



Believe

JOHN

MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

Examining the text & our hearts:

Bible Reading: John 1:19-28

¹⁹ This was John's testimony when the Jews from Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him, "Who are you?" ²⁰ He didn't deny it but confessed, "I am not the Messiah." ²¹ "What then?" they asked him. "Are you Elijah?" "I am not," he said. "Are you the Prophet?" "No," he answered. ²² "Who are you, then?" they asked. "We need to give an answer to those who sent us. What can you tell us about yourself?"

²³ He said, "I am a **voice of one crying out in the wilderness: Make straight the way of the Lord**—just as Isaiah the prophet said."

²⁴ Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. ²⁵ So they asked him, "Why then do you baptize if you aren't the Messiah, or Elijah, or the Prophet?" ²⁶ "I baptize with water," John answered them. "Someone stands among you, but you don't know him. ²⁷ He is the one coming after me, whose sandal strap I'm not worthy to untie." ²⁸ All this happened in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

1. Background

- a. Israel in bondage in Egypt
 - a. Returning to the land by crossing the Jordan
 - b. Crossing the Jordan to be in the land God prepared for them
 - c. With the blessing of the land, the temple and God's presence
- b. Israel goes into captivity – from Jerusalem to Babylon
 - a. Falling away from right relationship with God
 - b. Losing the glory of God – the presence and right relationship with God

- c. Failed return
 - a. Returned but still in captivity
 - b. Rebuild the temple but still no glory of God
 - c. Under foreign domination; kingship not restored
 - d. Thinking they are ok when they are not
 - e. Still waiting for the real return from exile
 - f. Waiting for the Messiah

2. John the Baptist

a. Questioned by the Jewish leaders

- a. Because he was baptizing people
- b. One who baptizes is a kind of messianic figure
 “The delegation’s assumption seems to have been that certain messianic figures would “baptize” at the beginning of the messianic age, probably in the sense of purifying the world, or Israel in particular, from sin. **To them, ..., anyone who baptized in water was making some kind of messianic claim.**” J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, p. 102

b. Who he is – “Who are you?”

John 1:6-8 There was a man sent from God whose name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness to testify about the light, so that all might believe through him. ^[c] ⁸ He was not the light, but he came to testify about the light.

- a. Sent from God
- b. A witness to testify about the light

c. Who he isn’t

- a. Not the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor “the Prophet”
 “John denies being the Christ (cf. [v. 8](#), [15: 3:28](#)), Elijah, or the Prophet.... **Elijah**, who never died ([2 Kings 2:11](#)), was expected to return in the end times ([Mal. 4:5](#)) to “restore all things” ([Matt. 17:11](#); cf. [Luke 1:17](#)). Though the Baptist resembled Elijah in his rugged lifestyle ([Matt. 3:4](#); cf. [2 Kings 1:8](#)), he denied that he himself was Elijah (though Jesus, understanding more about this than John, saw John as fulfilling the prophecy about Elijah; cf. [Matt. 11:14](#)). The coming of **the Prophet** was predicted by Moses in [Deut. 18:15, 18](#) (cf. [Acts 3:22; 7:37](#)) and was expected in Jesus’ day ([John 6:14; 7:40](#)). John denied being this Prophet as well (though he was a prophet; see [Matt. 11:11–14](#); [John 10:40–41](#)).” ESV Study Bible

d. His declaration – v. 23

²³ He said, “**I am a voice of one crying out in the wilderness: Make straight the way of the Lord—just as Isaiah the prophet said.**”

Isa. 40:3 A voice of one crying out: Prepare the way of the Lord in the wilderness; make a straight highway for our God in the desert.

