

19) And 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.”

21) And they asked him, “What then? Are you Elijah? He said, “I am not.”
“Are you the Prophet?” And he answered, “No.”

22) So they said to him, “Who are you? We need to give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?” He said, “I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’ as the prophet Isaiah said.” [Isaiah 40:3]

24) (Now they had been sent from the Pharisees.) They asked him, “Then why are you baptizing if you are neither the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?” John answered them, “I baptize with water, but among you stands one you do not know, even he who comes after me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie.” These things took place in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

29) The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! This is He of whom I said, ‘After me comes a man who ranks before me, because He was before me.’ I myself did not know Him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that He might be revealed to Israel.”

(32) And John bore witness: “I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on Him. I myself did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ And I have seen and borne witness that this is the Son of God.”

Think on these things:

- 1) Most people coming to church have heard of Jesus Christ. Many people raised in the church would have heard of Elijah. See Deuteronomy 18:9-22 to learn about the Prophet. Who told us about the Prophet, and what warning is given to those who don’t listen to Him?

Moses is the one who told us about the Prophet that God said would be like him [Moses, vs. 15, 18]. The Prophet would come from among the Jewish brothers, and God said, “whoever will not listen to Him, God will require it” (punishment?) of him.

- 2) Let’s learn some more about John the Baptist:

- a) How was John’s birth miraculous? Skim Luke 1:5-7, 11, 18-20 and 57-68. **God sent the angel Gabriel to tell Zechariah, a godly Levite, that he would have a son in his advanced [elderly] years with his barren wife, Elizabeth. Zechariah questioned this and was smote mute until John was born to the couple. John was about 6 months older than Jesus, his cousin.**
- b) Where did John live, and how did he get by in life? See Matthew 3:1-6 **John lived and preached repentance from the Judean wilderness (desert). He wore a camel-hair garment with a leather belt, and his primary food sources were locusts and wild honey.**
- c) What did he preach about? See Luke 3:2-3. **He proclaimed the need to be baptized for repenting of sin and to receive God’s forgiveness of personal sins. He expected change!**

- d) With John's messages (e.g., Luke 3:7), was he popular with religious or political leaders?
See Luke 3:18-20. **John was not popular with leaders; he confronted and angered them.**
- e) What did Jesus say about John the Baptist? See Luke 7:24-28, 33-35.
He proclaimed John "more than a prophet", and "among those born of women none is greater than John." John prepared the way for the arrival of Jesus.
- f) How did John the Baptist eventually die? See Matthew 14:1-12.
Herod the Tetrarch beheaded him at the request of his stepdaughter, Salome, following a provocative dance at a state event Herod hosted (prompted by Herodias, Salome's mom).
- 3) John the Baptist referred to Jesus as "the Lamb of God." There are lots of passages about this topic in the Bible, but let's skim just these few: Exodus 12:1-13; Isaiah 53:1-12; 1 Peter 2:21-25; and Revelation 5:1-14. What does "Jesus as the Lamb of God" mean to you?
Personal responses. Ex 12 is about Passover; the blood of a lamb, smeared above the door threshold, allowed the Angel of Death to "pass over" that home. Is. 53 speaks about God's Anointed experiencing an agonizing and sacrificial death to bear mankind's sins and make many righteous. 1 Peter says Jesus suffered for us and bore our sins, so that we might be healed and become righteous. From Revelation, the slain Lamb in God's throne room was the only One deemed worthy to open God's scroll with 7 seals, and the Lamb was worshipped.
(other verses on your own: Leviticus 4:1-5:13, 2 Corinthians 5:16-21 and 1 Timothy 2:5-7)
- 4) Jesus and John the Baptist were actually cousins (Luke 1) and knew each other as family. Still, John says in our passage today that he didn't know who God's anointed was (John 1:31), and that God directed him to watch for a specific sign. How did God reveal to John that JESUS was this person? What Christian symbol is introduced here, and what/who does it represent?

After seeing Jesus arrive for John's baptism, John informed his followers that Jesus was, "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (v.29). John said God told him to watch for the One upon whom the Holy Spirit descended. John reported that the Holy Spirit of God descended upon Jesus in the form of a dove and remained. The Christian symbol from this event is the 'dove,' and the dove represents the Holy Spirit (3rd person of the Trinity).
- 5) Since the topic of baptism is brought up in this week's study, let's quickly note a few things here.
- a) What was the purpose of John's water baptism in Israel (v.31)?

John said he came baptizing so that the Lamb of God could be revealed to the world.
- b) For those being baptized, why did they seek water baptism (Matthew 3:6)? Water baptism is symbolic, a way of identifying with God's church. It is NOT a saving factor.

People came to confess their sins and allow John to baptize them as an act of repentance.
- c) Jesus did not baptize anyone with water. What does Jesus baptize believers with (John 1:33)?

Jesus baptizes people with the Holy Spirit. Holy Spirit baptism is the "baptism of Jesus."

People and situations I want to pray for this week: