

## Bible Fellowship Teaching Plan for John 1:19-51 (April 26, 2026)

Opening Question: *If someone asked you who Jesus is, how would you answer?*

John's purpose (20:31): "These are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."

New study; follows Trey's sermon on 1:1-5 and Wednesday study from 1:6-18

### I. Background

A. John: brother of James (first apostle to be martyred--Acts 12:2); son of Zebedee and Salome (sa-lo-may) who may have been Mary's (Jesus' mother's) sister; wrote this gospel, three letters and The Revelation

### B. Key characteristics of John's gospel

- Simple style and language
- Deep meaning: "a pool in which a child may wade and an elephant can swim."
  - Miracles are referred to as "signs" that point us to Who Jesus is. Seven of them: turning water into wine at the wedding in Cana (2), the healing of the nobleman's son (4), the healing of the man at the pool of Bethesda (5), the feeding of the five thousand (6), Jesus' walking on the water (6), the healing of the man born blind (9), and the raising of Lazarus from the dead (11)
- Personal encounters (Nicodemus and the woman at the well)
- John points out the various Jewish festivals Jesus attended
  - Jesus as divine Son of God: truly God, pre-existent, only-begotten Son, and the "I am" sayings: bread of life, light of the world, door to the

sheepfold, good shepherd, the resurrection and the life, the way truth and life, the true vine; and note what happens when Jesus says, “I am” in chapter eighteen, verse six.

- Jesus is superior: to the Law, the Temple, and the feasts, and He accepts the worship given to Him
- Above all, John’s is the gospel of believing; “believe” is the key word in John

## II. John the Baptist’s Testimony (1:19-34)

A. The attention he had gained demanded the religious leaders learn who he was

B. Who John is not (19-23)

- Not the Christ
- Not Elijah (literally--they expected an Elijah risen from the dead)
- Not “the Prophet” (not Moses and not Jeremiah)

C. What John says about himself (25-27). John defines himself by his mission, not his identity: “I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’ as the prophet Isaiah said.”

Teaching Point: It’s not about us--it’s about Jesus and pointing others to Him.

Discussion question: *How can we point others to Jesus instead of drawing attention to ourselves?*

D. John’s baptism (26-27)

- Water baptism as a symbolic rite of purification in preparation for the coming of the Messiah (Zechariah 13:1)
- Merely previewed a baptism by One greater than he

### E. John reveals Jesus (28-34)

- Bethany across the Jordan--not the Bethany near the Mount of Olives
- John's understanding of Jesus came earlier, at His baptism where he saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and remain on Jesus
  - God had made it clear to John just how He was going to know that Jesus is the Messiah
  - The presence and power of the Holy Spirit was a recognized characteristic of the Messiah (Isaiah 11:2, 42: 1, 61:1)
  - "Like a dove"--probably wasn't an actual dove
  - Misinterpretations: NOT the awakening of the "divine-human consciousness" within Jesus; NOT the formal bestowal of any divine powers; NOT the provision of the Holy Spirit so Jesus could then pass Him on to mankind.
  - The events surrounding Jesus' baptism confirmed to John that Jesus is the Messiah and marked the beginning of the Lord's public ministry
- John identifies Jesus as "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world"
  - Abraham to Isaac: "My son, God will provide Himself a lamb."
  - The Passover lamb (Exodus 29)
  - Prophesied by Isaiah (53:7)
  - Peter explains: 1 Peter 2:23
  - Daily sacrifices in the Temple and Jesus was crucified at the time of the evening sacrifice on the day of Passover

- The final, ultimate, and only sacrifice for sin (1 Peter 1:19-20, Romans 5:8)

Discussion question: *Why is it important that Jesus is the Lamb of God?*

## II. The Calling of the First Disciples (35-51)

- A. Two of John's disciples follow Jesus to where He's staying; one was Andrew
- B. Andrew tells his brother, Simon, whom Jesus meets and renames "Peter"
- C. Jesus invites Philip to follow Him, and Philip tells Nathanael (probably Bartholomew per Matthew, Mark, and Luke) that they had found (i.e., recognized) the Messiah
- D. Nathanael is surprised with Philip's claim that the Messiah is from Nazareth
- E. Nathanael believes as Jesus reveals His knowledge of Nathanael's conversation with Philip as well as (possibly) his prayers under the fig tree. Jesus assures him that there's much more to come!

Teaching point: New believers can immediately share Christ. We should be looking forward to the Lord's return just as Nathanael was looking for the coming of the Messiah.

Discussion question: *Who is someone you could invite to "come and see?"*

III. Summary/Major Themes: John's purpose, John the Baptist's testimony about Jesus (Messiahship confirmed at His baptism; the Lamb of God), telling others about Jesus ("Come and see")

## IV. Personal Reflection Questions

- Do I truly see Jesus as the Lamb of God?
- What am I seeking in life--and is it found in Jesus?
- Whom can I invite to "come and see"?

Challenge: This week, intentionally share Jesus with one person.

Sunday School Lesson for April 26, 2026  
John 1:19-51

Welcome to Sunday School on the go from the First Baptist Church in Tallahassee. I'm Jim Glass, one of the teachers in the Pairs and Spares Class, and, on this fourth Sunday in April, we're beginning a new series of lessons, this time turning our attention to the deep and wondrously profound gospel according to John, whose purpose in writing this book, as he tells us in chapter twenty, verse 31, is "so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."

Following Pastor Trey's sermon on the first five verses of the first chapter, with his teaching on verses six through eighteen to follow on Wednesday, our assigned verses come from the rest of the chapter, verses nineteen through 51 where we learn of John the Baptist's testimony about Jesus and the calling of the first disciples. By the way, there's a teaching guide that accompanies the notes to this lesson.

But first, some background information. The gospel of John was written by John, the brother of James who would become the first of the apostles to be martyred--Acts, chapter twelve, verse two. They were fishermen, their father was Zebedee, and their mother was Salome, whom tradition says was Mary's--Jesus' mother's--sister.

While Matthew, Mark, and Luke generally follow a common focus on the events of Jesus' life and ministry, John writes about Jesus from a very different perspective. Here are some of the characteristics that mark his gospel. First, John

writes in a very simple style. Most of the words and ideas he uses were well understood by the people of his day, including John's opening words about Jesus being the Word. Second, his story is deep and profound. Probably no book of the New Testament has provoked more thought and reflection. One commentator compares the gospel of John to "a pool in which a child may wade and an elephant can swim. It is both simple and profound. It is for the veriest beginner in the faith and for the mature Christian. Its appeal is immediate and neverfailing."

Third, the miracles of Jesus are referred to as "signs" and the gospel may well be outlined around the seven that John writes about: Jesus' turning water into wine at the wedding in Cana in chapter two, the healing of the nobleman's son in chapter four, the healing of the man at the pool of Bethesda in chapter five, the feeding of the five thousand in chapter six, Jesus' walking on the water--also in chapter six--, the healing of the man born blind in chapter nine, and the raising of Lazarus from the dead in chapter eleven.

Fourth, John highlights the Jewish festivals that Jesus attended--three Passovers, a Feast of Dedication, and a Feast of Tabernacles, plus an unnamed festival. Fifth, rather than presenting a picture of Jesus with the great throngs of people as Mark does, John pictures the personal side of Jesus, for example, with Nicodemus or with the woman at the well. Sixth, John presents Jesus as the divine Son of God. He is truly God--chapter one, verses one and eighteen; He is the pre-existent Son--chapter one, verses one and fourteen; chapter eight, verse 58; and chapter seventeen, verse five--; and He is the only-begotten Son--chapter one, verse eighteen, and chapter three, verse sixteen; for example. John records the "I am" sayings of Jesus--just as God identified Himself to Moses in Exodus, chapter three, verse fourteen. Jesus declares, "I am" the bread of life, the light of the world, the door to the sheepfold, the good shepherd, the resurrection and the life,

the way truth and life, the true vine; and simply says, “I am” in several places. And note what happens when Jesus says, “I am” in chapter eighteen, verse six.

Seventh, John lets us know that Jesus is superior to the Law--chapter one, verse seventeen--, superior to the Temple--chapter two, verses nineteen through 21--, superior to the significance of the feasts--chapter seven, verses 37-39--, and He accepts the worship that’s presented Him--chapter nine, verse 38 and chapter twenty, verse 28. Above all, John is the gospel of believing--putting one’s complete faith and confidence in God’s ability to forgive sin because of what Jesus has done. Believe is the key word in the gospel as we see in his purpose statement in chapter twenty, verse 31; and, when one believes, he or she receives eternal life--chapter three, verse sixteen.

So, with John’s weighty, profound introduction reverberating in the minds of his readers, John proceeds to demonstrate how “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” as the Lord Jesus made the Father known to us. As he weaves his amazing story of the life of our Lord, he begins with the testimony of John the Baptist whom he briefly mentioned in verse fifteen where he wrote, “John bore witness about him, and cried out, ‘This was he of whom I said, “He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.””’

Beginning in verse nineteen, John writes, “And this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, ‘Who are you?’ He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, ‘I am not the Christ.’ And they asked him, ‘What then? Are you Elijah?’ He said, ‘I am not.’ ‘Are you the Prophet?’” And he answered, ‘No.’ So they said to him, ‘Who are you? We need to give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?’ ‘I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, “Make straight the way of the Lord,” as the prophet Isaiah said.’”

This “John” that John is writing about is John the Baptist, the son of Mary’s sister, Elizabeth. As John the Baptist was drawing crowds of people, Matthew tells us in chapter three, verse eleven of his gospel, that he was “preaching in the wilderness of Judea [saying], “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Naturally, everyone wanted to know more about this strange prophet; in fact, Matthew tells us in chapter three, verse five, that “Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan were going out to him.” Even king Herod was curious about this man clothed in camel hair who ate locusts and honey.

The religious authorities in Jerusalem were becoming concerned about John’s message and the popularity that he was generating, so they sent a delegation of priests and Levites to question him. The priests were those who performed religious services, including making the sacrifices in the Temple, and the Levites were in charge of daily operations, so to speak, in the Temple.

When they found John, they started a game of twenty questions. Luke tells us in chapter three, verse fifteen, of his gospel that because “the people were in expectation”—that is the expectation that the Messiah would come very soon—“all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Christ; but John clearly explained that he was not the Christ.

As His cousin, John had grown up with Jesus, so he probably knew just about everything anyone could know about Him. As the son of a Levite, John would also have been very familiar with the prophecies about the Messiah. So, if there was anyone in that day who thought that John the Baptist was the Messiah, he was quick to let them know the truth that he had surely known for years.

The priests and Levites thought further back in their knowledge of prophetic history, to the book of Malachi, for there they read that Elijah would come just before the Christ, and asked, “Are you Elijah?” Again, John answered, “No,”

apparently meaning that he was not Elijah returned from the dead as it seems they expected. He would not make the claim for himself, even though that's exactly how Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and even Jesus Himself identified John the Baptist, and Luke records the angel's message to Zechariah in verse seventeen of the first chapter of his gospel who said, "he will go before him"--that is, the Messiah--"in the spirit and power of Elijah, and that's how he'll describe his mission in verse 23.

So, the priests and Levites then went back even further--to Moses--and asked, "Are you the Prophet?" Not "a" prophet, but "the" prophet. In Deuteronomy, chapter eighteen, verse fifteen, Moses had said that God would one day raise up a prophet like himself. "John, are you the prophet Moses told us about?" No, he was not the prophet.

Well, maybe another prophet. There was the belief that the prophet, Jeremiah, would return to usher in the arrival of the Messiah; but again, John answered, "No." As well as they knew their prophecy, they kept getting negative answers from John. As one commentator imagines, his rough skin for a cloak; long, uncared-for hair; wiry, weather-beaten frame; and the lofty, calm, penetrating eye, spoke as eloquently as his lips. The religious leaders obviously sensed some special power and presence in John, and they couldn't object to his call to repentance, but they could not figure out who he was.

Finally, they said, "We give up. Tell us who you are." John understood that they were looking for and expecting the Messiah to come, they knew the prophecy of Malachi, and they knew the prediction of Moses. Their question was, "What do you say about yourself?" He had nothing to say about himself, because that's not why he had come. Rather than take to himself a name, he identified himself by his mission: "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as the prophet Isaiah said."

In his testimony, John doesn't answer their "who are you?" question, but tells them what he is: merely a voice crying in the wilderness, preparing the way for someone far greater than he Whom the writer of this gospel has identified as "the Word." John the Baptist is merely the announcer, the pitchman, the herald. He's not the message. He's not the Word; he's the voice calling the world to hear and receive the Word.

