

John 1:19-34 Manuscript

Many of you have probably seen a Disney movie, called Aladdin. There is a new version with Will Smith as the genie that is pretty good. My daughter really likes one scene in particular.

The genie turns Aladdin (who is called a street rat) into a prince so he can impress the princess. There is a musical number that is loud, dramatic, and colorful. The genie comes into the town first and starts the parade. He is dressed up and important looking, but none of the focus is on him. You are watching the genie.

But the genie's whole purpose is to be the herald for Aladdin, who is pretending to be prince Ali. Everything he does in this procession is to prepare the way and announce the prince coming in.

This is a silly example of what a herald is before a king. While he may be well dressed, powerful, and charismatic his entire goal is to redirect all attention to the king coming behind him.

That was John the Baptist's job in going before Jesus. He was a herald to the king. But the messiah is more than just a king. He was the prophet, priest, and king to which the entire OT pointed. And it was John's job in this text to show us that fact.

Proposition: Because Jesus is the promised lamb who takes away the sin of the world, we must know him as our prophet, priest, and king.

John 1:19-34 >>> Pray

As we dive into this section, I want to make a couple of notes on the text. First of all, the narrative we are about to start, actually runs from verse 19 to the end of the chapter, in verse 51.

Together it is one unit, comprised of four sections. And these 4 sections are actually 4 consecutive days. The first section talks about John the Baptist and then the following three sections all start with "the next day."

The days...

Day 1- focuses on identity of John and his purpose

Day 2- John's testimony that Jesus is the Xp

Day 3- John's disciples become Jesus' disciples

Day 4- Jesus is the fulfillment of all OT promise

Since it is all one section, I was very tempted to work through v.19-51 in one sermon. But, since there is far too much content to cover in less than a couple of hours, we will only be looking at the first two days.

Now then, let's dig into the passage, starting in v.19-22. This is all about how John answered the pharisees who wanted to know who he was.

I will go ahead and give away, that we should not seek to find the messiah in the way the pharisees did. Their attitude towards John was lacking in many respects.

MP1- Because Xp has come, we must know how to seek him (19-22)

We were already told John the Baptist's purpose in last week's text, back in **v.7-8** and **15**. So before we even get into this passage, we know about John the Baptists mission from the prologue.

But now we are able to see more of the story. John's job was to point to the Light that was coming into the world, and direct others to it.

V.19 sets up the story for us by telling us that the pharisees sent priests and Levites to question John to see who he was. These men did not come on their own initiative to hear John's message.

They came on a fact-finding mission for their bosses. They do not ask about John's teaching or how his day has been. They only wanted to know one thing...

'Hey John, who are you?' But what they were really asking was, 'do you think you are the Xp?' John, knowing what they really wanted to know, immediately denies being the Xp.

You can see how emphatically John denies being the messiah. He confessed, did not lie, and confessed again. Why was he so emphatic?

A simple no would have done the job, right? Well, what was John's mission? His entire purpose is to point to the messiah and not himself.

John's adamant 'no' is also important for another reason. Some false prophets had led men into the wilderness before to 'reconquer' the promised land.

They all claimed to be specially sent from God. In other words, some others had claimed to be special prophets from God or the messiah himself. Instead John says, no, I am not the messiah.

The pharisees are not satisfied with John's answer, so they ask 'Are you Elijah?' Why did they ask if he was Elijah?

This comes from the promise in **Malachi 4:5** "Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes." The pharisees understood this verse to mean that the actual Elijah would come back, bodily, before the messiah came.

Their understanding was that Elijah was going to come back from heaven and prepare the messiah's way. John answered, no.

This was an honest answer according to the pharisees' understanding of Mal. 4. He was not Elijah, but John. But Jesus tells us in Matt.11 that John was the Elijah to come.

Luke 1:17 tells us that John went forward in the spirit of Elijah. John answered the pharisees according to their understanding and yet he was the promised Elijah of Mal. 4.

Still not satisfied, they ask another question. 'Are you The Prophet?'

Again, this sounds confusing to us. What prophet are they talking about? They did not ask if he was *A prophet*, but if he was *THE Prophet*.

This is a reference to the promise of **Deut. 18:15** “The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers- it is to him you shall listen.”

They are awaiting a promised prophet like Moses. John says he is not *THE Prophet*. He had already told them he was not the Xp, but they asked this question anyway.

