

God With Us

A Study of John's Gospel: "The Voice in the Wilderness"

John 1:19-28

"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 1:23)

I. Labels and Identities

- a. A label on the outside most often identifies what's on the inside (purpose, role, meaning, flavor etc.) What labels to people wear? And do those labels define what is inside?
- b. The early decades of the first century was a time of intense speculation about the Messiah. (Essenes, Herodians, Pharisees, Sadducees, Samaritans and The Zealots)
- c. Who are you? What do you say about yourself? Three times John the Baptist was asked to identify himself. Why is this important?
- d. Are you the Christ, Elijah, or The Prophet?
 1. Christ - The Greek word *christos* (meaning "anointed one"), is equivalent to the Hebrew term *mashiach*, meaning "Messiah."
 2. Elijah ascended into heaven on a fiery divine chariot and his return was prophesied. (2 Kgs 2:11) (Malachi 4:5)
 3. *The Prophet* is predicted by Moses. (Deuteronomy 18:15-18)
- e. John identifies himself by quoting Isaiah 40:3. All four Gospels apply this identity to John the Baptist, but John's Gospel is the only one that puts the quote on John the Baptist's lips.
- f. The idea of building up the kingdom of God by means of *testimony* was a primary method Christ' followers used to spread His message of salvation.
- g. Under the O.T. law the "Nation of Israel" was built up by the natural increase of a family, the family of Abraham. Every Hebrew child found their identity in God by virtue of having Hebrew parents. But the Kingdom of God would be built through spiritual increase.
- h. John's testimony concerns a Person, not an ethical system, nor a doctrine, but Jesus the Christ.
- i. He was content to be the *voice* which announced the Christ.

II. John's Baptism

- a. Why then are you baptizing? John took it upon himself to baptize Jews and Gentiles. Washing with water was a common practice in Jewish ritual purification, but baptism was associated with the conversion of Gentiles. (Exodus 29:4; Num 19:19-21) (Matt. 3:5-6)
- b. John prepared the way for Christ by calling people to acknowledge their sin and their need for salvation. His baptism was a purification ceremony meant to ready the peoples' hearts to receive their Savior.

III. Personal Application of His Word

- a. Labels do indeed identify what is on the inside. If we carry the Christ label, then we should testify to the *inside truth*.
- b. In order to be an effective witness, you must testify. When asked, *How do you explain the change in your life?* You must testify. When asked, *Why do you have joy in the midst of pain?* You must testify. When asked, *What has this Jesus done for you?* You must testify.
- c. When you testify, it lets everyone know you identify. Our Christian testimony gives us identity. It is true that you should not let anyone label you, but do you wear a consistent Christ identity?
- d. Let everyone see the label God has placed on you. Proclaim that label so that people want to know what is behind the label.