

John 1:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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

Analysis

The narrative transitions from prologue to testimony. Jerusalem's religious establishment sends priests and Levites to investigate John the Baptist. Their question 'Who art thou?' reflects official concern about this wilderness prophet drawing massive crowds. John's answer is emphatically negative: 'he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ.' The threefold emphasis ('confessed,' 'denied not,' 'confessed') stresses John's integrity—he refused to claim more than he was.

Historical Context

The Sanhedrin, responsible for religious orthodoxy, naturally investigated this prophetic movement. During the intertestamental period, no prophetic voice had spoken. John's appearance after 400 years of prophetic silence demanded explanation. His denial that he was Messiah, Elijah (in physical return), or 'the Prophet' (Deuteronomy 18:15) demonstrated remarkable humility given his popularity.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How does John's honest denial model integrity in ministry and witness?
2. Why was it important for John to clearly distinguish himself from the Messiah?

Interlinear Text

καὶ αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ μαρτυρία τοῦ Ἰωάννου ὅτε
And this is the record of John when

ἀπέστειλαν οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι ἐξ Ἱεροσολύμων ἱερεῖς καὶ
sent the Jews from Jerusalem priests And

Λευίτας ἵνα ἐρωτήσωσιν αὐτὸν Σὺ τίς εἰ
Levites to ask him thou Who art

Additional Cross-References

John 10:24 (Parallel theme): Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly.

Acts 19:4 (References John): Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.

Acts 13:25 (References John): And as John fulfilled his course, he said, Whom think ye that I am? I am not he. But, behold, there cometh one after me, whose shoes of his feet I am not worthy to loose.