The priests and Levites didn't yet understand, so they raised a ritualistic technicality. They asked, "Why, then, are you baptizing people if you are not the Christ, Elijah, or the prophet?" When someone converted to Judaism, it was common before John's day to baptize that person, but it wasn't customary to baptize another Jew. John had changed the custom. He baptized everyone who responded to his call to "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

In answer to their question, John interpreted his mission to them: "I baptize in water." They knew what baptism in water meant. John had called the people to repent, to turn from their sin and submit to water baptism as a sign of the new life that they had committed themselves to.

Repentance was the acknowledgment, confession, and turning away from sin, and baptism was a sign of the need for remission--the sending away of sin--but John's baptism was limited to a symbolic rite of purification in preparation for the coming of the Messiah. Without a provision for the forgiveness of sin made possible by the Messiah's death and resurrection, this baptism only represented someone's commitment to preparing his or her heart for the coming Kingdom of God.

Based on the first verse of Zechariah, chapter thirteen: "On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness," the Jews expected a general purification

before the coming of the Messiah. So, those who came from Jerusalem wanted to know if this was the baptism that would precede the Messiah's arrival.

John provides them with the answer to their question in verse 26: "John answered them, 'I baptize with water, but among you stands one you do not know, even he who comes after me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie.'" It could well have been that Jesus was among those there in the crowd that day. Why John didn't point Jesus out to them if He was there, we don't know, possibly because His time had not yet come. On the other hand, they should have known about Jesus since His birth, miraculously announced to the shepherd by the angels. Jesus had "been in their midst" since He was born.

John was well known; he was highly honored; thousands had come to hear him. At the moment, Jesus was relatively unknown, but John says that he was unworthy to perform the humblest office for Jesus--untying His sandals--something that a person's servant would do.

John was not the Christ, he was not Elijah, he was not the Prophet, but, "in your midst," he told them, "is the One Whose way I am preparing by calling men and women to repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." For John, it's all about Jesus. "Who am I? I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord.'"

Verse 28: "These things took place in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptizing." This is not the Bethany near the Mount of Olives, but another Bethany, somewhere across the Jordan River from Jericho and about fourteen miles south of the Sea of Galilee as you can see on this map.

"The next day," John writes in verse 29, "he"--John the Baptist--"saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, 'Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!'" The day after the delegation from the religious leaders of

Jerusalem showed up, Jesus came to John. This was not the first time they had met in the wilderness; Jesus had come to be baptized of John as we'll see in the next few verses. Most likely, Jesus was just then returning from the forty days in the wilderness where He had been tempted by Satan.

Now, it seems that John was given permission to identify Jesus publicly which he does by declaring, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! This is he of whom I said, “After me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was prior to me.” I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel.’ And John bore witness: ‘I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, “He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.” And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.’”

In light of John's previous ministry, it was a remarkable declaration indeed. John had said that Jesus would come as a fan to separate the wheat from the chaff and that He would come as a consuming fire to burn the chaff. He was coming to exalt valleys and bring down mountains. Everything that John had declared previously pointed to God's promised Messiah coming in majesty and power.

Now, when Jesus comes to John, John doesn't say, “Behold the winnowing fork of God, the fire of God, the One Who will exalt valleys and bring down the mountains;” instead, he said, “Behold, the Lamb of God.”

A lot must have gone through John's own mind during the last six weeks when Jesus was away, beginning the very day that Jesus was baptized. On that particular day, Jesus had come to John at the Jordan River and asked him to baptize Him. But, as we read in Matthew, chapter three, John had protested. John recognized the

sinlessness of Jesus and declared that he needed to be baptized by Jesus rather than the other way around. But Jesus told him, “Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” It was essential for Jesus to identify with those He had come to save. In that way he would illustrate how the Sinless One had come to take the place of the sinful ones and thus fulfill the righteous requirements of God.

In verse 31, John the Baptist said, “I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel.” We know that John actually did know Jesus quite well, but that’s not the word for “know” that John uses here. There are two Greek words that are translated “know,” and this is the one that actually means “to see,” but, when you see with the mind, those truths are decisively perceived and are now confirmed to be unmistakably true. So, John did have a pretty good idea of Who Jesus was from what his parents had told him and all that he had picked up from living around his Cousin, but, when--verse 32: “I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him,” then, he was absolutely convinced that Jesus was the Messiah.

