

B) The deputation of leaders ask JTB three questions:

Q1) Who are you? (Are you the Messiah?)

A1) I am not the Christ (Messiah).

Q2) What then? Are you Elijah? (cf. Malachi 4:5)

A2) I am not.

Q3) Are you the Prophet? (cf. Deuteronomy 18:15-18)

A3) No.

C) Finally the Pharisees ask JTB, since he is "none of the above," by what authority is he baptizing people? John's pointed response is simply that He is a humble servant who is preparing the way for Christ, who is the "One" who has the real authority (John 1:26-28).

D) In a final four-fold exposure of humility by JTB, he brings his "baton-passing" ministry to a stunning and miraculous apex (John 1:29-34):

- 1) Revelation ~ "Behold, the Lamb of God"
- 2) Humility ~ "a Man who has a higher rank than I"
- 3) Vulnerability ~ "I did not recognize Him"
- 4) Confirmation ~ "this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit"

Who Are You?

Long Beach Alliance Church • July 11th, 2004 • Pastor Chris Lankford

**"WHO ARE YOU?" AND HE CONFESSED
AND DID NOT DENY, BUT CONFESSED,
"I AM NOT THE CHRIST."
THEY ASKED HIM, "WHAT THEN..?"
~ JOHN 1:19B - 21A (NASB)**

1) The Baptizer's Background...

- A) Miraculous birth to his parents (Zacharias & Elizabeth, both from the priestly line of Aaron). Zacharias was a functioning priest and both parents were advanced in age (Luke 1:5-25).
- B) John's life was filled (even before birth in Elizabeth's womb, cf. Luke 1:41-42), with the Holy Spirit (in direct contrast to any other thing in Luke 1:15).
- C) The Baptizer's life will be marked by a relationship to "the spirit and power of Elijah" (Luke 1:17), to which Jesus Christ Himself testified (Matthew 11:14, 17:12 & Mark 9:13).
- D) John's ministry was one of simplicity in lifestyle (Matthew 3:4), a message of repentance from sin and preparation for the Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 3:2, Luke 3:3) and subsequent baptism for those who repented (Matthew 3:6). His ministry was wide-spread, embraced by the people and centered around the Jordan River (Matthew 3:5-6). John baptized Jesus (Matthew 3:13-17).

E) John was locked in jail for his prophetic ministry (Luke 3:18-20). He was eventually beheaded in prison by Herod the tetrarch in a horrible familial exchange involving his illegitimate wife and wife's child (Salome) which has deviant overtones (Matthew 14:3-12).

F) Jesus Christ attested that "among those born of women there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist!" (Matthew 11:11a). The comment is clearly attached to the Baptizer's humility and servant attitude (Matthew 11b). A.W. Pink notes that Jesus is clearly referring to John the Baptist's positional greatness, not supremacy to Christ (A.W. Pink, *Gospel of John*, Pg. 50).

2) The Significance Of JTB's Ministry

A) John's ministry was specifically to turn the disobedient back toward the Lord (Luke 1:17). John's own testimony about himself (quoted from Isaiah 40:3) was that he was a prophet in the desert, sent to make a path for the Lord (John 1:23, cf. Matthew 3:3).

B) John emphasized that he baptized with water to testify to repentance of sins, but that Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit to testify to entry into the Kingdom of Heaven (Mark 1:4-8, John 1:33).

C) John's ministry was very successful, which caught the attention of a "deputation of interlocutors" (D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According To John*, Pages 142-144) from the religiously powerful in Jerusalem (John 1:19).

D) We can see that JTB's ministry lasted long after his death from the followers which Paul encountered in Ephesus who had not

yet received Christ and the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:1-7). This is, almost certainly, one of John's (the author) primary emphases in including JTB's "Elijah-esque" ministry in his gospel introduction -- especially since John himself was a disciple of JTB, and would have had a first-person view of the entire "preparation/fulfillment" ministry of JTB and Jesus Christ (John 1:35-40).

3) An Example Of Humility

A) John the Baptist is approached by a deputation from the ruling Sanhedrin religious authorities (John 1:19, 22). The "most-interested" group in the deputation is clearly the Pharisees* (John 1:24).

* The Pharisees were a religious party, dating from the time of John Hyrcanus and Alexander Jannaeus. They seem always to have represented the ordinary people against the aristocracy, and pure religion over against the ecclesiastical policies so characteristic of the Sadducees (the representatives of an ossified orthodoxy with no guiding principle except *quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus*). They made a great deal of the study of the Law. But they tended to surround it with a mass of their own interpretations. In practice this meant that the keeping of their traditions loomed larger than the Law. On occasion, as Jesus pointed out, the traditions hindered the people from living in accordance with the spirit of the Law (Mark 7:6-13). Some of the Pharisees were men of noble spirit, but all too often their multitudinous regulations led to an emphasis on the outward, all this in turn to spiritual pride. This was accentuated by the fact that ordinary people did not have the time (nor the inclination!) to learn, let alone practice, the host of traditions that the Pharisees valued so highly. On this occasion their inquiry was the natural outcome of the position they had arrogated to themselves in the Jewish religion. A man was preaching and baptizing. He was drawing crowds in the name of religion. The Pharisees must know all about him (Leon Morris, *The Gospel According To John* (NICNT), Pages 122-123).

PHARISEES AND SADDUCEES	
PHARISEES	SADDUCEES
name means "the separated ones"	name may be from a word meaning the "righteous ones"
largest and most influential sect	the aristocratic minority
extreme legalism	external legalism
little interest in politics	a major concern with politics
believed in immortality, resurrection, spirits, and angels	denied these doctrines
regarded rabbinic tradition highly	rejected rabbinic tradition as authoritative

Small Group Bible Study Questions

- A) Have you ever been in a situation where you know you should say something about Jesus Christ to someone, but you simply kept quiet? What were the circumstances of that/those moment(s), and what holds you back from answering the question, "Who are you?" (John 1:19)?
- B) John the Baptist encapsulated his entire philosophy of ministry in John 3:30, "He must increase, but I must decrease." For many of us, Jesus Christ is very far away, a distant point on the horizon which we can hardly see in our everyday lives. Is that all He is, or is that simply all we see? The closer we get to God, the bigger He seems to get. To what degree is Jesus "filling your view?" Take some time to study Him through the following passages, and share with your group what you discovered about your view of God.
- Hebrews 1:1-4~
 - Colossians 1:15-19, 2:9~
 - Revelation 5:6-14~
- C) Have you noticed that when you work hard at "being humble," it simply brings more attention to you and your efforts? Commentator A.W. Pink writes that "humility is not the product of direct cultivation, rather it is a *by-product*." Practically speaking, how do we become more humble? Take some time to observe the humility of others and discuss it with your group.
- D) There was some discussion of the Pharisees in the church service this past Sunday. Do you think "Pharisaism" is still a problem in the church today? How so? How do we break out of the religious "rules-n-regulations?"
- E) John the Baptist's life was marked by a central focus on Christ. Is your life marked by this trait? Share one area of your life (BE AUTHENTIC!) that you could use some prayer and follow-up from your group this week!

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