

The Witness

I am only a voice

Title: ~~Behold, The Lamb of God~~

Text: John 1:19-34 (19-28)

Will you take your Bibles, please, and turn with me to the Gospel of John. The Gospel of John chapter 1 beginning with Vs 19. There are notes in your bulletin. And I invite you to use them as we study the Word of God.....

Would you please stand for the reading of God's word

(Read John 1:19-34)

Will you join with me in a moment of prayer

Thank you, Father, for your Word. And the clear presentation of your Son, Jesus I pray that you will plant this deep within our hearts that we might understand that this one who lived over 19 hundred years ago is God in human flesh. The one who died for our sins and rose from the dead on that third day. That He is the one who will come again, just like He came the first time.

We thank you, Father, that we are here today worshipping the one whom you desire that we worship..namily Jesus. And we pay this in His wonderful name...Amen

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(1A) We are looking at the PUBLIC MIISTRY OF JESUS CHRIST. Which is the theme of chapters 1 thru. 12

(1B) First of all we looked at the person nd power of Jessu in chapter 1 verses 1 thru 18. These first 18 verses are tremendous verses. They set the stage for the entire Gospel of John as to what we should believe and understand about Jesus. If you missed any of those messages, you should get the tap and review those verses.

(2A) Now, today, (2A on your outline) we begin a second section ^{*of John. This section*} ~~which~~ ^{*OR How Jesus sets himself*} deals with THE RECORD OF JESUS' MANIFESTATIONS. In the next four chapters, Jesus proves to the world who he really is. That he really is God. And he does this in a number of wonderful exciting ways....

(1B) ^{*seen*} And the first method of proof is in the ministry of John the Baptist ^{*(Vs 19-34)*}
Once again, we come to some powerful verses. I am taking my time in going through all these verses in chapter 1 because they ar so important.

(1) Beginning at Vs 19 and going through Vs 28, the first thing we are going to notice about the Ministry of John the Baptist as he gives public testimony to the person of the Messiah, is that His authority is at stake. In Vs 19-28 the authority of John the Baptist is a real question among the Jews. Because he was saying some fantastic things, and he was also having a tremendous following. In one passage in the Gospels it tells us that the entire city of Jerusalem went down to hear John. In another passage in the Gospels it tells us that all Judea was going after him.

Now, if you can picture this for a moment. This fellow is down in the desert, it is 18 miles from Jerusalem. Jerusalem is about 2500 feet above sea level. And down by the Jordan where ~~he~~ ^{John} is baptizing is near 1000 feet below sea level. The Dead Sea is 1300 feet below sea level. So, it is quite a drop in elevation.

Today there is a nice big highway that goes from Jerusalem to the Jordan River. But there were no highways in the days of Jesus. It was a long hot, dangerous journey. And yet, the people were flowing out off Jerusalem, down to this desert river, to hear this man with camel's hair and a leather belt preach. Now, you have to admit, that is a little strange.

^{So} Now, John is down there at the river preaching. And he is crying out. Do you know what he is saying? He said to the religious leaders, "Oh, generation of snakes." Now, that is not very diplomatic.

On another occasion he condemned them so severely and said that the judgment of God was going to come upon them unless they repented. And if they didn't get strightened out concerning their sins even the stones would cry out against them. Now, that is pretty strong language.

(1) In Vs 19, the first thing that I want you to see, is that a deligation was sent from Jerusalem.

Now, don't think of this group as going down there to net-pick or criticize him, or whatever. Whether you know it or not, they are doing what they were suppose to do according to the O.T. ^{Now} In Deut. chapter 18, will you turn there please. The O.T. Deut chapter 18...

~~This deligation was going down to the River Jordan to see John. And they were doing exactly what the O.T. told them to do. The Bible tells us in~~ ^{Vs 19 5th} ^{Vs 19}
 that this deligation was composed of Priest, and Levites. And in Vs 24 it says that there were also Pharisees. They were all members of the Sanhedrian. In fact, in cross examining John, they said, "We want you to tell us who you are so that we can ~~go~~ back and tell them who sent us." The ~~one~~ who sent them were the Sanhedrian. The highest ruling body in Israel. Now, these men, Priest and Levites and Pharisees are going down to examine John, according to the O.T. *And they were say the accord to O.T. law*

~~Deuteronomy 18 verse 20... (READ Vs 20-22)~~

~~Now, I come back to John chapter 1~~

It is fastinating to me and I jrsut to you that the thing that John is predicting, which they are going down there to check out, is the coming of the Messiah. He is not simplely predicting world events or the coming Kingdom of God, or whatever. He is predicting the coming of the Messiah. And he is teaching the people that he was chosen by God to prepare the way ~~for that~~ ^{for the} Messiah.