John tells us more about this in verse 33: “I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ And”--verse 34--“I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.” God had made it clear to John just how He was going to know that Jesus is the Messiah: the One on Whom the Spirit descends and remains is the Messiah.

So, how exactly did “the Spirit of God descend like a dove and come to rest on Him?” The presence and power of the Holy Spirit was a recognized characteristic of the Messiah, according to such prophecies as Isaiah, chapter 11, verse two: “The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him;” chapter 42, verse one, where the Lord

says, “Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him;” and particularly the first verse of chapter 61 from which the Lord spoke in His first sermon: “The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound.”

Although it’s possible that an actual dove alighted upon Jesus, it was the Spirit’s gentle and peaceful appearance with Jesus--like a dove would come to rest--and not the bodily appearance of a dove that’s spoken of here. One commentator writes, “Such visions are granted only to the spiritually receptive. It was not the descent of the dove that was the sign to John of Jesus’ Messiahship, but his possession of the Spirit. This is brought out by the addition of the word resting .... That Jesus thus possessed the Spirit was abundantly evident to John ‘as plain as if he had seen the Spirit in visible shape alighting upon him.’”

Alexander MacLaren adds that “We need not dwell on the beautiful significance of the emblem of the dove. It symbolised both the nature of that gracious, gentle Spirit, and the perpetuity and completeness of its abode on Jesus.”

Verse 33: “I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’” John came baptizing with water, but Jesus came baptizing with the Holy Spirit. The water baptism signified a negative cleansing from past sin in preparation for the coming of the Kingdom of God. Baptism with the Holy Spirit is the positive bestowal of eternal life. This gift of eternal life was not possible before this moment--it’s a quality of life that only Jesus Christ would make available to all who place their trust in Him--those who believe in Him. John will have much more to say about those words--believe and life--throughout his gospel.

This descending of the Holy Spirit has been variously misinterpreted over the years. It was not the awakening of the divine-human consciousness within the Lord Jesus. It wasn't the formal bestowal of any divine powers. It wasn't the provision of the Holy Spirit so Jesus could then pass Him on to mankind. The visible descent of the Holy Spirit--perhaps visible only to Jesus and John since John was the only person who had been alerted to what was about to happen--the visible descent of the Holy Spirit made no change in the nature of the Son. As a member of the Trinity--Father, Son, and Holy Spirit--the three are one God in three Persons. As one commentator put it, "The relations of the Logos and the Pneuma to each other and to the Father, metaphysically considered, are profoundly intricate," and beyond the scope of our study today. What's important to note is that the Holy Spirit's presence confirmed to John the Baptist that Jesus is the Messiah and marked the beginning of the Lord's public ministry.

What happened in this moment, then, was the authenticating certification as John says, "And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God." So as John surely pondered the meaning of that all-important encounter with Jesus and the confirming sign sent from God, He understood more fully the Lord's purpose in coming--not simply as a winnowing fork or a purifying fire, but as the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world and the One Who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. In John's declaration, Jesus' two-fold mission was declared: He came to take away sin and to baptize with the Holy Spirit--to free men and women from the bondage and punishment of sin and to empower them to do what they never could have in their own power and strength.

It was at this point, also, that John's ministry achieved its major objective. He had prepared the way for the coming of the Messiah, and now Jesus was publicly introduced to those He had come to save. For that very reason John had been sent into the world. He did well when he called the people of Israel to repentance; he

did well when he baptized those who came in repentance; he did well when he faced the Pharisees and when he rebuked Herod, but his chief errand was to publicly introduce to everyone the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world.

So--verse 35-- “The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, ‘Behold, the Lamb of God!’” What did it mean for John to call Jesus, “The Lamb of God?” The people of John’s day readily understood that when a thing is said to be “of God,” they meant that it’s the greatest, noblest, the first, and the best of all those things. The cedars were called, “the trees of God,” the thunder was called, “the voice of God.” So, when John called Jesus “the Lamb of God,” he was saying that Jesus is the greatest, the best, of all sacrifices and the only offering that could ever be made for the sins of humanity. All the sacrifices of the Old Testament pointed to and prefigured the greatest offering that would be made in Christ.

