

John 1.35-51 Sermon / COB / 02.02.14

[video 7.47-12.52]

Introduction

- † **[Slide 1: Title]** As archaeologists have excavated ancient synagogues in Israel, they have found in several of them images of other gods. The November/December [2013] issue of *Biblical Archaeology Review* has an article on some of these [pp.6, 86].
- One synagogue has a mosaic centered in the floor of the Egyptian sun god riding his chariot, surrounded by the astrological zodiac. Right below it is an inscription thanking the good Jews who contributed to the building of the synagogue.
 - When the Jews in Capernaum built a new synagogue over the one where Jesus had taught, they included many pagan naked cupid angels associated with love and sex.
 - In the catacombs of Beth Shearim, where the Jewish religious council called the Sanhedrin retreated after the Romans destroyed Jerusalem in AD70, archaeologists have found an engraving of the Greek god Zeus raping a human princess.
 - If this was the condition of Judaism when Jesus walked the earth, is it any wonder John the Baptist was calling his nation to return to God before the Messiah came?
- † Same issue of the magazine, p.18... Today there is a *NY Times* bestselling book about Jesus, about which a reviewer says the author is limited in ability; but then he says, “So why am I here to cheer him? Because he has had an enormous effect on the lay public, educating them to the fact that the New Testament, like the Hebrew Bible, is not always literally accurate. For example, Jesus was probably born in Nazareth, not Bethlehem.”
- Same issue, p.22... This is in a feature called “Biblical Views”: “There were, no doubt, other people ‘out there’ when God created Adam and Eve, but they didn’t count, as far as the Israelite storyteller was concerned.”
 - Despite all the archaeological evidence we have reviewed in this room – and there is more in this issue of the magazine – which shows the accuracy of biblical history, doubt and rationalization remain the prevailing view in our culture, that the Bible cannot be trusted. Is it any wonder that Christ calls us to turn to God now that he has come and before he comes back? Let’s pray...

[Slide 2: 1.35-37] John 1.35-37 [NET]: Again the next day John [the Baptist] was standing there with two of his disciples. Gazing at Jesus as he walked by, he said, “Look, the Lamb of God!” When John’s two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus.

- † It’s been two weeks since we were in our narrative, so let’s recall the context. John the Baptist was talking with his disciples [or students or protégés] about the Messiah [or Christ].
- He said this Messiah was the eternal Son of God as well as the promised deliverer from God. He said that Jesus was this Messiah, which he knew because of a sign that God had given him, of the Holy Spirit descending and remaining on Jesus at his baptism.

- And when he saw Jesus walking toward him, he declared that Jesus was the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world and baptizes with the Holy Spirit. If you missed the sermon two weeks ago, you might want to listen online or get a copy of the devotion.
- † Now this is the next day, after John the Baptist has told his disciples that it is Jesus who is the Messiah. John the Baptist was standing with two of his disciples and again declared that Jesus is the Lamb of God. To refresh your memory, let's review two of the Old Testament references about the Lamb of God.
- First, just before the Exodus from Egypt, God instructed each family to sacrifice a lamb to make temporary atonement, that is to make temporary peace with God, allowing God to forgive their sin and deliver them from oppression in Egypt. This sacrifice and deliverance was commemorated in the Jewish festival of Passover, and Jesus himself drew parallels between Passover and what he would go through to sacrifice for our sin.
 - Second, Isaiah prophesied about the Messiah who would die to pay the penalty for our sin, and referred to him as a lamb being led to slaughter. Both of these could point to Jesus as the Lamb of God.
 - So John the Baptist's disciples would have understood their teacher to be telling them that Jesus was the long awaited Messiah Deliverer who would reconcile people with God and deliver Israel from oppression.
- † **[Slide 3: follow]** Hearing this, John the Baptist's disciples walk away from him and follow Jesus! Do you think this made John the Baptist feel bad? Well, he was human, so maybe he felt a little bad. But as we have already seen, John the Baptist understood his role of pointing people to Christ, and he understood his place as being less worthy than a slave compared to Christ. So I think he probably encouraged his disciples to chase after Jesus.
- We should adopt John the Baptist's attitude. Our goal should be to help others follow Christ! Whether we are preaching from the pulpit, teaching in the classroom, leading a small group, mentoring individuals, or just talking to people out in society, we should be asking them to follow Christ and worship Christ, not ourselves.
 - I am your pastor, and I hope like Paul I will be a good enough example to say that you could follow me as I follow Christ, but also like Paul I would always tell you the goal is to know and walk with Christ, not me.
 - When LeeAnn and I were thinking of planting a church in Florida, we were spiritually developing a team of young adult leaders, when two of them declared they were going into the mission field and one decided to go to seminary. We were shocked to lose so many key players, but we saw these decisions as victories for Christ, so we rejoiced!
 - When I was interviewing here, I told the search committee and the elders that my goal was to make multiplying disciples of Christ: i.e. to help people become mature in faith to the point that they then could help others become mature in faith. Teaching from the pulpit is one tool for that purpose, but discipleship benefits from intensity, intimacy, and intentionality. If you are interested in some one-on-one investment, or perhaps one on three [particularly if you are a woman], then let me know. I want to help you become

