

The Church of the Servant King

Survey of the Bible Series – The Gospel of John (SB_JN1E_The Testimony of John and Choosing Disciples)

In our previous lesson, we examined at some length the significance of John's statement in verse 29 – "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." We observed that this statement validates the fact that the sacrifices under the Mosaic Law and in the Age of Israel *typified* the reality to occur via the Messiah's prophesied death (e.g. Psa 22; Isa 53). The *type* in the form of animal sacrifices provided a vivid analogy to the *anti-type* in Jesus' death on the Cross. The *type* provided atonement (*covering*) for sin; whereas the *anti-type* provided expiation (complete removal) of sin. We also noted that John alludes to the expiatory work of Christ frequently in his Gospel and develops the theology of expiation in his first epistle (1 John).

We also reviewed the two-fold purpose of John's baptism: 1) to reveal the Messiah – Jesus and 2) to serve as an outward sign of the inner cleansing that had occurred via the repentance of the person being baptized. We then examined the issue of repentance in the context of the purpose of the Jew and the nation of Israel in covenant relationship with Yahweh. The Church Age believer today is not under the same covenant relationship with God as was Israel, therefore baptism cannot be associated with any such repentance. We do not ask people to also become readjusted to the covenants that God made with Israel through baptism and repentance.

We then examined at least nine different baptisms in the Bible in light of their context in Scripture and concluded that no where does the Bible specifically endorse or command the water baptism of a Church Age believer. In addition, the spiritual baptism of the Church Age believer with the Holy Spirit (as in receiving the Holy Spirit) is only implied in Scripture.

John Provides Testimony to Verify Jesus as God's Son (1:32-34)

In these verses John the Baptist indicates that God had given him a means of identifying the Messiah – the One upon Whom the Spirit descended as a dove and remained. In addition, John was told that this One would be the One Who would baptize with the Holy Spirit. At the point in time during which John the Baptist ministered, the Age of Israel had not run its course and the Church Age was still a total "mystery" (as Paul described it in such passages as Ephesians 3). Therefore, the mention by John of the Messiah's baptism with the Holy Spirit in a predictive sense has been fulfilled (day of Pentecost) and will be fulfilled (2nd Advent).

- ❑ This prediction was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost and was explained by Peter in Acts 2 using Joel's prediction. (This does not mean that Pentecost represented the beginning of the Church Age – the position held by traditional dispensationals).
- ❑ It will be fulfilled in the future in association with the Second Advent of Christ when only believers remain to enter the Messianic Kingdom.

Had Israel repented (Acts 2:38; 3:19) and accepted Jesus as the Messiah Whom they had crucified, evidently the events at Pentecost would have represented a foretaste of the spiritual blessings to come in the Messianic kingdom.

Jesus' First Disciples (1:35-42)

By proclaiming Jesus as the "Son of God" (verse 35), John, a member of the priestly tribe of Levi and well-schooled in the Hebrew Scriptures, connects Jesus to prophecies of the Davidic King¹ and to the Messiah King of Israel.² In addition, the connection of Jesus the prophetic title –

¹ For instance, 2 Samuel 7:13 which reads – "He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever."

“Son of God” – is a reference to the very divine nature of Jesus. In John’s Gospel, the title of “son” is not applied to believers as it is elsewhere in the Bible. Rather, John uses the Greek word *tekna children* (Jn 1:12) in his Gospel instead of the Greek word *huios* or *son*. He uses the latter only in reference to Jesus.

John, the apostle and writer of this Fourth Gospel, uses the two disciples of John the Baptist who became disciples of Jesus to note the shift in emphasis between John the Baptist’s ministry and Jesus’ ministry. This is consistent with John the Baptist’s statement that “He must increase, but I must decrease” (Jn 3:30). As we have noted, perhaps more than any of the other Gospel writers, the apostle John emphasizes the introductory nature of John the Baptist’s ministry relative to Jesus (see 1:8, 15, 20, 27, 30; 3:27).

Only one of the two disciples of John who left John to follow Jesus is named – Andrew, the brother of Peter. Andrew appears two other times in the Gospel of John. In both cases, Andrew is seen bringing someone to Jesus. See 6:4-9 – Andrew introduces a lad with five loaves of bread and two small fish which Jesus then uses to feed five thousand people and see 12:20-22 – Andrew brings Philip to Jesus to relay the request of some Greek proselytes to see Jesus.

John focuses the attention of the disciples upon Jesus as “the Lamb of God.” The repeated use of this title by John the Baptist (cf. 1:29) is his way of focusing upon the sacrificial aspect of the Messiah’s purpose on earth. The most interesting thing to me about the apostle John’s account of John the Baptist’s ministry is the fact that John the Baptist obviously understood that the Messiah was going to die as a sacrifice based upon his extensive knowledge such Hebrew Scripture passages as Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53.

