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John 1:19 - 1:51



Gospel of John - Steve Gregg

In this passage, Steve Gregg provides an in-depth analysis of John 1:19-51. He discusses the specific group of people asking questions, who were likely concerned with the arrival of the Messiah. Jesus' relationship with John the Baptist, and his declaration that John is the "greatest among men", is also explored. Finally, Gregg delves into the introduction of Jesus' disciples, including Simon (later known as Peter), Nathaniel, and Philip. Overall, Gregg provides valuable insights and interpretations of these important biblical passages.

Transcript

Well, we have taken a couple of sessions just on what's called the prologue to the Gospel of John, the first 18 verses, but we completed that last time. And what remains of chapter 1 is, of course, much longer than the prologue, but much lighter going. In the prologue, almost every verse was full of mystery and meaning, and I felt required a lot of examination and discussion, whereas now we begin the story, which flows more like a story, at least for a while, until Jesus starts talking.

When Jesus starts talking in some of his longer discourses, it starts to feel like the prologue again, with all these deep subjects that he talks about. But initially, we'll probably have no trouble getting through the remainder of the chapter, although, of course, that's like 30-something verses, but much easier going than the prologue, I'm sure. Now, this is the testimony, verse 19.

This is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, And they asked him, And he said, And he answered no. Then they said to him, And he said, Make straight the way of the Lord, as the prophet Isaiah said. Now those who were sent were of the Pharisees.

And they asked him, John answered them, saying, Now these things were done in Bethabara, beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing, and some manuscripts say Bethany, instead of Bethabara. There are two Bethany's. One is that which is beyond the Jordan, and there is one which is near Jerusalem, where Lazarus and his sisters Mary and

Martha lived.

And the older manuscripts actually have the location in verse 28 listed as Bethany. So this would be the other Bethany. Unless the Textus Receptus retains the original reading, which would be Bethabara.

In any case, it's over along the Jordan River, near the southern end. John was baptizing. And we have a sample here of his witness that he bore for Christ.

Now he said, he was not Elijah. And that he was not the prophet. And he said prior to that, he was not the Christ.

These are the questions that people were asking him. Now a specific group of people were asking him these questions. But the same questions were no doubt on the minds of everybody.

When John appeared preaching, there was a great sense of expectation in Israel that the Messiah would be coming soon. There had been in fact many pretenders who had claimed to be the Messiah, got themselves crucified in the act. Because they weren't the real deal.

But the Jews thought the Messiah would be coming soon because there were prophecies that had indicated the timing. That they were living in the time when they should expect the Messiah, not least of which was the 70 weeks of Daniel chapter 9, which gave an actual number of years that would transpire between the decree of a Persian emperor to let the Jews rebuild their temple in Jerusalem as a starting point, and 483 years from then the Messiah would come. Now that 483 years expired in Jesus' lifetime, and therefore people knew that it was around the right time for the Messiah to appear.

Besides that, before Jacob died, when he prophesied over his sons, he prophesied over Judah that the scepter would not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet until Shiloh comes, and unto him shall the gathering of the people be. In Genesis 49, or yeah, Genesis 49.10, I believe. So he said that the scepter or the rule, the kingly rule, would not depart from Judah until the time the Messiah would come.

Shiloh means him to whom it belongs. That is the one to whom the scepter belongs, a reference to the Messiah. So the scepter would remain in the house of Judah until the time that the Messiah would come to take it.

Well, the scepter had been loosely held in the tribe of Judah from the days of David until the days of Herod. Herod became king by Roman appointment. He became the king of the Jews, and he was not a Jew.

He was part Israelite and part Edomite, but the Edomite part was the thing the Jews were most aware of, and they objected to, and they realized that the scepter now had passed.

They had a king of the Jews, but was not of the tribe of Judah. Some of the rabbis, we're told, said at that time, woe unto us, for the scepter has departed from Judah, and Shiloh has not yet come, referring to Jacob's prediction.

But while Herod was still alive, Jesus was born. But you see, there were a number of things in the Old Testament that indicated to the Jews that they were living at the time when the Messiah ought to show up. And so there were many pretenders who actually proclaimed themselves to be the Messiah, hoping to get people to follow them, and each of them came to shame and usually to crucifixion, because the Romans didn't like messiahs.

A messiah was someone who would rise up to try to deliver the Jews from the Roman overlords. Now, when John the Baptist appears, he's causing a big stir. The other Gospels tell us that all of Judea went out to hear him and to be baptized by him.

This man was causing a much bigger splash than any former pretender at messiahship. And so the first question on everyone's mind was, do you suppose he's the Messiah? And so the priests in Jerusalem, the chief priests send the Pharisees up to inquire. Who do you say you are? Are you the Messiah? That's what the word Christ means, Messiah.

And it says, he confessed, I'm not the Christ. And they asked, what then, are you Elijah? Now, why would they ask that? Well, for one thing, John probably looked a lot like Elijah. He wore a hairy garment with a leather belt.

Now, leather belts were not as common in their style as ours. They wore cloth sashes around their robes, not leather belts. A leather belt was usually worn by a military man.

It was not a normal article of clothing. John, however, wore a leather belt and a garment of hair. And so did Elijah the prophet, interestingly enough.

Also, Elijah and John were apparently both Nazarites. We know John was, because in Luke chapter 1, the angel told Zacharias, who became the father later of John the Baptist, that his son would be a Nazarite. He didn't use the term Nazarite, but he said he would drink no wine, which meant he'd be a Nazarite.

Everyone drank wine, except them. And that would mean he never cut his hair or beard. Elijah also was almost certainly a Nazarite.

He was described in the only description ever given of him as a hairy man. And so Elijah and John had a similar resemblance to each other and a similar demeanor. John was out there preaching that people should repent.

That was essentially Elijah's message in his day, too. In fact, we're told in Luke chapter 1, the angel told Zacharias that his son John would come in the spirit and power of Elijah to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the wicked to the disobedient to the

wisdom of the just. And this was an echo of a prophecy in Malachi chapter 4, verses 5 and 6, the last prophecy, in fact, in the Old Testament.

In fact, the last words in the Old Testament. Where God said, Behold, I send Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I strike the earth with a curse. So this coming of Elijah had been predicted in Malachi.

In fact, it was the last thing God had said before he stopped sending prophets to Israel. 400 years had passed, no prophets had come, and now John the Baptist comes. And he looks a lot like Elijah.

So it's not surprising they say, Are you Elijah? The Jews, by the way, fully expected the original Elijah to return. He had not died, after all. Sometimes people think that the expectation of the return of Elijah suggests a belief in reincarnation.

New Agers and people who say that the Bible teaches reincarnation will sometimes bring this up. But even if the Bible did indicate that the original Elijah would return, it would not be a reincarnation because before you can be reincarnated, you have to die. And Elijah is one of the few people who didn't die.

It would just be a return, not a reincarnation. But John said he was not Elijah. And then they went on.

But we can't go on very quickly because most of us are aware that Jesus said something about John and about Elijah that stands somewhat in tension with John's denial. They said, Are you Elijah? He said, No. Short answer.

And they went on to the next question. But we, some of us, have read the other Gospels and are aware that Jesus seemed to talk as if John was Elijah, twice. In Matthew chapter 11, when John was put in prison and had sent messengers to Jesus, and Jesus sent the message back to John, then Jesus began to speak to the crowds and eulogized John, who would soon be dead.

He was not dead yet. He said, What did you go out to see? Jesus said, When you went out to see John the Baptist, what did you go out to see? Verse 8, Matthew 11, 8. A man clothed in soft garments. Indeed, those who wear soft clothing are in the king's houses, not out living in the desert, standing in, you know, waste state in the river.

But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I saved you, and more than a prophet. For this is he of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you. Now, by the way, that's from Malachi chapter 3, just one chapter prior to the prediction that God would send Elijah.

