

## P A S T O R ' S   S E R M O N   N O T E S   ·   P U L P I T   C O P Y

# A Voice in the Wilderness

The Gospel of John: Why Should I Believe? · Week 04 · October 4, 2026

**Scripture:**

John 1:19–28

**MOTIVATION (WHY YOU NEED THIS)**

In the first few verses of studying John 1, we have discovered...

- **WHO** Jesus was – Eternal, God made manifest, Creator, Life and Light
- **HOW** Jesus was sent by God the Father to earth as a human (and why?)

**John 3:17 (ESV)** For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

- **WHAT** Jesus brought with Him to earth – grace and truth

**John 1:16 (ESV)** For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.

Today, we'll be turning our attention fully to John the Baptist (not the same as the writer of this gospel), and the testimony he gave concerning Jesus Christ.

Why was it necessary to have someone give testimony about Jesus? **Because no one was looking, and you don't recognize a person you're not expecting.**

There had been 400 years of silence (no prophet or word from God), and people were treating religion as routine. So, Jesus walking into Galilee one day would have added one more face to the crowd.

But it's God's pattern to send someone before He acts (think Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, the prophets).

**God sends someone to wake people up.**

John the Baptist's testimony would cause people to look again (to stir up expectation, call them to repentance, and get their hearts ready).

So, when Jesus came on the scene, people would recognize Him.

This isn't a surprise because God promised this testimony 700 years earlier (Is. 40:3). John was proof God was keeping His word, and that the King was right behind him.

**INFORMATION (WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW)**

John's testimony was received with questions from the Jewish religious leaders...

**Who are you?**

- The Jews are the ones asking the questions; however, the priests/Levites are the messengers on behalf of the Jewish religious leaders

**John 1:19 (ESV)** And this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?"

- Jewish religious leaders were in Jerusalem (center of religion/temple)

**John 1:24 (ESV)** Now they had been sent from the Pharisees.

- **Priests** (responsible for temple's sacrifices) – If you wanted to get right with God, you went through them. John was offering people a way to get right with God at a river, and they wanted to know by whose authority.
- **Levites** (temple's staff and teachers) – They knew the Law and taught it. They came to evaluate John against the Scriptures.
- **Pharisees** (most respected religious leaders of the day) – Not temple officials, but the group everyone looked to for what a faithful Jew should believe and do. They sent the priests and Levites because John was drawing the crowds that used to follow them.

"The Pharisees held a strict interpretation of the Law and embraced many oral traditions.... Their question to the Baptizer was 'Since you have no official title, why are you baptizing?'" – Bible Knowledge Commentary

– John was baptizing in Bethany, about 20 miles away from Jerusalem

**John 1:28 (ESV)** These things took place in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

**John pulled the crowds out of the temple, and the temple leaders noticed.**

- John the Baptist answers their repeated questions with who he was not...

**John 1:20 (ESV)** He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ." 21 And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No."

- "I'm not the Christ" (he wasn't the Messiah promised by God)
- "I'm not Elijah" (one expected to return in the last days to restore all things; not the literal Elijah coming back from heaven, as they expected)
- "I'm not the Prophet" (prophesied by Moses and expected in this time)

**What do you have to say about yourself?**

- Frustrated, the Jews asked John who he said he was

**John 1:22 (ESV)** So they said to him, "Who are you? We need to give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?"

- John told them he was sent to prepare the way for the Messiah

**John 1:23 (ESV)** He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as the prophet Isaiah said."

"John's real function was not to teach ethics, but to point men to Jesus. 'Make straight the way of the Lord' is a call to be ready, for the coming of the Messiah is near." – Leon Morris

**What right do you have to baptize?**

**John 1:25 (ESV)** They asked him, "Then why are you baptizing, if you are neither the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?" 26 John answered them, "I baptize with water, but among you stands one you do not know, 27 even he who comes after me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie."

- John told them he was simply baptizing with water

"His role was to prepare the people of Israel for the salvation coming in Jesus Christ. His baptism was a visible sign of repentance. It was an opportunity to testify publicly they were turning from their sin and waiting in faith for the promised Messiah. His authority to baptize was simply an extension of his role as the voice crying to the people to prepare for Jesus's coming." – Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary

- John told them that there was One among them they didn't know
  - John continually deflected attention off himself in order that Jesus might be proclaimed and believed in
  - John's role is the same as ours – to proclaim Jesus to those who do not yet know Him

**We gather here on Sundays and scatter into the world so that our friends, family, neighbors, co-workers, and the whole world may know and believe.**

#### **APPLICATION (WHAT YOU NEED TO DO)**

John the Baptist's role is also your role – **to point people to Jesus.**

John wasn't the Christ and neither are you.

It's not your job to save anyone. We just point people to the One who saves.

**What should you do this week?**

- Think of one person in your life who doesn't know Jesus yet
- Pray for them every day and then take the bold step to share what Jesus has done in your life.