

Session 6 John's Loyalty and Jesus' Early Ministry (Jn. 1:19-4:42)

I. OVERVIEW OF JOHN 1-4

- A. **Review:** In Luke 3, we see the beginning of John's ministry (summer AD 26) and that he baptized Jesus (autumn AD 26), followed by Jesus' temptation (Lk. 4:1-13).
- B. **Overview of John 1-4:** The apostle John describes how Jesus went to Perea (1:28), Cana (2:1), Capernaum (2:12); Jerusalem (2:13), Judea (3:22), and Samaria (4:4). Only John gives a record of Jesus' early ministry in Judea (Jn. 2-4). The Synoptic writers began their narratives with Jesus' ministry in Galilee without mentioning His early ministry in Judea.
1. Jesus' first sign was at the wedding in Cana (2:1-11), then He cleansed the temple (2:13-22), then had a conversation with Nicodemus, (3:1-21) and with the Samaritan woman (4:1-42).
 2. Five disciples were referred to in these early days (1:35-51)—Andrew, Peter, Philip, Nathaniel and one unnamed – it is commonly accepted this was John.

II. JOHN THE BAPTIST DECLARED JESUS TO BE THE LAMB OF GOD (JN. 1:19-28)

- A. A deputation of priests and Levites were sent from Jerusalem to ask John about his ministry in Perea (Jn. 1:19-28). John identified Jesus as the Lamb of God (Jn. 1:29-34). The Pharisees were looking for a king who would deliver them from Roman oppression, not for a spiritual leader.
- ²⁶John answered them, saying, "...there stands One among you whom you do not know. ²⁷It is He... whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose." ²⁸These things were done in Bethabara [Bethany] beyond the Jordan...²⁹The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world..." (Jn. 1:26-29)*
- B. **Beyond the Jordan:** This refers to the east side of the Jordan (in Perea). The city of Bethabara is also translated as Bethany (NIV and ESV); it was on the east side of the Jordan a few miles from Jericho. It is not the same Bethany where Lazarus was raised, near Jerusalem, west of the Jordan.
- C. **Lamb of God:** The One who died for our sins as a lamb (Isa. 53:7; cf. Gen. 22:8-14; Ex. 12:3-17; Isa. 53:12; 1 Pet. 1:19). This title joins together the truths about Jesus' purity, gentleness, and submission to God as the substitutionary atonement as the Passover lamb (Ex. 12: 21-27).
- D. Notice three ideas repeated in three verses (Jn. 1:15, 27, 30)—*He that comes after me* (in the time of his birth and ministry), *He is preferred before me*—Jesus' supremacy over him (Mt. 3:11), and *He was before me* (1:30)—Jesus' pre-existence as the uncreated God with the Father. The high point of John the Baptist's testimony about Jesus is that He is the Son of God (1:34).
- ³⁰"This is He of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me.'"... ³²John bore witness, saying, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. ³³I did not know Him, but He [the Father] 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.'* (Jn. 1:30-34)

E. John's witness and the first disciples (Jn. 1:35-42). The transition from John to Jesus.

³⁵*Again, the next day, John stood with two of his disciples. ³⁶And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God!" ³⁷The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. ³⁸Then Jesus turned...said to them, "What do you seek?" They said to Him, "Rabbi... where are You staying?" ³⁹...they came...and remained with Him that day (now it was about the tenth hour). ⁴⁰One of the two who heard John speak and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. ⁴¹He first found his own brother Simon [Peter] and said to him, "We have found the Messiah"...⁴²he 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). (Jn. 1:35-42)*

1. **Two disciples:** Andrew and John (most consider the unnamed disciple to be John)
2. **The tenth hour:** This was 4 pm. Most assume that they remained with Jesus that night.
3. Jesus did not call them to follow Him as His disciples at this time. He did that some months later (Mt. 4:18-22; 9:9; Mk. 1:16-20; 2:13-14; Lk. 5:1-11, 27-28). John relates Jesus' intimate conversion with these men, while Matthew, Mark and Luke relate their call to be disciples.
4. Jesus gave Simon a new name "Peter"—a rock—so that he would see himself as who God was making him to be. The impulsive Simon would become a steadfast rock from whom others might draw strength. He gave him a new name to express his new character. *Cephas* is Aramaic, and means *Rock*. *Peter* is the English form of *Cephas* from the Greek, *Petros*.

