



## The Gospel of John Bible Study, Lesson #7

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**When you stand before the Judge, can you testify truthfully that you are a follower of Jesus, the Christ, and your actions prove that you believe what God says?**

*John 1:19-22, “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?”*

**Note:** John preached in the wilderness of Judea...near the Jordan river.

**Religious leaders from Jerusalem question John the Baptist.**

**Remember...**John’s parents were Jewish; descendants of the priesthood (Luke 1).

**Here is the testimony of John the Baptist**

- **Now this is the testimony of John:** We have already learned that John the Baptist *came for a witness* (John 1:7 and 1:15). Now we learn what his **testimony** regarding Jesus was.
- **The Jews:** “Here for the first time we come upon the use of the term ‘the Jews’ in this Gospel to denote not the people as a whole but one particular group – here, the religious establishment in Jerusalem.” (Bruce)
- **I am not the Christ:** With emphasis, John told the Jewish leaders who he was *not*. He did not come to focus attention on himself, because he was not the Messiah. His job was to point to the Messiah.  
     “John completely rejected that claim; ‘I am not the Messiah, but, if you only knew, the Messiah is here.’” (Barclay)
- **He confessed and did not deny:** “Sincerely and studiously; he put away that honor; knowing the danger of wronging the jealous God.” (Trapp)
  - ✓ It was important for John the Gospel writer to make clear to his readers that John the Baptist did not claim to be more than he was.  
     “As late as A.D. 250 the *Clementine Recognitions* tell us that ‘there were some of John’s disciples who preached about him as if their master was the Messiah.’” (Barclay)

- **Are you Elijah?**
  - ✓ It might be easy for the priests and Levites from Jerusalem to associate John with Elijah because of his personality and because of the promise that Elijah would come before the Day of the LORD (Malachi 4:5-6).
  - ✓ John was careful to never say of *himself* that he was Elijah. Yet Jesus noted that in a sense, John *was* Elijah, ministering in his office and spirit (Matthew 11:13-14 and Mark 9:11-13).
- **Are you the Prophet?** In Deuteronomy 18:15-19 God promised that another prophet would come in due time. Based on this passage, they expected another **Prophet** to come, and wondered if John was not he.

**John 1:23-28) John explains his identity to the religious leaders. He said: “I am ‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness: “Make straight the way of the LORD,” as the prophet Isaiah said.” 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 loosen.” These things were done in Bethabara beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing.”**

- **I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness:** Quoting from Isaiah 40:3, John explained his work – to prepare **the way of the LORD**. His baptism prepared people, cleansing them for the coming King. The idea was, “Get cleaned up, get ready for a royal visit.”
  - ✓ “John’s real function was not to teach ethics, but to point people to Jesus.”
  - ✓ The religious leaders wanted to know who John was, and he wasn’t really interested in answering that question. He wanted to talk about his mission: to prepare the way for the Messiah.
- **Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ:** The Pharisees wondered about John’s authority if he was not actually one of the prophesied ones they had in mind.
- **I baptize with water:**
  - ✓ John’s baptism demonstrated the humble willingness to repent, be cleansed, and prepare for the coming Messiah. ***Yet John’s baptism gave nothing to help someone keep clean.***
  - ✓ ***The work of Jesus and His baptism of the Holy Spirit represents more than John’s baptism.***
  - ✓ Jewish people in John’s day practiced baptism. It was an outgrowth of ceremonial washings, but only for Gentiles who wanted to become Jews. In submitting to John’s baptism, a Jew had to identify with Gentile converts. This was a genuine sign of repentance.
- **There stands One among you whom you do not know. It is He who, coming after me, is preferred before me:**

- ✓ John explained to the religious leaders that *he* was not the focus of his work, but the **One** who was already **among** them.
- ✓ John's work was to prepare the way for the **One...Jesus**.
- **Whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loosen:** To untie the strap of a sandal (before foot washing) was duty of the lowest slave in the house. John said he was *unworthy* to do even this.
- **These things were done in Bethabara (Bethany) beyond the Jordan:** (House of the ferry-boat) on the east bank of the Jordan.

**John 1:29, "The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"**

### **(John the Baptist's testimony: Jesus is the Lamb of God.**

- **The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him:**
  - ✓ This was *after* John baptized Jesus and
  - ✓ *After* the 40 days of temptation in the wilderness. Jesus came back to see John in his baptizing work.
- **Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!**
  - ✓ At the dawn of His ministry, Jesus was greeted with words declaring His destiny – His sacrificial agony and death on the cross for the sin of mankind. The shadow of the cross was cast over the entire ministry of Jesus.  
***Note:*** *John didn't present Jesus as a great moral example or a great teacher of holiness and love. He proclaimed Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. It wasn't "Behold the great example" or "Behold the great teacher" – it was **Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.***
  - ✓ In this one sentence, John the Baptist summarized the greatest work of Jesus: to deal with the sin problem afflicting the human race. Every word of this sentence is important.
  - ✓ **Behold!**... "Take a long, glaring, inward and outward look at the One I am pointing to."

### **The Lamb of God:**

- **John used the image of the sacrificial lamb, represented many times in the Old Testament. Jesus is the perfect fulfillment of every time that image is displayed.**
  - ✓ He is the lamb slain before the foundation of the world.
  - ✓ He is the animal slain in the Garden of Eden to cover the nakedness of the first sinners.
  - ✓ He is the lamb God would Himself provide for Abraham as a substitute for Isaac.
  - ✓ He is the Passover lamb for Israel.
  - ✓ He is the lamb for the guilt offering in the Levitical sacrifices.
  - ✓ He is Isaiah's lamb who was said to be slaughtered.

***Each of these lambs fulfilled their role in their death; this was an announcement that Jesus would die, and as a sacrifice for the sin of the world.***

**Who takes away the sin:** Not the plural *sins*, but the singular **sin** – with the sense that that the entire guilt of humanity was collected into one and placed upon Jesus...as if the whole mass of human transgression was bound together, in one black and awful bundle, and laid upon the unshrinking shoulders of our Redeemer who can bear it all, and bear it all away.” (Maclaren, paraphrased)

**Of the world:** The sacrifice of this **Lamb of God** has all the capacity to forgive every sin and cleanse every sinner worldwide in every century.

**“Behold” Church: Jesus...Our Savior, Redeemer, and Friend.**

