

Life and Ministry of Jesus Christ The Testimony of John the Baptist

Two studies ago...the baptism of Jesus by John

The Father was speaking in Luke's and Mark's account...to Jesus

"You are..."

The Father was bearing witness of the Son in Matt's account...to John

Matt 3:13-17

Jesus and John fulfilling all righteousness

"This is..."

Last time...the temptation of Christ

Matt 4:1-2 and "afterward"

While Jesus is being tried/tested for 40 days and 40 nights,

John is continuing his ministry down at the Jordan River

- "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."
- Baptism in water unto the repentance of sin

This time...we pick up the story with John the Baptist and his ministry

John 1:19-34

v19 testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites:

40 days after he had baptized/anointed Jesus and Jesus was led of the Holy Spirit into the wilderness, John receives a delegation of priests and Levites sent by the Sanhedrin

- 70 elders
- religious leaders
- judges in religious matters
- Sadducees and Pharisees
- "the Jews"

The Sanhedrin heard of this extraordinary man, his extraordinary message, and his new novel "ritual" of purification and preparation for the Kingdom

- directly (Matt 3:7)
- indirectly (reports/"buzz" from common folks, publicans, soldiers)

Messianic expectation in Judea is VERY high, so John the Baptist was News!

- breaking 400 years of silence from God
- striking some very deep and meaningful chords in Jewish hearts

And with that Messianic expectation, there was also some danger,
given the absolute intolerance of Rome for challengers to its authority

Many in the Sanhedrin did not want to rock the boat with Rome...not so much
because they were afraid but because their lives were very good
(worldly sense of power and possessions) in the status quo

The whole Sanhedrin could not possibly come to John the Baptist, otherwise

- they would have given a great endorsement/seal of approval to him and his message, which they did not want to do
- they would have sent Rome a message they did not want to send

So the Sanhedrin..."the Jews"...sent

- proxies
- a subcommittee
- deputies

authorized in their name to investigate John the Baptist...
apparently not a flash-in-the-pan nut job
but a man with a piercing and inspiring ministry

These "court appointed" deputies came from Jerusalem to John the Baptist and asked him, "Who are you?"

v20-21 I am not the Christ:

1. Based on John's answer, the deputies were asking if he were the Messiah/Christ upon whom the hopes of the Hebrews rested

John the Baptist gave a faithful and true testimony

- was not silent...
silence is a false testimony in that it cultivates doubt
- I am NOT the Christ...
claiming to be Christ is a false testimony

2. The Jews were not only looking for the Messiah, they were also looking for Elijah (snatched off earth in a whirlwind and a chariot of fire)

Mal 4:5-6...God's last words before 400 years of silence

Elijah's ministry would impact every family

Every family has Elijah's Cup" to express Jewish hope that their guest will be Elijah himself coming to inform them of the Messiah's coming (and, after 70AD, the rebuilding of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem)

Again John the Baptist gives a faithful and true testimony

3. The Jews were looking for a third promised person – the prophet spoken of by Moses

Deut 18:15-19

The children of Israel did not want to hear the words of God on Mount Sinai but they MUST hear the words of God's Prophet

For a third time John the Baptist gives a faithful and true testimony

It can be inferred by the three-fold inquiry of John the Baptist that the Jews were looking for the Messiah to come

- with the spectacular “electricity” of Elijah
- with the world-beating power of Moses to throw off the oppression of the superpower and to deliver God's people
- with the glory of a king to restore the glory (kingdom) to Israel

They got none of these things from this extraordinary man with an extraordinary message

v22-24 Who are you...voice...Pharisees:

“You are not one of us, and if you are not

- the Christ
- Elijah
- that prophet

then just who are you?

We were deputized to get the answer to that question and we are not leaving without an answer.”

For the fourth time, John the Baptist gave a faithful and true testimony...just as he

- did at the start of his ministry, including to “the Jews” (Matt 3:7)
- has he has every day since when asked this question

Is 40:3

His answer: his God-given ministry...
not his name, because his name is not important

Note: What opportunity was presented to John the Baptist by the deputies of the “generation of vipers”, children of the devil?

To claim to be the Christ, Elijah, that prophet...to seek for himself all the power and influence that would accompany that claim

So, in a sense, what is this delegation from the Sanhedrin?

The temptation of John by the devil

John was a faithful and true witness

Why were the Jews (Sanhedrin, Sadducees and Pharisees, the false priesthood) asking John this again, since they already have?
Because they did not believe John the first time...they did not humble themselves and submit to John's baptism
Luke 7:24-30

Notice: The deputies were Pharisees
The Sadducees did not care to re-visit John and to investigate further
He and his message were outside their thoughts and interests
So the Sadducees did not care...at least not yet

This speaks to the difference between the Pharisees and the Sadducees
(bears repeating given Jesus' future interaction with them)

Pharisees:

- socially:
 - middle-class
 - conservatives
 - staunchly anti-Hellenization (adopt Greek culture)
- religiously:
 - self-righteous legalists...
 - “keeping” the strictest letter of the Law, particularly
 - tithing
 - Levitical purity
 - gave equal weight to traditions and the oral law...
contrary to Deut 4:2
 - spiritual –
 - believed in angels, demons, and resurrection
 - believed greatly in the predestination of God
(fate, a heathen concept)
 - God chooses, man does not choose
i.e. were “Calvinists before his time”
 - hypocrites – outward observance without inward reality

Sadducees:

- socially: civil and political focused
 - elitists and aristocrats
 - High Priests and most of the Sanhedrin
 - wealthy and powerful families...
 - liberals
 - Hellenized, embraced the Greek culture
 - loyal to Rome...to keep their wealth and place of power

- religiously:
 - not spiritual – did not believe in angels, demons, or resurrection
believed the soul perished with the body
believed in free will of man, did not believe in any degree of sovereignty of God
i.e. man chooses, God does not choose
 - humanists – pursuing human reasoning and “rational freedom”

Diametrically opposed spiritually, yet with the same “issue” with John:
What is the meaning of “repentance”

- to hypocrites who believe in absolute predestination of God and no free will of man and who think just having the Law saves them?
- to humanists who believe in absolute free will of man and no life after death?