successful in your walk of faith. Also, LeeAnn and I want to start a group with the purpose of reaching out to the lost together, so let me know if you are interested in that.

[Slide 4: 1.38-39] John 1.38-39 [NET]: Jesus turned around and saw them [John the Baptist's two disciples] **following and said to them, "What do you want?"** [I would translate, "What do you seek?"] **So they said to him, "Rabbi" (which is translated Teacher), "where are you staying?" Jesus answered, "Come and you will see." So they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day. Now it was about four o'clock in the afternoon** [or the tenth hour as accounted by Jewish time].

- † Notice the apostle John, who wrote this narrative, has a parenthetical comment here. He says these two fellows called Jesus "Rabbi," and then he explains that this means "Teacher." Rabbi is an Aramaic word, and the apostle John was writing in Greek, so for the sake of his Greek readers, he explains what Rabbi means. He does this dozens of times in this gospel.
- † **[Slide 5: seek]** Jesus asked them, "What do you want?" or "What do you seek?" This is a question for us to answer today also. You are here in a church that preaches the gospel of Christ, why are you here? What do you seek from Christ? I asked six young adults this question last week, and I was delighted with their thoughtful and spiritual answers. I hope to hear the same from you!

[Slide 6: 1.40-42] John 1.40-42 [NET]: Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, was one of the two disciples who heard what John [the Baptist] said and followed Jesus. He first found his own brother Simon and told him, "We have found the Messiah!" (which is translated Christ). Andrew brought Simon to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon, the son of John. You will be called Cephas" [Κηφᾶς] (which is translated Peter).

- † Again we have some parenthetical notes from the author, the apostle John. He tells us that Messiah in Hebrew or Aramaic is translated as Christ in Greek, they mean the same thing.
- † **[Slide 7: peter]** Also, he says, Jesus calls Simon Κηφᾶς, which is translated Peter, because both of them mean "rock." Note, it is "kay-FAHS" and not "SEE-fus," like in the video. Peter would not like it if you called him SEE-fus, and you don't want to tick off an big impulsive fisherman!
 - Jesus calls Simon a rock. Names were important in this culture, indicating who you were. Calling Simon a rock seems ironic, because we see throughout the gospels that Peter is not the model of solid reliability, but what Jesus has in mind is who Simon will become. He will become Peter the rock, one of the very top leaders in the early church!
 - This is how Jesus looks at us too. It can be hard for us to break free of thought patterns, habits, little ruts in life into which we have fallen. It can be hard for us to believe in ourselves, to believe we can be any different, after years of minor or major failures. Indeed, I have heard several of you not only admit hopelessness about change, but actually embrace your faults! But Jesus knows who you can become! He offers you transformation by the Holy Spirit to not only become like him in character, but to become truly the most perfect and unique "you" that God created you to be! The question is do you want it? Is this something you seek?