- a. I am a voice
- b. I am here to make straight the way of the Lord
- c. Preparing them for a new exodus – they are still in captivity
 - “John the Baptist applies [Isa 40:3](#) to his own ministry (see [Matt 3:3](#); [Mark 1:3](#); [Luke 3:4](#)). [Isa 40:1-11](#) comforts God’s exiled people by announcing that God will deliver them out of their captivity in Babylon, and [Isa 40:3-5](#) commands them to ready themselves for the Lord’s coming by preparing a way for him. Similarly, John the Baptist’s audience must ready themselves for the Messiah’s coming by repenting. **This connection to [Isa 40](#) suggests that John the Baptist is proclaiming a new exodus in which God will, through Jesus, deliver his people from their bondage to sin.**” NIV Study Bible
 - “Originally, Isaiah had in mind a preliminary fulfillment in the return of the Jewish exiles from distant lands to Israel. But his language already reuses “exodus” imagery, making it natural for the evangelists to reapply this imagery in the greater restoration from (spiritual) exile inaugurated by the ministry of Jesus to which John’s preaching pointed. And given that no return from Babylon (or Persia or Greece or Rome) ever came anywhere close to fully ending Israel’s hard service, paying for its sins, or leveling (even metaphorically) all its rugged places, and certainly no event prior to Christ’s coming ever revealed the glory of the Lord to all humanity, it seems reasonable to suggest that Isaiah had a more distant, grander fulfillment in mind as well.” G. K. Beale & D. a Carson, *Commentary on the NT use of the OT*, p. 13.
- d. John is baptizing on the east side of the Jordan – indicating where they are spiritually

- a. They are still in exile, in the desert, needing to cross the Jordan
- b. “[The desert] a barren landscape, which God’s people had become (Isa. 64:10), is where he comes to them with refreshment John the Baptist found his his own calling to his generation, implying the promises of these chapters had not yet fully come to pass (cf. Matt. 3:1-6; John 1:23).” ESV Study Bible
- c. “The setting evoked memories of the desert where Israel first became God’s people ([19](#)) and where God would again purify them ([Ezek. 20:35-38](#)). Against this backdrop and in the context of the [Isa 40:3](#) quotation found in [v. 3](#), John’s location underlines the significance of his mission in preparation for God’s new exodus coming.” ESV Study Bible
- e. John points people to the one coming – Christ, the Messiah, who is Jesus
 - a. “According to the Fourth Evangelist, John’s witness centered on Jesus’ role in the divine plan of salvation as the “Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (1:29, 36). At its very heart, the purpose of John’s baptism and ministry is described as being bound up with revealing Jesus’ true identity to Israel (1:31).” G. K. Beale & D. a Carson, *Commentary on the NT use of the OT*, p. 425.
 - b. “The use of Isa. 40:3 in John 1:23 suggests...that **the Baptist’s salvation-historical role is that of ‘the herald of a new exodus, announcing that God is about to redeem his people from captivity, as he had in the days of Moses’, and to do so through the instrumentality of John the Baptist**, who served as the Isaianic ‘voice in the wilderness.’” In accordance with Isaiah’s prophecy, the Baptist calls God’s people to repentance in preparation for the coming Servant.” **K. Beale & D. a Carson**, *Commentary on the NT use of the OT*, p. 427.
 - c. The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (1:29)
 - d. The main point that is conveyed in this gospel regarding John the Baptist is not baptism but pointing people to Christ and being in right relationship with him. He is announcing the end of captivity. This will give people a real return from exile.
- f. Baptizing people – calling people to get ready for the coming Messiah
 - a. On east side of Jordan – implying they have not yet left their exile
 - a. “Such a procedure [baptism] would have signaled that a new age was at hand and that all Israel needed cleansing.” J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, p. 102
 - b. “Baptism: Such a distinctively new development that John was identified by it (being called “John the Baptist”). It was an outward sign of heartfelt repentance toward God in preparation for his coming. Israel’s prophets, including Isaiah and Malachi, had consistently called Israel to repentance in order that they might know God’s gracious forgiveness and be reconciled to him.” NIV Zondervan Study Bible
 - b. This baptism is different from believers’ baptism. It only prepared people for the coming of Christ.
 - “John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance. It prepared for the coming of the Messiah.” Zondervan NIV Study Bible
 - c. This baptism is challenging their false assurance, false sense of security, that they are alright

3. Our response

- a. We need to be in a right condition – where are you?
 - a. Our experience may mirror Israel’s history
 - b. At one time in a great relationship, but now cooled off
 - c. Is God calling you to restore of your relationship with Him?
 - a. Come back from your “Covid cool-off”
 - b. Be rescued from false assurance of merely doing things
 - c. Re-establish your personal time
 - d. Gather together
 - e. Serve i.e., kid’s ministry