

## UPPER ROOM ADULT BIBLE STUDY

“The Gospel of John”

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### Lesson 6: John 1:19-34. Don't Shoot the Messenger!

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

- a. “Who are you?” – reflecting the same inquiry made of Jesus.
  - a. Matthew 16:13-14. Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?”<sup>14</sup> And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”
- b. “sent priests and Levites” – John was the son of a priest, Zacharias. As such, he was expected to become a priest, and was expected to behave like a priest: which he was not!
  - a. What kinds of expectations do you think people would have had toward “PK’s” (preacher’s kids; priest’s kids)?
  - b. What kinds of expectations do you think people today have toward PK’s?
- c. “I am not the Christ...Elijah?...the prophet?”
  - a. The Jewish belief regarding the Messiah:
    - i. Would be preceded by the return of the prophet Elijah, who would prepare the people to receive Him.
    - ii. Malachi 4:5. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes.
    - iii. Elijah would determine the worthiness of those to receive the benefits of the Messiah’s coming: prosperity, power, and a righteous standing with God.
    - iv. The Messiah would usher in an age in which Israel would be restored to its former greatness (as in David’s day).
- d. “We need to give an answer to those who sent us”

- a. **Question:** Beliefs often shape expectations of how God, and believers, 'should' act in the world. The Jewish belief shaped their expectations of Jesus, in His day. Much of Jesus' ministry to His disciples was geared toward overcoming their pre-conceived ideas of what His Messiah-ship was about.
- i. What pre-conceived ideas do people today have about a messiah?
  - ii. In what ways are the culture defining those ideas?
  - iii. In Jesus' day, many people attempted to define His messiahship:
    1. The zealots – wanted a Messiah to lead an army to overthrow the Romans, It is believed that Judas was a zealot.
    2. The Pharisees – wanted a Messiah who would keep the law of God perfectly, and lead others to do so.
    3. The disciples – wanted a Messiah who would enrich their lives with power (the perks of which they would enjoy).
- e. **“He said, ‘I am the voice of one...’** – Quoting *Isaiah 40:3*, John affirms that he is the messenger: *A voice cries:<sup>[a]</sup> “In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.*

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

- a. **“why are you baptizing, if you are neither...”** – the fact that John was baptizing was not at issue; the fact that John was baptizing Jews together with Gentiles was offensive to them.
  - a. The Jewish belief was that only Gentile converts to Judaism were to be baptized. True Jews need not be baptized, because they were already in relationship with God, as the ‘chosen people.’
- b. **“among you stands One whom you do not know”** – John indicated that the true Messiah would be among them, but they would not recognize Him.
- c. **“the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie.”** – untying the sandal was considered slave’s work: so menial a task, that no disciple was required to do this for his master!

The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! <sup>30</sup> This is he of whom I said, ‘After me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was before me.’ <sup>31</sup> I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel.” <sup>32</sup> And John bore witness: “I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. <sup>33</sup> I 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.’<sup>34</sup> And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son<sup>[a]</sup> of God.”

a. “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin” – John gives a witness regarding Jesus: **The Lamb of God.**

- a. Recalling the sacrifice of a lamb at the temple, every day, for the sins of the people.
- b. Recalling the sacrifice of an unblemished lamb at the first Passover in Egypt, where the blood on the door posts directed the angel of death to Passover believers.
- c. Contrasted with the role of ‘scapegoat,’ who on the Day of Atonement, would symbolically bear the sin of the people, and be driven away into the wilderness (***Leviticus 16:9-10***).
- d. ***Isaiah 53:7***. *He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.*

b. “**And John bore witness...I have seen and born witness**” – John did not know who Jesus was, until he saw at the baptism, the presence of the Holy Spirit – in the form of a dove.

- a. ***Matthew 3:16-17***. *And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him,<sup>[a]</sup> and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; <sup>17</sup> and behold, a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son,<sup>[b]</sup> with whom I am well pleased.”*