The pharisees were confused as to whether the prophet and messiah were the same person. Since we have the full Bible, we know the Messiah and *The Prophet* are the same person.

In v.22 we see that the men from the pharisees were getting irritated. They are saying, look man, we have to report to our bosses, tell us who you are. ‘Who are you?’

They should have been trying to find the messiah. They should have listened to John’s message and tested to see if he was really a prophet from God.

Instead the real reason they came was to see if John was a troublemaker. Pharisees and Levites loved their positions of authority, and anything that got in the way of their power was a threat.

They needed to know if John was trying to challenge their authority or cause an uprising in Israel.

The irony is that the pharisees sent these men to check on John. They were not there to learn from John, repent, or to seek after God. They are sent by their bosses to question John.

Meanwhile God has sent John to speak truth and prepare the way for the messiah. Men backed by men, and one man backed by God. Who will win this confrontation?

If you remember, the point we have been examining is that we have to know how to seek for Xp. Well, there have been two apparent lines of thought in this passage so far.

First, John comes to reveal the messiah and to show how the entire OT points to who the messiah is. God speaks to us through His word. In it he tells us everything we need in order to know Xp.

Our own efforts, knowledge, and study of the world can never show us Xp enough to know him. But, through the Bible, God speaks to us and changes us.

Now let us look at the **second** line of thought. The men from the pharisees did not come to hear John’s message. They rejected his message before they even arrived.

They only went because they were sent. They wanted to know if John was trouble or not. They were impatient, rude, and unsatisfied with John’s answers.

We must seek to know Xp in humility and faith. We cannot badger our way to the truth, we have to look to the Word of God and let it guide us. Furthermore, we must be seeking God’s way, not our own or other man’s.

The men from the pharisees really just wanted to know who John was. Meanwhile, John is only concerned with one thing. His ministry is more important than what these men want.

John refuses to focus on himself. Instead he has been sent for one purpose, to point to the true messiah. He came to tell where to find the promised Xp.

MP2- Because Xp has come, we must know where to seek him (23-28)

In v.23 John gives an answer to the men from the pharisees. He quotes **Is. 40, verse 3** and says 'I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness.'

John seems to almost ignore their question. But he was answering the question. John told them who he was by telling them his purpose.

By redirecting their question, John also points to what they should really be asking.

Why did John answer in this way? Well, John refuses to even give his name next to the Messiah's. He so honors the coming Lord that he was unwilling to put his name in the same sentence.

John realizes and proclaims his purpose to the men sent from the pharisees. He is a voice crying out.

He is the greatest of the Old Testament preachers, summarizing everything written in the OT and showing how it all points to the messiah. That is his ministry.

He may just be a man, but God was speaking through John to the people. The one who brought the world into existence with the power of his speech, speaks now through John.

God did not speak through him to glorify John. God spoke through John to reveal where the Messiah was.

The rest of the quote from **Is. 40** is to 'Make straight the way of the Lord'

Is. 40 is talking about the return of YHWH to Zion. John is saying that the coming messiah will be YHWH himself. The Jews knew that a promised messiah was coming at some point.

They knew God would send a man into the world to rescue his people. But John adds something to the mix that many may not have understood.

The messiah will not only be man, but also God himself. The ruler of the universe will come to earth as a man.

[Illustration] I am sure you all know the chaos that can unfold when you find out someone is coming to your house to stay for a bit. Suddenly you realize the house is a wreck and every corner needs to be scrubbed.

Once the guest arrives, you may already be exhausted from cleaning. But, if you have enough time, you pull out the nice sheets, towels, and dishes (maybe even the nice china, depending on the occasion and guest).

Now, imagine that Queen Elizabeth is coming to visit. For her, you better pull out all the stops. Imagine the preparation you would need to prepare for a visit from the queen of England. That would be a huge deal!

In this text we are not talking about the queen of England. We are talking about the creator of the universe, coming to the earth. The king is on his way and preparations must be made.

When a king comes to visit, you do not put out plastic ware. John's purpose was to clean up and get ready for the Messiah's arrival. That is why he was there baptizing, in preparation for the arrival of the Son of God.

The men from the pharisees should have been interested in this coming messiah, but that was not what they really cared about. John kept redirecting their attention to the coming Xp, but they did not care.

They just wanted to figure out John and preserve their own power. So, they ask, why are you baptizing if you are not the Xp? Who are you, and what gives you the right to start up a new purification rite?

