

## St. John's Gospel – episode 2

### Chapter 1 part 2

Welcome to our sharing on Saint John's Gospel. I want to continue what I began in the last episode, which is looking at what Saint John is saying about Jesus being Wisdom Incarnate. It's very illuminating because we have to go back into the books of Wisdom, and you will never read the books of Wisdom the same once you realize what John is telling you about them. For example, the first thing is that Wisdom is identified with the Word of God. And we're told that it descended from Heaven, and it came to carry out God's Will. So let me read this text for you from wisdom chapter 18:14-15. "When peaceful silence lay overall, and night had run half of its swift course, down from the heavens, from the royal throne, left your all-powerful Word, carrying out your unambiguous command like a sharp sword".

Now when you look at John's other book, which is the book of Revelation in chapter 19:11-16, this is how he actually describes Jesus returning to us in the second coming. He says, "I saw heaven opened and a white horse appear. Its rider is called Faithful and True. He is a judge with integrity. He is a warrior for justice. His eyes were flames of fire, and his head was crowned with many crowns. He is known by the name, the Word of God. Behind him dressed in linen of dazzling white rode the armies of Heaven on white horses. From his mouth came a sharp sword to strike the pagans with, and he is the one who will rule them with an iron rod. On his cloak and on his thigh, his name was written, King of kings and Lord of lords".

So, John is saying That this mighty warrior that came down from the heavens to carry out God's Will is the Word who became flesh and dwelt among us. Secondly, we're told that - I'm talking about the Old Testament now. In the books of Wisdom, we're told That the Word of God carries a divine energy, which makes it effective in its work. Well, when you look at the miracles of Jesus in the Gospel, you're looking at miracles that he worked through his Word alone, And they were effective in carrying out the task that was meant to be done. For example, you have the cure of the noble man's son in chapter 4: 50.... and the child was healed simply by obedience to the Word of God.

The Word of God was sent forth and carried out its work. You have the cure of the blind man in John chapter 9 where he said: "I went and I washed and I saw". So again, the healing is obedience to the Word of God, which was sent forth. Jesus said: "go and wash in the pool of Siloam". The man obeyed. "I went, I washed, and I saw". Then finally, we have the raising of Lazarus in chapter 11, where Jesus sent his Word Into the tomb of rotten death and said: "Lazarus, come forth" ... and the dead man came forth, obeying the Word of God.

Listen to this. This is Isaiah 55:11: "The word that goes forth from my mouth does not return to me empty without carrying out my will and succeeding in what it was meant to do". That's about as clear as you can get. The third point is that God's Word was understood to be life giving and to be healing in its effects so John presents Jesus as the creative spirit-filled life-giving Word of God Incarnate.... so, the fulfilment of everything that they knew about Wisdom in the Old Testament.

But we're not finished! We're only starting. The 4th point is that God's Word was understood to enlighten people interiorly when they began to live it. So, you find Psalm a 119:9 saying, "how can the youth remain pure? It is by behaving as your word says". Psalm 119:105 "Your word is a lamp for my feet and a light for my path". Well, Jesus wasn't just a lamp for our feet. He was the light of God in its full glory shining upon the earth.

Not only that, but the Word of God was understood to be like rain that came down from the realm of above, and it came down to soften the souls that were to receive it so that they could open up spiritually and receive what God said. Well, this is Isaiah 55:10. "Yes, As the rain and the snow come down from the heavens, and do not return without watering the earth to provide seed for the Sower and growth for the eating, so the Word of God goes forth and produces its fruit. What I want to do now is make a comparison between statements that are made in the Old Testament scriptures about Wisdom and just see how it actually opens up John's Gospel.... so, what the Old Testament says about Wisdom, John is going to say about Jesus. Okay.

1): The first thing it says about Wisdom is that it was with God in the beginning before creation and was actually involved in creation. Listen to this. This is the book of Proverbs chapter 8:22 "The Lord created me when his purpose first unfolded before the oldest of his works. From everlasting, I was firmly set. From the beginning before the earth came into being. The deep was not when I was born, and there were no springs to gush with water. Before the mountains were settled before the hills, I came to birth. Before he made the earth, the countryside, and the first grains of sand. When he when he fixed the heavens firm, I was there. And he drew a ring on the surface of the deep when he thickened the clouds above, when he fixed the springs of the deep, when he assigned the sea its boundaries, I was at his side, a master craftsman delighting him day by day, ever at play in his presence, at play everywhere in the world, delighting to be with the sons of men". That's what the Old Testament says about wisdom. What does John say? John says, "in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning, and through him, all things came into be. Not one thing had its being without him".

