

Seeing Jesus

A Disciple's Perspective

Andrew Bernhardt

FREE PREVIEW

Seeing Jesus – A Disciple’s Perspective

Free Preview

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“Sir, we want to see Jesus!”

- John 12:21

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Introduction

Years ago, I discovered that the words “Christian” and “disciple” meant the same thing¹, and I realized I needed to know Jesus better. Jesus didn’t save me solely for the eternal benefits. He didn’t intend that I just spend time in prayer, or Bible study, or doing good works. He wants me to *follow* him. This means I need to learn to recognize his voice so I can continually submit to his leading. This is essential for the health of my relationship with him.

Jesus said, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.”² To better recognize the voice of my Shepherd³, I’ve been spending time in the gospels, observing Jesus with fresh eyes. If I were one of his disciples, or someone in the crowd that hung around him, what might I have seen, heard, and thought as he spoke, healed, and otherwise lived his life here on earth? How would my understanding of who Jesus is change over time? In some cases it was obvious. In others I had to use a little imagination based on the scriptures and my own personal walk with my Lord.

The first part of this book contains the results of some of my ‘imaginings.’ *A Gospel Travelogue* is a series of short vignettes on the first part of Jesus’ ministry in the gospels, from just before his public unveiling to his formal call to four young fishermen to follow him. My purpose for presenting this is not to teach doctrine (although there is some in there). Instead, I want to encourage you to do what I did: take time to rediscover Jesus

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in the pages of your Bible so you can know and follow him better.

The second part of the book, *What It Means To Follow Jesus*, is about the requirements Jesus gave in Matthew chapter 16 to those who want to follow him. Being a disciple is serious business. As disciples, we need to realize that, while salvation costs us nothing, discipleship costs us everything. Yet, salvation and discipleship are two sides of the same coin: they belong together.

As I became more familiar with Jesus, I realized he not only wants me to keep my eyes on him, he also wants me to see with his eyes. The next part, *Look, Pray, Go*, is about the need to see people the way Jesus sees them. I think this is an essential yet overlooked step in our evangelism of the lost. It's also an important part of our relationships with others, both in and out of the church. I also talk about our need to ask God for workers before we evangelize, because the work to be done is too great for us to do on our own. *Look, Pray, Go* is an older work that gave me the idea for the *Travelogue*.

The last part, *Discipleship – Then and Now*, compares the way Jesus and the apostles raised up disciples with the way we do so today. Too often we focus primarily on the doctrinal (i.e. educational) aspect of discipleship, but there is much more to it. As you become aware of the way people were discipled in the New Testament, you may receive some new ideas on how to disciple those around you.

As you can see, this book's focus is about knowing and following Jesus. I wrote it primarily for those who already have

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a saving relationship with him through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and his finished work on the cross. If this does not describe you, I hope this book will help you discover Jesus and come to know and trust him as your Lord and Savior. I encourage you not to rely on what I have written, but to take time to thoughtfully read through the first four books of the New Testament, and to seriously consider what Jesus said about himself.

ANDREW BERNHARDT

January 5, 2013

A Gospel Travelogue

In August of 2011 I started a blog to record my journey through Jesus' ministry years. Rather than approach the gospels in an intellectual way with just cold, hard facts, I wrote in what might loosely be called a 'travelogue', which I felt would better illuminate the hearts and minds of Jesus, his disciples, and the others who observed him.

What follows is a somewhat edited reprint from the first year of this blog.

Hidden Beginnings

“...among you stands one you do not know.”

- John 1:26

Before his ministry years, before his baptism and temptation, Jesus was virtually unknown.

It had been some time since the strange rumors of the birth of the long-hoped-for Messiah had made the rounds. Supposedly some herdsmen had seen him lying in (of all places) a cattle trough! And later, strangely dressed foreigners had come to pay their respects. But that was many years ago. The excitement had since faded to a memory, and life under Roman subjection went on as usual.

To those of Nazareth and the neighboring towns, Jesus was just another young man. He was Joseph the carpenter’s son⁴, and while he was unusually well behaved, kind, and astute on scriptural matters⁵, he was probably going to continue in the same occupation himself ⁶.

We take our knowledge of who Jesus is for granted. The apostle John wrote in his gospel:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. ... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us...

- John 1:1-3, 14

Discipleship - Then and Now

These familiar words are perhaps the most direct statements of the deity of Jesus to be found in all of scripture. John wrote them toward the end of his life, after decades of knowing him. But at the time Jesus walked the earth, the truth was hidden from John, along with virtually everyone else. Jesus appeared to be just another good Jewish boy.