The pharisees were confused. John said he was not the messiah, but they knew from passages like Zech. 13:1 and Ezek. 36:25 that the messiah would come baptizing.

That's part of why they thought John was claiming to be the messiah by baptizing.

Again, John used their question to deflect their attention away from himself and towards the coming Xp. 'I just baptize with water.' He is telling them 'you are asking the wrong question!'

The messiah is coming and you want to know why the simple messenger is baptizing?!

'among you stands one you do not know,' While these men quizzed John about who he was, the messiah was physically standing somewhere around them.

They were so distracted by their own prowess and mission, that they missed the Lord in their midst. Xp was with them.

John will not talk about himself when the King of glory is standing among them. John's humility before Xp was amazing, and what we should all seek to emulate.

John says, I am not worthy of even the smallest, most insignificant task before this messiah. He is far more worthy than anything else in existence.

John basically says, 'I am nothing compared to the glory of the Xp.' Is that something we are all ready to say in our lives?

Lastly for this section, I want to make a note of their location. Bethany (not the one near Jer.) was out beyond the Jordan, in the middle of nowhere. The location is important for a couple of reasons.

It would have taken quite the spectacle/preacher to draw these men out to the middle of nowhere just to ask John some questions.

While probably only a 45-minute drive today, this would not have been a quick or easy journey. The pharisees really wanted to know what was going on.

Also, this is probably where Joshua stood before entering into the promised land to conquer it. What is the significance?

John is anticipating the coming of the messiah, who will conquer the land in a different way. Remember, the king is on his way to Israel and preparations must be made.

We have talked about the attitude we must have in seeking the messiah, and where we can seek him. Now John will tell us who this messiah is. John does not just tell us his name, but who this God-man really is.

MP3- Because Xp has come, we must know who we seek (29-34): 3 offices

John had not told them who the messiah was, but only that he stood among them. This is now the next day, and John identifies the Xp.

So, the first day focused on John's identity and purpose and now on the second John testifies that Jesus is the Xp.

John the gospel writer, richly show us many things about Xp in this section. I find it fascinating that John describes many aspects which fall under the three offices of Xp.

Jesus Christ is a prophet, priest and a king. The entire OT explains how the messiah will fulfill the office of a king, a priest, and a prophet.

So, as we go through this final section, I will be making note of these three offices. While all three offices are mentioned here, they are not all in order and they overlap in the text.

So, just know we will look at all three offices in this passage, just not in order. Now, back to the text.

John points to the messiah as he approaches. Jesus had already been baptized before the events in today's text. He had also overcome the temptations of the devil in the wilderness.

The Messiah was now returning to be made known and start his ministry. And as Jesus approaches, John yells out 'Behold, the lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world.'

This description shows **the priestly action** of the messiah as the lamb of God. John does not describe this coming king in glory and power, but as a sacrificial lamb.

John calling Xp 'The Lamb' should point us back to many things in the OT. First, every day at the OT temple a lamb would be sacrificed for the sins of Israel (Ex. 29:38).

We should also think of the Passover lamb of Ex. 12:3. The last plague on Egypt was God striking down the firstborn of Egypt. The Israelites were saved by putting the blood of lambs on their doorposts.

The blood covered them, saving them from God's judgement. From that point on God commanded them to hold the Passover feast to celebrate the salvation they received.

But the Passover was really meant to point forward to God saving his people through Xp. This is evident when we think of Isaiah, chapters 52-53.

This text describes the new Passover lamb who will redeem God's people. The Passover and sacrifices were never an end in themselves, but meant to point forward to the messiah, just like John the Baptist.

John was the son of a Levite priest, named Zechariah. He would have known all about the different OT sacrifices, and now, God revealed to him how they pointed to the Xp.

All those OT sacrifices were never meant to remove the sin of the people. They were always a sign of the blood that must be spilled by the messiah for our salvation.

Hebrews 10:11-12 > “And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God...”

14 > For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified...

18 > Where there is forgiveness of these there is no longer any offering for sin.” The real lamb has come.

The Greek uses a verb that means that the lamb is continuously taking away the sin of the world.

So, when John was speaking Jesus had already defeated the devil’s temptations and lived perfectly. He was in the midst of his ministry, and so Xp is actively taking away the sin of the world.

Additionally, this refers to Xp’s death which perfectly brought our justification. But this also refers to our continual sanctification every day. The Spirit is refining us and making us holy.