When you go to the second half of the Gospel and Jesus is preparing for his dreadful hour. He prays. He says, "now, Father, it's time for you to glorify me with the glory that I had with you before the world began". So, what Proverbs said about Wisdom, John is saying about Jesus. The Bible says that "Wisdom is a pure emanation of the glory of God. This is Wisdom 7:25 "She is a breath of the power of God, pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty, hence, nothing impure can ever find its way into her".

This is what John says in chapter 1:14 "The word was made flesh. The logos was made sarx. He lived among us. We saw his glory. It was the glory that was his. As the only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth". In John chapter 2:12, We're told, he let his glory be seen, and his disciples believed in him.

3): We're told That Wisdom was said to be a reflection of the eternal light. Of course, you know the answer to that one. John said that Jesus is the light. So, Wisdom was merely a reflection of him. Jesus is the full, manifestation of the light of God.

4): Number 4, we're told that Wisdom descended from heaven, and it dwelt in Israel as in a tabernacle. This is very interesting. This is the book of Sirach Chapter 24:3-8. It begins with "Wisdom sings her own praises. In the midst of her people, she glories in herself. She opens her mouth in the assembly of the Highest. And she said "I came forth from the mouth of the Highest, and I covered the earth like mist. I had my tent in the heights and my throne in the pillar of cloud. Alone, I circled the vault of the sky. And I walked on the bottom of the deeps. Over the waves of the sea and over the whole earth and over every people and nation, I held my sway. Among these, I looked for somewhere to rest. I looked to see what territory I could pitch my tent. And then the creator of all things instructed me, and he who created me fixed the place for my tent. He said, pitch your tent in

Jacob. Let Israel be your inheritance". Now John 1:14 literally says that when the Word became flesh, he pitched his tent among us. He's using exactly the same expression.

So, John is telling you that he's talking about the Divine Wisdom that has become incarnate. Let's look at wisdom 9:10 for a moment. The author says, "dispatch Wisdom from her holy heavens. Send her forth from your throne of glory, and help me to toil and teach me what is pleasing to you". She knows and understands everything. John tells us that Jesus is the Word of God descended from above, from the heavens, and that he came to pitch his tent among us. He was coming into the world; John says in chapter 1:10.... that "He was in the world that had its being through him, but the world did not know him". Now, saying that the world did not know him, the world was not in a relationship with him. It was coming from below. It couldn't understand, so he came to his own domain.... that's his own people. Pitch your tent with Jacob. He came to his own domain and to his own people, but they did not accept him, but to all who did accept him, He gave power to become children of God".

In John chapter 3:31, we read, "He who comes from above is above all others". John chapter 6:38. "I have come down from heaven not to do my own will, but to do the will of the one who sent me. John 16:28, "I came from the Father, and I've come into the world. And I leave the world, and I go back to the Father". So, he goes back from where he came.... so here you have this circle of love.

Jesus the Incarnate Word came down to the earth to redeem the earth, to set humanity back on a new course of being in right relationship with God, and then love returns to its source.

5): Wisdom had a specific mission to teach, and it was meant to teach people the wisdom of above. What was it that heaven wanted to communicate with us? And its Wisdom wanted to teach us, about the will of God as well.... and she was considered a teacher of truth. You're hearing all these things. John says, Jesus is all of that.

Listen to this. This is the Old Testament speaking now. Job chapter 11:6-7. Were he to show up the secrets of wisdom, which put all the cleverness to shame. Wisdom 6:18-19. "Of her, the surest beginning is the desire for discipline. Care for discipline means loving her. Loving her means keeping her laws, that's doing God's Will. Obeying her laws guarantees incorruptibility, and Incorruptibility brings you back to God. This is Wisdom 6:17-18. "As for your intention, who could have learned it had you not granted Wisdom and sent your Holy Spirit from above?

Now we're going to find throughout the Gospel that the disciples have difficulty understanding Jesus and penetrating the mystery of his person until the Holy Spirit is given to them, and then they understand. So, we would not understand "unless you sent your Holy Spirit from above. And thus, the paths of those on earth have been straightened, and men have been taught what pleases you, and they've been saved by wisdom". Proverbs 4:13. "Hold fast to discipline. Never let her go. Keep your eyes on her for she is your life". So, John is going to present Jesus as the teacher of truth, the one who shows us the way back to God, the one who reveals the will of God to us in all its glory.

6): Just as Wisdom, taught through long discourses, you have Jesus' teaching in long discourses in John's Gospel as well. And in these long discourses, Jesus is explaining who he is and why he came just as wisdom was explaining who she was and why she came. You're coming on too much more familiar territory now

7): because number 7 tells us that Wisdom was identified with the vine, And Jesus identified himself with the vine in chapter 15. The book of Sirach chapter 24:17 says "I am like a vine putting out graceful shoots. My blossoms bear the fruit of glory and wealth".

8): Both Wisdom and Jesus offer their food. And they tell us that this food is life for us. Both of them refer to their food as bread and wine, and both of them urgently ask us to participate and feed. Okay? Let me give you a few examples. Proverbs 9:5, “Come and eat my bread, drink my wine that I have prepared”, 24:19-21: “They who eat me will hunger for more, and they who drink me will thirst for more”. The difference is that the food that Jesus gives actually satisfies the soul so that it neither hungers nor thirst for anything else. Jesus said in John 6:35, “I am the bread of life, he who comes to me will never be hungry, and he who believes in me will never thirst”. In John chapter 7: 37-39, Jesus said, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me, let the man come and drink .... because you can come without drinking! Let the man come and drink if he believes in me. A scripture says, from his own heart will flow fountains of living water”.

9): Jesus will seek out disciples just as Wisdom did, and he will instruct them in divine Wisdom. In chapters 13 -17, he will call them both friends and children just as Wisdom did, and he will offer them new life. So, this is wisdom 7:7 “And so I prayed, and understanding was given to me. I entreated, and the spirit of Wisdom came to me.... and then verse 17, “it was he who gave me true knowledge of all that is”. Proverbs 8:32- 33. “And now, my sons, listen to me. Listen to instruction. Learn to be wise. Do not ignore it. Happy are those who keep my ways”. Sirach 4:11. “And you will be like a son of the Highest whose love for you will surpass that of your mother”.

10): The coming or the advent of Wisdom. I'm deliberately using the word ‘advent’ because I'm thinking of Jesus. The coming or the advent of Wisdom into the world provokes division, and many reject it. Listen to this. This is Proverbs chapter 1:24-25. “Since I have called you and you have refused me, since I have beckoned and no one has taken notice, since you have ignored all my advice and rejected all my warnings, I, for my part, will laugh at your distress when calamity bears down on you like a storm”. So, Jesus' incarnate wisdom, as we know, was rejected right from the very beginning. The leadership never accepted him, not even in his birth. And, therefore, what the Old Testament is saying is fulfilled in him. This is to John chapter 1. “He was in the world. The world had its being through him, and the world did not know him. He came to his own domain. He came to his own people, but they would not accept him”.

This rejection of Jesus, who was the Word and Wisdom of God, had terrible consequences, and we're going to see these terrible consequences as we go through the text. But that text I gave you from Proverbs, Wisdom said it would laugh at the distress that people would have as a result of rejecting Wisdom. But when you come to the Gospel, Wisdom Incarnate didn't laugh when the people rejected him. In fact, he cried over Jerusalem! Not only that, but he sweated blood in Gethsemane because he knew he was the only Saviour that the Father was going to send to them. And if they rejected him absolutely, deliberately, and consciously, then they had chosen darkness for themselves. And that's very frightening, and you're going to hear that right from the very beginning.

John told you that initially, when they start rejecting him, they become more and more spiritually blind. You have a very interesting discussion about this in chapter 9 where the leadership, say to Jesus, “we're not blind, surely”. And Jesus replied, “blind, if you were, you wouldn't be guilty”! In other words, I could heal you. But since you say ‘we see’ your guilt remains. In other words, it was conscious, culpable, deliberate blindness. And this was the result of their own choices. So, Jesus said in John chapter 8:21 “I am going away. You will look for me, but you will die in your sins”.

