

The Gospel of John

Believe and Live!

Lesson 2

John 1:19–51

The First Witness

The ministry of John the Baptist serves as a turning point in history; he is the last in a long line of prophets, as far back as Abraham, who exercised their faith in God by waiting expectantly for the One God promised in the Old Testament scriptures. For hundreds of years, the prophets foretold of the Messiah's coming; now John's voice is the final one to announce His appearing.

At a glance ~ **Read John 1:19–51; and review 1:6–8 and 15.**

Getting to actually “see” a message up close can be more compelling than hearing one. In our lesson this week, John the Baptist answers for his ministry to the religious leaders while affirming the Messiah's mission as Jesus steps onto the scene. Read through the above verses, noting what about the Baptist stands out to you at first glance.

Picture it ~

In today's society, the blessed arrival of a baby is often announced on artful stationery adorned with the picture of the newborn next to his or her adoring parents. But can you imagine for a moment the astounding novelty of an angel of God appearing one day to announce your baby's arrival? How about having your child's earthly mission foretold in the Scripture by one of the greatest of the Old Testament prophets? Such was the extraordinary birth announcement of John the Baptist!

According to the following references, what do you learn about John the Baptist?

- a. *The prophecy*: Isaiah 40:3–5 _____

b. *The announcement:* Luke 1:5–19 _____

c. *John's message:* Matthew 3:1–3 _____

d. *John's manner:* Matthew 3:4 _____

e. *John's method:* Matthew 3:5–8 _____

John the Baptist was a uniquely colorful character even for his day, particularly when compared with the mainstream religious establishment. And yet, John had become so immensely popular with the people that even the religious leaders had to sit up and take notice.

The Apostle John records for us the first confrontation between John the Baptist and the religious leaders sent out to investigate him. Instead of responding with a direct answer about himself, John responds three times about who he is not.

1. What does John say when asked, "Who are you?" John 1:19–23.
 - a. v. 20
 - b. v. 21a
 - c. v. 21b
2. How does John reply when asked, "What do you say about yourself?" v. 23

The delegation dispatched to interrogate John the Baptist consisted of priests and Levites from the Sanhedrin sent out by the high priest. This man from the desert was the absolute antithesis of the religious establishment: ragged in appearance, abrupt and unpolished in his presentation, unqualified and unauthorized to speak on God's behalf; yet he was drawing large crowds who were flocking to hear him preach! Although he was without the proper credentials or respectful resume, he was considered a threat to the Jewish leaders who could no longer ignore him.

3. When pressed as to why he would baptize if he were not Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet (v. 25), what was John’s reply? vv. 26–27

a. What does John say about Jesus in these verses?

The angel Gabriel himself had predicted to John’s father, Zechariah, that John “*will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah*” (Luke 1:17). John the Baptist’s mission was the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy and Gabriel’s announcement. His ministry was *like Elijah’s*—in the spirit and power of Elijah’s—but he was *not* Elijah!

Selah ~ (Pause and ponder.)

John the Baptist grew up hearing the amazing stories from his parents about his birth and that he was a chosen instrument of the Lord—filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother’s womb. God had a specific mission for him to accomplish, *to make straight the way of the Lord*; to lead sinners on the highway of repentance toward righteousness. What about you? Are you aware that you, too, are chosen by God? Whether you did or didn’t grow up hearing stories about your own childhood, God is writing your life story right now. Your commitment to spend time with Him in His Word this year will affect the outcome for all of eternity! What does Ephesians 2:8–10 reveal to you about your mission on earth? Ask the Lord today to help you fulfill your calling.

Take a closer look ~ John 1:29

(Memorize and meditate on the memory verse each time you open your lesson.)

“The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, ‘Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!’”

What does this verse reveal to you about Jesus? How does this revelation of truth encourage you today?

The Lamb of God

Outlook ~ Read John 1:19–28 for review along with 29–34.

A comparison of this passage in John's gospel along with the other three gospels makes it clear that the event John records here took place earlier—approximately six weeks earlier. In verses 29–34, John relates it in the past tense, it had already happened. The other gospel writers tell us that Jesus left immediately following his baptism to go into the desert where He spent forty days and forty nights. This took place before the leaders of the Sanhedrin arrived to interrogate John the Baptist as told in John 1.

1. Compare John's text here with those of the other three: Matthew 3:13–17; Mark 1:9–13; and Luke 3:21–22. What insights do you glean that are not shared in John's gospel account?

John the Baptist had explained his own ministry to the religious leaders sent to investigate him; now he would acknowledge Jesus' ministry. Jesus had returned from the desert and was standing in the crowd amongst those who were coming to hear John preach. John acknowledged him by saying, "*There stands One among you whom you do not know. It is He who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose*" (vv. 26–27).

2. The very next day, John the Baptist makes a startling declaration about Jesus; what does he say? v. 29

3. Revelation 13:8 speaks of Jesus Christ as the "*Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.*" Holding this truth in the forefront of your mind, note what else the Bible has to say about the sacrifice of the Lamb . . .

a. Genesis 22:6–8

b. Isaiah 53:4–7

c. Hebrews 9:11–14

On the night before the Exodus of Israel from the land of Egypt, the Lord gave instructions through Moses for initiating the first Passover. In Exodus 12 we're told that each family had to offer up a lamb for a sacrifice: a lamb (v. 3), the lamb (v. 4), and your lamb (v. 5). (Notice the increasing personal intimacy with the lamb in these verses.)