That is also part of Christ’s priestly office. And another wonderful aspect of his priesthood was mentioned in Heb. 10, His blood continually intercedes for us in heaven.

In v.30 we see **the kingly aspect** of the Messiah. Back in v.20, John was asked if he was the messiah, he said that he was ‘NOT the I AM.’

Well now in v.31 he presents the one who is the great I Am. While John was on the scene preparing the way before Xp, the messiah existed before him.

John says how this is possible. ‘Because he was before me’ think back to John 1:1. The Word is God. Xp ranks before all and he was before all.

The messiah is the creator and ruler of all creation. He is very much the king, come to earth.

In v.31 John tells us that he did not know the messiah. ‘Know’ here is not merely an acquaintance. John did know Jesus, but he did not yet know he was the messiah.

But God revealed that Jesus was the messiah at his baptism, and now John can reveal him as such. How did John know it was Jesus?

In v.33 we see **the prophetic office** of Xp. John identifies Jesus as the messiah by quoting **Is. 11:2**.

“And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.”

We see that John 1:32 is a direct fulfillment of this verse, in what John witnessed in Jesus’ baptism.

How did John know to connect Is. 11:2 with Jesus’ baptism? The Word spoke through John so that he would recognize the sign.

All of the OT and John the Baptist bore witness to the coming of this messiah. And now the messiah will begin his ministry and speak to the world through his human voice.

Now we jump back to another priestly aspect of XP. He is going to baptize with the HS. Because the Spirit rests upon the messiah, he is able to baptize with the Spirit.

Christ will send out his spirit in his ministry, and at Pentecost.

We go to another prophetic aspect of the Xp. He speaks to his people. When we read in v.34 that John saw and bore witness.

The verb here is in the perfect tense. It is like saying 'I am seeing and bearing witness.' The vision and message that John received still burn in his mind as he looks upon the promised messiah.

The Word proclaims himself through John.

This passage closes in dramatic fashion. What is it that John (the gospel writer) has been leading us to in the text? John the Baptist is not the Xp.

He came to point us to the messiah. That messiah was in their midst. Xp also will fulfill everything the OT has promised.

He will be the perfect prophet, priest, and king. The great climax of these two days is this: Jesus is the Son of God. What does this mean?

God, talking about David's promised descendant in 2 Sam. 7:14 says "I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a son."

Jesus is the promised king from the Davidic line. Everyone in Israel's history was awaiting the promised descendant of David to rise up and save Israel.

All of God's blessings pointed forward to this promised king who would come and save his people. The son of David had come, and he was the son of the living God.

Xp has come to fulfill the roles of prophet, priest, and king to his people. He is the Word, the Lamb, and the Son of God.

Conclusion

We began by looking at John's ministry and how we should seek for the messiah. The pharisees thought John was the Xp, but he was not.

John the Baptist's entire ministry was to prepare the way for the Messiah to appear. Instead of seeking to learn from John and to find the true messiah, the pharisees were hard-hearted.

So, what about you? Are you standing before God today with a hard heart? If so, you need to fall at the feet of Xp and repent.

Do not be flippant about your faith or about Xp. We must come to our Lord humbly and in faith.

Next, we looked at the purpose of John's ministry. He was tasked with being a herald of the king. He came to prepare the way for the messiah.

His job was to call people to repentance and faith in God's promises. And he did not make up those promises. All of the promises and prophecies had come from the OT.

God has given us his word to guide us to lives of faith. John did not make things up. But have you? Do you learn about your God through his revealed Word?

Or, have you constructed your own version of God, in your image? Has worldly thinking and your own idolatrous heart infected your knowledge of God? If so, repent and go to the source of all truth, the Word.

Lastly, we looked at who the Xp is and what he came to accomplish. He came as a prophet, speaking through his word, other prophets, and his own body during his physical ministry on earth.

Hebrews tells us that Jesus is the new and better Moses. Xp is our sacrificial lamb, whose blood has atoned for the sins of his elect.

Not only that, but Hebrews tells us that he is always interceding for us in heaven. He also baptizes us with his Spirit, pouring out grace upon grace.

The Messiah is also our king. He is the promised son of David and the creator of the world.

All things have been placed under his feet, to rule over all. Our Lord is the perfect prophet, priest, and king to which the entirety of the OT has pointed.

John the Baptist was the great herald who prepared the way for our Lord. He looked upon his Lord and knew him.

May we see our Savior clearly, and with John say "Behold, the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

Amen.