

# Lesson 2 Notes

John 1:19-51

## Focus Verse

"The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, 'Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!'" (John 1:29)

## Outline

- Preparing for Jesus – John 1:19-28
- Proclaiming Jesus – John 1:29-34
- Following Jesus – John 1:35-51

## Engage

News travels fast. Momentous news travels even faster. After 400 years of seeming silence, God sent His prophet who arrived on the scene with a riveting declaration. In his prologue, John introduced another man named John—John the Baptist—whom God sent to testify concerning Jesus. **The arrival of Messiah's forerunner and the Messiah Himself headlined earth-shattering news.** With humility and boldness, John the Baptist fulfilled his call. Very quickly, crowds gathered to hear him preach. Many responded in repentance and were baptized. Ultimately, everything John the Baptist said and did deflected glory from himself and pointed to Jesus. As he proclaimed Jesus, some believed, others denied, but many were intrigued.

With John's majestic prologue still ringing in our ears, our attention now turns to Jesus's first week of public ministry. John the Baptist witnessed publicly about Jesus to those ready to believe and others poised to reject Him. Jesus called disciples who did not understand everything about Him but recognized His authority and followed Him. John the Baptist's humble witness sets an example for us. **God calls every Christian to proclaim Jesus.** No greater message or mission exists than to point to Jesus, the Lamb of God sent to bear the sin of humanity.

## ✦ Preparing for Jesus – John 1:19-28

### John the Baptist's Preaching and Baptism

A wide cross section of Jewish society poured out of Judea and Jerusalem to listen to John the Baptist.<sup>1</sup> **The Holy Spirit spoke powerfully through him, convicting many of their sins.** Cut to the heart, they confessed their need for God's cleansing and were baptized to express repentance and God's work in their hearts.<sup>2</sup>

1. Crowds seek John the Baptist: Matthew 3:5-6; Mark 1:5; Luke 3:7  
2. John the Baptist's call to repent: Luke 3:3, 7-9

For the most part, Jewish people presumed that as God's people they were already clean. **John the Baptist's listeners saw the reality of their sin in God's sight and realized they needed spiritual cleansing as much as any Gentile sinner.** This movement challenged traditional Jewish thinking and authority.

**John the Baptist's rising ministry stirred up hope of the Messiah's coming.** Old Testament prophets foretold a cleansing ministry associated with the Messiah.<sup>3</sup> People began to ask if John the Baptist was the promised Messiah.<sup>4</sup>

## Questions from a Jewish Delegation

John the Baptist's call for repentance and messianic rumors troubled the Jewish leadership council, the Sanhedrin. **The Jewish hierarchy sent an official contingent from Jerusalem to investigate John the Baptist and his influence.** Who was this strange man who preached in the wilderness and baptized without their official sanction?<sup>5</sup> This confrontation represents the earliest opposition to Jesus and His message. John's Gospel records the escalation of opposition throughout Jesus's ministry.

John's Gospel uses the word "Jews" (or as the NIV translates here, "Jewish leaders") almost 70 times. Obviously Jesus Christ and John were Jews. However, John usually used this word to represent those who resisted Jesus. **From the beginning, this Gospel makes it clear that whenever Jesus is revealed, opposition arises because of sin and unbelief.** Picking up on the theme introduced in his prologue, John continues to highlight the wonder of belief alongside the hostility of unbelief.<sup>6</sup> John's Gospel powerfully presents this combination of God's love and human rejection—the offer of grace and the warning of judgment.

The apostle John, likely a disciple of John the Baptist at this time, recorded this conversation. **The Jewish delegation engaged John the Baptist in a series of questions regarding his identity and baptism.** Their inquiry did not arise from an honest quest for truth but from a desire to deny his claim of authority. True to his calling, John the Baptist seized every opportunity to exalt Jesus and not himself.

## Who Are You? – 1:19-23

### □ "Are You the Messiah?" (implied) – 1:19-20

The Jews longed for the coming of the Messiah—an expectation that began in the Old Testament<sup>7</sup> and developed in Judaism between the time of the Old Testament and the New Testament. Some key features identified with the Messiah include:

- He would be King David's descendant.
- He would be guided and empowered by the Spirit of God.
- He would exhibit supernatural power.
- He would defeat nations and enemies of God.

