

Today's reading selection is only 10 verses, but they are crucial for our understanding of the New Testament, as they highlight the preparatory work leading to the arrival of the Messiah. The entire canon of the Old Testament points to the coming of the Christ, and in these 10 verses, we witness the culmination of this groundwork. This can be seen as the final "prequel," illustrating the last event that points forward to the Messiah's arrival. Following this, we will experience approximately three years of Jesus Christ's earthly ministry before awaiting another 2,000+ years for His second coming. Every detail is significant. While the following may not fully capture every detail, it aims to highlight the interconnectedness and importance of each verse in God's Holy Word. This is how we should regard the entire Bible.

Jn 1:19. *And this is the witness of John, when the Jews sent to him priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?"*

The priests and Levites from Jerusalem were sent to question John the Baptist about his identity and mission. This questioning reflects the growing curiosity and speculation among the people about John's role in God's plan. (**Luke 3:15-16:** "The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Messiah.")

Jn 1:20. *And he confessed and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ."*

John the Baptist unequivocally denies being the Messiah. His clear and honest response sets the stage for understanding his true role as the forerunner to Christ. (**Acts 13:25:** "As John was completing his work, he said: 'Who do you suppose I am? I am not the one you are looking for. But there is one coming after me whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.'")

Jn 1:21. *And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" And he said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No."*

The priests and Levites then ask if John is Elijah or the Prophet, referring to prophecies in the Hebrew Scriptures. John denies both identities, emphasizing his unique role. (**Malachi 4:5:** "See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes.")

Deuteronomy 18:15: "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your fellow Israelites. You must listen to him." **Matthew 11:14:** "And if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come.")

Jn 1:22. *Therefore, they said to him, "Who are you, so that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?"*

The questioners press for a clear answer, needing to report back to those who sent them. They inquire about John's authority and purpose. (**John 1:25:** "They asked him, 'Why then do you baptize if you are not the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?'"")

Jn 1:23. *He said, "I am A VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, 'MAKE STRAIGHT THE WAY OF THE LORD,' as Isaiah the prophet said."*

John responds by quoting Isaiah 40:3. This self-identification points to his role in preparing the people for the coming Messiah. (**Isaiah 40:3:** "A voice of one calling: 'In the wilderness prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.'" **Matthew 3:3:** "This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah: 'A voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'")

Jn 1:24. *Now they had been sent from the Pharisees.*

This is the introduction of the Pharisees, a significant religious group, mentioned as those who sent the questioners, highlighting the religious leaders' interest in John's activities. (**John 3:1**: "Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council.")

Jn 1:25. *And they asked him, and said to him, "Why then are you baptizing, if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?"*

This question reflects their concern about his authority and the significance of his actions.

(**Matthew 21:25**: "John's baptism—where did it come from? Was it from heaven, or of human origin?")

Jn 1:26. *John answered them, saying, "I baptize with water, but among you stands One whom you do not know.*

John explains that he baptizes with water, a symbolic act of repentance, but points to someone greater who is already among them, whose significance surpasses his own. (**Acts 19:4**: "Paul said, 'John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus.'")

Jn 1:27. *"This One is He who comes after me, of whom I am not worthy to untie the strap of His sandal."*

John demonstrates profound humility by stating he is not worthy to untie the sandals of the One coming after him. This act of untying sandals was considered a menial task, highlighting John's recognition of Jesus' supreme authority and holiness. (**John 1:33**: "And I myself did not know Him, but the One who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the One who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.'" **Mark 1:7**: "And this was his message: 'After me comes the One more powerful than I, the straps of Whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie.'" **Acts 13:25**: "As John was completing his work, he said: 'Who do you suppose I am? I am not the one you are looking for. But there is One coming after me whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.'")

Jn 1:28. *These things took place in Bethany beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing.*

The passage concludes by noting that these events occurred in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptizing. This geographical detail places the events in a real, historical context. (**John 10:40**: "Then Jesus went back across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing in the early days. There he stayed.")