

Gospel of John



Lecture 2 – Chs 1:19-3

John 1:19-28 – John the Baptist denies being the Christ

- John "came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe in him" (v. 7). These words, "witness" (Greek noun: marturian) and "testify" (Greek verb: marturese)—are forms of the same word—a word meaning witness or testimony, but which, in English, has become martyr in recognition of the many Christians who have died as they witnessed to Christ.
- “The Jews” – John uses the phrase some 70 times. John uses the term in three different ways. Generally used negatively for the religious leaders but occurs also in a favorable sense and in a neutral sense.

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John 1:19-28 – John the Baptist denies being the Christ

- At v. 19, we have the first interrogation of John by priests and Levites from Jerusalem, asking, "Who are you?" John denies that he is the Messiah, Elijah, or the prophet, and says that he is "the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord.'" “
- Jesus is known for the “I Am” statements throughout John, but John the Baptist can be characterized as the “I Am Not!” (Also, Peter)

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John 1:19-28 – John the Baptist denies being the Christ

- At v. 24, we have the second interrogation of John, asking why he is baptizing. This provides John another occasion to speak highly of "the one who is coming after me" (v. 27) and humbly of himself.
 - “Elijah” – the Jews believed him to return to announce the end of time.
 - “The Prophet” – a reference to Deuteronomy 18:15, 18.
 - “The Christ.” – means “the Anointed One.”

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John 1:29-34 – Jesus declared the Lamb of God

- “Lamb of God” – found only here and in verse 36.
- The phrase, Lamb of God, carries several possible meanings:

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John 1:29-34 – Jesus declared the Lamb of God

- First, it might refer to the Paschal (Passover) lamb, whose blood saved the Israelites from death and paved the way for their deliverance from Egypt (Exodus 12). The Passover will soon be celebrated (2:13), so the Paschal Lamb might be in the evangelist's mind as he writes this. "In Judaism, the Passover lamb was not viewed as a sacrifice for sin, but the early church quickly reinterpreted Passover symbolism in the light of the Eucharist (e.g., 1 Corinthians 5:7-8). Indeed, in the Fourth Gospel Jesus' crucifixion is linked to the slaughter of the paschal lamb. For example, the Fourth Evangelist links Jesus' unbroken legs at the crucifixion (19:33) with the Exodus 12:46 teaching about the Passover lamb (19:36) (O'Day, 528).

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- Second, it might refer to the lamb from the Suffering Servant songs of Isaiah, which portrayed one who, by his sacrifice, will redeem his people. (Isa 53:7) "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth". This certainly became an important part of the church's understanding of Christ, and "it may be that John the Baptist was the first to see it so" (Barclay, 64).

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- Third, sheep were sacrificed daily in the temple to redeem the people from their sins. John the Baptist's father was a priest (Luke 1:5), so these sacrifices would be very familiar to him.
- Fourth, it might have its roots in apocalyptic literature, where we find a "conquering lamb..." (who) crushes the evil powers of the earth. The picture of the apocalyptic, destroying lamb fits in very well with what we know of John the Baptist's eschatological preaching" (Brown, 59).

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John 1:29-34 – Jesus declared the Lamb of God

- It is not necessary to choose one of these meanings. All four merge in John's "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."
- "Will baptize with the Holy Spirit" – its fulfillment seen on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2).
- John the Baptist is several months older than Jesus (Luke 1:36), but Jesus "ranks ahead of me because he was before me." This is a veiled reference to Jesus' pre-existence, which the evangelist addresses in the Prologue (1:1-5).
- John and Jesus are related (Luke 1:36) and have been acquainted from childhood, but only now does John recognize Jesus for who he really is. Only divine revelation makes this recognition possible.

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John 1:29-34 – Jesus declared the Lamb of God

- John comes baptizing "that (Jesus) might be revealed to Israel" (vs. 31). John's role is to reveal to others that which has been revealed to him.
- What is interesting from the beginning is that John follows God's call at a time when his understanding is still incomplete.
- I believe this is very indicative of our walk with God – and is a hallmark of faith
- God often calls us to walk with him on a road that is illuminated only a few inches ahead of us—if at all.

