

## John 1:19-51

### John the Baptist and the first disciples

#### BACKGROUND

This account of the gospel is believed by modern scholars to have been written by the apostle John. While John assumes knowledge of basic Jewish concepts on the part of the reader, some Hebrew words and nevertheless translated into Greek (e.g. Cephas, Messiah, etc.) and his writing employs symbolism and abstraction which create a Hellenistic style, so a dual audience is anticipated. The purpose of this book is stated by the author to be evangelism.

John differs from the synoptic gospels in three ways:

- (1) **Style:** Stylistically, John uses a very small vocabulary with elegance and great expressiveness.
- (2) **Content:** John includes many discourses (but no parables). Some of these discourses describe interruptions by the listeners, which the synoptics never describe. Also, while John contains historical material not found elsewhere, his focus was primarily theological rather than historical, and so John's chronology differs significantly from that of the synoptics.
- (3) **Theology:** John's main focus is on the person of Jesus. To this end he begins not with a genealogy, but with a description of Jesus' transcendent nature, and describes Jesus' revelation of himself as the bread of life, resurrection and the life, light of the world, one with the Father, etc.

*Note:* When John refers to "the Jews" he often (but not always) means the ruling authorities.

*Read all of chapter 1, even though the discussion will focus on 19-51.*

#### QUESTIONS

1. In chapter 1 John records seven titles for Jesus.

- a. What are they, and what aspect of Jesus does each reflect?

*The Word of God*  
*the Lamb of God*

*Jesus as God's message to the world*  
*Jesus as God's sacrifice for the world*  
*(cf. Is 53:7, Gen 22:8, maybe Jer 11:19)*

*Rabbi*

*Jesus as teacher*

*Christ*

*Messiah*

*the King of Israel*

*sovereign*

*the Son of God*

*son of God*

*the Son of Man*

*mortal*

- b. Which of these attributes would the Jew-on-the-street in John's day have associated with the Messiah?

*King, Son of God, Son of Man, maybe Lamb of God if they were really keen.*

*Regarding John and Jesus' claim to Jesus' divinity:*

*"It would not have been so bad if Christians had contented themselves with asserting that Jesus was the Messiah. But they went much further. The earliest baptismal confession that we can trace is the short assertion that 'Jesus is Lord.' It*

*must be remembered that 'Lord' was the particular name for God in the Old Testament: in the LXX it translates Adonai. There could be no mistake about the matter. Jesus himself, followed by the early Christians, made great play with Ps 110:1 in which David addresses 'my Lord.' This was intrerpretted as refering to Jesus, who was thus David's Lord. Is it any wonder that the Jews thought Christians were preaching a second God? How could they, in their pure monotheism, have any truck with such blasphemy?" (Michael Green, Evangelism in the Early Church.)*

- c. Which aspect does your relationship with Jesus most resonate with? Which does it least resonate with?
2. Why did each of the following choose to follow Jesus: Andrew, Simon, Philip, Nathaniel? Which reason is most similar to the reason you chose to follow Christ?

<i>Andrew</i>	<i>because JtB vouched for Jesus</i>
<i>Simon</i>	<i>because Andrew vouched for him,</i>
<i>Philip</i>	<i>because Jesus called him</i>
<i>Nathaniel</i>	<i>because Jesus displayed miraculous knowledge.</i>

3. John records the "conversion" stories of these four disciples. Each of has his or her own story of when we repented and chose to follow Christ (and were chosen by him). How are these stories (the disciples' and ours) important?

*Q: What about those of us raised in the church?*

*Q: Why do you think John included these four, and only these four stories?*

4. Read Deut 26:4-10. God commanded the Israelites to regularly retell the story of their deliverance. Why?

*Read the quote from Jim Van Tholen's sermon, "Remembering the Way,"*

*That's what Moses commands, that each of them go into the presence of the Lord and, whether they feel like it or not, whether they witnessed it all or not, declare how this land came to be theirs. That's what makes them God's people. Moses doesn't tell them to talk about the Ten Commandments or their obedience to them, as important as they are; he doesn't tell them to speak of their priorities or their customs or their lifestyle. He says, Tell the story. Because the story is what makes them God's people, and, when they remember the story, when they live out the story, nothing on earth will change them into anything else.*

5. In v. 51 Jesus quotes Gen 28:10-17. Read this passage. To what in Jacob's dream is Jesus likening himself? How does he play that role in the life of a believer? (See for instance Heb 4:14-16.)

*Jesus is likening himself to Jacob's ladder, which the angels were ascending and descending. In the sense that angels are messengers, Jesus is our intermediary with the father, allowing unfettered communication with the Father.*

6. Philip describes Jesus as the one Moses wrote about. Where did Moses write about Jesus?

*In Deut 18:14-22 it is said that when Israel falls into sin, prophets will be sent to guide it back. By Jesus' time, the next such prophet was referred to as The Prophet, a single eschatological figure.*

7. Was Jesus being sarcastic in v. 47?

*If you run out of material:*

8. *John the Baptist refers to himself as the voice crying in the wilderness. How would his hearers have understood this reference?*

9. *Why didn't John the Baptist also become a disciple of Jesus?*