

"The Interrogation of John the Baptist"

John 1:19-28

Introduction: Tonight, in our study we have come to a passage in which we are going to consider the testimony of John the Baptist. John was approached by the religious leaders, and they presented him with seven questions. We will consider these questions and what they reveal as we work through these verses. Before we get into the text that is before us, I want to take a few moments to consider John the Baptist. There are some things that are said about John that we need to understand.

John was a man who did not fear the opposition of his day. He proclaimed the message of the Messiah with no hesitation. One interesting point about John and his mother and father is that they were all filled with the Holy Spirit.

Luke 1:15, 41, 67

¹⁵ For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb.

⁴¹ And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost:

⁶⁷ And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied,...

John and his parents were filled with the Holy Spirit, but they were not members of the body of Jesus Christ because the church did not begin until Acts 2. This was Old Testament filling for ministries. The Spirit of God came upon them and filled them for the ministries which God had appointed for them. Let us notice an Old Testament example.

Exodus 31:2-5

² See, I have called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah:

³ And I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship,

⁴ To devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass,

⁵ And in cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of timber, to work in all manner of workmanship.

Now let us get back to John.

It was the filling of the Spirit that gave John the Baptist the boldness that he needed for the ministry he was appointed to.

Acts 4:31

³¹ *And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.*

The same Spirit that gave boldness to John the Baptist is the very Spirit that lives within us. We are commanded to be filled with the Spirit.

Ephesians 5:18

¹⁸ *And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;*

To be filled with the Spirit is an option for the believer. We are all given the Holy Spirit the moment of salvation, but not every believer is filled with the Spirit. To be filled with the Spirit is to be controlled by God. Many who are saved are not controlled by God but they are controlled by the flesh. To be controlled by God is to surrender all areas of our lives over to Him. It is to allow Him to be the Lord of our lives.

➤ **The Questioning**

Notice John 1:19

Here we see that the Jews sent priests and Levites out to John. Those who came to John were those of the Pharisees.

Notice John 1:24

Here we see that they were Pharisees.

Before we step into this text let us first of all understand the mindset of John's Day. There was a great anticipation of the arrival of a Deliverer. Notice the words of Wiersbe.

"Historians tell us that the Roman world was in great expectation, waiting for a Deliverer, at the time when Jesus was born. The old religions were dying; the old philosophies were empty and powerless to change men's lives. Strange new mystery religions were invading the empire. Religious bankruptcy and spiritual hunger were everywhere. God was preparing the world for the arrival of His Son."

Luke 2:25

²⁵ And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him.

This combined with what Daniel wrote had the nation living in expectation of the coming Redeemer.

Daniel 9:24-25

²⁴ Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.

²⁵ Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: (69 weeks of years which equals 483 years) the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.

The command to restore and build Jerusalem was given by Artaxerxes when he sent Nehemiah to Jerusalem. From the command given by Artaxerxes, until Jesus came into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday could have been calculated by the Jews to the very day. The Jews should have known this. They knew the approximate time, but they did not do the math to know the day. Notice what Jesus said on the day He came to present Himself to them as the King.

Luke 19:41-42

⁴¹ And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it,

⁴² Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.

Getting back to the point, there was great anticipation so when John showed up it caught the attention of many people. It especially caught the attention of the religious leaders but not for the right reason.

Notice John 1:19 again.

The question they asked was, "Who are you?" These are the religious leaders, and they feel threatened by the popularity of John. They saw him as a threat to their authority and power. They had not come to make friends with John but to interrogate him.

Let us remember who these Pharisees were. They were basically the fathers of legalism. They were so fearful of the nation going into another captivity like the Jews in Babylon, that they developed their own laws that were in addition to the Bible. Their intent was good. They wanted to keep the Jews from sin, but their rules turned into a religion, and they made them a means of salvation. They greatly oppressed the people with all of their rules, and no one could keep them.

Matthew 11:28-30

²⁸ Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Notice John 1:20

We do not see a question asked here but, it is implied that it was asked. Luke gives us some insight into the questions in the mind of the people concerning John.

Luke 3:15

¹⁵ And as the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ, or not;

They had asked John if he was the Christ. The name "CHRIST" means "anointed One" and the ultimate question they were asking was, "Are you the Messiah?" John was quick to deny that he was the Messiah, and he was quick to deny that he was special in any way. John was a very humble man, and his goal was to point people to Jesus Christ and to make sure that all glory went to God.

Notice John 1:21

Here in this verse the religious leaders asked two questions to John. They asked him if he was Elijah and if he was the Prophet. Let me show you where these questions came from.

Malachi 4:5

⁵ Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD:

Deuteronomy 18:15

¹⁵ The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken;

They thought maybe John was Elijah because there were many similarities. John came onto the scene like Elijah, no introduction and suddenly he was there. He was dressed like Elijah would have been dressed. He was like Elijah in his boldness. The Prophet spoken of by Moses in Deuteronomy is a reference to Jesus Christ, but they did not understand this.

The point I want to make here is that these religious leaders knew the Bible, but they did not know the God of the Bible.

Application:

These religious leaders represent a great number of people today who are religious but not saved. They know about the Bible but they have no relationship with the God of the Bible.

Notice John 1:22-23

When they pressed John, he pointed them back to Isaiah 40.

Isaiah 40:3-5

³ The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

⁴ Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain:

⁵ And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.

John's answer that pointed them back to these verses should have caused them to listen and look for they should have known that the Messiah was close at hand.

Notice John 1:23 again.

John was not the Word, but John was a VOICE. John's ministry was to point people to Jesus Christ, and he was successful in doing this.

Luke 1:13-16

¹³ *But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.*

¹⁴ *And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth.*

¹⁵ *For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb.*

¹⁶ *And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God.*

Notice John 1:23 again.

We need to notice what John called his listeners to do. He called them to make straight the way of the Lord. This meant they were to clear out of their lives that which would keep Jesus from them.

Conclusion:

John was called to prepare people to believe on Jesus Christ. The application for us is that we are called to remove from our lives that which hinders our fellowship with the Lord. I am convinced that there are few believers who live as living sacrifices.

Romans 12:1-2

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

² *And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*