

**The WORD Became Flesh  
(Week 2)  
John 1:19-34  
“The Testimony of The Baptizer”**

**Introduction**

***I have seen and testified that this is The Son of God.***

***John 1:34***

As we have already seen, John presents his conclusions about Jesus in the opening statements of his gospel. He then proceeds to call his witnesses to the stand, as it were, to show us how he has come to his conclusions. The word for “testimony” in the Greek is “*maturia*”, and John uses that word or some form of it more than seventy-five times in this writing. Just as any attorney would make his case by the calling of witnesses, this is exactly what John is doing here. And we already know the reason:

***Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of His disciples that are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is The Messiah, The Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His Name.***

***John 20:30-31***

The first “witness” that John calls is none other than John The Baptist. This makes perfect sense, for John himself had been a disciple of John The Baptist before he became a follower of Jesus. In fact, he started following Jesus, when he heard the great baptizer’s endorsement of Him (**John 1:40**). John would have been a very young man at the time, more than likely in his teens, when he and Andrew (brother of Simon Peter) left John The Baptist to follow The LORD.

It is important to point out the differences in this story of John The Baptist’s encounter with Jesus as opposed to the narratives found in *Matthew* and *Mark*, who tell of Jesus’ baptism by John. The baptism of Jesus had actually occurred some six weeks prior to the events that John is describing for us here. The sequence of events that needs explanation is as follows: First Jesus came to be baptized by John, and then, He went into the wilderness to be tested. After His wilderness trial had ended with Satan’s resounding defeat, Jesus then began His earthly ministry. And that ministry actually began with a return visit to John The Baptist. It is this second meeting that John the disciple witnessed personally and shares with the readers of his gospel. He is actually giving us an eyewitness account of Jesus’ first full week of ministry, which begins with His encounter with John The Baptist and culminates with the famous turning of water into wine at a local wedding feast.

John more than likely does not bother to include the telling of Jesus’ baptism prior to this event for one or two possible reasons. First, he may not have witnessed that event personally. After all, he was a disciple of John The Baptist, but he also worked as a fisherman, and therefore, he may not have been there to see it. And second, he probably assumed that everyone knew of this previous meeting between The Baptizer and Jesus by reading the other gospels. John does allude to the first meeting with the testimony of John The Baptist, who mentions his first encounter with Christ in this text:

***And John testified. ‘I saw (past tense) The Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He rested on Him.’***

***John 1:32***

So, as we look here at the beginning of Jesus’ earthly ministry, we can see first hand the interaction between those who believe and those who refuse to believe in Jesus. John The Baptist was most definitely a believer, and just as all those who profess the name of Jesus will always experience, the Baptizer himself was subjected to severe opposition. Let us look together at the three components of this eyewitness account of Jesus’ “first week on the job”, as it were: The Self-Righteous, The Servant, and The Son of God.

**The Self-Righteous (vs. 19-22a)**

**This was John's testimony when the Jews from Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him, 'Who are you?' He didn't deny it but confessed, 'I and not the Messiah.' 'What then?' they asked him. 'Are you Elijah?' 'I am not,' he said. 'Are you the prophet?' 'No,' he answered. 'Who are you then?' they asked. 'We need to give an answer to those who sent us.'...** **John 1:19-22a**

In order to fully comprehend this exchange, we must first familiarize ourselves with the inner working of the Jewish political structure during the first century Roman Empire. Israel was an occupied territory. The Romans ruled all of the known world at this time with an iron fist. But local officials were given some latitude as to how their citizenry would be ruled, so long as that rule did nothing to oppose Roman law. This is the way that the empire appeased the vastly different cultures over which it presided.

Israel was governed by a king appointed by the Romans. However, it was impossible not to have a religious authority with some governing power in a nation such as that of the Jewish people. Therefore they were allowed to have a religious "governing body" in addition to their appointed king. This body was made up of seventy-one religious leaders and was called "The Sanhedrin". The word actually comes from two Jewish words meaning "seated together". So, it was an assembly of religious leaders that formed a judiciary of sorts. In our society we might consider this as "The Supreme Court". And much like our own high court in America, this one was comprised of Liberals and Conservatives. History really does seem to repeat itself does it not?