† **[Slide 8: Andrew]** We can see that Andrew believed what John the Baptist said about Jesus. Here he runs to tell his brother that they have found the long awaited Messiah! What joy that must have brought these men! They might not have fully understood the nuances of what the Messiah was, but they knew they were waiting for him to come bless the nation!

- In a moment, we will see another man seek out his friend to tell him about Jesus. We should react the same way! We know who the Christ is! We know the cure for the corruption of sin, the way to peace with God, the path to salvation, eternal life, a life of victory and hope right now! We should run to find our loved ones and share this news!
- Andrew was one of the two disciples of John the Baptist who left to follow Jesus. We never find out who the other disciple was that day. But there are hints in this narrative, and the early church tradition was that this was the apostle John. It probably was, since the apostle John never mentions himself by name in his own gospel narrative!

[Slide 9: 1.43-46] John 1.43-46 [NET]: On the next day Jesus wanted to set out for Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, “Follow me.” (Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the town of Andrew and Peter.) Philip found Nathanael and told him, “We have found the one Moses wrote about in the law, and the prophets also wrote about—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” Nathanael replied, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Philip replied, “Come and see.”

† **[Slide 10: galilee map]** Recall from two weeks ago that Jesus and John the Baptist were somewhere east of the Jordan River, possibly in an area known as Batanea. Batanea is at the top left of this map. Now, author Bill Schlegel has followed the convention in Israel of putting east to the top of the page. So when Jesus desired to go back to Galilee, which was like the county he was from, he headed west, which is down on our map.

- He would have passed the sea of Galilee on the north if he was in Batanea, to the south if he was closer to the Jordan River.
- Since we are not sure how close Jesus was to the Jordan River valley, we don't know if this was a one day's journey or two or more. As we will see next week, he is heading to Cana for a wedding celebration, and the Bible says he got to the celebration two or three days after he decided to go to Galilee; but he could have stopped at one of the many towns around the Sea of Galilee on the way.

† **[Slide 11: Philip]** In the Greek it sounds like Jesus found Philip as he was setting out for Galilee, but it could have been on the way. In any case, Jesus told Philip, “Follow me.”

- This is a historical event, Jesus walked up to Philip and told Philip to follow him. This can never happen to us in a physical, historical, way. But spiritually, Jesus is calling through scripture to all of us to follow him.
- I note that you are in this church today, and many of you consider yourselves to be Christians, so you must admit you have heard the call in your heart to at least consider following Jesus. Now the question is, are you following him closely, or are you hanging back where it is safe in the crowd, just keeping an eye on Jesus in case you need him?

- † **[Slide 12: prophet]** When Philip tells Nathanael about Jesus, he says they have found the one about whom Moses and the prophets wrote. The prophets wrote about the coming Messiah. Moses wrote about a prophet-leader whom God would send, who would be greater than Moses himself. When the priests and Levites were questioning John the Baptist, we saw they considered the Messiah and the Greater Moses Prophet to be different people, but here Philip equates the two.
 - Is Philip accepting some teaching by John the Baptist or was he prompted to make this connection by the Holy Spirit?
 - **[Slide 13: Deuteronomy 18]** Let's look at Moses' prophecy in Deuteronomy 18.15-19 [NET]: [Moses talking] The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you—from your fellow Israelites; you must listen to him. This accords with what happened at Horeb in the day of the assembly. You asked the Lord your God: “Please do not make us hear the voice of the Lord our God any more or see this great fire any more lest we die.” The Lord then said to me, “What they have said is good. I will raise up a prophet like you for them from among their fellow Israelites. I will put my words in his mouth and he will speak to them whatever I command. I will personally hold responsible anyone who then pays no attention to the words that prophet speaks in my name.”
 - Soon after Jesus ascended to Heaven, Peter the Rock would confirm in a public speech that the Messiah was also the Greater Moses Prophet, and that Jesus was both [Acts 3].
- † **[Slide 14: Nathanael]** What do you think of Nathanael's reaction? “What good thing can be from Nazareth?”
 - Philip was from Bethsaida, Nathanael was from Cana. Bethsaida was one of several urban, contemporary, Greek commercial villages along the Sea of Galilee. Nazareth was up in the hills, country hick land. So was Cana, so perhaps there was a rivalry. Galilee itself had a low reputation in Israel at this time, and Nazareth had a low reputation within Galilee. Poor Christ, not only taking on human form, not only coming as a baby and immediately becoming a refugee, but even growing up known to come from Nazareth!
 - I like Philip's response to Nathanael! “Come and see.” I know where he learned that!