Jesus, the Lamb of God, is the Lamb that Abraham prophetically spoke of when Isaac asked him where the offering was. Abraham had said, “My son, God will provide Himself a lamb.” The night before the Israelites were sent out of the land of Egypt, they were told to kill a lamb and sprinkle its blood on the doorposts of their houses so that when the death angel came that night, he would pass over those homes that had been marked with the blood of a lamb. All those whose homes were not covered by the blood of the lamb woke the next morning to the death of the first-born, whether man or animal. Then, when the Israelites reached the Promised Land and began the daily sacrifices, all of these lambs pointed to the Lamb that God Himself would provide and that John would proclaim.

According to the Lord’s instructions in Exodus, chapter 29, a lamb was offered in the tabernacle and, later, the Temple, every morning and evening, as a part of the daily worship. In chapter 53, verse seven of the book that bears his name, Isaiah

wrote that the Messiah would be “like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent,” revealing His patience through all His sufferings and His readiness to die for us. Among the Jews, a lamb was also an emblem of patience, meekness, and gentleness. Because of all these and more, and not on any one of them alone, Jesus was called “the Lamb.”

He was innocent. Peter tells us in First Peter, chapter two, verse 23 that “He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.” He was the final--the ultimate--sacrifice for sin that had been represented by the daily offering of the lamb; in fact, Luke tells us in chapter 23, that Jesus died about the ninth hour--the usual time of the evening sacrifice in the Temple. This Lamb of God was everything that the original Passover lamb represented, turning away the death angel and the wrath of God, and saving sinners by his blood from eternal death as Paul explains to the followers of Christ in First Corinthians, chapter five, verse seven, where he writes, “For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.”

As difficult as it is for some people to accept, there’s something within the justice of God, within the very nature of God, that requires that sin be punished. Wrongs must be paid for, and justice must be satisfied. Do the crime, do the time. The time, however, is not measured in terms of months or years, but by eternity, since the sin of finite creatures against an infinite God is an infinite sin. But because Jesus is the Lamb of God, the infinite Son of the infinite God, He and He alone can stand in our place to bear the punishment for our sin. No other person could be the substitute for our sin, for no one else is both our representative before God / and Who is free from sin. There is no other name given among men by which we must be saved. And it’s because Jesus is the Lamb of God Who takes

away the sin of the world that you and I can be forgiven of our sin and be rightly related to God once again.

Jesus is the Lamb of God, appointed and provided by God. The apostle Peter tells us that Jesus is the lamb without blemish and without spot, Who was foreordained from before the foundation of the world--First Peter, chapter one, verses nineteen and twenty. Even while we were yet sinners, before we even realized our sin and separation from God, God had made a way--Romans, chapter five, verse eight. God spared not His Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all. In this, John will later write, "In this / is love--not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation--the means by which we could be forgiven--of our sins." All this and so much more in John the Baptist's declaration, "Behold, the Lamb of God."

Verse 37: "The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, 'What are you seeking?' And they said to him, 'Rabbi' (which means Teacher), 'where are you staying?' He said to them, 'Come and you will see.' So they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour."

They respond by addressing Him as "Rabbi," meaning "teacher"--a term John defines for his readers since it seems that the word had only recently come into common use.

Jesus, of course, didn't ask the question because He didn't know, but so that John's two disciples could put into their own words why they had chosen to follow Him. He shows them where He's staying, and they remain with Him until about four in the afternoon.

"One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus," we read in verse forty, "was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his own brother Simon

and said to him, 'We have found the Messiah' (which means Christ). He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, 'So you are Simon the son of John? You shall be called Cephas' (which means Peter)."

John again defines some terms for us. The Messiah means "Christ." "Christ" isn't Jesus' last name. It's His title--He is the Christ, the Messiah.

We don't know a lot about Andrew. He was from Bethsaida as you can see on this map. We'll hear of him again in chapter six when he tells Jesus about a boy who has five barley loaves and two fish, and again in chapter twelve when some Greeks want to talk with Jesus. Andrew, however, was no sooner converted than he became a missionary. That's a model of authentic Christian discipleship, by the way--not waiting around until you think you know enough, but going out immediately and telling others about Jesus.

Who else did Andrew find and invite to Jesus? We really don't know for sure, but legend tells us that Andrew went on to take the gospel to the Slavs, going all the way to what is now Kiev, the capital city of Ukraine. To this day, the Russian navy's insignia is the cross of St. Andrew. But first, he told his brother.

