

# The Ministry of John the Baptist

## John 1:19-28

<sup>19</sup> Now this was John's testimony when the Jews of Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was.

<sup>20</sup> He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, "I am not the Christ."

<sup>21</sup> They asked him, "Then who are you? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" He answered, "No."

<sup>22</sup> Finally they said, "Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?"

<sup>23</sup> John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, "I am the voice of one calling in the desert, 'Make straight the way for the Lord.'"

<sup>24</sup> Now some Pharisees who had been sent

<sup>25</sup> questioned him, "Why then do you baptise if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?"

<sup>26</sup> "I baptise with water," John replied, "but among you stands one you do not know.

<sup>27</sup> He is the one who comes after me, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie."

<sup>28</sup> This all happened at Bethany on the other side of the Jordan, where John was baptising. (NIV)

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These verses begin the properly historical part of John's gospel. In the previous verses we have been reading deep and weighty statements about Jesus' divine nature and incarnation. Now we begin the plain narrative of Jesus' earthly ministry.

Like the other three gospels the description of Jesus' ministry begins with the testimony of John the Baptist.

### 1. Introduction

Why do people enjoy boasting about themselves and their accomplishments?

What are the characteristics of a humble person?

In what situations is it difficult for you to be humble?

### 2. Who was John the Baptist?

Note -- not to be confused with John who wrote the gospel.

*Jesus' relative*

See Luke 1:5-17 with Luke 1:36

*The last of the "Old Testament prophets" -- calling people to repentance*

See Mark 1:1-8 (Luke 3:1-20 is longer)

### 3. What were the People's opinion of him?

See verses 19 to 21.

[The idea that John could have been Elijah was based on the promise that Elijah the prophet would come before the Messiah -- (Malachi 4:5,6). Even though John looked and sounded like the expected Elijah and had a ministry similar to his, John denied the identification. He came in Elijah's power and office, but he was not the resurrected prophet. Many Jews also expected a prophet like Moses to rise before the Messiah's arrival (Deuteronomy 18:15-19). They hoped this prophet would deliver them from their enemies in a new exodus, and expected him to be a separate person from the Messiah.]

### 4. What was Jesus opinion of him?

See Matthew 11:11 and John 5:35.

### 5. What was John's opinion of himself? (Who did he say he was?)

See verses 23 and 26

John does not accept for himself the honours which the Jews from Jerusalem were ready to pay him. He was just a voice -- 23, one who prepared the way -- 23, one who baptises with water for repentance. -- 26.

True humility - to exalt Jesus was his mission.

### 6. In what way can you be a voice for Jesus?

John knew who he was. Do you know who you are? Is your self-identity and life purpose clear to you? Where does Jesus come into this? What practical ways can we point others to him?