

The Gospel of John
Week Two
John 1:29-50

Day One

29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! 30 This is the one I meant when I said, 'A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.' 31 I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel."

v. 29 – The Baptist wasn't just a prophet in theory or in the "pulpit.". He "saw" the truth, declared it and then recognized "it" when He walked by. John referred to Jesus as the Lamb of God. Of course, a lamb was the mainstay of the Jewish sacrificial system. Only the finest lambs without blemish were sacrificed, yet the lamb was not the animal for any sin offering. Those lambs, or any animal for that matter, could never satisfy God, for they had to be sacrificed again and again and again. The Lamb of God, who was from God and was also God, would be the perfect sacrifice for sins.

There is no way John could have uttered this without the Holy Spirit's revelation. A person being a sacrificial lamb? Unheard of! Yet that is exactly what John "saw." He understood what Abraham understood in Genesis 22, that God would send a lamb to die in the place of "Isaac." In this case, the lamb turned out to be a man, a God-man no less.

This Lamb that John saw had the ability of taking away the sins of the world! What power, what majesty such a Lamb would have. This would be no ordinary Lamb and Jesus was no ordinary sacrifice for sin.

v. 30 – John had talked about Jesus, but now he recognized the One about whom He had been speaking. John's and Jesus' mothers were cousins, so it took an act of God, so to speak, for John to have the insight that he did. He had grown up with Jesus; perhaps they had played together. John had known him in one capacity and now he saw Him in a whole different light. John repeated his testimony that Jesus exceeded John in rank and greatness due to His eternal nature.

Is there anyone close to you that you have not seen in the proper light, or acknowledged them from God's perspective? Paul had written

So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! (2 Corinthians 5:16-17).

How familiar are you with Jesus? Do you see Him for who He truly is or who you want Him to be? Ask the same question about the people around you.

v. 31 – Jesus had been in John’s life up to that day without John recognizing who He was. Then the Father showed John a sign and He then recognized that Jesus was the One for whom John had come to prepare the way. It seems that John did not struggle or question what he saw; he immediately gave testimony that Jesus was the One whom John was sent to announce. I appreciate John’s obedience to his purpose and call. **Do you have that same kind of commitment and willingness to be used no matter what you see and hear?**

Day Two

32 Then John gave this testimony: "I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. 33 I would not have known him, except that the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' 34 I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God."

v. 32 – I get the sense that this account was given to John by an eyewitness who had this scene etched into his memory. This person could have been John’s disciple who then became Jesus’ disciple. It doesn’t really matter, but what does matter is that this account was written decades after it happened. Yet it was still fresh in the witness’s mind. **What has God done that you will never forget?** I’m talking about something that you witnessed personally.

v. 33 – John admitted that he did not “figure out” or recognize Jesus on his own. The Father helped him by giving him a sign. You cannot see or understand the things of God on your own as well. God has to help you, which He is willing to do. This is why Paul the following to the Ephesians and to us:

I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come (Ephesians 1).

John had his eyes opened and he saw who Jesus was. I pray your eyes (and mine for that matter) will be opened as well.

We know from the other gospels that the Spirit descended on Jesus like a dove and that is how John knew who Jesus was. Yet John could not have seen the Spirit descend unless God opened his eyes, for no one else around him saw what he saw.

Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved

Son; in thee I am well pleased. And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age (Luke 3:21-23).

John understood also that Jesus would baptize people with the Holy Spirit just like John did with water. The word *baptize* means to “immerse.” So Jesus immerses His followers with God’s Holy Spirit, sort of like a sunken ship is filled and immersed in the ocean. **Are you making the most of this immersion? In other words, are you living in the power of the Spirit?**

v. 34 – John could only tell us what he saw, which is what any good witness would do. John knew Jesus as a distant family member, but then he saw Him in a whole different light. And he did not keep it to himself; he told others so that they could know and follow Jesus. John was true to his mission.

