

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?

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. _____

b) Where did John live, and how did he get by in life? See Matthew 3:1-6 _____

c) What did he preach about? See Luke 3:2-3. _____

d) With John's messages (e.g., Luke 3:7), was he popular with religious or political leaders? See Luke 3:18-20.

e) What did Jesus say about John the Baptist? See Luke 7:24-28, 33-35.

f) How did John the Baptist eventually die? See Matthew 14:1-12.

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?

(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?

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)?

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.

c) Jesus did not baptize anyone with water. What does Jesus baptize believers with (John 1:33)?

People and situations I want to pray for this week: