The Gospel of John

**6—CLOSER THAN YOU THINK – JOHN 1:19–28**

For people who have been hearing about the imminence of the tribulation period, the rapture, and the second coming of Jesus their whole life, the combination of their ongoing delay and frequent mention tend to reduce the reality of such forthcoming events from “watchful expectation” to “maybe someday,” or even to the level of “the unknown or unlikely.” In such cases, hearing about these events no longer affects them like it used to, so when these events are mentioned they simply brush off the warnings, or just ignore them. Some people have even become cynical about them. Though I don’t believe I’ve ever been cynical about the end times, I have caught myself becoming a bit too casual about the timing of their arrival. When someone has delayed completing a project for a long time, but asserts—maybe for the fourth time—that they’re going to get it done soon, I have sometimes said, “Soon, like Jesus is coming soon?” To the defense of people who’ve said similar things, it has been about 2000 years since Jesus said, “Behold, I am coming soon.” However, Jesus also said, “… be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect” (Luke 12:40).

All of these attitudes were doubtless present just prior to Jesus starting His ministry. The prophecies of His first coming had, after all, begun to be announced some 4,000 years before He arrived, so there was certainly much cynicism, skepticism and even disbelief about it. The portion of John chapter one that I want us to focus on today shows us how John the Baptist humbly and diligently attempted to reconcile these attitudes with his awareness that Jesus had already arrived. My hope is that, like John, we will realize how close we are to the coming of the Lord, and that we will sense the urgency and assume the responsibility to prepare people before it’s too late.

Let’s read:

**John 1:19–28 (ESV)** And this is the testimony of John, when **the Jews** sent **priests and Levites** from Jerusalem to ask him, “**Who are you?**” **20** 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.” **22** 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**?” **23** 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.” **24** (Now **they had been sent from the Pharisees**.) **25** 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**.” **28** These things took place **in Bethany across the Jordan**, where John was baptizing.

V.28 – “These things took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.”

1. On the east side of the Jordan River, a place called Bethany
2. Not the Bethany on the east side of the Mount of Olives … 20 miles from the Jordan River
3. The location is not specified, but likely just north of where the Jordan dumps into the Dead Sea

V.19.1 – “the Jews”

1. Often used to reference the religious leaders of the Jews, and not the entire population.
2. Like we would say, “the Republicans” or “the Democrats”

V.19.2 – “the priests and Levites”

1. Most priests and Levites were Sadducees
2. The high priest was always a Sadducee

Vv.22 & 24 – “those who sent us” and “the Pharisees”

1. It’s interesting that the Pharisees sent Sadducees
2. John the Baptist was from a priestly line on both sides, so these priests and Levites may have known his parents or family

V.20 – “the Christ”

1. Hebrew = Messiah
2. Literally = the Anointed One

V.21.1 – “Elijah”

1. The Old Testament had prophesied that Elijah would come back before the Messiah returned

**Malachi 4:5–6 (ESV)** “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. **6** And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction.”

1. This prophecy is specifically speaking of the second coming of Jesus, but, of course, they didn’t know that

V.21.2 – “the Prophet”

1. Moses had prophesied:

**Deuteronomy 18:15 (ESV)** “The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen—

1. So they’re asking John if he is “that prophet?”

Vv.19–22 – “Who are you?” and “What do you say about yourself?”

* V.23 – “I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’ as the prophet Isaiah said.” (Isaiah 40:3)

V.25 – “Then why are you baptizing?”

1. John the Baptist is the first person to baptize people.
2. God required people to bathe in water before entering the Temple to wash away anything unclean.
3. John’s message is that Messiah is coming, and bathing physically is not nearly enough to be ready. You must also repent and be washed from the sins of your heart.
4. The Temple in Jerusalem is some 20 miles away from where John is baptizing, but John is diverting crowds of people from the Temple to go out and be baptized by him … the religious leaders are greatly concerned about that.

V.26.1 – “I baptize with water, but”

1. The apostle John doesn’t record John the Baptist’s whole explanation here, but it’s recorded in Matthew 3:11-12:

**Matthew 3:11–12 (ESV)** “I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. **12** His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

1. John was really saying, “You’d better repent while you can.”

V.27 – “the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie”

* Here’s a guy who has thousands of people gathering to him … away from the religious leaders of the day … and in essence he says … I’m no better than any of you … it’s the One coming after me that deserves all the honor

V.26.2 – “among you stands One”

1. John the Baptist is saying, “You’ve been waiting thousands of years for Him to come … and you need to know … He’s already here.”
2. The prophecies had come to pass unnoticed.

**Five of the modern-day prophecies fulfilled and being fulfilled**

1. Israel has been regathered to the Promised Land for the second time

**Isaiah 11:11–12 (ESV)** In that day the Lord will extend his hand yet a second time to recover the remnant that remains of his people, from Assyria, from Egypt, from Pathros, from Cush, from Elam, from Shinar, from Hamath, and from the coastlands of the sea. **12** He will raise a signal for the nations and will assemble the banished of Israel, and gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.

**Matthew 24:32–34 (ESV)** “From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. **33** So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates. **34** Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.

**JESUS SAID THAT THE END-TIME EVENTS WOULD ALL HAPPEN IN ONE GENERATION**

**Hosea 9:10 (ESV)** Like grapes in the wilderness, I found Israel. Like the first fruit on the fig tree in its first season, I saw your fathers…

**Joel 1:6–7 (ESV)** For a nation has come up against my land, powerful and beyond number; its teeth are lions’ teeth, and it has the fangs of a lioness. **7** It has laid waste my vine and splintered my fig tree; it has stripped off their bark and thrown it down; their branches are made white.

[Also Jeremiah 24]

 **FRIDAY, MAY 14, 2021 WAS ISRAEL’S 73RD BIRTHDAY**

1. In 1967, Israel captured the old city of Jerusalem, including the Temple Mount

**Luke 21:23–24 (ESV)** … there will be great distress upon the earth and wrath against this people. **24** They will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive among all nations, and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles, **until** the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

1. Jerusalem and the Temple Mount, is again becoming a heavy issue to the surrounding nations and the world

**Zechariah 12:1–3 (ESV)** The oracle of the word of the Lord concerning Israel: Thus declares the Lord, who stretched out the heavens and founded the earth and formed the spirit of man within him: **2** “Behold, I am about to make Jerusalem a cup of staggering to all the surrounding peoples. The siege of Jerusalem will also be against Judah. **3** On that day I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples. All who lift it will surely hurt themselves. And all the nations of the earth will gather against it.

1. All nations will gather against Jerusalem

**Zechariah 12:3 (ESV)** On that day I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples. All who lift it will surely hurt themselves. And all the nations of the earth will gather against it.

Former President Trump was a great supporter of Israel, and declared Jerusalem to the capital of Israel. However, the Biden Administration has drastically changed course and is now saying that they support a pre-1967 border.

1. The Gog & Magog War maybe in the making

**Ezekiel 38:1–2, 8–9 (ESV)** The word of the Lord came to me: **2** “Son of man, set your face toward Gog, of the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him **… Verse 8** After many days you will be mustered. In the latter years you will go against the land that is restored from war, the land whose people were gathered from many peoples upon the mountains of Israel, which had been a continual waste. Its people were brought out from the peoples and now dwell securely, all of them. **9** You will advance, coming on like a storm. You will be like a cloud covering the land, you and all your hordes, and many peoples with you.

**IT’S TIME TO REPENT OF OUR SINS … TO LIVE FOR GOD … TO DO WHATEVER HE HAS CALLED US TO DO**