The conservatives of Jesus day were the Pharisees (*Perushim* in Hebrew, meaning "separated ones"), while the more liberal leaders of the court were called the Sadducees (*Saducim*, meaning "righteous ones"). At the time of this narrative, the Sadducees held the majority in the court. And as such, they would have been the ones to decide the makeup of the delegation sent to question John.

We must also understand that it had been four hundred years since God had sent a prophet to the people of Israel. There had been four centuries of silence between the prophet Malachi, and the coming of John The Baptist. And Malachi had some very important things to say regarding the coming of The Messiah, the Savior of Israel.

**Remember the instruction of Moses My servant, the statues and ordinances I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel. Look, I am going to send you the prophet Elijah before the great and terrible day of The LORD comes. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers. Otherwise, I will come and strike the land with a curse.** **Malachi 4:4-6**

So needless to say, when John The Baptist showed up, many thought that he must have either been the Messiah or the reappearing of Elijah the prophet, that would usher in the last days.

It is also important to remember that the Sanhedrin had been granted by the Roman Empire a pretty lofty position in the kingdom. In short, they were considered to be highly influential in their native land. And if we have learned anything regarding those with power in this world, they will do most anything to hold on to it. So, needless to say, the members of the Sanhedrin were more than a little concerned that John The Baptist might do something to cause them to lose their positions in authority. The word of a "Messiah" might cause the Romans to "clean house" as it were. And to the Sanhedrin, this was not acceptable. Things needed to stay just as they were. After all, these guys had made a pretty comfortable life for themselves. So they felt the need to head off this uprising, if at all possible. This world is filled with those who claim to be "religious", but in reality, they are far more concerned with their own personal welfare than the will of God.

John has no regard for these men whatsoever, for he sees them for exactly what they are, a self-righteous "brood of vipers" disguised as priests (**Matthew 3:7**). But nonetheless, he did not refuse to answer their questions. Albeit his answers were short and to the point. He was not the Messiah, he was not Elijah, and he was most definitely not the "great prophet" that Moses prophesied Who was to come

**(Deuteronomy 18:15)**, for this “prophet” was Christ Himself. The delegation sent by the Sanhedrin became increasingly frustrated with John’s answers, but I cannot help but think this wild man of a prophet was actually enjoying their exasperation. He had to have known that he was driving them crazy! **God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble (James 4:6).**

### **The Servant (vs. 22b-28)**

**‘What can you tell us about yourself?’ He said, ‘I am a voice of one crying out in the wilderness; Make straight the way of The LORD — just as Isaiah the prophet said.’ Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. So they asked him, ‘Why then do you baptize if you aren’t the Messiah, or Elijah, or the Prophet?’ ‘I baptize with water.’ John answered them. ‘Someone stands among you, but you don’t know Him. He is the One coming after men whose sandal strap I’m not worthy to untie.’ All this happened in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptizing. John 1:22b-28**

So many people in this world cannot wait to let you know just how important they are! It is just the nature of fallen man. Now here stood these powerful, well-dressed sons of Levi, with all their titles and authority, and they give John the perfect opportunity to be just like them. In short, they give him a chance to boast about himself. After all, even Jesus would later say that John was the best mortal man that had ever lived up to that point (**Matthew 11:11**). But John refuses to say anything about himself other than to quote from the prophet Isaiah, calling himself **“a voice, crying out in the wilderness”**. He doesn’t even say he is “the voice”, but merely “a voice.”

Now, let us look closely at some very telling and important words of this text. John, the writer of this gospel, refers to Jesus as The WORD (logos), and here John The Baptist clearly states that he is merely “a voice”. Can you see the stark difference? One is the Source and the other is just repeating what he has learned from that Source! In short, Jesus has given us His Word, and we are simply called to take it to those who will hear it. This is what a true servant looks like my friends! John wanted no personal glory for himself. He merely existed to bring glory to The Son of God. Remember how we spoke last time of how the moon was created simply to reflect the sun’s light bringing light into the darkness and influence over the tides of men? Well here is the perfect spiritual example of such a creation. So let me ask you, do you live only to glorify The Son of God, or do you think that you should get a bit of credit along the way as well? Think hard before you answer. You may have some repenting to do. The LORD doesn’t share His glory.

