

Food for thought from the Gospel of John

5 John the Baptist – Interrogated

Read John 1:19-28

John the Baptist was sent to draw attention to the Messiah. However, John managed to draw some attention to himself. He was making very big claims and very big demands. John was calling the nation to repentance and humility before the coming of the Messiah. There were some who made false claims of being the Messiah. But they had to announce themselves. The true Messiah would have a divinely appointed announcer.

John 1:19-23 – The Pharisees sent priests and other Levites to question John about his identity.

- The first thing John made clear was that he was not the Christ (Messiah).
- The second thing he dealt with is that he is not Elijah (Malachi 4:5-6 – *more on that later*).
- The third thing he clarified is that he is not “that prophet”
 - (Deuteronomy 18:15) Moses said to Israel, “The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me in your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear.”
 - (Deuteronomy 18:18-19) The Lord told Moses, “*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.*”
- Finally, John the Baptist is able to tell them who he is. “*...The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘make straight the way of the Lord.’*” (John 1:23 cp. Isaiah 40:3)

John 1:24-28 – Next, they questioned John about his ministry of baptism, which he did for those who responded to John’s preaching and repented of their sins.

We are reminded that those who are questioning John were sent by the Pharisees. They would want to know about who gave John authority to do these things. Here, John gives a short answer. In other places he will say much more. But for now John tells them that he is under the authority of the One that he is announcing. As usual, John is trying to draw attention to the Messiah, not himself (John 3:30).

Questions:

- Does our life draw enough attention to make people ask questions about our faith and our values?
- Are we prepared to answer questions if people do ask us? See I Peter 3:15.
- Those who followed John's preaching would confess their faith publicly through baptism. Are we confessing Christ to others?
- Do we understand what Baptism means?

Hint: It is about identification with the Lord. It is not a ritual that washes away sins. Jesus was baptized. He was not washing away His sins. He had none. He was identifying with those who were repenting and turning their hearts toward Him. The people who were baptized were not going to have their sins washed away until Jesus died on the cross.