This makes John the Baptist’s question of Jesus just before his execution all the more interesting. In Matthew 11:1-6, we find John in prison and he realizes that his days are numbered. As this circumstance becomes a reality, he sees a great dichotomy between the servant aspect of Jesus’ public ministry and the king-Messiah nature of Jesus’ public ministry that he expected. Even John the Baptist had problems reconciling these two seemingly antithetical concepts. Jesus’ disciples (see Mark 10:35-45) and the remainder of Israel had just as great a difficulty grasping the reality of a servant Messiah verses a conquering Messiah.

John the Baptist’s statements at the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry:

He said: [quotes Isa 40:3] ‘I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness “Make straight the way of the Lord.”’ (Jn 1:23)

John answered them, saying, “I baptize with water, but there stands One among you whom you do not know. It is He who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose.” (Jn 1:26-27)

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, 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.’” (Jn 1:29-30)

I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God. (Jn 1:34)

And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, “Behold the Lamb of God.” (Jn 1:36)

² For instance, Psalm 2:7 which reads – “I will declare the decree; the Lord has said to Me, ‘You are My Son, today I have begotten You.’”

You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, "I am not the Christ," but, "I have been sent before Him." (Jn 3:28)

He must increase, but I must decrease. (Jn 3:30)

In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" (Matt 3:1-2)

I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." (Matt 3:11-12)

John the Baptist's question after being thrown into prison and awaiting His fate:

And when John had heard in prison about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples and said to Him, "Are you the Coming One, or do we look for another?" (Matt 11:2-3)

~*When Jesus sees Andrew's brother, Peter, Jesus gives him another name by which he shall be known. Jesus names him "Cephas" which is the Aramaic word for "rock." Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit's ministry in Jesus' life, Jesus recognized in Peter certain personality traits that pointed to a man who would be a leader. In Matthew 16:17-19, we find an amplification of this initial meeting in a later incident in Jesus' ministry.

Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." (Matt 16:17-19)

Just prior to this passage, Peter had confessed Jesus as the Christ (the Messiah). Jesus indicates that this confession came as a result of God's ministry in Peter's life. In brief, Jesus' statements to Peter recorded in Matthew 16 establish a connection between:

- ❑ Peter's name (petros – rock)
- ❑ Peter's confession of faith in Jesus as the Christ or Messiah ["on this rock"]
- ❑ The foundation of the church or assembly of believers after Jesus' death, i.e. a similar confession of faith in Jesus as the Messiah³

Apparently, Philip (v. 43) was evangelized by Andrew and Peter since they all hailed from the same city. Philip seems to have had a good understanding of the Hebrew Scriptures since he proclaims Jesus as the fulfillment of certain predictions in Moses' writings (the Pentateuch) and in

³ Peter's special apostolic authority in the form of the "keys of the kingdom" relates to Peter's re-offer of the kingdom to Israel ("church" = assembly of Jews in Acts 3 especially 3:19). Peter was granted the privilege of re-offering the kingdom first to Israel. Peter had no special authority to bind or loose except the binding or loosing that would occur as a result of Israel's acceptance or rejection of the truth. The same privilege was extended to the other apostles in Matt 18:18

the prophets (virtually all of the remainder of the Hebrew Scriptures). Philip uses the description “son of Joseph” (v. 45) to most likely refer to Jesus’ legal right to be the Messiah.

Nathanael is not mentioned in the synoptic Gospel accounts; however, it is very likely that Nathanael is the same man as Bartholomew who is associated with Philip in the other Gospels. Nathanael knew that the Hebrew Scriptures predicted that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. Nazareth was an obscure village. How could the Messiah hail from such an insignificant place as Nazareth?⁴ Nathanael was an Israelite and an honest man in contrast to the first Israelite, Jacob, who in his younger years was cunning and full of deceit.

In verse 48, Jesus draws upon the supernatural ministry of God the Holy Spirit in His life and sees Philip under the fig tree at leisure. In verse 51, Jesus alludes to Jacob’s vision of angels ascending and descending a ladder from heaven (Ge 28:10-17) – probably a vision that relates to the future Messianic kingdom of God on earth that is ruled from the New Jerusalem. It is possible that Jesus used this wording because this scene was what Nathanael had been meditating prior to Philip’s call to him. Regardless, Nathanael would see far greater things during the course of Jesus’ public ministry.

⁴ Upon their return from Egypt, Joseph, Jesus’ paternal guardian, returned to Nazareth in Galilee after having been warned by God in a dream to avoid Judea where their original home of Bethlehem was located (Matt 2:19-23). Also, Matthew notes that the return to Nazareth was a fulfillment of prophecy; however, there is no prophecy regarding Nazareth. Matthew is not quoting an Old Testament passage, rather he is summarizing what OT prophets had said regarding the Messiah. No OT prophet stated that Jesus would be called a Nazarene. Examples of these OT passages that Matthew summarizes include Psalm 22:6-9 and Isaiah 53. The name Nazarene carried the idea of that which was despicable or despised. Jesus was considered despised (Isa 53:3c).