Day Three

35 The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. 36 When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God!" 37 When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus.

v. 35 – John had disciples, those who followed his ministry and teaching. We see many decades later that he had “followers” whom Paul met in Ephesus:

He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus (Acts 19:2-4).

Yet John did not come to lead a movement unless that movement was away from him and toward Jesus. I am so impressed with John and his lack of ego in the ministry. He knew who he was and wasn’t and was only too glad to point out to his disciples, as he did in this verse, that Jesus was the Man, the Son of God! The goal for each of us in ministry is to point our followers to Him and not make ourselves the center of attention. It’s not about me, it’s not about you, it’s about Him – and John understood this more clearly than anyone. That is why Jesus referred to him as the greatest prophet of the Old Testament era.

v. 36 – John repeated the description he had used earlier, that Jesus was the Lamb of God. There is no way that his disciples or any Jew could understand the significance of that title, not like we can. The Jews did not yet understand the role and purpose Jesus had in the remission of sins. I think every prophet speaks beyond his (or her) ability to understand what they are saying at that time. Oh, they understand some of it, I’m sure, but not all of it until God brings the full interpretation.

v. 37 – When John’s disciples heard this, they left John to follow Jesus, which is exactly what John wanted to happen. John must have been so pleased when this took place, although later John himself would question Jesus as to whether or not he was “the One.” Jesus was so far removed from what Jews expected of their Messiah that even John had to double check, in spite of his revelation and understanding.

It’s always a good thing to speak what you know but to go back to God to make sure you understand what it is that you are saying. John was a great man and the perfect one to announce and introduce Jesus. Yet so was Peter, Paul, John the writer, Matthew and Luke. God uses who you are to produce His will and purpose in your life. Often, however, I have found people trying to change things about themselves that God doesn’t want to change! They are convinced that, before God can “use” them, they must make a major overhaul.

Is that your attitude? If so, I have good news: God can use you as you are right now! That doesn’t mean He won’t make some changes along the way, but you are ready now for the assignment you have today. **What are you waiting for? What is holding you back?** Just be ready to point people to Him and you will do fine, no matter what your calling or where you are called to serve.

Day Four

38 Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, "What do you want?" They said, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you staying?" 39 "Come," he replied, "and you will see." So they went and saw where he was staying, and spent that day with him. It was about the tenth hour. 40 Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus.

v. 38 – Jesus saw John’s disciples and asked them just what He is asking you today: **What do you want? What is your answer to that question today? What do you want from Jesus? What would you ask of Him if He appeared and posed that question to you right now?**

v. 39 – The disciples started out with a simple question. They wanted to know where Jesus was staying. **Where was He from? What was He doing that John would make such an interesting and profound statement?** They gave Jesus a title of respect, rabbi, and indicated that He had something to teach them. And they wanted to get a closer to him than they were.

Jesus did not hesitate to invite them to see where he lived. **Does this mean that Jesus had a house?** I would think He did, funded from the family business back in Nazareth. So John’s disciples went with Jesus and they spent the day together. **I wonder what they talked about?** I would love to have a recording! **When is the last time that you spent the day with Jesus, just talking and listening? What is stopping you from doing it again sooner rather than later?**

v. 40 – It is of note that Andrew was in this gospel identified as Peter’s brother. Peter was of such notoriety even at the time John wrote that Andrew’s identity was described through Peter. Andrew came to Jesus first, but Peter was the more prominent. All of those things are in God’s hands; we should not fret over them.

Yet I have seen leaders fretting over the fact that they were not receiving enough honor as a man (or woman) of God. They have gone to great lengths to make sure they have a choice seat, the best parking space and a nice office. They are able to wrap those demands in the Bible, saying that it is honoring the Lord when such things are done. I don’t understand and I never will.

I have also heard it said that familiarity with leaders will cause followers not to recognize or acknowledge the gifts in the leaders. Therefore everyone must have a title of respect or none will be given – or so the thinking goes. Again, I don’t understand. I think respect is earned and not demanded, and I think once a leader begins to expect honor, it becomes legalistic and people give it because they must, not because they choose to do so willingly.

