

John 1:19-51

Come and See

In his prologue to his gospel the apostle John has told us his intention for his account of the life of Christ. He will show us that in Jesus we have the mind, reason, heart and will of God expressed fully in a human being. Starting in verse 19 John tells us about the beginning of Jesus Christ's ministry. And we begin with Christ's forerunner John the Baptist.

John was a faithful man of God. In fact in Matthew 11:11 Jesus stated that there was no prophet greater than John, even though he never even performed a miracle. And in John 5:35 Jesus called John a burning and shining lamp. So let's begin with John the Baptist being investigated and his witness for Jesus being the Christ. The events we read about occurred over a period of four days.

Now this is the testimony of John,
when the Jews sent priests and
Levites from Jerusalem to ask him,
"Who are you?"
(John 1:19)

John the Baptists popularity was colossal. Hundreds and thousands of people would go out to the wilderness to hear him preach and to be baptized. In fact he was so popular and revered that the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem sent a delegation to check him out.

Now 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."
(John 1;19, 20)

The event that takes place here occurred after John had baptized Jesus.¹ And John saw the Spirit of God descend on Jesus and John knew then that his cousin, Jesus, was the Messiah, the Christ. John will give witness to this truth. And

¹ Matthew 3:13-17

each time he will emphasize a certain aspect about who Jesus is. Here he denied that he was the Christ.

And they asked him,
“What then? Are you Elijah?”
He said, “I am not.”
“Are you the Prophet?”
And he answered, “No.”
(John 1L21)

John was asked if he was Elijah, because the last two verses of Malachi, the last book of the Old Testament, stated that the prophet Elijah would come before the great Day of the Lord. John denied being Elijah. But in Matthew 11:14, Jesus said that John ministered in the Spirit and power of Elijah. The prophet spoken of here is from a prophecy by Moses in Deuteronomy 18:15. Moses declared that a prophet like him would arise in Israel in the future.²

Then they said to him,
“Who are you, that we may
give an answer to those who
sent us? What do you say
about yourself?”

²³ He said: “I *am*
‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness:
“Make straight the way of the LORD,” ’
as the prophet Isaiah said.”
(John 1:22, 23)

John explained who he is by quoting Isaiah 40:3. The prophet Isaiah heard a voice calling for the leveling of a road through the eastern desert so that God would lead His people out of captivity in Babylon and bring them to Jerusalem. In Isaiah the full quote reads,

The voice of one crying in the wilderness:
“Prepare the way of the Lord;
Make straight [b]in the desert
A highway for our God.
⁴ Every valley shall be exalted
And every mountain and hill brought low;

² In Revelation 11 there are two unnamed witnesses who come before the Day of the Lord, the Day of God’s wrath. Like Moses one turns water into blood and the other like Elijah calls down fire from heaven.

The crooked places shall be made straight
And the rough places smooth;
(Isaiah 40:3, 4)

John the Baptist was a spiritual road builder bringing people to God. And this quote is a good illustration about how repentance works in our hearts. If you are in a valley of hurt, depression fear or feel insignificant look to Christ and he will lift you up. If you are on the mountain of pride and self-righteousness then you need to be humbled to receive Christ. If you are crooked then turning to Christ will straighten you out. And if you are rough around the edges Christ will smooth your heart. When people repented like this they were baptized by John to signify the change.

Now those who were sent were from the Pharisees. ²⁵ And they asked him, saying, "Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?" ²⁶ John answered them, saying, "I baptize with water, but there stands One among you whom you do not know. ²⁷ It is He who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose." ²⁸ These things were done in Bethabara³ beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing.
(John 1:24-28)

It seems clear from what John said that Jesus was standing in the crowd. When you compare this passage with the other gospels this episode took place at least five or six weeks after John baptized Jesus. Immediately after Jesus was baptized he went out to the desert for forty days and was tempted by the devil. Overcoming the temptations Jesus has returned and was ready to begin his ministry. This was day one of the four days we will read about. Now day two.

³ The Greek text reads "Bethany" but some feel that the apostle John incorrectly identified Bethany was the place where this event occurred. The solution is that two Bethany's existed at the time, one near Jerusalem where Mary, Martha and Lazarus lived (John 11:1) and one beyond the Jordan. Later in the gospel John is clear about the Bethany near Jerusalem. So, here he is referring to the town near the Jordan

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!
³⁰This is He of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me.'
(John 1:29, 30)

The day before John told the Pharisees that there was someone standing in the crowd who was far superior than he. That person was Jesus. Now, on this day the Baptist points to Jesus and says, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" This was a stunning testimony from John.