F. Jesus found Philip (Jn. 1:43-44), who witnessed to Nathaniel (Jn. 1:45-51), either before traveling to Galilee or soon after arriving there. Someone could walk from Bethany-beyond-the-Jordan to Galilee in two days. So these five men were probably friends before becoming followers of Jesus.

⁴³*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. ⁴⁵Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found Him of whom Moses...and the prophets, wrote..." ⁴⁶Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?"...⁴⁷Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!" ⁴⁸Nathanael said to Him, "How do You know me?" Jesus answered..., "...when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." ⁴⁹Nathanael...said to Him, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God..." (Jn. 1:43-49)*

G. Jacob had an encounter with the Lord in a dream at Bethel (Gen. 28:10-22). Jesus referred to Jacob's encounter to describe the greater revelation that Nathanael and others would experience.

⁵⁰*Jesus answered..., "Because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree,' do you believe? You will see greater things than these." ⁵¹He said to him, "Most assuredly...hereafter you shall see*

heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.”
(Jn. 1:50-51)

1. The Son of Man brings the realities of heaven to God's people on earth.
2. God is now revealing Himself to people directly through Jesus.

III. JESUS' EARLY PUBLIC MINISTRY—MOSTLY IN JUDEA IN EARLY AD 27 (JN. 2-4)

- A. Jesus' first miracle was changing water to wine at Cana in Galilee in the spring AD 27 (Jn. 2:1-11). Jesus began His earthly ministry in context to a wedding feast, symbolizing the messianic banquet.
- ¹On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. ²Now both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding. ³And when they ran out of wine, the mother of Jesus said to Him, “They have no wine.” ⁴Jesus said to her, “Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come.” ⁵His mother said to the servants, “Whatever He says to you, do it.” (Jn. 2:1-5)***
- B. ***Third day***: That is, the third day after Nathanael met Jesus. John referenced several days (1:29, 35, 43; 2:1). On day 1, a group questioned John (1:19-28). On day 2, John declared Jesus was the Lamb of God (1:29-34). On day 3, John's disciples, Andrew and John, followed Jesus (1:35-42). On day 4, Philip and Nathanael met Jesus (1:43-51), and on day 7, attended a wedding (2:1-11).
- C. Mary knew Jesus was recently anointed by the Spirit and thought it might be time for Him to begin to *openly manifest* His power (2:3). Jesus publicly demonstrated His power first in Jerusalem. The hour of *publicly* manifesting His power was not at hand. Mary gathered from His response to her that He intended to help, so she told the servants to obey Him without making a big display (2:5).
- D. ***Woman***: Calling Mary “woman” was not disrespectful, but He wanted her to know that she must no longer think of Jesus *only* in terms of being her son—He was her Lord. He wanted her to know that their relationship was now changing as He entered His messianic ministry. Jesus was explaining to Mary that He would handle the situation, on His terms—in obedience to His Father.
- E. Jesus spoke of “His hour” as the time of His death and its consequences (Jn. 5:28-29; 7:30; 8:20; 12:23, 27; 13:1; 17:1)—the hour He was to return to the Father (13:1) and be glorified (17:1).
- F. Jews had strict purification laws related to washing their hands, their utensils, etc.
- ⁶Now there were set there six waterpots of stone, according to the manner of purification of the Jews, containing twenty or thirty gallons apiece. ⁷Jesus said to them, “Fill the waterpots with water.”...⁹When the master of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and did not know where it came from...[he] called the bridegroom. ¹⁰ And he said to him, “Every man at the beginning sets out the good wine, and when the guests have well drunk, then the inferior. You have kept the good wine [best, NIV] until now!”...¹¹His disciples believed in Him. (Jn. 2:6-11)***

