means to immerse. Jesus when He was baptized was immersed,

† **Mark 1:9-10** *It came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And immediately, coming up from the water, He saw the heavens parting and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove.*

as well as all the others in the bible who we read of being baptized.

† **Acts 8:38-39** *So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing.*

So if you are a Christian and have not been baptized, I would encourage you to do so, because Jesus told you to, not because you have to, to be saved.

If you were baptized as a baby and have not been baptized as a believer, I would encourage you to do the same also.

You should want to tell the world that Jesus has changed your life and you have a new life in Jesus, and let them know you have buried your old life through baptism.

And if you haven't been baptized and you are not a Christian, I would encourage; No, I plead with you to repent from your sins and receive Jesus as your Lord and Savior right now.

Just pray,

Jesus, I admit I am a sinner and I ask You to please forgive me for my sins. I believe that You died on the cross for me and rose from the dead. I choose You and the life You have for me and choose to turn from my old life style. Please give me the strength not to go back to what I used to be, and to become the person You want me to be. Please fill me with Your Holy Spirit and may I tell others about You and what You did for them too.

I ask this in Your name Jesus. AMEN!

Now you can get baptized as a believer in Jesus Christ.

That's it for this week. Next week, Jesus and John the Baptist come together and we may get into Jesus choosing some of the 12 disciples.

May God richly bless you in His love, grace and mercy!