3. **Cleansing:** Isaiah 52:15; Ezekiel 36:25; Zechariah 13:1

4. **The Messiah:** Luke 3:15

5. **John the Baptist's strange ways:** Matthew 3:4-6; Mark 1:6

6. **Unbelief:** John 1:10-11

7. **Expectation of the Messiah:** 2 Samuel 7:8-16; Isaiah 11:1-11; Jeremiah 23:5-6; Micah 5:2; Matthew 1:1

- He would purge Jerusalem of sin.
- He would bring worldwide peace.
- He would establish an eternal reign of justice and righteousness.

The Old Testament promises about the Messiah often blended Jesus's first and second comings in ways that people failed to understand. Jewish expectations of the Messiah did not include the divine nature of the Messiah as God's own Son nor His earthly mission to die as the Suffering Servant. The Jewish leaders schooled on the promise of the Messiah failed to recognize Jesus when He came to earth. 🙄

### 🗨️ "Are You Elijah?" – 1:21a

With their second question, the Jewish representatives checked another possibility off their list. Elijah, Israel's great reformer, did not experience death but was mysteriously taken to heaven in a whirlwind.<sup>8</sup> The prophet Malachi spoke of Elijah's return to prepare God's people for "the day of the LORD," the final judgment of the world.<sup>9</sup> John the Baptist's lifestyle and ministry paralleled the style of Elijah.<sup>10</sup> Both Elijah and John the Baptist confronted evil leaders, had their lives threatened by self-serving queens, and struggled with discouragement.<sup>11</sup>

John the Baptist's reply left no room for doubt. He was not Elijah. However, Jesus later connected Malachi's promises with John when He said, "I tell you, Elijah has already come."<sup>12</sup> How do we reconcile John the Baptist's firm denial with the Lord's words? Zechariah, John the Baptist's father, received a prophetic message that his son would come "in the spirit and power of Elijah."<sup>13</sup> John the Baptist was not actually Elijah but was sent by God to fulfill a similar role with similar power.

### 🗨️ "Are You the Prophet?" – 1:21b

This question likely refers to Deuteronomy 18:15-18, the source of a Jewish expectation of another prophet like Moses. Most likely, Jesus Himself fulfilled this prophecy. John the Baptist simply and straightforwardly answered, "No."

### 🗨️ "What Do You Say about Yourself?" – 1:22-23

With their checklist of options growing thin, the Jewish delegates sought a viable answer to take back to the Sanhedrin. Because John the Baptist had revealed only who he was not, they diligently tried to extract a claim regarding his identity. John the Baptist's steadfast aim was to turn attention away from himself and direct the focus on the good news of the Messiah's coming. He replied by quoting Isaiah 40:3: "I am the voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way for the LORD.'" The "LORD" in Isaiah 40:3 is none other than Yahweh, the Lord God. John the Baptist prepares for the coming of God—Jesus. He humbly deflected any specific title or name and only identified himself as the "voice."

8. Elijah's departure: 2 Kings 2:11

9. Elijah's return: Malachi 4:5

10. Parallel to Elijah: 1 Kings 18:21; 2 Kings 1:7-8; Matthew 3:1-4

11. John the Baptist and Elijah: 1 Kings 18:18; 19:1-4; Matthew 11:2-3; 14:3-4, 8-11

12. Jesus's words about Elijah: Matthew 17:11-12

13. Spirit and power of Elijah: Luke 1:16-17

## Why Are You Baptizing? – 1:24-28

Without a satisfying answer regarding John the Baptist's identity, the inquiring panel moved on to ask for the reasons behind his practice of baptism. Perhaps they suspected he was a false prophet. **They wanted John the Baptist to declare what right he had to baptize, as he did so without their authority.**

Once again, John the Baptist pointed away from himself and directly to Jesus. He did not want anyone distracted by his practice of baptism with mere water. **All he sought to do was prepare people for the gloriously worthy One who had come.** He again humbly expressed his own lowly position before Jesus who was coming behind him. "He is the one who comes after me, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie."

The apostle John provides distinct geographical details regarding the location of this recorded conversation. There were evidently two towns known as "Bethany"—one near Jerusalem<sup>14</sup> where Jesus raised Lazarus and one "on the other side of the Jordan, where John was baptizing." **John offered this clarifying eyewitness detail to eliminate any confusion regarding the location of this confrontation.**

*From the terrible moment when sin first entered the world, God made a way for people to grasp their inability to save themselves from sin's death grip.*

## Proclaiming Jesus – John 1:29-34

John used the phrase "the next day" more than once to indicate the chronological flow of events through Jesus's first week of ministry. Prior to the Jerusalem delegation's confrontation of John the Baptist, Jesus had already been baptized by John the Baptist and overcome Satan's temptation in the wilderness.<sup>15</sup> John 1:29 indicates that Jesus approached John the Baptist the day after the Jerusalem delegation's visit. In verses 32-34, John recalled God's confirmation of Jesus at His baptism which had occurred earlier.