And, in retrospect, Christians can know that both predictions in Malachi are of the same

thing. They're both about John. John was to be the messenger sent before the face of the Lord.

Then, in verse 11, Jesus says, Surely, I say to you, among those born of women, there is not risen one greater than John the Baptist, but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. And I believe this simply means that John and all the persons prior to the new covenant being instituted were, they were, they were born of women, but they were not born again. I don't believe they could be born again, in all likelihood, until after the resurrection of Christ.

At least, John did not live to see that phase. He did not live to see Pentecost. He did not live to see the kingdom come with power.

And, therefore, John did not have the opportunity to enter the kingdom. He had the opportunity and the privilege of announcing it. John's message was the kingdom of God is at hand.

But he died at the hands of Herod before he could himself become part of it. So, Jesus said, Of those living and dying, those born of women who lived and died before the kingdom comes into being, there's none that outstrips John in virtue and in importance. But, the kingdom of God is even so much greater that even the least person who is in there has a higher status than him, at least a higher function than him.

But then he says, in verse 12, From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John, and if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

Now, Jesus said, If you are willing to receive it, John is Elijah who is to come. Now, who is to come means who is predicted. Where is he predicted? In Malachi.

That's the only place he's predicted. And, therefore, the prophecy of Malachi 4 is alluded to here. That Elijah that is expected, the one that Malachi predicted, the one who is supposed to come, John is him.

If you are willing to receive it only. Now, why would that be a condition for John being Elijah? Well, because the angel told Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, that John would come in the spirit and the power of Elijah. He is not Elijah, but he is, in fact, the fulfillment of the prophecy.

What Jesus is saying is, if you are expecting the same Elijah who was here before, in the days of Ahab and Jezebel, to reappear now, 700 years later in Palestine, then you're not understanding what Malachi was talking about. And, no surprise, the Jews rarely did understand what the prophets were talking about. That's why Jesus had to, at a later date, open the disciples' understanding so they might understand the scriptures.

The rabbis couldn't do it for them. The rabbis didn't understand themselves. It was Jesus who understood the scriptures.

And he knew that some of them had a spiritual meaning. When Malachi said, God says, I'm going to send Elijah, he didn't mean the historic man Elijah. He meant a spiritual Elijah, one who would come in the spirit of Elijah, and he would be John the Baptist.

But that's a spiritual fulfillment. Now, Jesus said, if you're willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come. You know, Paul made an interesting statement using similar wording about being able to receive such things.

In 1 Corinthians 2, verse 14, 1 Corinthians 2, verse 14, Paul said, but the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, nor can he know them because they are spiritually discerned. The things of the Spirit of God have got to be discerned by spiritual people. They are spiritually discerned.

Natural men cannot receive them. The coming of Elijah in the person of John the Baptist was a spiritual thing because Elijah and John were not the same person, but he came in the spirit of Elijah. It was a spiritual fulfillment of Malachi.

And Jesus said, if you are willing to receive it, well, a natural man cannot receive spiritual things, but if you are spiritual enough to receive this, Jesus said, then you can see John is the fulfillment of what Malachi predicted, the coming of Elijah. By the way, this came up again in Matthew. In Matthew chapter 17, after the disciples, a few of them, three of them, had seen Moses and Elijah appearing with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration and then disappearing.

As they were coming down the hill, in verse 10, Matthew 17, 10, the disciples asked Jesus, saying, why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first? Well, there's an answer to that. They read Malachi and took it literally. Malachi said Elijah would come first.

That's why the scribes said Elijah would come first. But Jesus said, Elijah truly is coming first and will restore all things. But I say to you that Elijah has already come.

And they did not know him, but did to him whatever they wished. Likewise, the Son of Man is about to suffer at their hands. And it says the disciples understood that he spoke to them of John the Baptist.

He said Elijah already has come and they didn't know it. Why? They couldn't receive it. They were not spiritual.

When they asked John, are you Elijah? They were not asking, are you spiritually Elijah? They were asking, are you Elijah the Tishbite? The man who went up in the flaming chariot 700 years ago. Are you that guy? And John said, no, he wasn't. He was not Elijah.

But in truth he had come in the spirit of Elijah and in truth he was the fulfillment of the prediction that Elijah would come. The very prediction that got the Jews wondering if he was Elijah. They were misunderstanding its nature.

He knew how they meant it and they didn't understand it correctly and he denied that he was what they thought. He's not Elijah as they are thinking of it. But he was, if you can receive it, Elijah, according to Jesus.

So there's sort of a tension between what John says here on the one hand and what Jesus said. But if you are a Christian, you can accept the fact that John is Elijah. But if you're a Jew expecting the historical Elijah to reappear again, that isn't him.

John's a different guy. He's not Elijah, the prophet from the past. And then they said in John 1.21, Are you the prophet? And he answered no.

Well, who is the prophet? If they said, Are you a prophet? He would have to say, Yes, I'm a prophet, of course. Jesus said, Did you come out to see a prophet? Yes, I'm more than a prophet. John is a prophet.

But is he the prophet? Well, what do you mean the prophet? Well, this is a reference to Deuteronomy 18. When Moses was near his own time of departure and knew there would be a power vacuum and a spiritual leadership vacuum left in Israel by his departure, not entirely because Joshua would take up some of that, but he knew the time would come when Israel would be lacking in any spiritual leadership. He warned them not to follow soothsayers and other people, but he said God would raise up prophets.

In Deuteronomy 18, verse 15, Moses said, The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren, him you shall hear. And later on down in verse 18, Deuteronomy 18.18, God says, I will raise up for them a prophet like you, Moses, from among their brethren, and will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. Now in one sense, God did raise up a prophet a little bit like Moses and Joshua.

Joshua did a lot of the same things Moses did and he did come to replace him, but Joshua was not the prophet referred to here. And the reason we know it is because almost certainly Joshua wrote the final words of Deuteronomy after Moses died. The last words in the book of Deuteronomy were written after Moses died.

And the final thing it says, in Deuteronomy 34, verse 10, But since then, that is, since the death of Moses, there has not arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face. So, whoever wrote this wrote sometime after Moses died. Because he speaks of Moses' death and says, Since then, since Moses died, there hasn't arisen a prophet like Moses.

Obviously, there was some kind of passage of time because he wouldn't talk about since

Moses died, we've been without a prophet. But notice the prediction was a prophet like Moses would be sent and now, after Moses has been dead a while, somebody writes, there hasn't that prophet shown up yet. Not that prophet like Moses.

And the Jews remembered that that prediction existed. So, there was a prophet par excellence, not just one of the prophets, not just another prophet, but the prophet like Moses. When they said to John the Baptist, Okay, are you the prophet then? Well, he denied that too.

And they couldn't think of any other, you know, great spiritual dignitaries to ask him about. They said, well then, if you're not any of those guys, who are you? Why are you baptizing? What are you about? What do you say about yourself? We need to give an answer to the people who sent us. You're not helping us out here.

You know, we've asked all the relevant questions we thought would make sense. You don't claim to be the Christ or Elijah or the prophet. Who are you that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself? He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness.

He quotes from Isaiah chapter 40. This passage in Isaiah 40 is also quoted in other gospels about John. So, he didn't only say about himself, but other gospel writers said it about him.

This passage, it's in Isaiah chapter 40, verses 6 through 8, is about John, a voice crying in the wilderness, make straight the way of the Lord. And he talks about, you know, he's there to prepare people to receive the arrival of the King, the Messiah. Now, in verse 25, they asked him, saying, well, why then do you baptize if you're not the Christ nor Elijah nor the prophet? Now, he didn't say he wasn't anybody important.

He had just identified himself with the voice of one crying in the wilderness that Isaiah spoke of. But they passed over that. They didn't know who to identify that with.

So, they said, well, it seems like the really important people were expecting, the Messiah and Elijah and the prophet. If you're not any of them, what are you baptizing for? Now, baptizing, the word baptize means immersing. And John was immersing people in water as an emblem of their repentance and probably, although it's never stated, probably with the idea that this is washing them from their guilt because they have repented.