Don't forget that the Word of God is the voice of God himself. God knows everything about us, and you're going to hear this at the end of chapter 1. And when he said to them, you will die in your sins, they did. It's frightening. In John chapter 8:46, Jesus said, “if I speak the truth, why don't you believe it?” The reason for rejecting Jesus' Word and Wisdom were many, and I'll discuss that as we go

through the text. But there's a very telling text given to us in chapter 3:19 "On these grounds is sentence pronounced that though the light has come into the world, men have shown that they prefer darkness to the light because their deeds are evil".

So, the life and death that we're going to be discussing, not only now, but as we go through the text, has nothing to do with material life or death, nothing to do with earthly life or death. We're talking about spiritual and eternal Life or death! Listen to this. Proverbs 8:35 "For the man who finds me finds life. He will win favour with the Lord, but he who does injury to me does hurt to his own soul, and all who hate me are in love with death". Now this is horribly and sadly reflected in the death of Judas Iscariot, which John, in his great kindness, leaves under a blanket of silence. He didn't have to tell us because the story had already been told by Matthew.

So, all I wanted to do, in this particular section is to say to you that the Old Testament is all over this text, but it's not obvious. That's why I wanted to point out certain things, so that when we go through the actual text beginning in our next episode you will be able to see that this is very rich and that you're looking at the scriptures being fulfilled completely in Christ. Thank you for joining us.

Welcome to our sharing on Saint John's Gospel. In this episode, I want to begin with chapter 1 after all the introduction we've done! And now that you know that there's an extensive Old Testament background, you will realize that what you're looking at is not as simple as it appears. I have another surprise for you, and that is the moment you go into chapter 1, you'll hear that John the Baptist is my witness. We only use witnesses when we go into a courtroom and we're on trial. So, I just need to give you this Last piece of introduction, and then we'll go into the text.

The whole of the first half of Saint John's Gospel is one vast trial. John gives it as a whole courtroom scene in which Jesus of Nazareth is on trial before the leadership of the chosen people of God. And because he's on trial and he's being accused of all kinds of things, he has to produce witnesses. So right from the very beginning, John starts piling up the witnesses, and it's very important. Many witnesses are presented. Now if this is a courtroom, who is the judge, and where is the jury? Jesus is the accused person. The judges are the Sanhedrin, the leadership of the people of God, and the jury are the people of God.

So, when we go through the story of the Gospel things are not what they seem. While Jesus is on trial before the people of Israel and before the Roman authorities. Actually, John chose **you!** It's the other way around. That as far as John is concerned Jesus has come as the covenant prosecutor, and he is pressing charges against the evil shepherds of Israel. Hence, you have all these controversies in the Gospel, that there's this mutual accusation going on between them. And when you come to the Passion, for example, and you have Jesus actually facing his accusers you find that the person who is most calm and under control and has the authority, and the power... is actually Jesus! I mean, he quite calmly tells the representative of the superpower of the world, "You would have no power over me unless given to you from above"!

And then he says "the people who handed me over to you are much more guilty than you are" .... so, who's the judge? It's actually Jesus! It's quite amazing. In this courtroom scene, for example, we start in chapter 1:7. John the Baptist came as my witness. Then in chapter 4:39, the Samaritans believed on the testimony or the witness of the woman who spoke to Jesus. In chapter 5, we're told that there's another witness to speak for Jesus. In chapter 19:35, John says that the blood and water that flowed from Jesus, these are trustworthy evidence.

And then in John 21:24, the disciple says, I vouch for everything I have said. I am an authoritative witness. Okay. So, therefore, you've got all of these witnesses being called, to give evidence, and you find that the witnesses who testify to Jesus are everybody and everything. But no matter what he produces in court, the judgment is going to go against him, because Jesus is up against the failure of the Judean leadership in John's Gospel..... called in the English Bible, 'Jews'. I will explain that term eventually, but they are Judeans. They are the 'UDEOI' (Hebrew). And it is their failure in leadership that is really in contention as far as Jesus is concerned.

