

## John 1:19-51

**Who were the Jews of Jerusalem (v. 19)?** In John's gospel, "Jews" usually refers to the Jewish leaders who made up the religious world around Jerusalem and were hostile to Jesus.

**Why did the Jews send this delegation to investigate John the Baptist (v. 19)?** Because he was a "nobody" and his ministry was so influential that he was impacting their popularity.

**Who did John the Baptist say he *wasn't* (vv. 20-21)?** He was not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet. The Prophet whom the leaders had in mind was the Prophet that Moses had predicted would come (Deuteronomy 18:15, 18). The Jews incorrectly failed to identify this Prophet with the Messiah (7:40-41).<sup>1</sup>

**Why did they ask him if he was Elijah (v. 21)?** Malachi had prophesied 400 years earlier that before the arrival of the Messiah, God would send Elijah back (Malachi 4:5). Remember, Elijah didn't die, but was taken straight up to heaven. Since his dress, diet, lifestyle, and ministry area were very similar to Elijah's, the Jews thought John the Baptist might be Elijah, which would mean the arrival of the Messiah was imminent. Messianic expectation was high due to Daniel's prediction that suggested the appearance of Messiah at that general time (Daniel 9:25).

**What was John the Baptist's primary purpose/mission (vv. 7, 23)?** To bear witness to the "light." To prepare the hearts of the people to receive Jesus. To herald the arrival of the Messiah. John the Baptist spoke the same general message as the other prophets—repent, turn back to God, the promised Messiah is coming. The major difference was.....John, the last of the Old Testament Prophets, had the privilege of announcing the arrival (not just the future coming) of the Messiah. He got to say to the people, "The Savior of the world has arrived and let me introduce you to Him."

Application: **What might your purpose be? How does it compare to John's? How can you pursue it?**

**Why were the Jewish leaders so concerned about John the Baptist (vv. 24-25)?** They were basically saying, "You are not officially sanctioned (no credentials, no authority), so why are you baptizing?"

Note: Baptism was not a new or novel ritual to the Israelites. Baptism was one of the rituals by which Gentiles were brought into Judaism as proselytes. John's baptism was an outward sign of cleansing reflecting an inward repentance from sins. This was distressing to the Jewish leaders. These were not Gentiles who were being baptized, they were Jews! These were not Gentiles who were being indicted for their sin and warned of God's coming wrath, they were Jews! John was treating Jews as though they were lost sinners, in need of salvation. Jewish religious leaders had convinced their Jewish followers that simply being Jewish and keeping the Law (as they interpreted it) were sufficient to save them. John's ministry and message said otherwise. The Jewish religious system was under siege, and it looked at the moment as though John the Baptist was prevailing.

**How did John the Baptist respond to their questions (vv. 26-27)?** He pointed outside himself. He contrasted the great authority of Jesus ("*among you stands one you do not know*"), by saying that he himself was unworthy to do even the most menial service for Him: "*the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.*"

**What did John the Baptist testify about Jesus (vv. 29-34)?**

- He is the Lamb of God
- He takes away the sin of world
- He has surpassed me because He was before me
- He revealed Jesus to the world
- John saw the Spirit descend and stayed upon Him
- He is the Son of God

**Why did John the Baptist use the term Lamb of God (v. 29)?** The title "Lamb of God" identified Jesus with the Lamb that God required as a substitute sacrifice for people's sins (1 Peter 1:19). That lamb had to be perfect, without blemish. It was killed as a substitute and its blood shed for the forgiveness of the peoples' sins. This imagery would be very familiar to these Jews.... a lamb dying for their sins. One of the reasons God instituted the sacrificial system was so the Jews would come to understand the principle of substitution in preparation for the atoning death of their Messiah.

**Did Jesus' death take away the sin of the entire world?** His death was sufficient to pay for the sin of the entire world but is only efficacious for those who trust in Him as Savior (1 John 2:2).

**How did John the Baptist know who Jesus was (vv. 32-34)?** The Holy Spirit revealed it to him by descending like a dove and remaining on Jesus just as God had told him it would happen. "Remaining" implies permanence. Note that John describes Jesus as the Son of God. This is a title that explicitly claims deity.

**What was the message that John the Baptist conveyed to his disciples (vv. 35-39)?** When John the Baptist saw Jesus passing by, he pointed Him out to his two disciples and identified Him as the "*Lamb of God*." The two disciples with John the Baptist left him and set out after Jesus. This is precisely what John had been called to do—to prepare men to leave him and follow the Messiah.

**What was the specific calling the two disciples received from Jesus (v. 39)?** They first had to "come" with Him, and then they would "see." Only by coming to Jesus could they really comprehend what they were seeking spiritually. The same principle holds true today. Faith precedes understanding (11:40).

**How did each of the disciples come to Jesus (vv. 40-45)?** Andrew – by word of John the Baptist. Simon Peter – brought by his brother Andrew. Philip – called by Jesus. Nathanael – invited by Philip.

**What are some of the messages from these different encounters with Jesus?** There is no one way to come to the Savior. There is no one person God uses to introduce us to Jesus. We are all to introduce others to the Savior.

**How did Phillip react when confronted by a skeptical Nathanael (v. 46)?** Phillip didn't try to argue or reason him into the kingdom. He merely said "*Come and see*." A valuable lesson in evangelism – don't waste time arguing. Don't engage in lengthy intellectual conversations trying to convince. Just invite men to come and see. Once they truly see, their concerns will be resolved.

**On what basis did Jesus select the twelve Apostles?** God's choice of the twelve was in accordance with His sovereign will and His good pleasure, just as He has always chosen those to enter into fellowship with Himself (Ephesians 1:5). It was not because of what they could do for His kingdom—not because of some untapped potential. He chose the ordinary so that it would be very clear that He was the source of their later success and power. "*When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus*" (Acts 4:13). There was no room for boasting here. He works through the weak so He gets the glory.

**What did Jesus tell these men to do (v. 43)?** *Follow Me*. He took them just the way they were and made them into the men He desired them to be. Eventually, some of them would do great things for Him, but there were no prerequisites for selection. Isn't that essentially the heartbeat of Christianity – following Jesus?

**How did Jesus convince a skeptical Nathanael (v. 47-49)?** Jesus' simple statement elicited a most dramatic reaction from Nathanael. He concluded that the only way Jesus could have seen him when he was under the fig tree was if Jesus had supernatural knowledge. Evidently Nathanael knew that he was completely alone, and that no one except God could have seen him when he was under the fig tree.<sup>2</sup>

**What is meant by "*the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man*" (v. 51)?** This probably refers to the dream in Genesis 28:12, where Jacob saw a ladder extending from earth to heaven, and the angels ascending and descending upon it. Jesus says that *He* is the ladder, the link between heaven and earth. He is the way. The title "Son of Man" is a reference to Daniel 7:13-14, where the King of Glory, coming to judge the world, is called the Son of Man. When a Jewish person of that time heard "King" or "Christ" they often thought of a political or military savior. Jesus used the Son of Man title often because it was a Messianic title free from political and nationalistic sentiment. Jesus refers to himself as the Son of Man over eighty times in the Gospels.

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on John, 2023 Edition (published by <http://planobiblechapel.org/soniclight/>), 50.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 64.