It's like giving them a bath. The Jews practiced this when Gentiles wanted to become Jewish. When a Gentile became a Jew, he was called a proselyte.

We would say a convert. They would say proselyte. A Gentile could become a Jew.

He'd have to be circumcised and keep the law of Moses. But at some point in Israel's later history, later than Moses, in other words, they adopted procedures that Moses did

not assign. One of them was they began to baptize proselytes.

So, when a man who was a Gentile wanted to be a Jew, he'd have to be circumcised and go through whatever Moses required. And also, they would baptize him. Now, we have documentation of the Jews doing this at least as early as the 2nd century AD, which is, of course, after the time of Christ and after the time of John.

We don't have documentation before that, but they may well have been doing that for centuries earlier. And if, indeed, the Jews were already practicing baptism, a baptism in water of proselytes, what they were saying is, these Gentiles, of course, are filthy, unacceptable people. They need to be clean.

They can become one of us, but they've got to clean up their act because they're not really clean people. But if John was now preaching to the Jews that they need to be baptized, he's essentially saying, you're really not better than the Gentiles. You need it as much as they do.

You're not a superior, more righteous group of people than they. If you're going to get right with God, you need to be baptized. As you would think a Gentile needs to be, God thinks you need to be cleaned up that way.

You need to repent. Now, it's possible that that's what it meant. We don't know for sure.

It is the case that in the Septuagint, the word baptized, baptizo, which means immerse, is used in the story of Naaman the Syrian, who came to Elisha the prophet because he was a leper. And Elisha said, go dip yourself three times in the river Jordan, and you'll be clean. The word dip there in the Septuagint is baptized.

Go immerse yourself. Go baptize yourself three times. And when he did, he came up clean.

And this is no doubt an image of the sinner who's got the leprosy of sin eating his soul up. And when he comes to Christ and gets cleansed, he's cleansed. He's clean.

He's no longer a leper. And dipping in the Jordan was actually the ritual that Elisha recommended. But it wasn't a regular practice yet.

But it has these roots, this practice of dipping. And John was dipping in the Jordan here, people. He could have been basically saying by his action, but without words, but implying, you guys are lepers yourselves.

Like Naaman the Syrian, the Gentile, who Elisha said should dip himself in the river Jordan. I think you people need to dip in the river Jordan. I think you people are lepers morally.

I think you people are unclean like that Gentile. And so whatever it is, whatever the

meaning they were taking from it, they knew that he was making some kind of a significant statement because he intended to baptize everyone in the country. And they said, well, why are you doing this? What authorizes you to do something like this, with this kind of significance? You're not the prophet, you're not Elijah.

And John answered them saying, I baptize with water. And he says this as if to say, that's really not that significant compared to one who is standing among you, whom you do not know. It is he who coming after me is preferred before me, whose sandal strap I'm not worthy to lose.

In other words, I'm not worthy even be the lowest servant to him. These things were done in Bethabara. Now, the other Gospels tell us that John's comment goes a little further.

He didn't just say, I baptize with water, but there's one coming after me. He said, the one coming after me is going to baptize in the Holy Spirit and with fire. That's what the other Gospels record John saying.

At least Matthew records the part about fire. So, we know that that was said. John has left some of that out here.

But the next day, in verse 29, John saw Jesus coming toward him. Now, what's the timing of this? We know Jesus came to John to get baptized, but we're going to find that on this day we're reading about, Jesus doesn't come to get baptized. He comes and John reminisces about having baptized him.

John saw Jesus coming and said, behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. This is he of whom I said, after me comes a man who is preferred before me, for he was before me. I did not know him, but that he should be revealed to Israel.

Therefore, I came baptizing with water. And John bore witness saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and he remained upon him. I did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining on him, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.

And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God. Now this story of the baptism of Jesus is familiar to us from the other Gospels, but the difference is, the other Gospels record it happening. That is, in the course of the narrative, Matthew, Mark, and Luke tell us, Jesus did this, then he came to John, he got baptized, and so forth.

We read the story of the baptism as it occurs. Here we're reading about John reporting it as a past event. Now what do we know about the chronology of the early life of Christ, or early ministry of Christ? Well, the other Gospels tell us that Jesus began his public career by getting baptized by John.

But immediately after that, he went 40 days into the wilderness to fast and to be tempted by the devil. Now John is saying the baptism is now in the past, so the temptation must be too. This timing, if we want to fit it in the proper place with the other Gospels, must be after the baptism, because John is reporting the baptism as a past event.

And, since Jesus was immediately tempted in the wilderness after the baptism, that must have happened already too. So this must be at least six weeks after the baptism of Jesus. Now one thing that's interesting to know is that the other Gospels, all three of them, report the baptism of Jesus and the temptation of Jesus.

But after that, the only thing they report next is that Jesus went into Galilee when John was put in prison. So, if you're reading Matthew, Mark, or Luke, you're going to get the baptism of Jesus, the temptation of Jesus, and the next thing you read of is when John was put in prison, Jesus went to Galilee. Well, John's not in prison here.

But the baptism and the temptation have taken place, so there's between the temptation of Jesus and his going to Galilee upon the imprisonment of John, there was still some stuff that happened that the other Gospels have simply passed over without comment about. John doesn't pass over without comment. John's Gospel fills in the gap.

And that fill-in material is in the material we're reading right now as well as chapter 2 and 3 and 4. In other words, there's some things Jesus did that the other Gospels skip over without comment. And John's Gospel doesn't want to leave them out. For example, in this section, we have four successive days described.

There's the one that is described in verses 19 through 28, and then verse 29 says, the next day, so here's a second day in the sequence, and then in verse 35, again the next day, so here's a third day in the sequence, and then verse 43, the following day, Jesus wanted to go to Galilee. So there's four days here. But this going to Galilee is not the same going to Galilee that the other Gospels mention, because John is not here put in prison yet.

In fact, if you'll turn a couple chapters over, chapter 3 and verse 24, John 3, 24, it says, for John had not yet been thrown into prison. Now, since the other Gospels pick up the story when John is thrown into prison, all these chapters are happening before the other Gospel reports even start their storytelling. This time before John was put in prison, but when Jesus was doing these things in these few chapters, is sometimes called the year of obscurity for Jesus.

Because when John went to prison, and Jesus went to Galilee, that began his great Galilean ministry, which lasted in excess of a year. And we usually call that the year of popularity. After that, there was a year of opposition.

And at the end of that, he died. There's usually three years of the ministry of Jesus that are assumed to have taken place. There is some dispute over the actual length of Jesus' ministry, but there was at least a year of popularity in Galilee, followed by what appears to be at least a year of opposition after that.

But this that we're reading of in John chapter 1, chapter 2, chapter 3, and chapter 4, is previous to the year of popularity in Galilee. This is a year of obscurity. Jesus is doing things, but he's keeping a low profile, pretty much.

We read mainly about private conversations, one with Nicodemus after dark, one with the woman at the well alone in Samaria. Jesus has begun to minister, but he hasn't begun to really make a big splash. He's more or less obscure.

And even in these days that we're reading about in John chapter 1, the next day and the next day, Jesus is not really doing or saying too much. He's not calling attention to himself, though John calls attention to him. Jesus has come back, apparently, from the 40 days temptation, and upon doing so, he has returned to the place from which he left, that is, where John was baptizing.

He had been in the crowd, baptized by John. He went away into the wilderness alone for 40 days, came back to the place where John was baptizing, and John says, there he is, I see him, I recognize him. I remember baptizing him.

Six weeks ago, as I recall, I didn't really know him, but when he came, and I baptized him, I saw the Spirit come down upon him like a dove, and the one who sent me to baptize said, the one you see that happen with is the one who's going to baptize people with the Holy Spirit. And so he says in verse 34, and I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God. Now, here we have another problem.