The struggle between Jesus and the Judean leadership comes to a peak in John chapter 11, where they decide that they want to protect their temple.... because if he's a temple and he's setting up a new religion and a new People of God, and he's the Word of God, and he's everything that he said... then we're out of office! We're going to lose everything. So, in order to protect their Judean temple – and that is where they earn their living and have their seat of power - In order to protect that and in order to have whatever prosperity they could have under the Roman domination, they decided to kill Jesus. Caiaphas said, "It's better for one man to die for the nation than for the whole nation to be destroyed". We deal with that in chapter 11. But what they do is that they demand that Jesus give signs. You have saint Paul saying in his first letter to the Corinthians that the Jews always demand signs.

Well, Jesus produced seven signs in John's Gospel. seven is the perfect number. It means this is the complete witness. It's the witness of his works, and when we go into the big controversies in chapter 7 and 8, for example, he will say, "even if you don't believe in me as a person, believe in the works that I do". I mean, if somebody, creates an incredible piece of art, we admire the artist, don't we? We give them some kind of acknowledgement. If somebody does an incredible piece of architecture, we admire the architect that produced this. And so that's why Jesus will say to them, at least believe in my works. So, he produces seven, the witness of his works.

The first one is in chapter 2, the creation of wine. In chapter 4, there's the healing of the nobleman's Son. In chapter 5, there's the healing of a man who was 38 years sick. I call him 'the man on the mat'. In chapter 6, there is the manna miracle. In chapter 6, there's also the water miracle. Now he needed to produce manna and water miracles if he's to be the prophet like Moses. We'll deal with that in chapter 6. In chapter 9, he creates sight. In other words, he creates light for a person. And in chapter 11, only God can raise the dead, and so he called Lazarus from his tomb. These were the 7 complete signs that Jesus actually produces, in his ministry.

Now we know from the synoptic Gospels that Jesus produced many more signs, but John chooses 7 to show you that he did in fact give a complete witness to who he was. And the final witness, of course, was that when he himself rose from the dead. So that's just to explain why as soon as we go into the text, we're talking about witnesses. And before we get into the text as well, another little word, and that is why John uses the word **cosmos**. This is usually translated in our English bibles as 'world', but it doesn't mean 'planet Earth', and it doesn't mean the whole of humanity.

And it doesn't just mean society out there. John has a very particular meaning for using **COSMOS** and he means: 'the whole order of society that is in opposition against God'. The cosmos is **the unbelieving world**. The world that says 'no' to the fact that God exists, 'no' to the fact that God can actually do anything. And so, the world is that order of human beings that's actually in opposition to God. So, listen to this. John 7:7. "The world cannot hate you, but it does hate me, he says, because I show it up".



In chapter 9:39 “For judgment, I came into the world”. Well, naturally, there's going to be opposition to that! In John chapter 12:31 “Now sentence is being passed on this world”. And John 15:18, if the world hates you, remember It hated me before you”. So, we have the world, the unbelieving world, the cosmos in opposition to Jesus, and yet you're going to be told in John 3:16 that he came to redeem this world. He came into this hostile environment, to redeem it. And look at what John the Baptist says about him in chapter 1:29 “There is the lamb of God who will take away the sins of the world”.

So, Jesus is going to sacrifice himself to try and redeem this world. In John 3:16 “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son not to condemn the world, but that through him, the world might be saved”. I've only given you the words of that that are needed here. And in John 6:33, we hear, “the bread of God which comes down from heaven is to give life to the whole world”. So why does Jesus want to redeem this unbelieving Cosmos? Why does he want to get through to the people who hate him and oppose him and will kill him and are in total opposition to him. Why? You'll be told in John 1:1 and also in Genesis from verse 1, and that is that the whole world was created by the living Word of God. And Jesus is the living word of God become flesh. So, he wants to restore, the world that he himself created, which I think is absolutely fantastic.

Now that we have looked at that a little bit, I want to move into looking at the witnesses, that are in chapter 1 of John's Gospel. And the witness is actually given by John the Baptist, a very, very powerful, 3-part witness that he gives to Jesus. For example, we first of all are introduced to John the Baptist, which I will read for you. And then we're told in, chapter 1:19-28 that John bears witness before the Jerusalem authorities. And then in chapter 1:29-34 that John the Baptist bears witness to the people of God. And then in chapter 1:35-37 that John actually bears witness before his own disciples. A final witness of John that's not given here in chapter 1 is given in chapter 3:22-36 but we'll deal with that in chapter 3.