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John 1:29-34 – Jesus declared the Lamb of God

- “Son of God” as defined in John’s prologue (see 1:14; 18). Introduced as a title by John the Baptist and confirmed by Nathanael in 1:49. This title is later used as a form of mockery (John 19:7; see also Matt 27:40)
- This Gospel does not recount the details of Jesus’ baptism, but tells only of John’s seeing “the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove” (vs. 32). This is the sign by which John came to recognize Jesus as the Son of God.

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John 1:29-34 – Jesus declared the Lamb of God

- It is significant that the Spirit remains (meno) on Jesus (vs. 32). This verb, meno, occurs frequently in this Gospel, and is also translated abide (15:1-11). It describes a deep relationship—not trivial or passing. Jesus has this kind of relationship with the Spirit, and gives the disciples that kind of relationship with the Spirit (20:22).
- There is a close relationship between the Greek words – meno (abide) and koinonia (fellowship)

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John 1:35-42 – Jesus' first disciples

- “Two of his disciples” – i.e. John the Baptist. One was Andrew (vs. 40), the other is not mentioned but is regarded to be the apostle John who wrote the Gospel.
- Look at the pattern of witnessing that occurs in these verses. John the Baptist witnesses to two of his disciples concerning Jesus. One of these witnesses to his brother, who becomes a key figure in the Gospel story. The ripples move ever outward, and we can neither predict their effect nor imagine their potential.
- Jesus responds by inviting them to "Come and see," which is the closest that Jesus comes to calling them to discipleship. These are Jesus' first words in this Gospel.

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John 1:35-42 – Jesus' first disciples

- This is a great evangelism tool – the principle of “Come and see!” – NOT shut-up and listen.
- Not very many people have ever been argued into Christianity.... The only way to convince a man of the supremacy of Christ is to confront him with Christ" (Barclay, 76).
- Andrew responds by bringing his brother, Simon, to see Jesus. He does not have a grand vision. He goes only to his brother, but that outreach will have profound consequences. Evangelism often begins with those whom we know best.

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John 1:35-42 – Jesus' first disciples

- "Andrew... has virtually no prominence in the Gospels. But when we do have him mentioned, he is always doing the same thing, bringing others to Christ
 - Andrew does this on three occasions, this being the first.
 - Later, he will bring a boy with loaves and fishes to Jesus (6:8-9).
 - Finally, he will bring a group of Greeks (12:20-22).
- "You can accomplish anything if you don't care who gets the credit." Andrew bears evidence of this truth

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John 1:35-42 – Jesus' first disciples

- He never achieves prominence in the Gospels, but he uses his unique gift of inviting to great effect.
- From the very beginning, Jesus gathered around him the most ordinary people. People like Andrew—ordinary people who possess only ordinary gifts—still do most of Christ's work today.
- " 'We have found the Messiah' (Messias) (which is translated Anointed [Christos])" (v 41). Note that, in the original, we find both Messias and Christos.
- "Messiah and Christ are the same word. Messiah is Hebrew and Christ is Greek; both mean anointed.

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John 1:35-42 – Jesus' first disciples

- Jesus looks at Simon and changes his name to Cephas.' (Which is translated Peter)."
- This kind of name change has precedents in the Old Testament.
 - Abram to Abraham – from exalted father to father of a multitude
 - Jacob to Israel – from “He laughs” to “He contends with God”
 - Such name changes indicate the beginning of a new life—a new purpose—a new relationship with God.

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John 1:35-42 – Jesus' first disciples

- Cephas is the Aramaic word and Peter the Greek word for rock.
- Jesus sees possibilities in Peter that will not be realized for quite some time.
- Only after the resurrection will Peter begin to resemble the rock that Jesus saw in him so much earlier.
- "With the transfer of these disciples to the new teacher Jesus thus achieved, John the Baptist slips away" (Sloyan, 24).
- He has succeeded in his witness to Jesus.
- He will re-appear briefly in chapter 3 only to re-affirm that he must decrease while Jesus must increase (3:30).