**I AM The LORD, that is My Name; I will not give My glory to another or My praise to idols. Isaiah 42:8**

Now, contrast this with the Pharisees. Do you know why the “conservatives” on the court were so upset with John’s baptizing? Because, up to this time, only pagan Gentiles who wished to convert to Judaism were baptized in a symbolic “cleansing ritual”, since the Jews considered them as unclean. But the Pharisees taught that everyone who was born a Jew was already in the family of God by birth. After all, were they not God’s chosen people? Why would a Jew need to be baptized? Because:

**For ALL have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Romans 3:23**  
(emphasis added)

These self-righteous Pharisees didn’t like it that John was insisting on Israel’s need of repentance. For if all had sinned, then they weren’t as perfect as they thought they were! If you want to see genuine hostility my friends, just point out the sins of the self-righteous man, and then buckle up for the ride! But take a lesson from John here, don’t think of yourself more highly than you ought. Remember that you are either a lost and dying sinner or a sinner saved by grace. Either way, our

condition begins the same. Only The Blood of The Lamb of God can change the outcome. And He alone belongs the glory. Again, **“God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”**

### **The Son of God (vs. 29-34)**

**The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, ‘Look The Lamb of God, Who takes away the sin of the world! This is the One I told you about: After me comes a man Who ranks ahead of me, because He existed before me. I didn’t know Him, but I came baptizing with water so that He might be revealed to Israel.’ And John testified, ‘I saw The Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He rested on Him. I didn’t know Him, but He Who sent me to baptize with water told me, ‘The One you see The Spirit descending and resting on — He is the One Who baptizes with The Holy Spirit.’ ‘I have seen and testified that this is The Son of God.’**

**John 1:29-34**

Is it a coincidence that after John refused to glorify himself, and only glorify The Savior, that the Savior Himself makes an appearance that very next day? I think not! For you see, John had just passed a huge test. He knew that apart from Christ, he was nothing, and he told those religious leaders as much. They refused to believe it, but John KNEW it. He knew it with more certainty than he had ever known anything in his life. Jesus was The WORD, and John was merely “a voice”. We, as His disciples, are called to do the same, to share the Word from the source, to be voices of those crying out in the wilderness, **‘Make straight the way of The LORD.’** This simply means that we are to call sinners to repentance, to confess with their mouth that Jesus is LORD, and to believe in their heart that God raised Him from the dead and be saved (**Romans 10:9**). That is how the way of The LORD is “made straight”. The obstacles of sin and pride are removed, so that The LORD can give us new life.

John refers back to the day when He saw Jesus for Who He truly was. On that wonderful day that Jesus came to be baptized in the River Jordan. God manifested Himself to John that day in all three persons of The Trinity. Jesus came and was baptized, signifying His death burial and resurrection, and immediately after He came up out of the water, The Spirit of God descended upon Him in the form of a dove, and then God The Father’s voice came from heaven saying:

**...This is My beloved Son, with Whom I AM well-pleased.**

**Matthew 3:17a**

That was all that John needed to see in order to proclaim, “This is The Son of God”. That was when John became “enlightened”. Do you remember what John the disciple had written just a few verses back? That Jesus was the light and the life (**vs. 4**). We said that the light was about “knowing” and the life was about “showing”. First you must have the Spirit illuminate your heart, so you can “see” Jesus for Who He is. And then, you are forever changed and given new life. First comes the knowing, which is followed by the showing that you have been made new. It is how John became a believer, and it is the same way that we all became believers. The Holy Spirit revealed The Son of God to us, and we will never be the same!

Can you testify this morning that you have “seen” The Son for Who He is? Or are you still living in the darkness. Jesus has come. He is The Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world. All that you need to do to be forgiven is recognize Him and realize that you need saving, and The Lamb of God will do the rest. Can I get a witness?

And let all those who believe say... TRUTH!!!