I am always happy sitting anywhere in a church and with no title at all. God opened John’s eyes to recognize who Jesus was. I am perfectly happy to have God open eyes so that people see who I am; if they don’t see it, then I will entrust that to Him. **Do you agree or disagree? Is there any justification for the honor system that has been built for and around some of the leaders in the body of Christ?** Please if you see or know anything, write and let me know. I hope I am wrong, but I don’t think I am.

Day Five

41 The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). 42 And he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas" (which, when translated, is Peter. 43 The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, "Follow me."

v. 41 – Andrew had his priorities straight. He found the Messiah and saw his first obligation to tell those closest to him, in this case his brother, Peter. **Who are you telling about Jesus? Do those closest to you know where you stand with Him?** It is interesting that after one day with Jesus, Andrew knew who He was. There was no doubt in Andrew’s mind. God had opened His eyes to see just like God had opened the Baptist’s eyes. They both saw Jesus for who He was and is.

Can you trust God for others to see you for who you are in Him? Can you wait for them to recognize your gifts and role in their life and the life of the body of Christ? That is a hard thing to do some times and requires faith. Yet when God opens their eyes, they see clearly and you never have to establish your position again.

At times, I have heard how confused the disciples were over who Jesus was. Andrew sure didn't seem confused! He was clear enough to go tell others, based on John's testimony and Andrew's own revelation from God. No matter how long you have known the Lord, you have insight into Him, whether it's one day or 35 years. Go and tell someone what you know!

v. 42 – When Andrew brought Peter to Jesus, Jesus recognized him and had a “word” or prophetic utterance for Peter. Jesus knew his name, which was Simon. Then Jesus told Simon that his new name would be Cephas or Peter, which means rock. Jesus changed Simon's name based on his purpose, which was to be a rock of testimony and faith to God's people from that point forward.

There are many so-called prophets who try to emulate what Jesus did to Peter here. They want to be able to tell people what only the people would know, like where they have been, what they have done and the like. They believe that this establishes the credibility of their prophetic ministry. I think very often it turns to weirdness.

There are other prophets who come forward after some significant event in the news and try to convince us that they predicted that event, again to establish their prophetic credentials. Once again, I think it's kind of weird. Prophecy exists to edify believers, not to shock and awe them. Telling someone “what they had for breakfast” isn't what a good prophetic gift does. Telling people a message from God that strengthens their faith and confidence in God is. Don't be sucked in by someone who seems to have an inside track to insight from God. Judge what they say, wait and see the fruit in their life and then you can make a judgment as to their connection to God.

v. 43 – **So who found Phillip, Jesus or Andrew?** The text isn't clear, but that isn't important. What's important is that Jesus and Phillip connected. Jesus had decided to go to Galilee, the region in the far north of modern Israel around the Sea of Galilee (it is a large lake, not a literal sea). Jesus decided to take Phillip with him. Most Jews at that time had no need to travel, unless they were going to Jerusalem for a holy day. Jesus didn't say where they were going, He just commanded Phillip to follow him. That is how it is with you and me. We are on a journey and only Jesus knows our destination! **Does that make you nervous?**

Day Six

44 Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. 45 Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." 46 "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked. "Come and see," said Philip. 47 When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, "Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false."

v. 44 – Bethsaida was a small fishing village on the shore of the Lake. Most of those towns no longer exist and many we aren't even sure of where they were exactly. Since

the three disciples were from the same village, that makes me think that Andrew found Phillip and brought him to Jesus. Notice again that Jesus was not working with or through the established religious system of the day and that He did not choose His followers from among the religious hierarchy. God's choices are sovereign; He has His own reasons for doing what He does.