- G. Each waterpot held around 25 gallons; thus six waterpots together might hold 150 gallons of liquid. A normal bottle of wine today is about 25 ounces (128 ounces in one gallon)—about 5 standard-sized bottles hold about one gallon of wine—150 gallons would be over 700 bottles of wine.
- H. Jesus went to Capernaum with His family and disciples, about 15 miles from Cana (2:12). Later, Jesus made Capernaum His ministry base and moved there from Nazareth (Mt. 4:13; Mk 1:21; 2:1).
- ¹²After this He went down to Capernaum, He, His mother, His brothers, and His disciples; and they did not stay there many days. (Jn. 2:12)*

IV. JESUS' FIRST VISIT TO JERUSALEM (JN. 2:13-3:21)

- A. Jesus' first Passover after He was anointed by the Spirit was in April, AD 27. He traveled about 90 miles from Capernaum to Jerusalem to attend. He wanted the leaders of Israel to have the first opportunity to accept Him as the Messiah.
- B. Jesus cleansed the temple during Passover (Jn. 2:13-22). He cleansed the temple three years later (Lk. 19:45-48). This was His first public act as Messiah.
- ¹³Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁴And He found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers doing business. ¹⁵When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen and poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables. ¹⁶And He said to those who sold doves, "Take these things away! Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!" ¹⁷Then His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up." (Jn. 2:13-22)*
1. Only John mentioned the cleansing of the temple at the beginning of Jesus' ministry. This reveals an important aspect of Christ's character which is ignored by many today.
 2. The Old Testament predicted that Messiah would come and purify the Levites (Mal. 3:1-3). The prophecy was partially fulfilled by this.
- C. Why did Jesus not answer clearly? He sometimes offends the mind to reveal the heart.
- ¹⁸The Jews...said to Him, "What sign do You show to us, since You do these things?" ¹⁹Jesus... said to them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." ²⁰Then the Jews said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple..." ²¹He was speaking of the temple of His body. (Jn. 2:18-21)*
- D. This provides a chronological marker, helping us to date His visit to the temple in AD 27. The work of rebuilding the temple began in 19 BC (18th year of Herod's reign); 46 years later is AD 27.
- E. Jesus did many signs *publicly* so that many believed (Jn. 2:23-25). However, Jesus knew they were following Him to see the miraculous and not out of genuine desire to be right with God.

23Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover...many believed in His name when they saw the signs which He did. 24But Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all men, 25and had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in men. (Jn 2:23-25)

1. The people sought a political king, not a spiritual deliverer. He knew the men were interested in miracles and not spiritual reform. They wanted the miraculous to serve their own purposes.
 2. He knew their enthusiasm from seeing miracles would soon dissipate. Many who believed turned against Him later (Jn. 6:15, 60, 66). He did not place His destiny in the hands of any others—He was not dependent on human approval.
- F. Nicodemus was a Pharisee and a member of the Sanhedrin (Jn. 3:1; 7:50-51). Jerusalem was stirred up after Jesus cleansed the temple and did miracles that caused many to want to follow Him.

1“There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. 2This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, “Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.” 3Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” 4Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old?...” 5Jesus answered, “Most assuredly...unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. 6That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.’ (Jn 3:1-6)

1. Many believe that being “born of water and the Spirit” refers to natural birth and spiritual birth. Water refers to the amniotic fluid that breaks from the womb shortly before childbirth.
 2. Some propose that being born of the water and spirit *both* speak of the new birth. The Old Testament often used water to speak of spiritual cleansing and empowering when associated with the ministry of the Spirit (Isa. 32:15; 44:3-5; 55:1-3; Jer. 2:13; 17:13; Ezek. 47:9; Zech. 14:8). In Ezekiel 36:25-27, water and spirit come together to signify cleansing and salvation.
- G. Jesus explained that He could speak about heavenly things because He had descended from heaven and was presently in a dynamic connection with heaven and His Father.