Well, naturally with all these growds flocking down to him, and hundreds are being baptized, ...By the way, ...some of Jesus's own disciples were at this time followeres of John the Baptist. And they had been baptized by John. So, naturally the religious leaders are concerned about the man. Is He a false prophet, or, is he a true prophet. That is why they went down to examine him.

(2) Now, I would like you to noitice in Vs 20 and 21, three denials of John the Baptist. He denied three things in front of these religioys leaders.

(1) And the first denial was in response to a question that they deidn't even ask. You see, in the days of the 400 years between the end of the O.T. and the time of Jesus, there were many men who arose claiming to be the Christ, ~~for the Messiah.~~ Judas MacBeeus was the most prominent figure. And ~~in fact he almost accomplished in the minds of the Jews what the Bible predicted in the O.T. But, of course, in the end he was defeated. And in these 400 years these so called promised Messiahs keep showing up.~~

And so this deligation is going to examine John. Now, they ^{didn't} ~~don't~~ ask him, yet, if he is the Messiah. But, John already knows what they want to know anyway. They ask him in Vs 19 "Who are you?"

Now, he could have answered, "I'm John the Baptist."

But, he didn't say that. He knew what they were really asking. So he says in Vs 20, "I am not the Christ or the Messiah."

There is one thing clear, "I am not the Christ."

WHY WOULD HE HAVE SAID THAT? Did he not know that they knew he wasn't the Messiah?

The reason is found in the verses 24 to 28. Because John was baptizing. And what right did he have to baptize? What right did he have to ask the Jewish ~~people~~ people to be baptized and give commitment to the coming Messiah, if he is not the Messiah himself?...."I AM NOT THE MESSIAH."

(2) ~~Then~~ Then in Vs 21 we have the second question. "They asked him, 'What then? Are you Elijah?'"

Now, didn't those Jewish leaders know that Elijah lived hundreds of years before then? Then why in the world did they say to John the Baptist, 'Are you Elijah?'..... *The answer is found in the Book of Malachi*

Turn, please, in your Bibles to the Last Book of the O.T., Malachi.
Malachi chapter 3 verse 1.....

This whole thing, when you put it together is really something, in terms of their examination of John the Baptist, and what they were really getting at

Malachi chapter 3 verse 1 says, "Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way ^{before} ~~before~~ Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming, says the Lord of hosts."

Now, here is a prophecy predicting that a messenger would come before the Lord comes suddenly to His temple.

~~Now, look at chapter 4 of Malachi.~~ ^{OK} WHO IS THIS MESSENGER?..Malachi chapter 4 verses 5 and 5...¹⁰⁰⁰"Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord. And he will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the land with a curse."

ELIJAH would come

So

Now, the O.T. predicts that before the Messiah would come (that is the great and terrible day of the Lord). WHAT DOES THAT MEAN? AND WHEN IS THAT GOING TO HAPPEN?

The DAY OF THE LORD has two parts in it according to the O.T. One is judgement. And the other is blessing. One deals with the period of time known as the "GREAT TRIBULATION." The other deals with the setting up of God's kingdom on earth. And the book of Revelation says that this period will be one thousand years in length. Jesus will rule on the throne of David over the entire earth for one thousand years. AND THAT PERIOD IS COMING.

Neither one of these have happened yet.

Now, before the great DAY OF THE LORD comes.....When Jesus comes in power and great glory to this earth and defeats the nations of this world....who at that point are all assembled against the land of Israel....but before He comes..Elijah the prophet is going to come back from the dead.

So, you see, that is why these religious leaders are asking John the Baptist that if he is not the Messiah, then are you Elijah. Because he is preaching.."PREPARE THE WAY OF THE LORD." So, if you are not the Messiah, you must be Elijah.

John

To add to your understanding, turn over to the Gospel of Luke chapter 1. Luke chapter 1 verse 17....

Before John the Baptist was born, an angel came to his father, Zacharias. He was a priest.

By the way, ^{these} little things in the Bible really interest me...It is interesting that the delegation from Jerusalem were Priest and Levites who knew John's father and John very, very well. There were 24 stations or orders of Priest which David in the O.T. established. Zacharias was one of those Priest who had his responsibilities when the time came to serve in the Temple and offer sacrifices. And John the Baptist knows all about that. He grew up in that home. He grew up in a Priest home. HE WAS A P.K.(Priest Kid).

And so the Priest and Levites are the main delegation going down to talk to John. They knew him. So, naturally they are really going to quizz him. What do you think you are doing, John?"