v. 45 – Andrew found Peter, someone found Phillip and then Phillip found Nathaniel. It was a chain reaction, but a good one. Phillip was profuse in his description of Jesus, as Andrew's had been. He was convinced that Jesus was the One about whom Moses wrote and the prophets spoke. That is quite a testimony! Phillip identified Jesus as being from Nazareth, which is the hometown of Joseph and Mary and the place they went after their return from Egypt. And of course the disciples had no concept of Jesus' birth, so they identified Jesus as Joseph's son. That was enough for people to know who Jesus was – his village and His father.

v. 46 – Nathaniel was rather bigoted about anything good coming from Nazareth. We find this attitude revealed among the leaders later in Jesus' ministry as well. And what's more, we see that the residents there tried to throw Jesus off a cliff! Maybe what Nathaniel felt had merit after all!

Do you have any prejudices that could hinder your ability to recognize or receive something from a certain group of people or country? God will usually confront those prejudices if you are serious about following Him and learning His ways from whomever He chooses. Phillip invited Nathaniel to find out for himself whether or not what Phillip said was true.

v. 47 – Man looks at the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart. Nathaniel had already judged Jesus based on where Jesus lived. Jesus did not do that (He was truly sinless) and looked at the inner man. What Jesus saw was quite impressive, for He declared that Nathaniel had no guile or cunning. There was nothing in Nathaniel that tried to impress or flatter. This was a positive trait and Jesus commended Nathaniel for it and gave him public acclaim for his heart condition.

This is an aspect of ministry that I want: to be able to see people as they are and speak it forth to encouraged and affirm them. There are enough people telling others what they are doing wrong. I want to see things from God's perspective and tell them what's right with their lives. **Does this make sense?**

Day Seven

48 "How do you know me?" Nathaniel asked. Jesus answered, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you." 49 Then Nathaniel declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel." 50 Jesus said, "You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You shall see greater things than that." 51 He then added, "I tell you the truth, you[m] shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."

vs. 48&49 – Nathaniel was taken aback, for he had never met Jesus. Not only did Jesus know Nathaniel’s heart, but He also revealed where he had just been. Jesus gave a strong indication that He was God, and Nathaniel responded in kind by proclaiming Him to be both the Son of God and King of Israel!

There is a song that says, “He knows my heart, He knows my every thought, He sees each tear that falls and He hears me when I call, and He hears me when I call.” (*He Knows My Name* by Israel and New Breed.) That is so true. God is mindful of all our ways; we are never beyond His watchful eye. The psalmist said:

If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there (Psalm 139:8).

Are you confident of this fact, that God is always with you and mindful of you? What affect should that knowledge have on your daily life and routine?

v. 50 – Jesus seemed surprised that Nathaniel’s turnaround was so quick. One minute he was judging Jesus for being from Nazareth and the next he was declaring Jesus to be the Son of God. Yet that is what Jesus had pointed out: Nathaniel did not play games. He was without guile. Jesus promised that the men would see much greater things than He had just spoken to them. We also have seen much greater things. **Do you believe?** Don’t answer too quickly for you may believe things happened in the past but still struggle that things will happen now or in the future.

v. 51 – Jesus often had to say that He was telling the truth because what He said seemed so abnormal to the disciples. The problem was that their spirituality and faith were so subnormal that when Jesus spoke what was normal, it seemed bizarre. It was too good to be true, so Jesus had to reassure them.

Here Jesus alluded to a story that every Jew would have been familiar with: the story of Jacob’s vision of the heavenly ladder.

Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Haran. When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep. He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. There above it stood the Lord, and he said: "I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you." When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it." He was afraid and said, "How

awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven” (Genesis 28: 10-17).

Jesus indicated that what He had come to do was similar to what had happened to Jacob. While Israel was in a spiritual state of sleep, God had lowered a ladder and His blessings were coming down on the people through Jesus. This ladder story then qualifies as a type or shadow of what God does in Christ. He has opened a window of heaven and has granted man access to His blessings, by His grace. What a beautiful picture. **Are you taking advantage of this ladder? Do you see the reality of the heavenly escalator that is over your life and the life of the Church? If so, what are you doing with that access and those blessings?**