Research: John the Baptist in John and Luke

John 1:19-23

19¶ And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou?

“This is the record - The word "record" here means "testimony," in whatever way given. The word "record" now commonly refers to "written" evidence. This is not its meaning here. John's testimony was given without writing.

“When the Jews sent - John's fame was great. See [Matthew 3:5](http://biblehub.com/matthew/3-5.htm). It spread from the region of Galilee to Jerusalem, and the nation seemed to suppose, from the character of his preaching, that he was the Messiah, [Luke 3:15](http://biblehub.com/luke/3-15.htm). The great council of the nation, or the Sanhedrin, had, among other things, the charge of religion. They felt it to be their duty, therefore, to inquire into the character and claims of John, and to learn whether he was the Messiah. It is not improbable that they wished that he might be the long-expected Christ, and were prepared to regard him as such.

“When the Jews sent priests and Levites - See the notes at [Luke 10:31-32](http://biblehub.com/luke/10-31.htm). These were probably members of the Sanhedrin” (Barnes’ Notes)

20And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ.

“I am not the Christ - This confession proves that John was not an impostor. He had a wide reputation. The nation was expecting that the Messiah was about to come, and multitudes were ready to believe that John was he, [Luke 3:15](http://biblehub.com/luke/3-15.htm). If John had been an impostor he would have taken advantage of this excited state of public feeling, proclaimed himself to be the Messiah, and formed a large party in his favor. The fact that he did not do it is full proof that he did not intend to impose on people, but came only as the forerunner of Christ; and his example shows that all Christians, and especially all Christian ministers, however much they may be honored and blessed, should be willing to lay all their honors at the feet of Jesus; to keep themselves back and to hold up before the world only the Son of God” (Barnes’ Notes)

21And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No.

“ Elias—in His own proper person.

“that prophet—announced in De 18:15, &c., about whom they seem not to have been agreed whether he were the same with the Messiah or no” (Jamieson-Faussett-Brown).

“Art thou Elias? - This is the Greek way of writing Elijah. The Jews expected that Elijah would appear before the Messiah came. See the notes at [Matthew 11:14](http://biblehub.com/matthew/11-14.htm). They supposed that it would be the real Elijah returned from heaven. In this sense John denied that he was Elijah; but he did not deny that he was the Elias or Elijah which the prophet intended [Matthew 3:3](http://biblehub.com/matthew/3-3.htm), for he immediately proceeds to state [John 1:23](http://biblehub.com/john/1-23.htm) that he was sent, as it was predicted that Elijah would be, to prepare the way of the Lord; so that, while he corrected their false notions about Elijah, he so clearly stated to them his true character that they might understand that he was really the one predicted as Elijah.

“That prophet - It is possible that the Jews supposed that not only "Elijah" would reappear before the coming of the Messiah, but also "Jeremiah." See the notes at [Matthew 16:14](http://biblehub.com/matthew/16-14.htm). Some have supposed, however, that this question has reference to the prediction of Moses in [Deuteronomy 18:15](http://biblehub.com/deuteronomy/18-15.htm)” (Barnes’ Notes).

22Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself?

“*Who art thou?*

“They continue asking as to his person; he replies as to his office. In the presence of the Messiah the personality of His Forerunner is lost” (Cambridge Bible).

23He said, I *am* the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias.

“*Who art thou?*] They continue asking as to his person; he replies as to his office. In the presence of the Messiah the personality of His Forerunner is lost.

“The prophet Esaias - The prophet Isaiah. Esaias is the Greek mode of writing the name. This passage is taken from [Isaiah 40:3](http://biblehub.com/isaiah/40-3.htm). It is here said to have been spoken in reference to John, the forerunner of Christ. The language is such as was familiar to the Jews. and such as they would understand. It was spoken at first with reference to the return from the captivity at Babylon. In ancient times, it was customary in the march of armies to send messengers, or pioneers, before them to proclaim their approach; to provide for them; to remove obstructions; to make roads, level hills, fill up valleys, etc. Isaiah, describing the return from Babylon, uses language taken from that custom. A crier, or herald, is introduced. In the vast deserts that lay between Babylon and Judea he is represented as lifting up his voice, and, with authority, commanding a public road to be made for the return of the captive Jews, with the Lord as their deliverer. "Prepare his ways, make them straight," says he” (Barnes’ Notes).

Luke 7:19-22

19¶ And John calling *unto him* two of his disciples sent *them* to Jesus, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?

“And John calling unto him two of his disciples,.... Which were a sufficient number to be sent on an errand, to ask a question, and report the answer, or bear witness to any fact they should see, or hear done.

“Sent them unto Jesus, saying, art thou he that should come, or look we for another? not that he doubted that Jesus was the Messiah; nor was it for his own satisfaction so much that he sent these disciples of his with this question, but for theirs; and to remove all doubt and hesitation from them about Christ” (Gill’s Exposition).

20When the men were come unto him, they said, John Baptist hath sent us unto thee, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?

“On their arrival the men are made to repeat the question” (Expositor’s Greek Testament).

21And in that same hour he cured many of *their* infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many *that were* blind he gave sight.

“**And in that same hour he cured** . . . The statement of the facts is peculiar to St. Luke, and obviously adds much force to our Lord’s answer. He pointed to what was passing before the eyes of the questioners” (Ellicott’s Commentary).

“Diseases - plagues

“Marking the two classes of disease recognized in medical writings, chronic and acute.

“Evil spirits

“On evil, see [Luke 3:19](http://biblehub.com/luke/3-19.htm). It is applied to evil spirits by Luke only, with the single exception of [Matthew 12:45](http://biblehub.com/matthew/12-45.htm). In accordance with its signification of evil on its active side, it is applied in medicine to that which spreads destruction or corruption; as the poison of serpents. Note, moreover, that Luke distinguishes here between disease and demoniac possession, as often” (Vincent’s Word Studies).

22Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached.