

JOHN

AND THE WORD WAS GOD

JESUS AND JOHN THE BAPTIST

John 1:19–34

RELATED SCRIPTURES

Matthew 3:1–17 | Luke 3:1–22 | Isaiah 40:1–5

STUDY FOR SERMON FROM 1.18.26

SUMMARY

As the Gospel of John continues, we move from his prologue to a brief summation of the ministry and testimony of John the Baptist—the one sent from God who finally broke the 400-year prophetic silence. We learn from Matthew’s gospel that John the Baptist’s message was one of repentance, warning that the kingdom of the Messiah was *at hand* and that he would come in judgment (Matthew 3:2). Similarly, Luke tells the reader that John the Baptist warned Israel to get ready—to repent (Luke 3:17). When we reach John’s gospel, the narrative brings us into the middle of the priests and Levites questioning the identity of John the Baptist, and John confessing, “I am not the Christ” (v. 20). Their questions continued, asking whether he was *the* prophet or Elijah, which he denied. This response is curious because elsewhere, Jesus told his disciples of John, “If you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah to come” (Matthew 11:14), confirming that John the Baptist’s ministry was a fulfillment of Malachi 4:5, “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes.” Why, then, would John the Baptist deny it? Simply stated, John the Baptist was not Elijah himself, but his ministry was marked by a similar spirit and power; he was not Elijah, yet he nevertheless fulfilled the prophecy. John the Baptist revealed his identity by quoting from Isaiah 40, declaring he was the “voice crying in the wilderness” to “prepare the way of the Lord” (Isaiah 40:3). His means of preparation, as detailed in the other gospels, was to call the people of the Lord to a baptism of repentance in preparation for the Messiah who would baptize with the Holy Spirit (v. 33). In a similar way, those of us who trust in Christ must first realize our unworthiness, but despite our unworthiness, Jesus gave himself for us to save us from our sin. Glory to God!

GROUP QUESTIONS

Share something that surprises, encourages, or troubles you from the sermon or your direct reading of John 1:19–34.

How is it that John the Baptist can deny that he is Elijah, even though Jesus told his disciples, “If you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah to come” (Matthew 11:14)? Was John the Baptist Elijah?

What was the purpose of John the Baptist’s ministry? Why was he called, and what role did he serve? Why was it important for John the Baptist to come before Jesus and announce his kingdom’s impending arrival?

If there’s one thing Jesus would want you to walk away believing and receiving as a result of this portion of Scripture, what is that thing?

CLOSE IN PRAYER

As you pray, be sure to include today’s themes in what you bring before God.