We have many times that we find what seem to be conflicts between what John records in his gospel and what the other gospels record. Because you'll recall, the other gospels, Matthew, for example, tell us that when Jesus came to John to be baptized initially, John said, why are you coming to me to be baptized? You should baptize me. And Jesus said, no, sufficient, let it be sufficient to fulfill all righteousness.

In other words, John instantly knew Jesus did not need to be baptized when he saw him. He instantly knew that rather, John should be baptized by Jesus, if anything. So why does he here say he didn't know Jesus until the Spirit came down on him, which was, of course, after he was baptized? It seems like John is here saying he didn't know Jesus was anybody special until after he baptized him.

Whereas the other gospels say he knew he was someone special before he baptized him and even raised an objection about it beforehand. So what would we make of that? Well, certainly John would have known who Jesus was beforehand. He was a relative for crying

out loud.

They were cousins. It's almost impossible to imagine that all those things that happened to Mary and Elizabeth, the mothers of these two boys, had not been the buzz throughout the whole family and discussed on a regular basis while John was growing up. He certainly knew that he had an unusual circumstance and significance of his birth.

He certainly would have known that his cousin Jesus had also. It's not like Jesus would be a stranger to him completely. There is a great likelihood they'd even seen each other as youngsters, although John at some point in his young age went out and lived in the desert away and might not have seen Jesus anymore after that.

But the point is, it's not like he had no knowledge whatsoever that his cousin Jesus was somebody special, maybe even that he was the Messiah. But we have to remember that the Jews did not have a fully developed messianic theology like we do. And ours is based on New Testament revelation that had not yet been given.

They were working from sketchy and partial revelation from the Old Testament and from traditions of the rabbis. Notice, for example, that the Pharisees did not think of the Christ as the same person as the prophet. We do.

In the New Testament we're told that that prophet like Moses, that Moses predicted, is Jesus. It says so in Acts chapter 3 and in Acts chapter 7. That prophet Moses predicted is Jesus and the Messiah is Jesus. But when the Pharisees were asking John questions, they treated it like they were separate characters.

They weren't sure. Are you the Christ? No. Are you Elijah? No.

Are you the prophet? No. Now if they thought the prophet and the Christ were the same thing, they would have just said, oh, sorry, we already asked that. But the messianic hope was vague in the mind of the Jews.

In fact, they had noticed that some passages in the Old Testament described a Messiah that would suffer and other passages described a Messiah that would reign. And while there were more than one opinion among the Jews about this, a very common opinion at the time in the rabbis' teaching was that there would be maybe two Messiahs. One, the suffering Messiah, named Messiah Ben-Joseph, they called him, and one who would reign, who they called Messiah Ben-David.

It was just a theory. But they're trying to sort out what looked like the mixed messages the Old Testament was giving about the Messiah. They didn't have a clear picture.

Some thought he'd be a mere man like David. Others thought he'd be a divine being that float down from the sky. They didn't know who the Messiah would be.

And John was a Jew. Sure, he was a prophet. But the prophets only knew more than other people insofar as God gave them direct revelation about it.

Prophets weren't people who walked around knowing everything. Prophets were ordinary people who didn't know anything special unless God revealed it to them. And if John had not previously been told that the Messiah would be the Son of God, he might not know that.

He knew before he baptized Jesus that Jesus was something, that he was his superior, very possibly that he was the Messiah. But what he testifies here to is, in verse 34, that he's the Son of God. That's what he didn't know until he baptized him and the Spirit came down.

Why? Well, he doesn't say why here, but here's the other gospel supplement. When the Spirit came down on Jesus, a voice from heaven spoke to John and said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I'm well pleased. That apparently came as a revelation to John.

I didn't know he was the Son of God. I mean, I knew he was somebody. I knew he was someone more important than me.

But I didn't know what I know now. Having baptized him, when the Spirit came down, I can now testify to something I couldn't have earlier known and testified. And that's he's the Son of God.

Because that information came to him when the Spirit came down and the voice spoke from heaven. So when John says, I didn't know him until I baptized him, he doesn't mean I was totally, you know, unaware that I was dealing with anyone other than an ordinary man. Of course he knew that Jesus was not an ordinary man.

But what he discovered and what he could now testify to after baptism was he's the Son of God. I heard God say so himself. God said, this is my beloved Son.

So this is the testimony John gives, that Jesus is not only special, but he's God's Son. Verse 35, Again the next day, John stood with two of his disciples. And looking at Jesus as he walked, he said, Behold the Lamb of God.

Now, the previous day he had said, Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Maybe his disciples were not present at the time when he said that. But now they see John identify Jesus by that expression.

And the two disciples heard him speak. And they followed Jesus. Then Jesus turned and seeing them following, said to them, What do you seek? And they said to him, Rabbi, which is to say when translated teacher, where are you staying? And he said to them, Come and see.

They came and saw where he was staying and remained with him that day. Now it was about the tenth hour. If this was Jewish reckoning, the tenth hour would be four in the afternoon.

If it was Roman reckoning, it would be ten in the morning. And there is some dispute as to whether John in his gospel used Roman or Jewish reckoning. And there is some evidence, because he does mention several times the time of day in his gospel.

And arguments can be made from one passage or another that he is using the Roman or he is using the Jewish reckoning. It was either ten in the morning or four in the afternoon because the tenth hour would be one of those two depending on the reckoning. One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.

He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, We have found the Messiah, which is translated the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus. Now when Jesus looked at him, he said, You are Simon, the son of Jonah.

You shall be called Cephas, which is translated a stone. Now, this day there is a number of things to point out. This day John is standing with a couple of his disciples when he sees Jesus walking by.

Jesus seems to be frequenting the area, but he is not preaching. He is not healing. He has just come back from being tempted and maybe just biding his time and waiting to see what God has next for him.

It is obvious that Jesus was in no hurry to get things done. In fact, it has always been interesting to me, instructive really, that Jesus only lived about 33 years. And he had the most important mission in the world to accomplish that anyone has ever lived.

And yet he spent the first 30 of those 33 years working with wood. You know, not preaching, not doing miracles, not spreading the kingdom of God. He spent ten-elevenths of his lifetime just working in a carpenter shop without anyone thinking anything special about him at all.

Now, if I were him, and I knew I was the Messiah, and I knew, maybe I didn't know how young I would die, but even if I knew that I was only going to live a human lifetime and no more, and I was 29 years old, and I'm saying, why am I still building chairs? And why am I still carving ox yokes when I'm the one who is supposed to be informing the world that the kingdom of God is here? I mean, 30 years seems like a long time to a 30-year-old. It's a lifetime. And yet Jesus was patiently waiting for the right time.

The Son of God was the one who had him on his schedule. And Jesus didn't rush things. Even after he got baptized and was announced to be the Son of God, obviously his ministry is now beginning.

He goes out and he's tempted. Things are happening now. He's left the carpenter shop.

He's out doing spiritual stuff. And yet he's, several days later, he's just kind of walking around in the crowd. What's he doing? I don't know.

Listening to John preach? Checking out the crowd? Taking things in? We don't read that Jesus had anything to say publicly on these occasions. John sees him and points, John's doing all the talking. And he says, Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

Obviously a reference to a sacrificial lamb, sacrificed for sin. So right there at the very beginning of his ministry, before he even begins to, before he says a word, Jesus is announced that his death is going to be significant. Else the word lamb wouldn't mean anything.

A sacrificial lamb isn't of any use until it's sacrificed, until it dies. And so that he's going to take away the sins of the world, that he's going to die a ransom for the world, is one of the first things that's announced about him before he's even opened his mouth publicly. And the two disciples of John that hear this, were later told, not early on, but later in the story, were told one of them was Andrew.

We're not told who the other one was by name. We know it wasn't Andrew's brother, Simon, because he had to run and get him. So Andrew and Simon are spoken of by name, but the other disciple is not.