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John 1:43-51 – The Calling of Philip and Nathanael

- Nathanael's comment, "also provides the Gospel's first fulfillment of 1:10-11, ('his own people did not accept him')" (Brueggemann, 112).
- Earlier, Andrew identified Jesus as Messiah (v. 41). Now Nathanael identifies Jesus with three additional titles—Rabbi, Son of God, and King of Israel:
 1. The first of the three, Rabbi, is honorable but ordinary—there are many rabbis.

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John 1:43-51 – The Calling of Philip and Nathanael

2. Nathanael probably intends the second of the three, Son of God, as a Messianic title, and as such it does not necessarily imply divinity. The Jews expected the Messiah to be a man like David, a king and warrior who would save Israel from its enemies rather than a deity who would save the world from its sins. However, the author of this Gospel has made it clear in the Prologue that Jesus is, in fact, God (1:1, 14). If Nathanael does yet not understand this, and it seems likely that he does not, God uses him to proclaim a greater truth than he understands.

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John 1:43-51 – The Calling of Philip and Nathanael

2. The third of the three titles, King of Israel, is also a messianic title, and like Son of God, conveys truth beyond Nathanael's understanding. "As Jesus enters Jerusalem, he will be acclaimed as a king (xii 12-19), but he will show that he is not a king in a nationalistic sense. His kingdom does not belong to this world (xviii 36); and his subjects are not Jews but believers" (Brown, 87).

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John 1:43-51 – The Calling of Philip and Nathanael

- It is interesting that, both at the beginning and the end of this Gospel, there are those who respond with bold statements of faith.
- Nathanael here at the beginning and Doubting Thomas will respond with "My Lord and my God" in 20:28.
- Jesus' introductory words in 51 translated "I tell you the truth", is literally "amen, amen", "truly, truly" or "very truly,"
- It is a distinctive component of this Gospel—in the Synoptics, Jesus uses only a single amen (Matt 5:26; 6:2, 5, 16, etc.). These words are intended to emphasize the truthfulness of the words that follow.

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John 1:43-51 – The Calling of Philip and Nathanael

- “Heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending” – a reference to Jacobs dream (Gen 28:12). Denotes Jesus as the bridge between heaven and earth and the only mediator between God and men.
- Now Jesus says that the angels will no longer ascend and descend on a ladder but upon the Son of Man.
- “Son of Man” – Jesus’ favourite self-designation. Used 83 times in the Gospels – 12 of those by John. A Messianic title (Dan 7:13). Used only by Jesus in the Gospels but is found in Acts 7:56, (Stephen), and in Rev 1:13, (the Apostle John).
- See also Ezekiel – Son of man as prophetic title

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Lecture 2 – Chs 1:19-3

John 2:1-11 – Jesus changes water to wine

- This Gospel speaks of signs rather than miracles.
- A sign is more than a demonstration of power. A sign reveals something—points to something beyond itself.
- In this story of Jesus changing water to wine the sign points to Jesus' glory (v. 11).
- Signs, however, unlike miracles that are done openly, are hidden from some. Not everyone understands their significance.

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John 2:1-11 – Jesus changes water to wine

- “Wedding” – a feast that was known to last up to a week. It was a serious offense to fail in the area of hospitality, so a wedding was a time for a family to display their best. They were socially obligated to provide a feast based on cultural standards so “when the wine ran out”, it was a significant social embarrassment for the family.

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John 2:1-11 – Jesus changes water to wine

- When the wine runs out and Jesus' mother asks him to do something about it he responds with...
- “My time has not yet come” – an expression found throughout the Gospel (7:6, 8, 30; 8:20), and is contrasted with Jesus' statement that “the hour has come” when he entered into his final days before the cross and resurrection (12:23, 27; 13:1; 16:32; 17:1).
- The first two stories of this Gospel, the wedding (vv. 1-11) and the cleansing of the Temple (vv. 22) are both "third day" stories (vv. 1, 19-21), pointing toward Jesus' death and resurrection.