Personal ~

The lambs offered up by man to God could not take away sin, but the Lamb of God takes away the sin of the whole world! He is not *any* lamb; He is *The Lamb*! Has He become *your Lamb*? Have you turned to Him to take away the guilt of *your sin*? Will you turn to Him today?

Three different times John the Baptist restates the priority of Jesus using the same exact words: "*He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me*" (vv. 15, 27, and 30).

4. Did John the Baptist know that Jesus was the Messiah? v. 31
 - a. When did John know? v. 32
 - b. How did John know? v. 33
 - c. As the result of God's direct revelation, how did John testify of Jesus? v. 34
 - d. Since Jesus was God's Son, why did He allow John to baptize Him? See Matthew 3:13–17.

Jesus' mother Mary and John the Baptist's mother Elizabeth were cousins, so Jesus and John would have played together as children and grown up with the understanding that they were related. But John did not know that his cousin was the Messiah until he received God's revelation and saw God's sign of the dove. When the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus, He remained as a sign of His divine anointing. This moment was a glorious depiction of the Trinity at work!

Before moving on in the text, it is worth mentioning that the first people who witnessed the long-awaited Messiah firsthand did not observe Him in His glory or His deity—but as a Lamb. Yet John did not want any possible misunderstanding of who Jesus was, so to all the people and the religious leaders present, John boldly declares in verse 34: "*I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God.*" John's baptism by water was for repentance unto God, but Jesus' baptism with the Holy Spirit would be for entrance into the family of God.

Jesus now steps out of the shadow of John the Baptist to begin His own public ministry. In the remaining verses of chapter one, we are introduced to four of His early followers.

Review this week's memory verse.

The First Disciples Are Called

John the Baptist had the privilege of introducing Jesus to the nation of Israel, calling people to repent of their sin and live changed lives. Once Jesus began His public ministry, He called twelve men who would carry that commission to the rest of the world!

Outlook ~ Read John 1:35–51.

It is now the third day of the week in the sequence of events chronicled by the Apostle John in his gospel account. It is the Sabbath and John the Baptist is standing with two of his disciples when he notices Jesus walking before them.

1. What made two of John's disciples turn from him to follow Jesus? vv. 35–37
2. When Jesus turned and saw them following Him, what does He say? vv. 38–39
3. The writer John mentions one of these two men by name; who is he? v. 40

The other disciple is believed to be that of John, the author of this gospel, but he never refers to himself by name. (We will see John conceal his identity in his writing, choosing instead to refer to himself as “the disciple whom Jesus loved.”) When Jesus asks them, “*What do you seek?*” He was causing them to examine and acknowledge their purpose. He then invites them to spend the day with Him. We can only imagine what He must have shared about His heart and His ministry. Whatever He said, they were so greatly impacted that they in turn found their brothers and brought them to Jesus.

4. How did Andrew describe his encounter with Jesus to his brother? v. 41
 - a. What is the first thing Jesus does when Andrew brought Simon to Him?

It is worth mentioning that both Andrew and John were followers of Christ through the preaching of John the Baptist. They then each brought their brothers—Peter and James—to Jesus. It is a reminder to us that God uses people to win people to Christ!

In focus ~ (Key words) **Disciple**

Disciples in biblical times literally followed—walked behind—the man they had chosen as their teacher or mentor. Look up the word using the resources you have on hand (Bible translations, dictionary, concordance). Contrast the connotation in biblical times with what you understand a disciple to be in today's society.

5. Jesus “found Philip”; what does He say to him? v. 43

6. Who does Philip find? What was the friend’s reply and with whose words does Philip respond? vv. 45- 46

Again Jesus looks inside one of His future disciples and with very frank words reveals the man’s character to him.

7. What does Jesus have to say about Nathanael? What impact do Jesus’ words have on him? vv. 47–51
 - a. What title does Jesus use to describe Himself to Nathanael?

We’ve met five men in our study of John 1: an evangelist preacher and four fishermen. The preacher is self-described as a “*voice crying in the wilderness*” but all five men would become vocal witnesses of the Messiah—God’s Son—the Lamb slain for the sin of the world. What they experienced with Jesus they in turn shared with others who would also come to know and follow Him. What about you? Are you willing to be a “voice” to declare who He is to those around you? Will you be . . . yes or no . . .

- Vocal – willing to speak out?
- Obedient – to go whenever and wherever He leads?
- Instructing – with Truth over your own opinions?
- Concerned – for the salvation of others?
- Encouraging – those who listen to follow Christ?

More like Jesus ~

Are *you* becoming more like Jesus? Absolutely! Every time you open the Word and spend time getting to know Him more intimately, you partake in the life-long process of drawing near—going deeper—bearing fruit—becoming more like Him. As you close your lesson today, determine to put into practice what you’ve learned by noting it below.

- Recite your memory verse _____

- Reflect on a lesson you learned _____

- Respond with prayer and praise to God _____

Notes