So, let's come and introduce John the Baptist. This is the Gospel itself, chapter 1:6-8: “A man came sent by God. His name was John. He came as a witness”. Do you see you're introduced to it at the very beginning? “He came as a witness to speak for the light so that everyone might believe through him”. That means everybody might believe who Jesus is through John the Baptist. That's why he was bearing witness. He himself was not the light. He was only a witness to speak for the light. So, it's a very, very, wonderful, introduction to John the Baptist. Now, the apostle John who is writing this text doesn't tell us everything about John the Baptist because the three synoptic Gospels are already written. They're already in circulation in the church, so John will not repeat something they've already told us. So, there's lots about John the Baptist we can learn from the synoptic Gospels that this Gospel is not going to tell you. It's only going to tell you the bits that John wants to emphasize. I think that's important.

He doesn't want to just rehash something that's already been given. But since we're going into dealing with John the Baptist's witness, we have to deal with two questions that go right through this Gospel, and that is, what is the attitude you have in actually coming to these programs and listening to them, why do you pick up the Gospel and actually read it?

The question That you have to answer for yourself and for your own eternity is, who is this Jesus of Nazareth. Now John will answer that question for you in the first 12 chapters. And as he answers it, Jesus is going to be saying to you what he said to the first disciples. What do you want? And as he said to the men who arrested him in Gethsemane and to Mary of Magdala on Easter Day, “who are you looking for?” What do **you** want? And who are you looking for? These are extremely important questions, and, I give them to you before I even get into the depth of the text because if we look at

this thing theoretically and you either like the comment or you don't like the comment, the whole thing is a failure. That's not the reason why we listen to the Word of God! We listen to the Word of God to let that Word give us life.... and so that we will be changed because I gave you that already in my introduction that John said. He wrote this text so that you would believe that Jesus was the Christ and that believing in it that you would have life through him.

So, if we're coming at this prayerfully and we're really trying to listen to God speak to us through John's Gospel, then this is going to be very wonderful. So, the first thing the apostle John - who writes the text - tells us is that God sent a great prophet to introduce the Messiah, not just anybody. Now going into the Old Testament, there were loads of prophets. There were great prophets, and there were lesser prophets and Prophets you hardly know anything about, but John was a great prophet. In fact, you know from the Synoptics that "he was the greatest born of woman". Jesus said that himself. And not only that, but he was the last and greatest prophet of the Covenant of Moses. And he was the most privileged of all the prophets because he introduced the People of God to their Messiah. All the prophets would have given their lives for that privilege. Okay? So, the function that John the Baptist had was to open the hearts of the people to receive their Messiah. As a result of John's ministry there was a great expectation among the people, and we would say a great buzz among them, all talking about this is the time that the Messiah should show himself. This is the time. It's not any other time. So, the people were in expectation of the Messiah because you know this from Luke's Gospel that the 490 years from the prophecy of Daniel is now fulfilled. They know it's the time. It's the right time.

So, since they expect the Messiah, they listen to John's teaching, and John is telling them, you've got to go from me to somebody else to listen to his teaching and follow his way of salvation. Why? Because Jesus alone could lead them into the New Era of Redemption. As we listen to John the Baptist the old era of the covenant of Moses is coming to an end, and Jesus will bring it to its final fulfilment and completion on the cross. Once Jesus appears on the scene at all the New Era of Redemption is being inaugurated. So, during the time when Jesus is actually alive, you have both eras at the same time overlapping.

And so, you get the confusion that goes with two overlapping eras. John the Baptist was asked to identify himself. Who do you think you are? Now we know from the Synoptic Gospels that John was the Elijah that was to come - Jesus himself said it. But that's not in this Gospel. In this Gospel, John identified himself as the voice in the wilderness. Now this is Isaiah chapter 40, and it's a very wonderful, explanation. It's the beginning of the book of consolation in the prophet Isaiah. And it, therefore, was the beginning of the 'new thing' that God wanted to do with them. And as you go from chapter After 40 in Isaiah, Isaiah begins to say, look. "There's no need to remember the past. There's no need to do what was done before. Behold, God is going to do a completely new thing". And so, if John the Baptist identifies With chapter 40 of Isaiah, then he's declaring that a New era is opening up.

