
2

The Voice

John 1:19-34

Purpose: To introduce the ministry of John the Baptist: the man and his message.

He was a young boy born and raised in a rural town. His parents had been involved in ministry all their lives. They both died when the child was fairly young. The boy separated himself from the world of his parents—took on the life of a hermit.

He never held a job. He lived off of the land—ate what God's creation provided—lived out in the elements. This he did most of his life. He never cut his hair, he never shaved his beard, he dressed in the crudest of clothing (having complete disregard for culture). He never married and he had no friends. Finally he began to come into contact with society. But, this was short-lived. He was arrested by the government and imprisoned as a political subversive—shortly thereafter he was executed.

Most of us, if this were our son, would consider his life wasted, not at all well spent.

We'd be concerned about the hermit life-style. We'd be distressed about the anti-social behavior and appearance.

I wonder what God would think of this person? We don't have to wonder—Christ told us His evaluation (Luke 7:28), "Among those born of women, there is no one greater than John."

Jesus also added in Luke 16:16 "The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John. Since that time, the good news of the kingdom of God is being preached, and everyone is forcing their way into it."

John the Baptist clearly played an important part preparing people for Jesus' ministry. He was the first "prophet" in 400 years in the land of Israel. His preaching on repentance was necessary for the acceptance of Jesus' teaching.

1. Read Matt 11:9-15. 'What does Jesus have to say about John the Baptist?'

You might find it confusing that John responds that he is not Elijah or the Prophet, yet Jesus says that he was. They are both correct. He was not actually Elijah, but he was a prophet like Elijah who preached a message of repentance. Additionally, Matthew and Luke do not report that John the Baptist ever made the connection between himself and Elijah. It is likely that John the Baptist did not realize the significance of his ministry.

2. Read Matt. 3:1-12. John the Baptist was no ordinary guy, even in his day. Can you imagine how he would look if he were alive today? How would *you* perceive him? Do you think his message would be accepted or rejected? How would *you* relate to him?

3. Read John 1:6-8, 19–34. According to these verses, what steps did John take to guarantee that people would not look at him but at Christ?

Question 3. Be sure to distinguish between John the Baptizer (the “John” of verses 15–34) and John the Apostle (the author of the book and the unnamed disciple in verses 35 and 40).

4. What do you observe about John the Baptist's humility in this passage? What did he see as his primary purpose?

What does this teach us about what we should think of ourselves? See also 1 Peter 5:5-6 "All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time."

What should our primary purpose be?

Rabbi Joshua b. Levi (A.D. 250) taught, "All manner of service that a slave must render to his master, the pupil must render to his teacher-except that of taking off his shoe" (b. Ketub 96a). The Baptist, however, acknowledged that he was unworthy to untie Jesus' shoelaces, a task judged too menial even for a disciple. This is a telling statement of how great the Baptist considered Jesus to be.

5. John the Baptist knew exactly who he was. He would not allow others to look to him instead of Christ, yet he gained his identity through his identification through Christ.

Through what/whom do we commonly find our identity?

6. How would you summarize John's testimony concerning Jesus?

7. Read Luke 3:1-18. What does this tell us about John's message?

8. Read Leviticus 16:21, Numbers 28:3-10, and Isaiah 53:6-7. What do these verses tell us about the requirements of sacrifice for sin in the Old Testament?

9. Compare John 1:29 with 2 Cor. 5:21, Gal. 1:4, 3:13, 1 Peter 2:24, and 3:18. What do these verses teach us about the nature of Jesus' sacrifice?

10. Remember: the purpose of the book of John is "that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, you may have life in his name." (John 20:30). How does this passage (John 1:19-34) fit this purpose.

Clue: specifically observe verses 32-34.