But this becomes a pattern for a certain disciple in the book of John. There's a certain disciple who is never named, but is often spoken of. And almost certainly the second disciple in this case, who's not named, would be that one.

And that's the author of the book himself, John, the beloved disciple. There were two disciples of John the Baptist. One was Andrew, and we're just left in suspense who the other one was.

As if we don't need to know that, that's not important. Because what's interesting is that Andrew went and got his brother. We lose sight entirely of the second disciple of John who isn't Andrew.

But that it would be John seems very in keeping with the whole pattern of the book to make reference frequently to a disciple, and sometimes calling him the disciple whom Jesus loved, without giving his name, and it is the author. We know it's the author because in the very last chapter in 21, when it says that Peter looked back and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following him, then in the last verse it says, this is the disciple who testified of these things and wrote these things. So this unnamed disciple is the author himself.

And no doubt this is him, although it's not made clear that it is. It's logical that it would be because we know from the other Gospels, but not from John, that Andrew and Simon were brothers and that they were partners in a fishing business, two other brothers, James and John. That they would be associated in business and associated, as they are here, would be reasonable.

I mean, they're friends. And this would tell us then that these fishermen, before Jesus called them from their fishing, were already men who had been disciples of John the Baptist. These men were maybe, we might think coarse, uneducated, maybe we even think unreligious, fishermen, outdoorsmen, but they had a heart for God, as it seemed, by the fact that they responded first to John the Baptist before Jesus was on the scene.

And when John pointed to Jesus, they followed him next. They were part of the Jewish remnant. Now, this raises another interesting question in relation to the other Gospels, because in the other Gospels we read of Simon and Andrew and James and John.

We read of them following Jesus too, but it's not like this story. They're fishing. In fact, in Luke's version of the story, they've just finished fishing all night, and Jesus is looking for a boat to preach from to escape the crowds in Galilee, and he asks if he can use their boat.

So, they actually take him and their boat out a little ways. He preaches for the rest of the day, and then the crowds are sent away, and Jesus tells them to put down their nets for a catch of fish. They say, well, there aren't any fish today.

We tried all night, there weren't any. And Jesus says, well, just try it. And so they do, and they catch a miraculous catch of fish.

Peter falls down before Jesus and says, I'm a sinful man, depart from me, Lord. And Jesus says, don't be afraid. From now on, you're going to catch men.

And then he calls them to follow him, and all four of these men leave their nets and follow him. This story is very familiar to us, because it's in Matthew and Mark and Luke. But these are the same guys, and this isn't the same story.

But once again, Matthew is recording things that happened after John was put in prison, clearly he's not in prison here. He's on the shore of the lake, or to the rivers, and there's the Lamb of God. In Matthew, Mark, and Luke, the story takes place in Galilee.

This is not Galilee. It takes place later, after John's in prison. He's not in prison now.

This is an earlier occasion. It's not the same story, but it is the same men. On this occasion, these men became aware of Jesus.

They even became, we would say, believers, because we see Andrew going to his

brother and saying, we found the Messiah. Well, if you believe Jesus is the Messiah, doesn't that make you a Christian? I mean, they're basically believers now. And they spend the day with Jesus.

We don't read that they followed him after this. They just spent the day with him, the rest of the day. What did they do after that? Well, it would seem, they probably went back to their fishing.

We don't find here that Jesus asked them to follow him permanently. They became acquainted. The only thing, he did say, you know, come and see.

But, you know, they asked where he was staying. He said, come and see. That's the only invitation they received, to go home with him that day.

And what they talked about all day, it'd be very interesting to know. We don't know how the conversation went, but it was their first acquaintance with him. But apparently, he did not at that time, invite them or ask them to become his, to accompany him in his travels.

And so, it would appear they went back to their homes, and they fished as they had all their lives. And at a much later time, some say as much as maybe a year later, Jesus appears on the lake shore and says, come follow me, and they come. As a youth reading those stories, I thought it was so strange.

This stranger Jesus walks up. These guys leave their business just because he says, follow me. I mean, why would they be impressed with him enough to do that? Well, he was not a stranger.

They had followed John. John had commended Jesus as the Lamb of God. He had testified of Jesus.

They had met Jesus and been impressed with him already for some time. And now, he invites them to follow him. Perhaps all that time in between, they were wishing they could, but he hadn't invited them.

Or maybe not. Maybe it never occurred to them to follow him. Or that following him was something he wanted people to do.

Apparently, at this point in time, when they met him on this day, he had never asked anyone to follow him, and maybe he wasn't doing so at that point. The next day, he did. Not them.

But the next day, he asked Philip to follow him. And as far as we know, Philip is the first man that Jesus invited to be a disciple, to accompany him in his travels. And these fishermen that he met on this day before, they were called at a later date to follow him.

Their experience then would be like that of many Christians who have come to know Jesus. They believe he's the Messiah. They have no doubts about that.

That's part of the mental furniture of their life. As they go about their lives, there's a Messiah out there. His name is Jesus.

It hasn't changed our lives much. We're still doing the same things we were doing before. But then a time comes later in life when they hear more of a call.

We could say a call to discipleship, or maybe a call to preach, or a call to something. And there's another step they take of commitment. I think that we might give people the wrong impression if we give them the impression that everyone who's a Christian should be preaching, should be leaving their home and traveling around like an itinerant preacher or something.

Jesus doesn't call everyone to do that. These men were eventually called to do that, but not on this occasion. They were believers.

If they had died, they would have died knowing Jesus is the Messiah, and they would be saved, of course. But there would be another step, actually, in their life later. Maybe they weren't ready now, and Jesus knew it.

Or maybe he just had his own time scheduled, and this wasn't the time. We don't know. But he meets them, and he meets Simon for the first time.

Now, Simon is a name that is possessed by many biblical characters. In the Gospels themselves, there's this Simon. There's also another of the twelve named Simon, Simon the Zealot.

And there's Simon a Pharisee. Jesus eats in Simon's house on one occasion. That's when the sinful woman comes and washes his feet with her tears and wipes them with her hair.

He was in the home of a Pharisee named Simon. On another occasion, when Mary broke the alabaster jar of ointment over Jesus' head, Jesus was in the home of another Simon. Simon the leper, he's called.

And there are other Simons. Simon the magician. In Acts chapter 8, they encounter.

The reason a name like Simon was so common, and there were many names that were very common, is that one of the tribes of Israel was the tribe of Simeon, and Simon was a form of the name Simeon. And so there were also a lot of Judas, named after the tribe of Judah. Judas Iscariot, for example.

And Judas the brother of Jesus, James and Judas. Judas was the Greek form of Judah. So there's a lot of Judes or Judas, after the tribe of Judah.

There's a lot of Simons after the tribe of Simeon. There are a lot of Jameses, because James is the Greek form of Jacob. And Jacob was Israel's name in the Old Testament.

So a lot of these names, we're going to see, even the author is John, and yet he's talking about another John, John the Baptist. Now I'm not sure why the name John was quite so popular. But I think it's the same as Jonah.

Jonah the prophet. In fact, Jesus refers to Simon Peter as the son of Jonah. That would be the son of John, another John.

In fact, where he says son of Jonah in verse 42, the Alexandrian text says son of John. But he sees Simon for the first time, and Simon has heard about Jesus from his brother. He's been told that Jesus is the Christ.

Simon comes out of curiosity, and Jesus, we only have one thing recorded that Jesus said to him, you're now going to be called Cephas. Now, changing his name is an exercise of authority over somebody. Parents name their children.

Adam named the animals. Giving a name to someone meant that you were exercising an authority over them that is exhibited in your right to tell them what they'll be called. And God would often change people's names.

He told Abram, from now on you call yourself Abraham. You call Sarai, Sarah. He said, Jacob, you're going to be Israel now.

