

# THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

## Encounter Jesus – The Son of the Living God

### *The Domino Effect*

“Successful witnessing is simply sharing Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit and leaving the results to God.”

Can you imagine filling a ship with precious cargo and launching it into the sea, only to watch it repeatedly dock without offloading anything? I imagine silent Christians are much like this ship. God has personally blessed believers with salvation and eternal life and entrusted to them the message of the gospel, yet too few of His children are willing to share with others the good news of salvation in Christ. – *Charles Stanley*

We concluded last week’s lesson, with John the Baptist proclaiming Jesus of Nazareth to be the Lamb of God. “Where is the Lamb” was a question that had echoed down through the centuries. It was first whispered by a boy named Isaac. When he and his father, Abraham, were going to make a sacrifice, Isaac turned to his father and said, “Father, here is the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb?” And Abraham said, “My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering.” Isaiah had foretold of the One who would be led as a lamb to the slaughter in order to become the sacrifice for sin.

Now, as we consider John the Baptist’s declaration of Jesus of Nazareth being the Lamb of God, let’s find out how the Baptist knew that Jesus really was the perfect sacrifice sent from God.

**Read John 1:31 (ESV)** <sup>31</sup> *I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel.”*

John explained that the purpose of his baptizing ministry was so that the Messiah might be revealed to Israel. John acknowledged that there was a time that he did not recognize Jesus as the foretold Messiah. John is not saying that he did not know Jesus previously but that he had not yet received positive divine confirmation as to the identity of the Messiah. John the Baptist explains how the LORD revealed that Jesus was the Messiah.

**Read John 1:32-34 (ESV)** <sup>32</sup> *And John bore witness: “I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. <sup>33</sup> 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.’ <sup>34</sup> And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.”*

The LORD had revealed to John that he would be privileged to see the Spirit descend upon the Messiah. The Spirit of God descended **like** a dove upon Jesus at His baptism. The Holy Spirit is **not** a dove. The coming of the Holy Spirit upon the prophesied Messiah was **like** a dove. The dove was one of the clean animals to sacrifice if you were too poor to afford a lamb (*Leviticus 5:7*). The dove symbolized purity and humility. Notice that the Spirit came down from heaven and **remained** on Jesus. This was the sign that the Baptist had been told to watch for.

The word baptize comes from the Greek word *baptizo* which means to dip under water, immerse or sink. John baptized with water, but Jesus would baptize His children with the Holy Spirit of God.

Jesus was **not** baptized because He was a repentant sinner. Why was Jesus baptized? The simple answer is that Jesus was baptized to show that He identified with sinners. His baptism symbolized the sinners' baptism into the righteousness of Christ, dying with Him and rising free from sin and able to walk in the newness of life. His baptism pointed forward to His future death, burial and resurrection just as our baptism points backward to the death burial and resurrection of Jesus. **Romans 6:4 (ESV)** <sup>4</sup> *We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.*

The Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) appears together at the baptism of Jesus. God the Father spoke from heaven, God the Son was baptized, and God the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus like a dove.

Now, the writer takes us to the third day in the sequence.

**Read John 1:35-39 (ESV)** <sup>35</sup> *The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples,* <sup>36</sup> *and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!"* <sup>37</sup> *The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus.* <sup>38</sup> *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?"* <sup>39</sup> *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.*

When John sees Jesus, he shares with the two of disciples that Jesus is the Lamb of God. Why did they immediately turn to follow Jesus? Possibly, John had already shared with them his affirmation from God that Jesus was the Messiah. I believe they respected John the Baptist's opinion. In that first moment, they did not understand everything about Jesus being the Messiah. Even after following Him three years, none of the disciples fully understood until Jesus rose from the dead. But, on that day when John shared his "Word from the LORD" that Jesus was the Lamb of God, they believed. John did what we all are called to – point others to Jesus. And the domino effect began.

Jesus asked, *What are you seeking?* These are the first words of Jesus in the book of John. The question He asked applies to every generation. He is still asking men and women, boys and girls: *What are you seeking?* People are seeking many different things – love, peace, fame, money, power, prestige, security, etc. What we should seek is what Isaiah told us to seek. **Isaiah 55:6 (ESV)** <sup>6</sup> *"Seek the LORD while he may be found; call upon him while he is near.*

We are not told if this was the entire conversation between the two disciples and Jesus. But obviously, their question indicates their desire for a deeper conversation than just standing in the middle of the road chatting for a bit. Private time with Jesus was their initial desire concerning the Lamb of God. *It was about the tenth hour,* meaning the tenth hour after sunrise, about 4.00 p.m. This meant the disciples spent the latter part of the day with Jesus, probably continuing their conversation until nightfall.