John’s message is falling on deaf ears and challenging authorities

v25-28 Why baptize:

The Sanhedrin’s deputies have heard the testimony of John the Baptist...he is

- Not the Christ
- Not Elijah
- Not that prophet
- The Voice (did they hear The Word of God?)

They did not hear John give the authority for what he is doing so they ask him by
what authority he is baptizing people

John has already given them his Authority – God and His Word

They didn’t get it, hear it, or accept/believe it

So John, as he had previously, says his baptism is part of his ministry to prepare
the way for the Lord...his Authority is

- the Lord
- the Christ...Who is the Lord Himself
- that prophet...Who is the Lord Himself

But John the Baptist did not identify the Lord, the Christ, that prophet...
at least not this day

Now we are going to hear the testimony of John the Baptist amped up!

v29 The next day:

The day after being interrogated by the deputies of the Sanhedrin...

The day after Matt 4:11...

John the Baptist sees Jesus returning from the wilderness and His temptation of 40 days and 40 nights, sees Jesus approaching him, and he “calls Him out” to everyone there

“Look! The Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world!”

This testimony is so much greater than Matt 3:11 first spoken 40 days ago and repeated yesterday in v26-27

Let’s think about that...

John the Baptist, the voice crying in the wilderness to prepare the way of the Lord,

- is Spirit-filled (from conception) vs “natural”
(is spiritually discerned...1 Cor 2:10-14)
- saw the Spirit of God descend and abide upon Jesus
- heard the testimony of the Father regarding His Son directed at him...”This is My Son” (Matt 3:17)
- has had 40 days to meditate on that testimony and to study the Word of God, being taught and given understanding by the Teacher (John 14:26, 1 John 2:27)
- is living near or among the Essenes at Qumran
 - discovery of Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947
 - the greatest find: the complete scroll of Isaiah, rife with Messianic prophesies (hope) including his very own calling

So when John sees Jesus, he proclaims that which only the Father could have revealed to him...in the Book of Isaiah

Is 1:2-20

Is 42:1-4, 21

Is 43:3, 11

Is 52:13 – 53:12

Is 59:1-2, 20

Is 61:1-3

v11,17 esp. now with false priesthood in Jerusalem that Prophet, without “electricity” of Elijah

without the beauty of Moses, God’s sin offering not saved because have the Law
salvation/deliverance is God’s work

A revelation of

Gen 3:21

in the very beginning

Gen 22:8

Isaac, the only son of the father

Ex 12:1-11

Passover lamb

Heb 10:1-7

2 Cor 5:21...take away by taking upon Himself,
placed by hands of the Father

So when John sees Jesus returning from the wilderness, he “explodes” with v29

John the Baptist knew

- The coming Messiah...has come!
- his ministry would be winding down
- Jesus’ ministry was to be pre-eminent
- he was to point the people to Jesus Christ (“Jesus of Nazareth”)

Also notice Jesus

- returning to John’s ministry
- without any pomp or fanfare
- without the “electricity” of Elijah
- without the world-beating power of Moses
- humble and unpretentious
- alone
- mingling with the people to whom He was sent

v30 After me...preferred before...was before:

Pointing his disciples, the multitude, and the deputies of the Sanhedrin to Jesus,
John says Jesus

- came after...in the created dimension of time
- is preferred before...pre-eminent, superior to, his Authority
- was before...self-existent, eternal, from eternity (Micah 5:2)

v31 knew him not...manifest to Israel...I am come:

Three important statements in one sentence

1. knew Him not...until

John 6:44

Luke 10:22

Matt 16:17

2. Christ is made manifest to Israel

Not to the world

He was promised to the Jews, to the Jews He came...Rom 9:1-5

(Israel was to be the witness of the Christ to the world)

3. therefore am I come baptizing

the answer to the question in v25

Jesus Christ is the reason, the Authority, of my ministry

v32-34 John bare record:

Once again, John was a faithful and true witness of Jesus Christ

John bore witness that Jesus

- is the Christ
- is the Lamb of God
- is the Son of God
- is God become man
- is come!

42 months and 10 days later

(50 to Pentecost less 40 being tempted in the wilderness),
the testimony of the disciples of Jesus Christ would be the same

What is our testimony...if we are faithful and true witnesses?

Jesus

- is the Christ
- is the Lamb of God
- is the Son of God
- is God become man
- has come!
- is coming!!!

We are

- to not be silent (v20)
How many Christians are “silent witnesses”...not faithful and true?

Luke 12:8-9 Silence is denial

- not worthy of the lowest level of service to him (v27)
Do TV evangelists, Prosperity Gospel preachers, and celebrity pastors
with their bodyguards and airplanes believe this?
Is Jesus the Authority of such ministries?

Luke 9:58 And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air *have* nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay *his* head.

Luke 12:15 Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses.

Luke 12:21 So *is* he (foolish) that lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

Luke 12:34 where your treasure is, there will your heart be also

- the voice in the wilderness to prepare the way in men's hearts for the Lamb of God Who came to take away the sin of the world...
 - before the arrival of the King of kings to judge all who do not believe
 - the Kingdom of God ON EARTH is at hand – repent!
 - our names are not important, only Jesus' is (Acts 4:12)
 - Jesus is the reason for our ministries
 - a mere remnant, a “last stand” for the USA (?)
- to have the fragrance of Jesus and John the Baptist –
humble and unpretentious