

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.

QUESTIONS

1. In chapter 1 John records seven titles for Jesus.
 - a. What are they, and what aspect of Jesus does each reflect?
 - b. Which of these titles would the Jew-on-the-street in John's day have associated with the Messiah?
 - 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?
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?
4. Read Deut 26:4-10. God commanded the Israelites to regularly retell the story of their deliverance. Why?
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.)
6. Philip describes Jesus as the one Moses wrote about. Where did Moses write about Jesus?
7. Was Jesus being sarcastic in v. 47?