People's names were frequently changed by God. And now Jesus is acting like he's got that kind of authority over this man who's a relative stranger. He meets him and says, your name's Simon? Not from now on call yourself Cephas.

Now Cephas is an Aramaic word. That's the language they were speaking. It means a stone.

We're more familiar with the Greek form of this name which is Petras or Peter. Peter is Greek. Cephas or Cephais is Aramaic.

They are the same word. Just like Messiah and Christ are the same word in different languages. Messiah means the anointed one in Hebrew.

Christ means the anointed one in Greek. Cephas means a stone in Aramaic. Peter means a stone in Greek.

And so he's sometimes from this point on he is called Simon. Sometimes he's called Peter. Sometimes he's called Cephas in later writings.

Paul refers to him as Cephas in his writings. And sometimes he's called Simon Peter or some mix of these things. Actually once he's even called Simeon in Acts chapter 15.

So this man is called by a lot of names after this. But his given name was Simon. And then Jesus called him a stone.

Now this must have seemed strange. Not just that Jesus would be so brassy as to change his name. But that he'd change it to such a name.

A stone? That's not really a proper name. It is now. There's a lot of Peters now.

But that's because of the Bible. That's because Jesus called this guy stone. And in Greek that's Peter or Petros.

So that became a name. But I think at the time it probably wasn't a proper name. It's like if I said, so I'm going to call you River.

Or I'm going to call you Star. Or I'm going to call you Leaf. Or something like that.

Actually some of those things are used as names, aren't they? We can thank the hippie movement for a lot of that. Rainbow. Moonbeam.

But calling a guy rock is probably innovative. And why did he call him rock? He doesn't explain that here. In fact I don't know if he ever truly explains it outright.

But there's a strong hint of it. When at Caesarea Philippi. Much later.

Near the beginning of the end of Jesus' ministry. He takes Peter. And James and John and the other disciples.

And he goes to Caesarea Philippi. And there he says, who do men say I am? And they say, some are saying you're Elijah. Some say you're the prophet.

Some say you're someone else. And Jesus says to them, who do you say I am? And Peter speaks. And he says, you're the Christ, the Son of the living God.

Well this is essentially the same thing that his brother Andrew had told him. Way back on this occasion. But Jesus was impressed that Peter said it on this occasion.

He said, blessed are you Simon Bar-Jonah. Or Simon, son of John. Bar means son of in Hebrew.

For flesh and blood has not revealed this unto you. But my Father in heaven. And he says, and you are Peter the rock.

And upon this rock, I will build my church. And the gates of hell will not prevail against it. Now, that may be why he named him rock on this occasion.

Because he intended for him to become part of a foundation. A foundation stone. You see, the church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets.

Jesus Christ being the chief cornerstone, Paul says in Ephesians. And even Peter himself. In 1 Peter, when he's writing 1 Peter chapter 2 verse 5. He says, we are living stones built up a spiritual house.

So apparently this idea of being stone. Has to do with being stone like a building material. Like the stone of a foundation or the stone of a house being built.

And so, that must be the idea that Jesus was trying to get across. Whether he explained it that way at this point or not until later, we don't know. I also think it's interesting that on that later occasion at Caesarea Philippi.

When Peter said to Jesus, you're the Christ, the son of the living God. That Jesus said, flesh and blood did not reveal that to you. Well really, he did first hear it from flesh and blood.

His own flesh and blood, his own brother, Andrew told him that. It wasn't new information. It was very old information.

Before he ever laid eyes on Jesus, he had heard that Jesus was the Messiah. We read of it here. So why, a couple of years later, when Peter says, you're the Messiah.

Jesus says, wow, you didn't learn that from man, you learned that from God. Well, because it is entirely possible for you to hear things about God and about Jesus from men. And not have the revelation of them being true.

Almost every child raised in a Christian home. Has heard that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah. But in some cases it makes no impact on them.

And if it does, it will only be because at some later point in their life, the father reveals that same thing to them. What you hear from the mouth of men alone, and not from God, is mere head knowledge. It's mere theology.

But there comes a time in the lives of many, including many who have known the theology for a long time, that God lights that on fire. That God gives the revelation so that in their heart they say, wow, I know God. I don't just know about God, I know Him.

I know He's the Christ. It's like John the Baptist knew Jesus was somebody special, but at that time he said, wow, now I know He's the Son of God. It's like it was revealed by the Father.

The Father said, this is my Son. John got a revelation. And so did Peter, somewhere along the line, got a revelation from the Father.

And Jesus said, you're not saying that because your brother told you this. You're not saying this because some flesh and blood told it to you. You are saying it because you got a divine revelation about this.

And there is that necessary step to take in a relationship with Christ. Not just hearing from somebody that He's the Christ, but hearing from God. Having God speak to your heart and reveal that to you.

That's what we also find in chapter 4 when the woman at the well brings her friends out to meet Jesus. After two days with them, they say to her, now we believe in Him. And not because you told us, but because we've heard Him with our own ears.

And we know that He's the Savior of the world. I mean, we heard you tell us that. And obviously we thought there was some credence there because we came up at your invitation to hear Him.

But now, having heard Him for ourselves, we know. And there's a difference between believing in Christ and knowing that the things you believe are true. You believe them by hearing of them from somebody and finding them credible.

You know it when God reveals it to you. See, Christianity is not just the adoption of beliefs about God or about Jesus. It is a divine miracle worked in the heart when God reveals something to your soul, to your heart, to your spirit.

Paul says in Romans 8, God's spirit bears witness with our spirits. John said in 1 John chapter 5, he that believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself. There is an inward witness of the Holy Spirit, an inward witness of God that a true regenerate person has.

They don't just believe in Jesus because they've heard good evidence for it. And they say, yeah, that sounds right. They believe in Jesus because they've had an encounter which has been God created.

It's a revelation from the Father. Now, on this occasion, Peter learned that Jesus was the Christ. He got that theology in his head.

His brother taught him that theological truth. But at a later time, we don't know exactly when, Peter got the revelation. Maybe it was when that catch of fish happened and Peter fell at Jesus' feet and said, Depart from me, Lord, I'm a sinful man.

Maybe that's when the revelation came. We don't know. But we know that he had it and it stuck with him, even at Caesarea Philippi.

Now, the reason that's important is because that was right after Jesus had fed the 5,000. He'd had a huge number of people following him. And then he talked to them about the bread of life and they all left, except for the 12.

That happened just before Caesarea Philippi. He fed the 5,000. He blew them away with his teaching about eating his flesh, drinking his blood.

He lost 5,000 followers and had only 12 left. And even on that occasion, he turned to the 12 and said, Are you going to go away too? And it was Peter who spoke up and said, To whom shall we go? You alone have the words of eternal life. He knew that what Jesus was saying was right.

There was something bearing witness to him about that that wasn't bearing witness to the crowds. They didn't accept it. They said, This is a hard saying.

Who can hear it? And they left. Peter could hear it. He didn't understand it any more than anyone else did, but he could hear it because he recognized it.

Something in him bore witness. These are the words of eternal life. So it was right after that that Jesus took them to Caesarea Philippi and his whole popularity had caved in.

He had been preaching to the largest crowd probably ever a few days earlier and then they all abandoned him and his popularity was kind of down the tubes at that moment. He built it up again over in Perea across the river, but in Galilee his Galilean campaign sort of collapsed. And Jesus might have been even a little dejected when he turned to his disciples and said, Are you going to go away too? He might have wondered.

Am I going to lose them all? And when he took them up to Caesarea Philippi and said, Who do you say I am? And Peter said, We believe you're the Christ. You're the Son of the living God. Jesus said, You get it.

You've got the revelation. Flesh and blood didn't tell you this obviously because you probably would have caved in like everyone else. You've got something going inside that bears witness to you.

My Father has revealed it to you and that's why you're still hanging in there when others are not. And so here is that first encounter with these men. Then there's one more day recorded here.