[Slide 15: 1.47-49] John 1.47-49 [NET]: Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and exclaimed, “Look, a true Israelite in whom there is no deceit!” Nathanael asked him, “How do you know me?” Jesus replied, “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.” Nathanael answered him, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the king of Israel!”

- † Back in November, we studied Psalm 2 one week. Psalm 2 was a prophecy by King David, which foresaw the overthrow of God's enemies and God's establishment of the Messiah, the Christ, as his chosen King in Jerusalem, who would be called God's Son. At the end of the psalm, David said that any enemies of the Son would perish, but those who sought refuge in him would be blessed.
- † Philip told Nathanael that they had found the Psalm 2 Messiah/Christ, and now Nathanael is convinced, himself identifying Jesus as the Psalm 2 Son of God and King of Israel. Psalm 2

doesn't speak to the Messiah being the eternal Son of God, rather in the psalm the term "son" refers to God's anointing on the Messiah as God's chosen King, the ultimate representative of God on earth.

- † So Nathaniel, like many of these early disciples, is thinking of Jesus as the promised Messiah at least in terms of Psalm 2. This is interesting, because in prophecies like Psalm 2, the Messiah is the victorious king who not only delivers his people from Gentile oppression, but then rules the world in God's name from the throne of David in Jerusalem. The question is whether they also are thinking of Jesus as the Messiah portrayed in other prophecies, as the suffering servant of God who would die to pay the penalty for our sins and free us from Satanic and sinful oppression. We will see...

[Slide 16: 1.50-51] John 1.50-51 [NET]: Jesus said to him, "Because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You will see greater things than these." He continued, "I tell all of you the solemn truth—you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."

- † The fig tree was a symbol in this culture of Messianic peace and provision, i.e. the peace and provision that God would provide through the coming Messiah/Christ. This symbol was derived from some prophecies; let me show you a couple of examples.
 - **[Slide 17: Micah 4.1-4]** Micah 4.1-4 NIV: In the last days the mountain of the LORD's temple will be established as the highest of the mountains; it will be exalted above the hills, and peoples will stream to it. Many nations will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the temple of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths." The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He will judge between many peoples and will settle disputes for strong nations far and wide. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore. Everyone will sit under their own vine and under their own fig tree, and no one will make them afraid, for the LORD Almighty has spoken.
 - **[Slide 18: Zechariah 3.8-10]** Zechariah 3.8-10 NIV: [God speaking in the prophecy] "Listen, High Priest Joshua, you and your associates seated before you, who are men symbolic of things to come: I am going to bring my servant, the Branch. See, the stone I have set in front of Joshua! There are seven eyes on that one stone, and I will engrave an inscription on it," says the LORD Almighty, "and I will remove the sin of this land in a single day. In that day each of you will invite your neighbor to sit under your vine and fig tree," declares the LORD Almighty.
 - **[Slide 19: 1.50-51]** So perhaps it was a custom, or at least a habit of Nathaniel's, to have intense times of prayer or scripture reading under a fig tree. Certainly, Nathaniel's response indicates that his experience under that fig tree this day helped him connect Jesus with the Messiah/Christ of prophecy.
- † Still speaking to Nathaniel, Jesus says, "Truly, truly, I say to y'all..." In Greek, the plural you is not the same as the singular you, as it is in English. So in seminary, some of us took to translating the plural you as "y'all."