While most Jews of the time thought of the coming Messiah they thought in terms of a liberating king. They hoped for someone who would save them from their oppressors like Rome. And they were partly correct. But John knew that the sin problem had to be taken care of before God's kingdom came. Being the son of a priest he was well aware that every morning and evening a lamb was sacrificed at the temple for sin. He also must have understood the prophecy in Isaiah 53 where the servant of the LORD is "led like a lamb to the slaughter" and "crushed for our iniquities."

The two words "takes away" in verse 29 come from the Greek verb *airon* which means to carry something away to destroy it. In 1 Peter 2:24 we read that on the cross Jesus "bore our sins in his own body...that we having died to sins, might live for righteousness." There is another bad translation in verse 30. Jesus was not "before" John in the sense that he existed before John. The word before should be translated as "greater" or "superior."⁴

I did not know Him; but that
He should be revealed to Israel,
therefore I came baptizing with
water."
(John 1:31)

Although John and Jesus were cousins, John did not know that Jesus was the Christ until Jesus was baptized and John saw the Spirit of God descend upon Jesus.

And John bore witness, saying,
"I saw the Spirit descending from

⁴ The Revised English Version reads "After me comes a man who has surpassed me, for he was my superior."

heaven like a dove, and [it]⁵ remained upon Him. ³³ I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.'
³⁴ And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God."
(John 1:32-34)

What powerful moments these must have been when John pointed to Jesus and called him "the Lamb of God" and then "the Son of God." And Christ's baptism with the Spirit is superior to John's water baptism, just as Jesus is superior to John in ministry. Water baptism was symbolic of spiritual cleansing. But God's Spirit actually cleans us of all sin and renews and regenerates us.⁶

The baptism of the Spirit was promised in the Old Testament when God promised the new covenant.⁷ Every believer now has the gift of the Spirit and it illuminates our minds to understand God's Word. It strengthens us morally and purifies us. It makes us children of God and gifts us for service. And it is the guarantee of our everlasting inheritance.

When John called Jesus "the Son of God" it meant that Jesus came into existence by a direct act of God, just as Adam did who is also called the son of God.⁸ It also designated Jesus as the righteous king promised to King David. God said that this king would be His Son.⁹ This is the end of day two.

Again, the next day, John stood with two of his disciples. ³⁶ And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God!"
(John 1:35, 36)

Once again we see John the Baptist pointing away from himself to Jesus. Here he was, popular with the people. And he had gathered disciples around him. But he knew that it was his God-ordained role to point to Christ. And

⁵ As in the prologue the word "Him" is in Greek an impersonal, neuter pronoun. The Spirit is not a person, it is God's power in action, and should always be referred to as it or which.

⁶ Titus 3:4-7

⁷ Ezekiel 36:25-27

⁸ Luke 1:35; 3:38

⁹ 2 Samuel 7:13, 14

inevitably some of his disciples would leave John to follow Christ. There is no more difficult thing to do than to make someone else the star of the show when you had that role. But what makes a good Christian leader is not straining to be the star, but pointing to the great Morning Star, Jesus Christ.¹⁰

The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. ³⁸Then Jesus turned, and seeing them following, said to them, "What do you seek?" They said to Him, "Rabbi" (which is to say, when translated, Teacher), "where are You staying?" (John 1:37, 38)

Jesus asked, "What do you seek?" And there is no relevant question to ask in life. Four simple words that gets to the heart of life. What am I seeking after? Why am I here? What do I really want out of life? Am I seeking the things of God or my own agenda?

He said to them, "Come and see." They came and saw where He was staying, and remained with Him that day (now it was about the tenth hour). (John 1:39)

When Jesus replied to their question "Come and see" he was not just inviting them to his home. He was inviting them to come and see the things of God that only he could show them. And it is a good way for us today to introduce people to the faith—"Come and see." By the way, sic eth apostle John did not explain what the tenth hour was, it was probably Romans time, so 10AM. And what a wonderful inspiring day these two men must have had with Jesus. One of these two disciples was a man named Andrew. The other is most likely the author, the apostle John.

One of the two who heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. ⁴¹ He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated, the Christ). ⁴² And

¹⁰ Revelation 22:16

he brought him to Jesus. Now when Jesus looked at him, He said, "You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas" (which is translated, A Stone). (John 1:40-42)

As I mentioned in the previous teaching when John wrote his gospel there were many non-Jews, Gentiles, in the church. So he translated the Hebrew word "Messiah" to the Greek word "Christ." Both words mean the anointed one.

