

The Forgotten Jesus Podcast

S5E3

The Connection Between Sandals And Kinsman Redeemers - (John 1:19-28)

Description – Today we examine John the Baptist and his role as forerunner to the Messiah, but also what he means when he says the phrase, “whose sandal strap I’m not worthy to untie.”

Today on the podcast we’re back to John the baptist, looking at John 1.

Why John after we’ve been in Matthew 4 and Luke 4? It’s what happens next chronologically.

John 1:19 - John 2:11 - This passage is one week in the life of Jesus.

John 1:19

¹⁹ This was John’s testimony when the Jews from Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him, “Who are you?”

Why is this important? The religious leaders have completed the observation phase, but are now here (Jews, priests, levites) for the investigation phase.

John 1:20-21

²⁰ He didn’t deny it but confessed, “I am not the Messiah.” ²¹ “What then?” they asked him. “Are you Elijah?” “I am not,” he said. “Are you the Prophet?” “No,” he answered.

Notice: Not, “Are you A prophet?” But, “Are you THE prophet?” What prophet are they asking about? The one that Moses told them that God would raise up.

Deuteronomy 18:15

¹⁵ “The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him.

John 1:22

²² “Who are you, then?” they asked. “We need to give an answer to those who sent us. What can you tell us about yourself?”

Even right here we see that this delegation has to gather info to then report back to Jerusalem, to fill out their paperwork and file their investigative reports with the Sanhedrin.

John 1:23-25

²³ He said, "I am a **voice of one crying out in the wilderness: Make straight the way of the Lord**—just as Isaiah the prophet said."

²⁴ Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. ²⁵ So they asked him, "Why then do you baptize if you aren't the Messiah, or Elijah, or the Prophet?"

So we see here that delegations from all the religious leaders of Israel are here, you have Priests (1:19), Levites (1:19) and the Pharisees (1:24) all represented here interrogating John.

The Jews had the idea / concept that the Messiah was "the coming one..."

Malachi 3:1

"See, I am going to send my messenger, and he will clear the way before me. Then the Lord you seek will suddenly come to his temple, the Messenger of the covenant you delight in—see, he is coming," says the LORD of Armies.

Isaiah 40:3

³ A voice of one crying out: Prepare the way of the LORD in the wilderness; make a straight highway for our God in the desert.

So the "coming one" meant certain things from the Old Testament. They knew that the Messiah would do certain things, like the blind seeing, the deaf / blind healed, dead raised, etc.

Even John knew of this concept of the "coming one..."

Matthew 11:1-6

When Jesus had finished giving instructions to his twelve disciples, he moved on from there to teach and preach in their towns. ² Now when John heard in prison what the Christ was doing, he sent a message through his disciples ³ and asked him, "Are you **the one who is to come**, or should we expect someone else?"

⁴ Jesus replied to them, "Go and report to John what you hear and see: ⁵ The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, those with leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor are told the good news, ⁶ and blessed is the one who isn't offended by me."

But back to John 1, what does the phrase "who's sandal straps I'm not worthy to untie."

John 1:26-27

²⁶ "I baptize with water," John answered them. "Someone stands among you, but you don't know him. ²⁷ He is the one coming after me, whose sandal strap I'm not worthy to untie."

How have we always interpreted this? Feet were dirty, dusty, smelly messes in the 1st century. To untie a sandal and wash feet was reserved for the lowest of the low slaves.

But this actually also ties back to the Old Testament levitical marriage,

Deuteronomy 25:5-10

⁵“When brothers live on the same property and one of them dies without a son, the wife of the dead man may not marry a stranger outside the family. Her brother-in-law is to take her as his wife, have sexual relations with her, and perform the duty of a brother-in-law for her. ⁶The first son she bears will carry on the name of the dead brother, so his name will not be blotted out from Israel. ⁷But if the man doesn’t want to marry his sister-in-law, she is to go to the elders at the city gate and say, ‘My brother-in-law refuses to preserve his brother’s name in Israel. He isn’t willing to perform the duty of a brother-in-law for me.’ ⁸The elders of his city will summon him and speak with him. If he persists and says, ‘I don’t want to marry her,’ ⁹then his sister-in-law will go up to him in the sight of the elders, remove his sandal from his foot, and spit in his face. Then she will declare, ‘This is what is done to a man who will not build up his brother’s house.’ ¹⁰And his family name in Israel will be ‘The house of the man whose sandal was removed.’