Verse 43, The following day Jesus wanted to go to Galilee and he found Philip and said to him, Follow me. So this is the first time we read of Jesus ever saying those words, Follow me, to a person. And Philip is the man.

Now just like Andrew got all excited when he met Jesus and went to get his brother, Philip had a friend he wanted to bring too. And it's probably not just because they were friends. Hopefully Philip had more friends than just one.

He felt this particular friend, Nathaniel, would be especially interested in meeting Jesus. And so he said, Wait here Jesus, I'm going to follow you, but let me go get my friend. It's like in Philip's head he must have thought, Wow, I know this guy is someone Nathaniel is going to want to know.

And this must mean that he and Nathaniel had on occasion at least expressed to each other their spiritual aspirations and their longings. They were no doubt looking for the Messiah like many others were. They were part of the Jewish remnant who were faithful to God and hoping for the redemption of Israel.

And Philip might not have known, he might have had a lot of friends, but not many who were part of that remnant. They were pretty few in those days. But he runs and gets his friend and says, Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.

Philip found Nathaniel 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. And Nathaniel said to him, Can anything good come out of Nazareth? And Philip said to him, Come and see. Now, this statement, Can anything good come out of Nazareth? has sparked a lot of speculation.

And you know, you hear a lot of things in sermons that preachers say as if they're like well-established facts. And they're just someone's theory that they have. Like, you know, when you hear sermons about the gate in Jerusalem called the eye of the needle.

And that when Jesus said it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. He's not really talking about the eye of a real needle. He's talking about a small gate in Jerusalem that was called the eye of the needle.

So we hear every preacher I know says that. But there's actually no known historical evidence there ever was a gate in Jerusalem called the eye of the needle. It's entirely something someone made up.

But it sounded good enough that it must have been taught at their Bible college by one of the professors. And then all the preachers began to say it. And it just spread like wildfire.

And now everyone says it. But there's no historical evidence of it. Another thing that's commonly said is Nazareth was a town with a bad reputation.

You ever hear that? Jesus came from a town with a bad reputation. There is no historical evidence that Nazareth had a particular bad reputation. The entire suggestion comes from this statement of Nathanael.

That Nathanael said can anything good come out of Nazareth is taken by many to suggest that he's saying Nazareth? That rotten place? I wouldn't think anything good would come from there. But that's not necessarily the importance of this statement. I mean Nazareth could have a bad reputation but there's no evidence from it outside this.

This statement alone would not necessarily establish that. And this is all we have. What this does establish is that Nathanael would be surprised if the Messiah came from

Nazareth.

But maybe that's not because of Nazareth per se so much as it's not Jerusalem. Maybe it's just because Nazareth is in Galilee. And Galilee did have a fairly low reputation in the eyes of the Jews of Judea.

To say can anything good come out of Nazareth since that's the town that was mentioned. And Nathanael says that's a Galilean town. Nothing good is going to come out of Galilee.

Nothing good is going to come out of Nazareth. That's in Galilee. Like us.

Philip and Nathanael. We're Galileans too. Nothing good is going to come from our region.

It could have actually been a self depreciating comment. You mean the Messiah could come from our neck of the woods? I doubt it. Nazareth, that's pretty close to where we live.

It's in our region. It's in Galilee. Nothing good is going to come from there.

Messiah has got to come from somewhere more prestigious like Jerusalem. He's going to be the son of David. He's going to rule.

He's not going to come out of Galilee. Remember when the Pharisees were rebuking Nicodemus in John chapter 7. And they said search and look. No prophet will arise out of Galilee.

Well of course that was not true. There were a lot of prophets from that region. Like Elijah and Elisha and Hosea and some others.

Jonah. They were from that region. But they were desperate.

They weren't telling the truth. They were desperate to make a disparaging remark about Jesus. But they said no prophet comes from Galilee.

But see it's not necessarily Nazareth as a town. But Galilee as a province. That was looked down upon by the more prestigious classes of Jews in Judea.

And can anything good come out of Nazareth might not be so much focused on the town itself. But at the fact that this is a Galilean town. You expect the Messiah to come from any town in Galilee like Nazareth? Couldn't expect that to be the case.

Whether Nazareth had a particularly bad name or not no one can say. Because we don't have any evidence of it. Not even here.

But interestingly Phillip's answer is come and see. Now it's like when you preach Christ to

people and people raise objections. And say well I don't think I'm impressed with Christ because of blah blah blah blah blah.

Sometimes you can't answer all their objections. You can always say come and see. You can always say well tell you what I can't answer all your objections.

I don't know if any good thing comes from Nazareth or not. But why don't you just check it out for yourself. That's all.

But taste and see that the Lord is good. You'll see for yourself I won't have to argue with you about this. So Nathanael came.

And Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said to him or said of him. Behold an Israelite indeed in whom is no guile. Guile of course means duplicity or hypocrisy or two-facedness.

Guile is where you're actually trying to give an impression that isn't real about yourself or whatever. It's being two-faced. It's being hypocritical.

That's what guile is. And Jesus said now this is an Israelite indeed. He's not a fake.

Unlike most of these Pharisees around here. Unlike most of these Jews around here. They're Israelites but they're not real Israelites.

They say they're Jews but they're really of the synagogue of Satan as Jesus said in Revelation. They claim to be Israelites but they're not Israelites indeed. This is one.

This is one of the true remnant. This is an honest man. And Jesus speaks about it as if it's a refreshing and rare thing to see a true Israelite.

And he says this is a true Israelite. There's no guile in him. You know in the book of Revelation when we're getting the description of the 144,000.

In Revelation 14 remember John wrote the book of Revelation as well as the book of John. And there's many verbal parallels between the two books. But Revelation 14 and Revelation 7 are the two places where the 144,000 are mentioned.

In the first of those chapters, Revelation 7, nothing is really said about the 144,000 except that they are sealed by God before judgment comes. And that there are 12,000 of them from each of the 12 tribes of Israel. So we know the number of them and we know their ethnicity.

They're Jews and there's 12,000 from each tribe. But when you encounter them again in Revelation 14 there's more things said about them that weren't said before. And it helps to identify them because in chapter 14 verses 1 through 5 he sees again the 144,000.

And they're singing a song and it says in verse 4, these are the ones who were not defiled with women for they're virgins. And this would be in the context of Revelation. They have not participated in the harlotry of the great harlot.

It doesn't mean they're unmarried men. Not being defiled with women isn't the same thing as being married. Being married isn't defiling.

In fact that's specifically stated in Hebrews chapter 13, marriage is honorable and the bed undefiled. So to say they were not defiled with women doesn't mean that they were literal virgins. It means that they have avoided the seduction of the harlot who is so prominent in the book of Revelation.

They're uncompromised in other words. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever he goes. Well that's what these disciples did.

They followed Jesus everywhere. These were redeemed from among men being the first fruits to God and to the Lamb. Okay, so they're the early believers, not late.

These are not future people in the end times. These are people in the early times. They are first fruits, not last fruits of the church.

They're the first converts, Jewish converts. Notice verse 5, and in their mouth was found no guile. They're Israelites indeed.

That's how Jesus defined an Israelite indeed in whom is no guile. Revelation says the 144,000, these are Jewish Christians in the first century, the first fruits of the church. And they're all like Nathaniel, honest Israelites.

No guile in them. They're the true Israel. They're the remnant.

Those are the ones who followed Jesus when he came. And Nathaniel was recognized instantly by Jesus as one of those. Nathaniel was surprised, of course.

And Nathaniel said, how do you know me? And Jesus answered and said to him, before Philip called you when you were under the fig tree, I saw you. Now, this must have been some area that was not visible, you know, by natural means. It must have been, you know, around the corner, over the hill, or somewhere far away, where Nathaniel would know that Jesus could not possibly have just walked by and seen him there.

That wouldn't have impressed Nathaniel. He knew that he was not, he was under the fig tree where, not anywhere near here. And Jesus' statement strikes Nathaniel really hard between the eyes.