Two things stand out about Andrew when you read about him in the gospels. First he was a man who was always ready to take on a supporting role. Almost every time he is mentioned, he is identified as Simon's or as he is later called, Peter's brother. People might not know Andrew but everyone knew Peter. And in all of the significant moments in Christ's life he took along with him his inner circle of Peter, James and John. It would have been very easy for Andrew to become jealous. After all Peter owed his introduction to Jesus to Andrew. But prominence probably didn't matter to Andrew. He was content to learn from Jesus and to serve him.

The second thing about Andrew was that he was always bringing people to Jesus. First, he brought his brother, Peter. Then in John 6 he brings a boy with five loaves of bread and two small fish to meet the Lord. And in John 12, he brings Greeks looking to meet Jesus.

Now, when Jesus looked at Peter the Greek word for "looked" is *emblepein*. It means to have a serious examination, to see beyond the surface. God knew Peter's heart and He revealed it to His Son. And Jesus changed Simon's name to Cephas in Aramaic, meaning a stone or rock, exactly what Peter means in Greek. This change of name show how God would transform Peter so he would become a strong leader in the church. By the way, we are told in Revelation 2, that when we enter the coming kingdom of God we will be given a new name as well. Day four.

The following day Jesus wanted to go to Galilee, and He found Philip and said to him, "Follow Me."
⁴⁴ Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.
⁴⁵ Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote—Jesus of

Nazareth, the son of Joseph."
(John 1:43-45)

At this point Jesus is on his way to Galilee and specifically to the town of Cana, where he has been invited to a wedding. As he traveled Jesus met Philip and called him to be a disciple. Philip found Nathaniel, who is almost always called Bartholomew. And Philip states that Jesus is the Messiah promised over and over again in the Old Testament.

And Nathanael said to him,
"Can anything good come
out of Nazareth?" Philip said
to him, "Come and see."
(John 1:46)

Nothing was said in the Old Testament about the Messiah coming from Nazareth, Bethlehem yes, but not Nazareth. And Nazareth was an insignificant, drive by town, so Nathaniel sarcastically asked, "What good can come from there?" To which Philip replied, "Come and see." You cannot argue someone into the kingdom of God. Arguments and debates only score talking points. The only way anyone comes to faith is by the power of the Word of God and the Spirit of God and by experiencing the love and kindness of God. And so the invitation, "Come and see."

Jesus saw Nathanael coming
toward Him, and said of him,
"Behold, an Israelite indeed,
in whom is no deceit!"
(John 1:47)

Once again, Jesus is given revelation by God to know Nathaniel's heart. What Christ said to Nathaniel was a compliment about his character. Psalm 32:2 says, "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit *there is* no deceit." Even though Nathaniel was blunt about Nazareth, he was willing to check things out. He was not a hypocrite. His heart was open and honest.

Nathanael said to Him,
"How do You know me?"
Jesus answered and said
to him, "Before Philip called
you, when you were under
the fig tree, I saw you."
(John 1:48)

Again God must have given Jesus a vision of Nathaniel under a fig tree, perhaps spending time in prayer. Whatever it was Christ understood Nathaniel's heart and it caused him to believe in Jesus.

Nathanael answered and said to Him, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!"
⁵⁰ Jesus answered and said to him, "Because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree,' do you believe? You will see greater things than these."
⁵¹ And He said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."
(John 1:49-51)

This last statement of Christ's is a reference back to Genesis where Jacob has a dream and sees a ladder between heaven and earth.¹¹ Jesus is that ladder, the true way to God and the only Mediator between God and mankind. As we learn from 1 Timothy 2:4, 5,

[God] desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. 5 For *there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus*

What an exiting experience meeting Jesus must have been for these early disciples. Faith in Jesus Christ is always life changing, even today. In our modern society we have attained knowledge and technologies that would amaze previous generations. Yet, the profoundly deep truths and the answers to the ultimate questions of life have eluded the philosophers and scientists and politicians of our time just as in the past.

But when we come to God through faith in Jesus Christ we see the answers to life's big questions. And we discover a love deeper than we ever imagined. We receive joy overflowing and peace to calm our anxious hearts. We become children of God with the hope of everlasting life in the kingdom of God. The invitation to meet Jesus Christ is still open—Come and see!

¹¹ Genesis 28

One Man Awake

By

Helen Kromer

One man awake
Can awaken another;
The second can waken
His next door brother.
The three awake
Can rouse a town,
By turning the whole
Place upside down.
The many awake
Can make such a fuss,
That it finally awakens
The rest of us!

One man up,
With down in his eyes,
Multiplies.