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Much like they said to Jesus. "Is not this Joseph's son, the carpenter's boy from Nazereth? How does he claim these things?" Well, they also knew John. And he is running around out there in the wilderness drawing all these people after him. WHO ARE YOU JOHN? ARE YOU ELIJAH COMING BACK FROM THE DEAD LIKE THE O.T. PREDICTED?

Well, look at what the angel said to his Dad when he was born. Vs 17... "And it is he (meaning John the Baptist) it is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the Fathers back to the children, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous; so to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

Now, is John the Baptist Elijah? IS THIS A FULFILLMENT OF THE PROPHECY IN MALACHI?

Now, to further complicate the problem for you, turn to Matthew chapter 11. I know that I am supposed to strengthen out things instead of complicating them, but I want you to see the total picture.

Matthew chapter 11. Here is a statement by Jesus in Vs 11. It is amazing. Matthew 11 beginning at Vs 11 and reading through Vs 14... Vs 11.. "Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist." NOW, THAT IS QUITE A STATEMENT! RIGHT? "yet, he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he".. THAT IS QUITE A STATEMENT, ALSO!!!

Vs 12.. "And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force."

You know, that is really interesting if you know something about the times. Do you remember that one of the disciples of Jesus was called Simon the ~~Zelot~~ Zealot?... The Zealots ^{were} ~~was~~ an active, well organized milite Jewish sect. And their goal was to establish the promises of the O.T. in their own power. They were radical. They believe the end justifies the means. They had a deep hatred of Rome. And one of their own became a disciple of Jesus. Simon, the radical Zealot.... *Fantastic*

Well, it is interesting. Jesus is making a statement that you all know is true. The earth suffers violence. And violent men force their will on others by force.

Vs 13. "For all the prophets and the Law prophesied until John. ^{Vs 14} And if you care to accept it, he himself is Elijah, who was to come."

Now, what do you think about that? ~~Jesus said,~~ "If you will accept it, if you will believe this, John the Baptist is Elijah, who will come."

Now, look at chapter 17 of Matthew...Chapter 17... Now, is he Elijah come back from the dead, or is he John the Baptist? John the Baptist is the son of the Priest Zacharies. ~~Z~~ Zacharies was not the father of Elijah. Now, is he Elijah or isn't he? Jesus said that he would be if you would believe it. Is this saying that we should believe something that isn't really true?

Matthew 17 beginning at vs 9.... "And as they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, "Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man has risen from the dead." And His disciples asked him, saying, Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?"

Boy, the insight of these men is terrific. Jesus said, "Don't tell anyone until the son of man is raised from the dead. And then the disciples ask the question, "WHY DO THE SCRIBES WHO ARE THE OFFICAL TEACHERS OF THE LAW AND THE O.T., WHY DO THEY KEEP TELLING US THAT ELIJAH HAS TO FIRST COME?" AFTER ALL IF YOU ARE THE MESSIAH, YOU ARE ALREADY HERE?"

Do you see the problem? If you are the Messiah, and you are going to be raised from the dead, and you are here, then why do the Scribes say that Elijah must first come? WHERE IS ELIJAH? They were smart men.

Vs 11. "And He answered and said, Elijah is coming and will restore all things; but I say to you, that Elijah already came, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they wished. So also the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands, Then the disciples understood that He had spoken to them about who?.....John the Baptist".....

Jesus said, "If you will receive him, he is Elijah." But, they didn't... "And he has already come," Jesus said. "And they did not recognize him, but did whatever they wished."

Now, you know the story of John the Baptist. You know what they did to him. They cut off his head.

And Jesus said, "So, also the Son of Man is going to suffer."

Now, the question is, friends, is Elijah still going to come before the return of Jesus? I mean, really come back from the dead? Does that passage from Malachi just apply to anybody who might announce the coming of the Messiah? Or, is Elijah really ~~going~~ ^{going} to come back from the dead? Did Jesus really mean that if the whole nation would have believed, that he would have set up his kingdom, and John the Baptist would represent Elijah?

ANSWER! HE SURE DID! HE MEANT IT. EVERY WORD OF IT. If that nation would have believed, that John was in the spirit and power of Elijah, the Biblical type....the Biblical symbol of that prophecy....and if they would have believed that Jesus was the Messiah, he would have set up his kingdom, But they didn't....They didn't at all....

So, I ask you, is Elijah going to come back from the dead?

Turn please to the book of Revelation chapter 11...Revelation, the great prophecy of future things. Things that have not yet taken place.

And in chapter 11 we read of two men who are going to come back. Two men who are going to witness to the world. And they are going to come before the Lord comes in power and great glory from heaven.