Lecture 2 – Chs 1:19-3

John 2:1-11 – Jesus changes water to wine

- Only in this Gospel is Mary with Jesus both at the beginning of his ministry and at the crucifixion (19:26).
- Jesus' response to Mary seems uncaring and even disrespectful. However, "woman" suggested distance rather than disrespect.
- Jesus used the word, "woman" as a form of address on several occasions (Matt 15:28; Luke 13:12; John 8:10; 19:26; 20:15), never disrespectfully.
- Jesus' hour, we will discover later in this Gospel (12:23; 17:1), is the hour of his glorification—the hour of his death, resurrection, and ascension. Jesus is living by God's timetable.

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John 2:1-11 – Jesus changes water to wine

- Stone jars were used for purification water, because non-porous stone is less subject to impurity than porous clay.
- There are those who estimate that the total pots would have held some 120-180 gallons – more than enough to have purified the crowd.
- This story never tells us when the water becomes wine. The servants pour water into the jars and, when the steward tastes it, we learn that it has become wine.
- The steward does not know where the wine came from (v. 9).

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John 2:1-11 – Jesus changes water to wine

- Just as the steward does not know where the wine came from, then, there is much confusion about where Jesus comes from.
- Some people know where the wine came from, but others do not. There is a reversal here.
- The steward should be the one to know the wine's origins, but it is the servants who know.
- And this is a pattern that will be repeated throughout John's Gospel – that the religious leaders should understand Jesus' signs, but it is the disciples, and more ordinary folk, who believe.

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John 2:12-25 – Jesus clears the Temple.

- “Passover” – Annual Jewish feast remembering Israel’s deliverance from Egypt. This is the first of three Passovers that John records (6:4; 11:55).
- All four Gospels tell the story of the cleansing of the temple (see Matt. 21:12-17; Mark 11:15-19; Luke 19:45-48), but the Synoptics place it near the end of Jesus' life, and it provokes the chief priests and scribes to plot to kill him (Mark 14:10).
- John's Gospel places the cleansing at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, and the raising of Lazarus is the precipitating event for his trial and crucifixion (John 11-12).

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John 2:12-25 – Jesus clears the Temple.

- "It is highly significant that both narratives (Cana and the cleansing of the temple) portray Jesus as bringing or embodying what is new, displacing the old" (Smith, 91).
- There are a number of times in the OT where God exclaims that he is doing a “new thing” – and these two stories echo that – that God is about to do a “new thing”.
- The vendors are almost surely located in the Court of the Gentiles, the outer precincts of the temple.

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John 2:12-25 – Jesus clears the Temple.

- Epstein writes that the high priest, Caiaphas, allowed his supporters to move their stalls to the temple as a way of avenging himself against rivals in the Sanhedrin (Brown, 119).
- If this is true, there are surely a large number of people offended by this commerce in the temple—Caiaphas' rivals for sure, but also people offended by the unnecessary crowding and stink in the temple precincts.
- Palmer notes that nobody moves to stop Jesus, probably because they are pleased to see him remove the offense from the temple area (Palmer, 38).

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John 2:12-25 – Jesus clears the Temple.

- There is an allusion here to Zech. 14:21, "And there shall no longer be traders in the house of the Lord of hosts on that day."
- This is the first time that Jesus identifies God as his Father, but the Jews who challenge him in v. 18 fail to pick up on this.
- "Destroy this temple and I will raise it again in three days" – Jews thought Jesus was talking about the literal Temple but John confirms that he was not in vs. 21. Jesus was mocked using this charge in Matt 27:40; Mark 29.
- On the surface, it appears that Jesus is challenging these Jews to destroy the Herodian temple and offering to rebuild it in three days—which is how they understand him.