## John the Baptist Proclaims Jesus as the Lamb of God – 1:29-31

When John the Baptist saw Jesus, he announced the most important message of his life: "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" Jesus, God's chosen Lamb, "surpassed" John the Baptist because "he was before" John the Baptist. **Although Jesus was 6 months younger than John the Baptist in physical age,<sup>16</sup> He had always existed in eternity past.** John the Baptist's exclamation of Jesus as the Lamb of God connected Him with important symbolism rooted in the past—the first Passover celebration.

**In coming to earth to offer Himself as the sinless substitute for humanity's sin, Jesus fulfilled the symbolism to which the Old Testament sacrificial system pointed.** From the terrible moment when sin first entered the world, **God made a way for people to grasp their inability to save themselves from sin's death grip.** In Israel, someone who sinned brought a lamb to the door of the temple, **laid hands on the lamb's head, confessed the specific sin, and then killed**

14. Bethany near Jerusalem: Mark 11:1; John 12:1

15. Jesus's baptism and temptation: Matthew 3:13-4:2

16. John the Baptist older than Jesus: Luke 1:26-33

## The Progression of Sacrifices that Culminate in Jesus

- One sacrifice for one person – Genesis 3:21; 4:4
- One sacrifice for one family – Exodus 12:3
- One sacrifice for one nation – Leviticus 16:15-16
- One sacrifice for the world – John 1:29

the lamb.<sup>17</sup> The innocent lamb paid the price for the sinful person to be made right with God. The priest then sprinkled the lamb's blood on God's altar to show that death accomplished the required judgment for that sin.

The prophet Isaiah connected the image of the sacrificial lamb with the Messiah, saying, "the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed...and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all."<sup>18</sup> By God's design, Jesus's death fell during Passover as He offered Himself as God's perfect substitute for sinners.<sup>19</sup> **Jesus died as the true Passover Lamb.**<sup>20</sup> Though few understood the magnitude of John the Baptist's words, he prepared people to recognize that Jesus was indeed God's promised Messiah.

## John the Baptist Proclaims Jesus as God's Chosen One – 1:32-34

John the Baptist remembered a defining moment in his understanding of Jesus's identity. God promised to confirm the Messiah's identity to John the Baptist with a physical sign: "The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit." John's Gospel does not mention that John the Baptist baptized Jesus but simply notes the sign that confirmed Jesus's identity. **John the Baptist saw the Spirit descend from heaven and rest on Jesus in the form of a dove.** With this scene etched in his memory and heart, John confidently declared, "I have seen and I testify that this is God's Chosen One."

**John the Baptist's water baptism pictured the true spiritual cleansing all people need and only Christ's death could accomplish.** Through repentance and water baptism, John the Baptist prepared Israel for the coming of Jesus who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.<sup>21</sup> Jesus taught that sinners need to be born again of the Spirit.<sup>22</sup> After Jesus ascended to heaven, God poured out His Holy Spirit upon His people.<sup>23</sup> **The baptism of the Holy Spirit is God's gift to all who receive new life through faith in Christ.**<sup>24</sup>

17. **Sacrificial lamb:** Leviticus 4:32-35; 5:5-6

18. **Perfect sacrifice:** Isaiah 53:5-10; Hebrews 7:27

19. **During Passover:** Matthew 27:62; Mark 15:42; Luke 23:54; John 19:14, 31, 42; Acts 2:23

20. **Passover Lamb:** Exodus 12:1-29; 1 Corinthians 5:7

21. **Baptism of the Holy Spirit:** Luke 3:16

22. **Born again:** John 3:3, 5, 8

23. **Spirit poured out:** John 7:38-39; Acts 1:5; 2:1-4

24. **God's gift:** 1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 2:8-9

## ✦ Following Jesus – John 1:35-51

### John the Baptist's Disciples Follow Jesus – 1:35-42

On the third day of this pivotal week, John the Baptist directed two of his own disciples so humbly and emphatically that they left him to follow his Lord—Jesus. One of these men was Andrew and the other was likely the apostle John, who never names himself in his Gospel. When John the Baptist drew their attention to Jesus, the Lamb of God, they followed Him. Jesus met them with a searching question, “What do you want?” Jesus knew every thought and impulse within these two men. He made it easy for them to follow Him without fear.