### The Domino Effect Continues

**Read John 1:40-42 (ESV)** <sup>40</sup> *One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.* <sup>41</sup> *He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which means Christ).* <sup>42</sup> *He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon the son of John. You shall be called Cephas" (which means Peter).*

As for the two disciples who left John the Baptist to follow Jesus, one is identified as Andrew. The name of the second is not revealed. Most likely the unnamed disciple was John, the author of this gospel, since in any reference to himself he never uses his name.

The beauty of what happened with Andrew is that his first reaction was to share the good news with his brother. Sometimes family members are the most difficult people to witness to about our faith. By the time John wrote this gospel, Simon Peter had become more widely known than Andrew. However, sharing Christ is never a contest.

Andrew played a very significant role in the domino effect of sharing Christ. He is best remembered for being one who led others to the Savior. First, he brought his brother and later the boy whose lunch Jesus transformed so that over 5,000 could eat. He also brought some Greeks to Jesus. If a person is remembered for only one thing in this life, nothing surpasses sharing the good news about Jesus with others.

When Simon came to Jesus, He immediately gave him a new name. We read of Jesus in **John 2:25 (ESV)** <sup>25</sup> ... *for he himself knew what was in man.* Jesus was not just putting on a show to gain followers. He knew Simon's heart. The name, Jesus gave Simon was Cephas, Aramaic for stone. The name Peter comes from the Greek meaning rock. It is interesting that Peter throughout his life was not always a "rock." He was impulsive, volatile, and often unreliable. But those negative things were never what Jesus saw in Simon Peter. When we falter in our walk with the Lord, we can remember Peter and be encouraged. Jesus saw the best in him just as Jesus sees the best in all His children.

**Read John 1:43-46 (ESV)** <sup>43</sup> *The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me."* <sup>44</sup> *Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.* <sup>45</sup> *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."* <sup>46</sup> *Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see."*

Jesus called Philip personally and Philip trusted Him and followed Him without hesitation. We do not know if there was more to the conversation or what kind of heart preparation Philip may have experienced prior to the encounter. Usually, God does prepare a person before He calls him or her. We do know that Philip proved his faith by continuing the domino effect by sharing Jesus with Nathanael. This Philip should not to be confused with Philip, the evangelist, who shared the gospel with the Ethiopian eunuch.

Nathanael's name occurs only in the Gospel of John. The gospel of John never mentions Bartholomew like the other gospels do. Most agree that Bartholomew was most likely Nathanael's family name.

We are not really sure why Nathanael was so ‘down on Nazareth’. Possibly it was because Nazareth was a small insignificant place. Possibly, it was because Nathanael knew the prophecy that the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem and since Jesus was from Nazareth he immediately assumed that Jesus could not be the Messiah.

Nathanael was not convinced just because Philip said so. He needed to see Jesus for himself. We should follow Philip’s example. He did not try to debate to prove to Nathanael that Jesus was the Anointed One. He just said, come and see – the same words that Jesus said to the two disciples in verse 39!

**Read John 1:47-51 (ESV)** <sup>47</sup> *Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!”* <sup>48</sup> *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.”* <sup>49</sup> *Nathanael answered him, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!”* <sup>50</sup> *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.”* <sup>51</sup> *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.”*

When Nathanael came to Jesus, he discovered that the Lord already knew all about him! That was shocking to him! Jesus said of Nathanael: *Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is **no deceit!*** The KJV uses the words “**no guile**”. Nathanael was different from the father of all Israelites, Jacob. Jacob, the supplanter, was eventually re-named Israel but he lived much of his life as a deceiver.

Nathanael asked, *How do you know me?* *Jesus answered, ‘I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you.’* Jewish scholars sat under fig trees to study the Law. Whatever Nathanael’s experience under the fig tree involved, it must have had significance for him when Jesus showed that He knew about it, Nathanael’s experience can be compared to how today we are amazed and thrilled when the Lord speaks to us through scripture.

Most believe that Nathanael had been contemplating an experience concerning Jacob. **Genesis 28:12 (ESV)** <sup>12</sup> *And he [meaning Jacob] dreamed, and behold, there was a **ladder** set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven. And behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it!* Notice what Jesus said and consider how His words differ from what Jacob saw. Jesus said: *you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the **Son of Man**.*

Jesus replaced the image of the ladder in Jacob’s dream with “the Son of Man” (a reference to Himself). This signified to Nathanael and to us that, Jesus Christ is the bridge or the ladder between heaven and earth. **John 14:6 (ESV)** <sup>6</sup> *Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*

**What to go to heaven? Take the only ladder to get there! Take Jesus!**