- Depending on your translation, it looks like Jesus starts with “truly, truly”; “Most assuredly”; or “I tell you the solemn truth”; but actually what Jesus said was “ἀμὴν ἀμὴν” meaning “amen, amen.” Jesus said this to prefix some of his most significant statements. Amen commonly was used to voice hearty agreement at the end of a prayer, but Jesus begins his statements with it, as if to say, “Listen up! Here is the truth!”
- † **[Slide 20: heaven open]** He does share some significant truth, that they will see Heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.
- Son of Man is another prophetic reference. This is the title Jesus used the most for himself. It both emphasized his humanity and his identity as the prophetic Son of Man in Daniel, to whom God gave the right to rule and bring redemption. Let’s take a look at one passage from Daniel:
 - **[Slide 21: Daniel 7.13-14]** Daniel 7.13-14 NIV: [Daniel speaking]: In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days [God the Father] and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.
 - We see from this reference that Jesus is God the Father’s chosen representative and king for the whole world, that he will eternally rule.
- † **[Slide 22: Genesis 28.12-15]** The vision Jesus promised these early disciples is symbolically related to Genesis 28.12.
- Genesis 28.12-15 NIV: He [Isaac’s son Jacob, who would be renamed Israel] had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. There above it stood the LORD, and he said: “I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.
 - The ladder foreshadowed the coming of Jesus as the Messiah who would serve as a mediator or high priest between God and mankind, who could bring the realities of Heaven to Earth, who could bring redemption – that set us free from the power of sin and death – and deliver on God’s promises to Israel. You will recall that when we studied Psalm 110, we learned that Jesus is God’s eternal high priest and mediator for us.

Conclusion

- † **[Slide 23: Jesus]** What have we learned about who Jesus is today? Every passage in John reveals so much!

- Jesus is the lamb of God who sacrificed himself to pay the penalty for our sin and thus bring us forgiveness, reconciliation with God, cleansing from sin, and peace and prosperity from God.
 - Jesus is a teacher, a Rabbi; in fact the ultimate teacher since he is the divine Son of God, who can see into our inner soul and also see who we can become if we walk with him.
 - Jesus is the promised Greater Moses Prophet who represents God morally.
 - Jesus is the promised Ultimate Davidic King who represents God legally and will rule the world in God's name.
 - Jesus is the promised Eternal High Priest who mediates between God and us, and brings God's promises and blessings to reality.
 - Jesus is the promised Son of Man, God's eternal ruler who brings redemption, freedom from the power of sin, death, Satan, and punishment from the Law.
- † **[Slide 24: respond]** Knowing this about Jesus, how should we respond? Most of the New Testament is about either who Jesus is or how we should respond! Today we see ...
- First, we should know what we are seeking from Jesus. Take some time this week and reflect on what spiritual step you would like Jesus to help you take this year. Then email me; I would like to know!
 - Second, we should actively seek this blessing by following Jesus. Reflect this week on how you could more closely follow Jesus, instead of hanging back doing your own thing.
 - Related to this, I ask you, do you seek transformation by the Holy Spirit? Are you ready to invest in seeing this transformation come about in you and your life? If you want help becoming a true multiplying disciple of Christ, come talk with me!
 - Third, we should share the good news about Jesus with everyone we love! We have some flyers left which could help you invite people to come hear about Jesus.
 - If I can help you with any of these steps, through prayer, teaching, discussion, or something else, let me know. This is why I am here.
 - Let's close in prayer...

[Slide 25: crucifixion] [for communion]