The two men called Jesus “Rabbi”—a sign of respect. Their question for Jesus communicated their desire to have more than a casual acquaintance with Him: “Where are you staying?” These two men may have struggled to know what to say in this powerful moment. Jesus answered with a beautifully simple promise that magnetically drew their searching hearts, “Come, and you will see.” Few people grasp the eternal significance of Jesus’s gracious invitation to “come.” This moment remained so indelibly fixed in John’s mind that about 60 years later, he remembered that this life-changing interaction occurred at 4 p.m.

Andrew, also moved by his encounter with Jesus, immediately found his brother Simon. He confidently announced the joyful news that he had “found the Messiah.” Whenever the Gospels mention Andrew, he was busy bringing people to Jesus—his brother Simon Peter, a boy with a lunch to share, or Greeks who wanted to meet Jesus.<sup>25</sup>

Jesus “looked” at Simon. The original Greek word describes a searching, penetrating gaze. Jesus spoke to Simon and changed his name from Simon to Cephas, an Aramaic word meaning “rock,” translated into Greek as “Petros” or “Peter” in English. This new name anticipated Jesus’s transformative work in Peter’s life. The apostle Peter became a faithful, tender shepherd who did not shrink back from following Jesus.<sup>26</sup> Jesus not only knows who we are, He knows who we can be by His transformative power.

### Philip and Nathanael Follow Jesus – 1:43-51

The next day while traveling to Galilee, Jesus found Philip and issued a call to follow Him. Like Andrew, Philip could not keep this glorious news to himself and found his friend Nathanael. He boldly claimed, “We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” Both Philip and Nathanael were godly men who clung to God’s promises about the Messiah.

Nathanael immediately questioned whether anything good could come from Nazareth—likely a reference to the insignificance of this small Galilean village. Philip did not argue but simply invited Nathanael to “come and see.” Nathanael approached Jesus to discover the truth for himself. Jesus seemed to recognize and speak to Nathanael’s inquisitive mind. He praised Nathanael as “an Israelite in whom there is no deceit.” Astonished by Jesus’s words, Nathanael questioned how Jesus knew him.

25. Andrew’s invitations: John 1:42; 6:8-9; 12:20-22

26. Peter: John 21:18-19; Acts 4:13, 19-21; 1 and 2 Peter

# Believing What God Has Declared as True

## The Doctrine of Faith

John's Gospel, from start to finish, calls people to faith in Christ. **At its simplest, faith is believing God and acting upon that belief.** Biblical faith involves more than optimism, blind hope, or only intellectual agreement with facts. Even demons recognize undeniable truth but refuse to surrender to what they know.<sup>1</sup>

**Saving faith requires three important elements.** First, specific *content*—actual truth God has revealed about the gospel of salvation—must be believed. John the Baptist and Jesus's first disciples embraced specific truth about Jesus.<sup>2</sup> Secondly, *conviction* leads to personal trust in Jesus.<sup>3</sup> Thirdly, *commitment* to repent and follow Christ brings willingness to surrender to Jesus's right to control and direct one's thoughts and actions.<sup>4</sup> If I trust someone then I respond to what they say.

**True faith involves more than a casual acknowledgement of Jesus with no bearing on daily life.** Failure to recognize Jesus for who He really is comes with great cost. Without personally receiving Jesus as Savior, sin's deserved judgment must be carried yourself. However, faith in Jesus offers more than escape from judgment. Without Jesus and God's unchanging truth as the anchor for life, this world's fleeting pleasures and ever-changing voices place your feet on constantly shifting sand.

Knowing and believing what is true about Jesus changes your life forever. Through the Holy Spirit's power, genuine faith yields a deepening understanding of salvation's wonder, a growing love for Jesus, and an ongoing surrender to Him in the moments of life. **Faith in Christ is not a benign influence but a transforming force in an individual's life.** Like Jesus's disciples, how has Jesus called you to believe in and follow Him? How has following Jesus transformed your life?

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1. **Demons:** James 2:19

2. **Gospel truth:** Matthew 16:16; Acts 4:12; 16:31

3. **Personal faith in Christ:** John 1:12; 3:16; 6:37; Acts 16:14

4. **Commitment to Christ:** Matthew 11:28-30; Luke 9:23; 14:25-27; Acts 3:19; 20:21; Romans 12:1-2

Jesus's response to Nathanael immediately overcame his doubts and penetrated his heart.

