

Having a Powerful Witness (John 1:19-28)

I. A Powerful Witness Testifies to Jesus Rather than Self (19-23)

A. John Did not Testify to Himself (19-21)

1. John Testified that He was not the Christ (19-20)

a. "And this is the record (testimony) of John..."

b. The religious authorities had heard of his ministry and came to investigate

i. The Jews knew that a Messiah was coming

ii. The Religious leaders heard about the holy life and preaching of John

- Would anyone consider your life worth investigating?

iii. The Messiah would come and bring deliverance and salvation to the nation – they asked if John was He

iv. John's life and actions were so representative of holiness and devotion to God that they thought he might be the Messiah

c. John testified that he was not the Messiah

2. John Testified that He was not Elijah (21a)

a. They asked if He was Elijah

i. The Jews believed the prophet Elijah would return before the Messiah according to Mal. 4:5 – *"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord"*

ii. John wore the same type of prophets clothes that Elijah wore, lived in the wilderness like Elijah, and proclaimed holiness to the Lord like Elijah (Mark 1:6; 2 Kings 1:8)

b. John denied that he was Elijah

i. It is interesting that in Luke 1:17 an angel foretelling John's birth says John was the fulfillment of Malachi 4:5.

ii. John denies the claim because he did not want to be the man people admire or look to for deliverance.

iii. John refused to accept acclaim and praise but rather pointed exclusively to Christ

- This is what a true witness should be

- We should never let ourselves become the focus of attention

- We cannot provide healing for people no matter how smart or experienced we are

- We can only point them to Jesus

iv. John did fulfill the role of Elijah in calling people to repentance before the Lord's coming

3. John Testified that He was Not the Prophet (21b)

a. "The Prophet" (not a prophet) refers to what God spoke through Moses in Deuteronomy 18:18 – *"I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him."*

i. The Jews wondered if John was THE prophet that was to come

b. John denied that he was the prophet – this role would be fulfilled by Christ Himself

B. John Witnessed Only to the Lord Jesus (22-23)

1. John's Identity is Questioned (22)

a. Those who came to investigate needed to take some answer back to the religious leaders

b. Some guy in the wilderness did not have the authority to be preaching the way he was

c. John is Asked to Identify Himself – "What sayest thou of thyself"

2. John Gives them Christ Rather than His Qualifications (23)

a. John quotes Isa. 40:3 – He is not what is important – His message and the one coming is important

i. In the first section of John, Jesus is called the WORD, John claims to be only a voice that speaks of the word.

ii. This is also our job – to be a voice testifying to the word

b. John calls them to Repentance

i. To make straight the paths means to clear the obstacles for the Lord's coming

ii. Matt. 3:2 shows John's core message – Repent because the Lord is coming

- this must be part of our message as well

- there is no salvation where there is no repentance

II. A Powerful Witness Testifies in the Authority of Christ (24-27)

A. John's Authority to Baptize is Questioned (24-25)

1. The religious leaders sent men to investigate John

2. They asked by what authority he was baptizing

a. If John was not the Christ, Elijah, or the prophet – who was he to be out in the wilderness baptizing people?

i. Baptism at that time was how Gentiles were inducted into the nation of Israel. Gentiles who repented would be baptized to demonstrate their conversion to the God of Israel

ii. But John was calling the Jews themselves to be baptized

iii. In essence, his ministry called the Jews to enter into God's people which would have been extremely offensive to them.

iv. They were religious and thought they were in no need of repentance.

B. John Responds only under Christ's Authority (26-27)

1. John did not defend his right to baptize or preach

2. John did not offer any evidence of his own authority

3. John simply gave them the message

a. He said, "I baptize with water but another is coming who will baptize in the Holy Spirit."

b. Once again, John defers attention away from himself and places it on Jesus.

4. John gives Jesus the highest authority

a. John says he isn't even worthy to untie Jesus' sandals

i. In those days, roads were dusty and feet were really nasty

ii. Even the disciples of Jewish Rabbis did not do such a humbling task

iii. John says that doing this disgusting task was too good for him.

b. John rests his entire ministry and preaching on the authority of Christ

i. Often we feel like we must defend our witness

ii. We feel we must argue many side issues about the faith

iii. We get sucked into debating things in order to win arguments and be proven right

iv. John did not defend himself, but pointed to salvation in Christ.

v. Winning an argument is not as important as bringing people the message of Christ

III. A Powerful Witness is Never in Vain (28)

A. John gave this testimony in Bethany beyond the Jordan

1. Notice that John wasn't doing too well with the Jews

2. They were doubting him and questioning him

3. It doesn't say that any of them repented and came to faith

B. John's Witness Bore Fruit

1. Later in John 10:40-42, Jesus was ministering in the place where John had this interchange and many remembered the testimony of John and believed

2. John 10:40-42 *"And went away again beyond Jordan into the place where John at first baptized; and there he abode. 41 And many resorted unto him, and said, John did no miracle: but all things that John spake of this man were true. 42 And many believed on him there"*

3. Although John did not see it, his testimony planted seeds that bore fruit.

- a. Your witness is never in vain if it is rooted in Christ
- b. Even if you don't see results you are successful if you hold to the gospel
- c. God works great victories in the witnessing opportunities that seem like failures.