Ruth 4:1-10

Boaz went to the gate of the town and sat down there. Soon the family redeemer Boaz had spoken about came by. Boaz said, “Come over here and sit down.” So he went over and sat down. ²Then Boaz took ten men of the town’s elders and said, “Sit here.” And they sat down. ³He said to the redeemer, “Naomi, who has returned from the territory of Moab, is selling the portion of the field that belonged to our brother Elimelech. ⁴I thought I should inform you: Buy it back in the presence of those seated here and in the presence of the elders of my people. If you want to redeem it, do it. But if you do not want to redeem it, tell me so that I will know, because there isn’t anyone other than you to redeem it, and I am next after you.”

“I want to redeem it,” he answered.

⁵Then Boaz said, “On the day you buy the field from Naomi, you will acquire Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the deceased man, to perpetuate the man’s name on his property.”

⁶The redeemer replied, “I can’t redeem it myself, or I will ruin my own inheritance. Take my right of redemption, because I can’t redeem it.”

⁷At an earlier period in Israel, a man removed his sandal and gave it to the other party in order to make any matter legally binding concerning the right of redemption or the exchange of property. This was the method of legally binding a transaction in Israel.

⁸So the redeemer removed his sandal and said to Boaz, “Buy back the property yourself.”

⁹Boaz said to the elders and all the people, “You are witnesses today that I am buying from Naomi everything that belonged to Elimelech, Chilion, and Mahlon. ¹⁰I have also acquired Ruth the Moabitess, Mahlon’s widow, as my wife, to perpetuate the deceased man’s name on his property, so that his name will not disappear among his relatives or from the gate of his hometown. You are witnesses today.”

So John is answering the questions of the religious leaders.

John is out in the middle of nowhere, baptizing with water, and not in the temple, even though his father was a levite.

To them, it looks like John is trying to untie their sandal straps. Because they're the "next" in line, they're the religious elite. After God, it is the Priests / Levites / Saducees / Pharisees.

They come to him because they realize that John was trying to take their sandal off, because they're not doing their job.

John was saying to them, they're failing at their job.

So John answers, **John 1:27**,

²⁷ He is the one coming after me, whose sandal strap I'm not worthy to untie."

John says not only is he not worthy, the leaders are not worthy, but also, Moses & Joshua are not worthy. Even as close to God as they were, they are unworthy to redeem the people.

Exodus 3:4-5

⁴ When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called out to him from the bush, "Moses, Moses!" "Here I am," he answered. ⁵ "Do not come closer," he said. "Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy ground."

Joshua 5:13-15

¹³ When Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua approached him and asked, "Are you for us or for our enemies?" ¹⁴ "Neither," he replied. "I have now come as commander of the LORD's army." Then Joshua bowed with his face to the ground in homage and asked him, "What does my lord want to say to his servant?" ¹⁵ The commander of the LORD's army said to Joshua, "Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did that.

John the baptist later says that Jesus, the one who is to come, is this kinsman redeemer. He's the one who will redeem and restore.

John 3:27-30

²⁷ John responded, "No one can receive anything unless it has been given to him from heaven. ²⁸ You yourselves can testify that I said, 'I am not the Messiah, but I've been sent ahead of him.' ²⁹ He who has the bride is the groom. But the groom's friend, who stands by and listens for him, rejoices greatly at the groom's voice. So this joy of mine is complete. ³⁰ He must increase, but I must decrease."

The role of Kinsman Redeemer was one of the most important, salvific roles in the Old Testament. Everything John the Baptist is saying here in John 3 is kinsman redeemer talk, the talk of a groom who is redeeming his bride.

John recognizes that his role, just like ours today, is not to draw attention to ourselves, but to point people to Christ.

John builds up a ministry, gathers a following, and then willingly hands it off to Jesus as the one who is the rightful heir.