**When Jesus mentioned he had seen Nathanael under the fig tree before Philip called him, Nathanael immediately confessed that Jesus was God's Son and the king of Israel.** In ways we cannot fully understand, Jesus's words demonstrated His omniscience and deity that personally broke down barriers in Nathanael's heart. Jesus's intimate and personal knowledge brought Nathanael's immediate confession.

Jesus's response to Nathanael's budding faith indicated that even **greater revelation awaited him.** The Savior who knew when and where he sat would reveal far greater truth. Jesus referenced their ancestor Jacob's dream of a ladder to heaven—a familiar image of angels



ascending and descending from heaven.<sup>27</sup> **Through Jesus, God offered Nathanael an open door to His presence and unbroken fellowship with Him.**

John the Baptist pointed to Jesus and called people to Him. Andrew and Philip met Jesus and immediately shared the news. **God calls every Christian to proclaim Jesus.** There is no greater message than truth about Jesus and no greater privilege than sharing that good news with others.

## ✦ Take to Heart

### Hold Fast

**John the Baptist humbly pointed to Jesus, the Lamb of God sent to take away the sin of the world.** When questioned by an official Jewish delegation, John the Baptist clearly denied being the Messiah, Elijah, or God's promised prophet. He powerfully testified to Jesus's superiority. He had seen God's Spirit descend from heaven and rest on Jesus in the form of a dove. **All John the Baptist wanted to do was get out of the way so God's Chosen One would be received and exalted.**

**Jesus demonstrated His authority by calling His first disciples.** Trusting John the Baptist's bold witness, two of his disciples—Andrew and likely John—were bid by Jesus to “come.” **They left what they were doing to follow Jesus.** Andrew quickly found his brother Simon who also responded to Jesus's invitation. With simple words, Jesus called Philip and revealed Himself to Nathanael. Jesus gathered a growing list of disciples who committed to follow Him **but had minimal understanding of the glorious adventure ahead.** This first trickle of faith will continue to flow until believers from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation have joined its mighty stream.<sup>28</sup> **What a privilege it is to be a witness for Jesus—the world's only Savior!**

### Apply It

John the Baptist sets an amazing example of denying self to exalt Christ. Though praised by Jesus<sup>29</sup> and filling an important role in God's redemptive plan, **he constantly yielded the spotlight to Jesus. He boldly confronted sin but humbly proclaimed Christ.** How do we, as naturally prideful humans, properly exhibit the elusive quality of humility? How do we balance faith-filled boldness with proper surrender? What helps us determine when to step up and speak out and when to step back and bow down? **We do not win the battle with self by simply trying harder. Ultimately, Adam's children gain a proper self-perspective through an exalted view of Christ and an accurate assessment of their own spiritual neediness.** In **what ways might you unknowingly promote yourself, even as you seek to serve the Lord?** How can you fix your eyes on Jesus so that your own agenda fades in the light of His greatness?

**When Jesus called His first disciples, they responded with immediate surrender. They left whatever they were doing to follow Jesus. Competing loyalties challenge everyone who desires to walk with Christ in this life. Daily cares such as earning a living, paying bills, and caring**

27. **Jacob's ladder:** Genesis 28:10-17

28. **Stream of faith:** Revelation 5:9

29. **Jesus praised John:** Matthew 11:11



for family represent duties that require much time and focus. While God does not call every believer to vocational ministry, He plans important work for all His children. Whoever you are, wherever you live, and whatever you do, Jesus's invitation reaches to you. In many ways and across time, He says, "Come, and you will see." God has positioned you right where He wants you. **Following Jesus is more important than anything else you are doing.** How is God leading you to speak for Him within your circle of influence? What is holding you back?

Jesus's encounter with Nathanael demonstrates His intimate knowledge and intentional love for every individual. We do not know exactly why Jesus's custom-crafted words made Nathanael ready to follow Him. Somehow, Jesus spoke "Nathanael" to Nathanael. **Jesus knows exactly how to reach each of His children.** Some hear God's call through hardship, others through success. God arrests some people's attention by engaging their minds with lingering questions. Other people are forever changed when they experience God's power, presence, and intervention. **God's Word can powerfully melt resistance and negate excuses to bring surrender.** How is Jesus saying, "Follow me" to you? What has God used to unlock your heart to the truth? In what unique ways has the Lord reached to you so you would hear Him? No matter how you have discerned God's voice, when you follow Jesus, greater and greater wonders await you. !