And he answered and said to him, Rabbi, you are the son of God. You are the king of Israel. Now, that's a rather radical response to the mere information that Jesus saw him under the fig tree.

Of course, if it required a miraculous vision for Jesus to see him under the fig tree, because he wasn't nearby, even then he wouldn't say, you're the son of God. He'd be more like the woman of Israel, I see you're a prophet, you know. It would be fair enough to deduce, if Jesus could see something or know something about him that was not possible to naturally see, he could say, oh, I see you're a prophet.

That's what the woman of Israel said when he said, you've had five husbands and the man you have now is not your husband. Oh, I see you're a prophet. You know things about people that aren't naturally known to you.

But he didn't say, oh, I see you're a prophet. He said, you're the son of God. You're the king of Israel.

And that makes many people believe, though no one quite knows for sure, that maybe under the fig tree, Nathaniel was somehow contemplating the Messiah or praying in a special way. When we saw the movie, The Gospel of John, it kind of flashed back to him under the fig tree, and he kind of looks up and there's some light shining in some special way through the tree, and it looks like he's getting some kind of a spiritual insight. I'm not sure exactly what they were trying to depict, but it's clear that the people who made the movie are assuming, as I am, that he wasn't just taking a snooze under the fig tree, and then Jesus, Nathaniel came and got him, and Jesus, I saw you there, and oh, wow, you must be the son of God.

Now, there must have been something more significant going on there. We don't know what it is, but he may have been reading the Scripture or contemplating on the Scripture or praying, or might have been specifically asking God to reveal to him the Messiah when he comes, or whatever. And Jesus is saying, I saw you there.

I heard you say that. I know what you're thinking. I mean, all this could have been what was implied by I saw you under the fig tree.

That may have been how Nathaniel took it. In any case, Nathaniel really reacted in a way that even surprised Jesus. And Jesus said, because I said to you I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? That's a little sudden.

That's a little surprising reaction to what I said. He says, you'll see greater things than these. And he said to him, most assuredly I say to you, hereafter you will see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.

Now, a couple of things about this statement of Jesus. One is that Nathaniel said, you're the King of Israel. And Jesus said, the time will come when you'll see me as the Son of Man.

Not of Israel alone, but of all mankind. I'm not just connected to Israel. I may be, in fact, the Messiah promised to Israel.

I may be the King of Israel indeed, but I'm not just for Israel. I'm here for all mankind. You'll see me not so much as King of Israel, you'll be calling me the Son of Man.

I'm connected to the whole human race, not just the Jewish part. But there's, what's this business about you will see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man? Did Nathaniel ever see such a thing? Well, some might say, well he must have at some point, unrecorded. We don't ever read of him having such a vision as Jesus described.

And so some might think, well taking Jesus quite literally, it must have happened. It's just not recorded anywhere, but he must have had some day where he had this vision, and saw angels of God ascending and descending on Jesus. It's possible.

But it's not necessarily what Jesus is saying is going to happen. If you look back at Genesis chapter 28, when Jacob was fleeing from his brother Esau, who wanted to kill him, as you know if you have any Sunday School background, he had a dream. And he saw a ladder.

You've probably seen it on the flannel boards if you're old enough. If you're younger, I'm not sure what medium you would have seen it on. Probably at least a video.

But the flannel graph pictures of the heavenly clouds and God's up there, and there's a ladder, and angels ascending and descending, and Jacob asleep at the bottom. You've seen it. You can picture it.

You sure can. Unless you've never been to Sunday School. And Jacob's ladder dream is described this way in Genesis 28, 12.

Then he dreamed, and behold a ladder was set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven, and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. This expression, the angels of God ascending and descending, is found two places in Scripture, here and in Jesus' statement to Nathaniel. Jesus is quoting this, or at least strongly alluding to it.

It's even possible that Nathaniel had been contemplating the story of Jacob and his dream. Who knows? Jesus made an allusion to it when he spoke to him. He said, you're going to see the angels of God ascending and descending on me.

Jacob saw a ladder. That ladder's foot was on earth. Its top was in heaven.

God was at the top. Man at the bottom. It was connecting heaven and earth.

It was obviously the passageway. It was the way to heaven. And it was the way that heaven reached down to earth too.

The angels, when they came to earth, came over that ladder. When they went back up,

they went up that ladder. The access between heaven and earth is that ladder in the dream.

And he says, the day's going to come when you're going to get the revelation, that's what I am. You'll see it as if the angels of God are ascending and descending on me, the son of man. I'm Jacob's ladder.

I'm the connecting link between heaven and earth. I'm the access route. The blessings of God are carried down to earth through me.

And men will ascend to heaven through me. And not by any other way, as Jesus said even more clearly on a later occasion in this book. In John 14, 6, I am the way, the truth, the life.

No man comes unto the Father but by me. So, he might be speaking somewhat figuratively and saying to Nathaniel, you too will get the revelation someday. You already believe something.

It's amazing that you will confess, I'm the son of God and the king of Israel. I'm not saying you're wrong. I'm just amazed that you say it so quickly.

The time will come when you'll have more reason to believe than this. You'll see much more. You'll understand much more.

Your eyes will be opened to see things. It will be as if heaven is open and you recognize who I am. That I am the one through whom God and man have access to each other.

Heaven and earth are linked by my presence. The angels of God ascend up and down on me as they did on Jacob's ladder. That's what he's saying.

And so, Nathaniel may or may not have actually had a literal vision of this type. It's not, I don't think, necessary to assume that he did. But if he did not, then what Jesus is saying is that you have come to recognize some important things about me.

You know I'm the Messiah. You know I'm the king of Israel. You know I'm the son of God.

Do you know that I'm also the way for people and angels to access God? And for God and man to have contact with each other. That is what he's referring to when he talks about the angels of God ascending and descending on him. So, at the end of this chapter, Jesus has now met at least five of the twelve men that will later be his apostles.

But as near as we can tell, he's only called two of them to go anywhere with him. The other three, Simon and Andrew and John, apparently did not follow him at this time, but went back to their fishing and were called to follow him at a later date. But Philip and Nathaniel apparently actually leave this area and go to Galilee with them and become part of his entourage.

Now, in the Gospels we read of a few other cases of specific callings. Well, really maybe only of James, who's not mentioned here. Of course, he's one of the fishermen we read of call.

And also of Matthew, the tax collector, we read of his call. But once you add them all up, you've got seven of the twelve that have a specific call that you actually read some story about. Yet, we know that at some time or another, the other five of the twelve, and a great number of other disciples, attach themselves to Jesus, but we don't know when the others did.

The Gospels go out of their way to tell us of the initial times when seven of the twelve were called. The other five at some point joined in, and they might have joined in earlier than this. Since we aren't told anything about when they joined Jesus, it might have been early or late.

And we might be supposed to picture not just Philip and Nathaniel traveling with Jesus, but maybe Philip and Nathaniel and Thaddeus, and maybe even Judas Iscariot is already with them. Who knows? All I can say is the story only tells us a little bit. And we know now Jesus is not traveling alone.

He's traveling with two, at least two disciples. Maybe as many as seven if the other five whose calling is not specifically mentioned are already with him. Not necessarily likely.

It's more likely that the majority of his followers joined him when he was in Galilee. That's where he had his greatest publicity and popularity, and that's where he would be going soon. Now at this point, he's going to Galilee.

It says so in verse 43, the following day Jesus wanted to go to Galilee and called Philip. But this is not going to launch the Galilean campaign. He's going to go up there and turn water into wine at a wedding.

He's going up there for a wedding. He's got an appointment to go to. But after that, he comes back down to Jerusalem for a while.

And it's not until John's put in prison that he actually ends up preaching in Galilee, which is still a ways off. But we've come to the end of chapter one, and obviously a natural stopping point. So we'll stop there and come to chapter two next time.