Revelation chapter 11 verse 3(Read Vs 3-6a)....

Alright, class, who in the O.T. shut up the sky in order that it would not rain? Who did it? ELIJAH!!!

Now, the next statement in Vs 6,...."and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to smite the earth with every plague."

Now, again, who in the O.T. turned the water into blood and smite the earth with plagies?.....MOSES....

Now, with that in mind...Elijah and Moses.....STAY WITH ME...WITH THAT IN MIND, GO BACK TO John chapter 1, John 1 verse 21. And look at it very carefully...^{So} "And they asked him, "What then? Are you ?Elijah?" And he said, I am not. Are you the..Prophet?" And he answered, NO."

(3F) WHO IS "THE PROPHET?" Is it Moses?.....

Turn, please to Deuteronomy 18....You know, ~~turning in your Bibles~~ ~~custs~~ having you turn to all these passages does one thing: It causes you to use your Bibles and you then can learn some wonderful things....

Deuteronomy chapter 18 and let's look at Vs 18....When you put all this together, this little examination of John the Baptist becomes an important understanding of what the Jews believed about the O.T.

Deut. 18:18 says "I will raise up a prophet ~~from~~ among their countrymen like you."....Who is the "you" referring to?" ^{He} ~~He~~ is talking to MOSES." "I am going to raise up a prophet like you, Moses, and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. And it shall come about that whoever will not listen to my words which he shall speak in my name I myself will require it of him."

Now, I should say that some folks teach that that is referring to the Mesisah. Now, I don't believe that ~~to~~ be so. I believe he is talking about Elijah, again. He is going to raise up a prophet like ~~us~~ you Moses. And he will put God's words in his mouth. He is going to prepare the way of the Lord. It all fits together.

Revelation 11... Moses and Elijah comes back and witnesses to the nation of Israel. They will prepare the coming of the Lord.

Do you ever wonder when the Bible says that there is going to be 144,000 Jews who are going to turn to the Lord in the Tribulation period, have you ever ~~w~~andered how they are going to do it?

I don't think it is wrong to say that if Moses and Elijah come back from the dead, I think that a lot of Jews are going to think twice.....

The greatest law-giver, the greatest prophet of Israel are going to come back from the dead!

Listen, God knows what he is doing. That prophecy in Malachi will be fulfilled.

But, keep the point in mind. They are looking at John the Baptist and asking, Are you the Messiah.....No

Well, then are you Elijah.....No

O.K. Are you THE PROPHET?.....NO...

You see, they were trying to trap him. } B_ecause in Deut 18:20 -22 we have the test of a true prophet verse a false prophet. So, they were trying to trap him.

So the point is...in what sense, John, are you a prophet at all....

And Jesus told us in the Gospels, as ^{with him} just looked, that ^{John} was a prophet in the sense that he predicted the coming of the Messiah. IS THAT A REAL COMING? It sure was. And if you will receive it and believe it that John was in the spirit and power of Elijah, then that was Elijah. The Jewish people could have had the kingdom. But they rejected John and they rejected Jesus.

WAS HE REALLY THE MESSIAH? Absolutely!

So, John's ministry was a ministry of preparation. That resulted in the death of himself and the Messiah. Which was also predicted in the O.T. But they didn't understand that. *(could stop here)*

Back to John chapter 1, again. So, we see that John denies on three accounts that he is the Messiah, or Elijah, or The Prophet.

(3/4) Now, in Vs 22 and 23 John gives to us a discription of himself. So, they ask him in the last part of Vs 22, "What do you say about yourself?", And this is so beautiful. Vs 23...He quotes from Isaiah 40 verse 3.."I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord."

(How) I am just a voice. That is all, Just a voice. I am not trying to attrach attendtion to myself. I don't want all these disciples following me. I am just a voice. My message is simple. "MAKE STRAIGHT THE WAY OF THE LORD." John made it clear the way to the Lord. He identified, acknowledged, and proclaimed Jesus as the Messiah. He is the first one to give public ~~manifestation~~ *Testimony* to the person of Jesus. *That Jesus is God*

STOP ~~And that hits a very stronge note in my mind. Because, you see, his own family didn't even believe him.~~

A lot of people say to me that if JAsus were here today, I would believe in him. Oh, would you! Listen, his brothers and sisters, his relatives, growing up in the same home, did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah. What's more, if you look clarefully at John 1 verses 31 and 33, John the Baptist, who was a second cousin to Jesus, ~~John~~ says the same thing: "I DID NOT KNOW HIM," until something happened. Then he knew that He was the Messiah.

You see, Jesus was all man. He was a human being.