



52 THE PURSUIT OF JESUS

Recognizing Jesus
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January 2, 2022

The Crossing Church
Las Vegas, Nevada

OPENING

This week we are beginning our Quest 52 series in our year-long Pursuit of Jesus. We are embarking on a journey with Him from the time He arrived on planet earth through His crucifixion and resurrection. We will be looking at some of Jesus' most intriguing encounters, His teachings and His significant conversations as documented in the four Gospels of the New Testament. Through His life we will see who God is.

SCRIPTURE¹

Matthew 3:1-6 In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah: "A voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'" John's clothes were made of camel hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. *People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.*

John 1:7-8 He came as a witness to testify concerning that light so that through him all might believe. He himself was the *not* the light. He came only as a *witness* to the light.

John 1:15 John testified concerning him. He cried out saying, "This is the one I spoke about when I said, 'He who comes *after* me has *surpassed* me because he was *before me*.'" "

John 1:17 For the law was given through Moses; but *grace* and *truth* came through Jesus Christ.

John 1:19-23 Now this was John's testimony when the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, "I am *not* the Messiah." "Then who are you? Are you Elijah?" And John says, "No, I'm not him." "Are you the Prophet?" He answered, "No." "Who are you – give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" "I am the voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way for the Lord.' I baptize with water, but among you, stands one *you do not know*."

John 1:26-27 "He is the one who comes after me, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie."

John 1:29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him. "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the *sin of the world!*"

John 10:10 "I have come that they may have *life*, and have it to the *full*."

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all scripture referenced here is NIV

OBSERVATION

John the Baptist had been given a unique mission by God. He was to introduce Jesus as the long-awaited Jewish Messiah of the Old Testament. God hadn't spoken to Israel for four hundred years before John emerged along the banks of the Jordan River and announced to thousands of people in the middle of nowhere that Jesus had arrived. What an amazingly **disruptive** thing this was to communicate to the crowd. What would Rome think of this? Would it be threatening to the powers that be if the Messiah had actually come? The temple leaders were getting nervous so the High Priests sent their underlings along to check out what was going on there by the Jordan. They questioned John who tells them, "If you think I'm disruptive, wait till you see what's coming!" This is where the world changes: Jesus has been baptized and begun His ministry. It is through this encounter with John that Jesus, the Son of God, steps into history, God in a body for the first and only time. Jesus came into the world to turn it upside down – He brought something radically different and new.

QUESTION: Why do you think God stopped communicating with His people for 400 years?

QUESTION: Why do you think Jesus called John the Baptist the greatest prophet? Matthew 11:11

APPLICATION

Sometimes we hear people say, "I want a relationship with Jesus, not a religion." They are defining "religion" as a group of rules, standards and requirements. But a relationship is a slow, revealing mystery, unpredictable and requiring flexibility. Every healthy relationship has its disruptive moments and norms that we are comfortable with, but becoming uncomfortable is how we grow. Jesus is telling us He wants a deeper relationship with us so we can expect disruption, but as we invest time we will see our level of spiritual maturity growing and our love for Him expanding geometrically.

QUESTION: What is your experience with religion?

QUESTION: What is the state of your relationship with Jesus today?

We have all experienced disruption in our lives during the past two years. We have often been reeling from it. But we can also recognize that there is power in disruptive moments. **1) They are always a reality.** For many of us, our lives are a never-ending quest for normalcy in a world that's only constant is chaos. Get used to it. Lean into it. Learn and grow from it; **2) Disruption creates the opportunity, and even forces change, if we will let it.** In many ways, beginning a new year also provides an opportunity for healthy disruption. It shakes up norms that have possibly drifted into a rut, not moving our lives forward in the direction and purpose that God has for us.

QUESTION: What types of disruption have you experienced in relationships?

QUESTION: If your life seems to be in a rut, how did you get there? What are the advantages and disadvantages of living in a rut?

Jesus is providing a bridge between religion and a relationship with the God of the universe. During this past year many of us have felt that urging, that drawing, that compelling of God. We've responded by looking and stepping into the waters of baptism; we've attended Rooted; we've realized that we can personally contribute to what God is doing in our church fellowship; we've begun to see subtle differences in our lives, our thoughts, our hearts and our hopes. So, maybe we need to be a part of this [52 Pursuit of Jesus](#) – this is the right place and time for us to meet Him at a deeper level. This can be the beginning of new life and hope for us.

QUESTION: In what ways has Jesus been speaking to you about your current relationship with Him?

QUESTION: What do you wish to change about your relationships with family members?

QUESTION: What is your closest relationship outside of your family? What do you need to do to improve it?

LOOK! The Lamb came for the whole world. We can't be selfish and withhold Him for ourselves alone. Come and join us as we prepare ourselves this year to take the Gospel of Christ to the world around us. Give Him this year and He will change our lives forever.

QUESTION: If you are hesitating about going forward whole-heartedly into Quest 52, why is that? What is more important in your life than going deeper with Jesus and dedicating your whole heart and soul and future to Him?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, thank You for this new opportunity to meet Jesus at a deeper level and grow in maturity through this journey in 2022. No matter what disruptions are waiting for us, help us to embrace them because the relationships Jesus wants to build for us in His Kingdom will be worth it all. In Jesus' name. Amen.

QUESTIONS

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