It's Peter whose new name means "rock" who figures prominently in the gospels. Among the disciples, no one speaks more than Peter, and the Lord spoke to Peter more than any other disciple. None of the other disciples is chastised as much as Peter, no disciple attempted to correct the Lord as much as Peter, and no other disciple pledged his loyalty yet betrayed that loyalty as strongly as Peter. Impulsive, passionate, reckless, impetuous are all good adjectives to describe him, yet he possessed a remarkable sensitivity and tenderness. And he would become "the rock."

"The next day,"--verse 43--"Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, 'Follow me.' Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew

and Peter.” This Philip is not Philip the evangelist whom we read about in the Book of Acts. He’s the Phillip who told the Lord in the upper room--chapter fourteen, verse eight--, “Lord, show us the Father, and that will be enough for us.”

As excitement builds and these first disciples are telling others about Jesus--verse 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.’ Nathanael said to him, ‘Can anything good come out of Nazareth?’ Philip said to him, ‘Come and see.’”

Nathanael--who is most likely the disciple called “Bartholemew” in the other gospels--knew what the prophets had written about the Messiah, and he knew there was nothing about the Messiah coming from Nazareth. Besides that, it may have been that Nazareth didn’t have a particularly good reputation--exactly why, we don’t know, but He knew the Messiah would come from Bethlehem. As a new follower of Jesus, Philip didn’t know the whole story about Jesus, but he knew enough that he was excited about telling others, so he told Nathanael, “Come and see.” What a great way to invite someone to meet Jesus--even today!

Soon afterwards, Nathanael has the opportunity to actually meet Jesus--verse 47--: “Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, ‘Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!’ Nathanael said to him, ‘How do you know me?’ Jesus answered him, ‘Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.’ Nathanael answered him, ‘Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!’ Jesus answered him, ‘Because I said to you, “I saw you under the fig tree,” do you believe? You will see greater things than these.’ And he said to him, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.’” Don’t you wish you could have been there to witness that moment?!

While Nathanael is walking toward Jesus--before they've been introduced to each other--Jesus reveals Nathanael's thoughts, his actions, and even his character. He tells Nathanael that he's "an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit." He's someone who possesses the spirit, the piety, and the integrity of a man who is a true Israelite who fears God and obeys His law. Being identified with Jacob after his name had been changed to Israel, there's no trickery in his life, he doesn't pull any punches, but says what he means and means what he says.

Nathanael's confused as well as astonished by what the Lord says about him, and, when he asks, "How do you know me?," Jesus tells him that He saw him under the fig tree before Philip called him. Nathanael thinks back to that moment and immediately concludes that only way anyone could have known about that conversation was for Him to be an all-seeing and all-knowing God.

There's also a Syriac tradition that says that when Herod ordered all the children in and around Bethlehem to be killed, Nathanael's mother hid him under a fig tree. Now, this Jesus of Nazareth had seen and heard him, and He knew who he was--much more than He could have learned by simply observing him for a moment under a tree, even if He had been there. His conclusion was obvious: "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" Only the long-awaited Messiah could know his heart and his mind. Nathanael knew that Jesus was no mere mortal. He is the Son of God. He is the King of Israel of Psalm two, verse six. Nathanel believed.

Well, that was easy. But Nathanael's heart was ready. He may have even been praying for the Messiah to come there under the fig tree, and he realizes that Jesus heard and was now answering his prayer. He was looking for the Messiah to come, as we should be looking for His return.

Jesus let Nathanael know that there was more to come--much more--many more evidences of the fact that Jesus is the Son of God, the King of Israel, including seeing “heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man,” just a little like Jacob envisioned near Bethel in Genesis, chapter 28, verse twelve, that now pointed to the Lord’s work as the one Mediator between God and man, reconciling us to God--something that only the Son of God could do.

As John concludes this portion of his story, giving us a glimpse of the testimony of John the Baptist and the calling of the first to follow Jesus, he’s just given us a taste of all those things intended for us to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, so that by believing you might have life in His name.

Thank you for being a part of our study of the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus seen through John’s eyes that’s meant to lead you to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that, by believing in Him, you might experience the fullness of life that can only come in Him. Next week, following Trey’s message from the events at a wedding in Cana, we’ll join John as he describes the first cleansing of the Temple and the Lord’s response to the Pharisees who challenged His authority to do so.

As always, as it’s still a good thing to do, keep calm, trust in the Lord, and wash your hands! God bless you!

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