13No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven. 14And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up...16For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” (Jn. 3:13-16)

V. THE BAPTIST'S RESPONSE TO JESUS' MINISTRY (JN. 3:22-30)

- A. Jesus was with His disciples who were baptizing in Judean countryside (Jn. 3:22), summer AD 27. The location of Aenon (lit. springs) near Salim points to a site a few miles west of the Jordan River.
- 22“After these things Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea, and there He remained with them and baptized. 23Now John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim... (Jn. 3:22)***

- B. Jesus was revealed by John the Baptist as the Bridegroom God (Jn. 3:29). Jesus *is* a Bridegroom; thus, He feels, thinks, and acts as a Bridegroom forever. He *has* the bride. From ages past, the Father promised to give Jesus a Bride as His inheritance, and Jesus was committed to purchase her on the cross. God's commitments could not be stopped.

²⁵There arose a dispute between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purification.

²⁶And they came to John and said, "...He [Jesus] is baptizing, and all are coming to Him!"

²⁷John...said, "A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven...

²⁹He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom...rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice..." (Jn. 3:25-29)

- C. John functioned in ministry as a *friend of the Bridegroom*. This speaks of having a specific message and spirit in ministering to people. The message is to make known Jesus' desire, beauty, and commitments as the Bridegroom God and to call people to love Him with all their heart.

VI. JESUS' MINISTRY IN SAMARIA (JN. 4:1-42)

- A. Jesus returned to Galilee through Samaria (Jn. 4:1-4). To avoid premature trouble due to growing popularity, Jesus went to Galilee. Some Jews walked *around* Samaria. Jesus *needed* to go *through* it, probably because the Spirit led Him, so He could speak to the Samaritan woman. The Samaritans had a mixture of Judaism and heathenism (2 Kgs. 17:26-41). Samaritans refused to recognize Jerusalem as the place of worship and chose their sacred Mount Gerizim.

¹Therefore, when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John ²(though Jesus Himself did not baptize, but His disciples), ³He left Judea and departed again to Galilee. ⁴But He needed to go through Samaria. (Jn. 4:1-4)

- B. The woman at the well in the city of Sychar in Samaria (Jn. 4:5-26). That is still a famous well which Jacob dug. The site is a popular tourist attraction, and the deep spring still flows. The sixth hour would have been noon. Jesus shared our fatigue and thirst in His humanity (Heb. 4:15-16).

⁵He came to a city of Samaria which is called Sychar... ⁶Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied from His journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour [noon].

⁷A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink." ⁸For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. (Jn. 4:5-8)

- C. The Jews regarded the Samaritans as unclean heathen idolaters. Jesus called her to "drink"— in the Greek this speaks of continuous action (Jn. 4:14).

⁹Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?" For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans. ¹⁰Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water..."¹⁴[Jesus said] "...whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst..."¹⁵The woman said to Him, "Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw." (Jn. 4:9-15)

D. She was surprised and stirred by Jesus knowing about her marital relationships (Jn. 4:16-19).

¹⁶Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here." ¹⁷The woman answered and said, "I have no husband." Jesus said...¹⁸for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband..." ¹⁹The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. (Jn. 4:16-19)

E. The Samaritan woman spoke of Jesus to others, and many in her city believed (Jn. 4:25-30, 39-42). The openness of the Samaritans contrasts with the hostility of many Jewish hearers.

²⁵The woman said..., "I know that Messiah is coming"...²⁶Jesus said..., "I who speak to you am He"...²⁸The woman...went her way into the city, and said to the men, ²⁹"Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did"... ³⁹And many of the Samaritans of that city believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified... (Jn. 4:25-39)