So let me just read Just little bits of it. I know you know Isaiah chapter 40. "Console my people. Console them, says your God. Speak to the heart of Jerusalem". Now when the Sanhedrin sends a delegation to John the Baptist, John the Baptist will be speaking to the heart of Jerusalem. "And call to her that her time of service has ended". That means the covenant of Moses is finished. "A voice cries, prepare in the wilderness away for the Lord". Now John the Baptist did that literally. And I'm going to jump down Because I know you know the text.

And John said, "shout without fear to the towns of Judah". The towns of Judah are where the Sanhedrin live, where the Judean temple is, and all the rest of it. "Say to the towns of Judah, here is



your God". They had been told 800 years in advance, and they didn't accept it. "Here is the Lord God coming, and his arms subduing all things to him. The prize of his victory is with him. His trophies go before him, but he's coming to you like a shepherd, feeding his flock, gathering the lambs in his arms, and holding them close to his breast". In other words, He's not coming like a warrior. He's coming as a very simple shepherd.

Now Jesus fulfilled that absolutely, but, of course, they don't accept it, so let's look at the text in which, John the Baptist gives witness before the Sanhedrin or the delegation that comes from the Judeans. And this is, chapter 1:19. "This is how John appeared as a witness. When the Jews, that means the Judean leaders, sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem, that's from Judea, to ask him, who are you? He not only declared, but he declared quite openly, I am not the Christ. Well, then they said, are you Elijah? I'm not, he said. Are you the prophet? He answered, no. He was a great prophet, and he was the Elijah figure. So, they said to him, who are you? We must take an answer back to those who sent us. What have you to say for yourself?" And John said, "I am what Isaiah has prophesied, a voice that cries in the wilderness. Make a straight way for the Lord". And so, these men who had been sent by the Pharisees, the leaders in Jerusalem, they put a further question to him, and he they said, "but why are you baptizing if you're not the Christ and you're not Elijah and you're not the prophet?" John said, "I baptize you with water, but there stands among you unknown to you, the one who is coming after me, and I am unfit to undo his sandal strap". Now this happened, John says, at Bethany on the far side of the Jordan. Now there were two Bethanie's in Israel. One was two miles from Jerusalem in the Judean territory. This Bethany is over to the east beyond the Jordan in what today we would call the kingdom of Jordan. Okay? So, it's far away from Jerusalem, that's why a delegation had to be sent.

So, this is very important, and I want to begin a discussion about it. The interesting thing is that John the Baptist had such an effect on the people that it aroused the leadership in Jerusalem; they started getting worried. Someone is trying to be a prophet. So, they sent a delegation, and this delegation is official. And it's from the official authority representing God, in Israel. The strange thing is the little people, the ordinary people, the uneducated people, who didn't know all the theology and scripture that the Sanhedrin knew.... they recognized John as a prophet; they recognized him as a holy man.

They understood what he was saying. They accepted his baptism. They tried to open their hearts and be ready for the Messiah. It's the little people who gave the right response. The other people are simply questioning and going back, not having made a decision. They never accepted John. And if they never accepted John, how could they accept Jesus? Because John was preparing for Jesus, and John pointed Jesus out very, very clearly to them. So, the question 'who are you' is a very interesting thing altogether.

So, who is John the Baptist? His answer is really fascinating. He said, I'm not. I'm not. I'm not. I'm not anything you said. He didn't want to claim anything for himself. John the Baptist is presented here as someone with wonderful humility. He just doesn't blow himself up at all.

He only wants to do one thing, which is to point to who the Messiah is. That's all. The question that is asked here, who is John the Baptist, is actually very important at the time when John writes his Gospel Because the Gospel is being written at the end of first century when John the Baptist's disciples had spread out all over the Middle East in what is called the diaspora. And when the Christian missionaries were going from town to town, presenting the Gospel they met with John's disciples in many, many places, and, many of John's disciples actually became Christians when they heard, who Jesus was. So, the question is actually very important. So, he clarifies, very much that he is not the Messiah. Now notice the confusion that was even among the leadership.

Are you the prophet? Are you Elijah, or are you the Messiah? Since so much time had passed since the time of Moses, they weren't sure whether the Messiah figure was going to come like Elijah or simply like a prophet or if he was going to do incredible things like Moses, they were not a bit sure. So, I'll answer these questions for you in our next episode. Thank you for joining us.