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John 3:1-21 – Jesus and Nicodemus

- Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus leads into three related subjects:
 1. The Son of Man being lifted up
 2. Eternal life
 3. Judgment.
- This Gospel associates night and darkness with evil and separation from God (1:5; 3:19-21; 9:4; 11:10; 13:30).
- Nicodemus probably comes at night so that he will not be seen.
- Jesus has just created a scene in the temple (2:13-22). Is he a prophet or a troublemaker?

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John 3:1-21 – Jesus and Nicodemus

- Nicodemus approaches Jesus respectfully, calling him "a teacher who has come from God" and affirming Jesus' works as evidence that Jesus is working by God's power (2:23)
- The Greek word, *anōthen*, carries a double meaning—"anew" and "from above"
- "Kingdom of God" – a common phrase in the Synoptic Gospels but used only twice in John, both in this passage (3:3, 5).
- Nicodemus would think of the kingdom of God as his heavenly reward for a life well lived.

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John 3:1-21 – Jesus and Nicodemus

- “Eternal life” – In John’s Gospel it means the abundant life of Jesus living in fellowship with God that is realized in the present and continues for all time (see 17:3).
- Nicodemus interprets Jesus’ words as having to do with physical rather than spiritual rebirth.
- “Born of water and Spirit” – various renderings of this: 1. Means the same as “born of the Spirit,” 2. Water denotes purification, 3. Water refers to baptism.
- The Greek, *pneuma*, has a double meaning—“wind” and “spirit”.

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John 3:1-21 – Jesus and Nicodemus

- Nicodemus' closing words show He does not understand Jesus.
- Later, however, Nicodemus will defend Jesus (7:50) and will assist in his burial (19:39). So, at some point, the light must have dawned for him.
- Jesus makes it clear that he can speak with authority about heavenly things.
- There appears to be a direct allusion to comments that Moses made in Deuteronomy 30:10-14.

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The LORD your God will delight in you if you obey his voice and keep the commands and laws written in this Book of the Law, and if you turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and soul. 11 "This command I am giving you today is not too difficult for you to understand or perform. 12 It is not up in heaven, so distant that you must ask, 'Who will go to heaven and bring it down so we can hear and obey it?' 13 It is not beyond the sea, so far away that you must ask, 'Who will cross the sea to bring it to us so we can hear and obey it?' 14 The message is very close at hand; it is on your lips and in your heart so that you can obey it.

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John 3:1-21 – Jesus and Nicodemus

- The references to Moses continue...
- "And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness" (v. 14).
A reference to Numbers 21:4-9.
- The parallels between the two are:
 - Death due to sin.
 - God provides salvation – a bronze snake in one, His Son the other.
 - Both are “lifted up”.
 - People are saved by looking/believing.

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John 3:1-21 – Jesus and Nicodemus

- In verse 15 we get the first mention of eternal life in this Gospel.
- John 3:16, though the most recognized verse, ultimately teaches how God loved us, not how much God loves us (by sending Jesus).
- Verse 17 states God's purpose in sending the Son. It is not to condemn (Greek: krine) the world, but to save it. Krine can mean either judged or condemned, but in this context—set over against saved—it means condemned.
- The language of the Prologue returns as Jesus speaks of 'life,' 'light,' and 'darkness' (vv. 18-21; cf. 1:4-8)

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John 3:22-36 – John the Baptist’s testimony concerning Jesus

- The passage opens with the picture of John the Baptist continuing his practice of baptizing and an argument arose over ceremonial washing.
- Jewish ritual baths had a preference for what was called, “living water”
- The baptism of John differed because it was more than a symbol of ceremonial purification; it was a baptism of repentance, a confession of sin, and moral purity and cleansing, and was a symbol of forgiveness.

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John 3:22-36 – John the Baptist’s testimony concerning Jesus

- “The Bridegroom” – The most important man at a wedding.
- His role is that of best man – one who rejoices in with the groom.
- John demonstrates servant hood – no sense of rivalry and competitiveness.
- “The one who comes from above” – also implied in 3:13 (cf. 1 Cor. 15:47). Contrasted with “the one who is from the earth.”

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