Even John the Baptist, who was sent by God to prepare the way for the Lord, who leaped in Elizabeth's womb at Mary's presence, was in the dark. He didn't know his own cousin was the Christ⁷. Surely his mom would have pointed Jesus out to him one day: "Look dearest! There's our long promised Lord and Savior!"⁸

Perhaps they didn't grow up together.

I expect the first thirty years of Jesus' life appeared, for the most part, unusually ordinary – at least to those who were not personally acquainted with him.

Who has believed what they heard from us?

And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

For he grew up before him like a young plant,

and like a root out of dry ground;

he had no form or majesty that we should look at him,

and no beauty that we should desire him.

- Isaiah 53:1-2

There was nothing in Jesus' appearance or deportment that proclaimed "Messiah," "Savior," "Lord." It would take John the Baptist to fulfill that role.

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When you consider the humble obscurity of most of Jesus' life, it's amazing to see the impact of his last few years, and how quickly his ministry took off.

Looking back, it's easy to think that we know Jesus better than his peers... and we probably do in many important and essential ways. The New Testament reveals the doctrine of Christ to us with supernatural clarity. But that knowledge can blind us in other ways. When we become confident of the truths of various biblical doctrines about Jesus Christ, we can overlook his heart and mind. We become fixated more on the facts than on the Person those facts point to.

As you continue reading, I invite you to temporarily set aside what you know (or think you know) about Jesus, and look at him as if seeing him for the first time. It shouldn't be too hard. After all, just as with his disciples, there was a time when you and I didn't know him either.

Preparing A Way For The Way

Just as with us all, Jesus started out a stranger to his disciples. Many first heard about him from John the Baptist, a man born for this very purpose. Before John was even conceived, an angel told Zechariah, his father:

"...he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared."

- Luke 1:16-17

Discipleship - Then and Now

Since the people might not recognize their Lord when he came, it was necessary that John come first. (He was born six months earlier than Jesus, and his ministry came and flourished first.) John was like the forerunner of a king telling the people to clean up their streets and houses, for their ruler would be arriving shortly.

“Prepare the way! Make straight his paths!”⁹

But this King would not be concerned with buildings and roadways. He didn't want his citizens to hide their eyesores: the embarrassing poor, lame, and homeless. Nor did he want to see them replaced with freshly painted park benches and pretty flowers. No, the preparation had to be spiritual, for this King would be looking at people's hearts.

A unique King required a unique forerunner. John's message was summarized in his oft-repeated call:

“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near!”¹⁰

Calling the people to repentance was, perhaps, not too novel of an idea. After all, the prophets had done so for hundreds of years. But the way John went about it was strange: he baptized people in an unusual location and for an unusual reason.

It was common for people to arrive at the temple in Jerusalem in a ceremonially unclean condition. So special baths called *mikvehs* were provided where the Jews would immerse themselves, becoming ritually clean so they could worship in the temple. (These baths were also used by Gentiles when they converted to Judaism.)

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Since there were cleansing pools at the temple already, the Pharisees probably wondered who John was, and why he was baptizing out in the wilderness. Why would people want to travel away from Jerusalem, the Jewish center of all things spiritual, to the desert where they'd have to walk through mud to get in and out of a dirty river? Weren't the baptismal pools at the temple good enough? So, the Jewish leaders sent priests and Levites to John to find out¹¹.

The Jordan River held an important place in the history of the Israelites. Joshua had led the people across this river to enter the Promised Land. Some see this as a picture of baptism, but there's one problem with this idea: the people went across on dry land¹². They never got wet. Whatever your view of baptism is, sprinkling or immersion, you should feel at least a little bit of moisture!

But another event happened at the Jordan, foreshadowing John's baptism. You can read the story for yourself in 2 Kings 5, but I'll summarize the relevant details.

Naaman was the commander of the Syrian army. He was directly under the king of Syria. He was powerful, respected, and a leper. Through a series of events Naaman found his way to Elisha, the prophet of God in Samaria, seeking a cure for his disease. Elisha told him to go dunk himself in the Jordan River seven times. At first, Naaman was incensed.

"Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?"

- 2 Kings 5:12

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But his servants convinced him to do what the prophet had said. When he came up out of the Jordan River, his leprosy was gone, his skin became as new as a baby's backside, and "he was clean" (vs. 14)!

Returning to Elisha, humbled and grateful, he said:

... "Behold, I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel ... from now on your servant will not offer burnt offering or sacrifice to any god but the LORD."

- 2 Kings 5:15-17

What was once a stubborn, proud, idol-worshiping leper was now a humble, repentant, clean man who would henceforth live to worship Yahweh alone. Naaman was the first to be baptized in the Jordan. His was a baptism of repentance, and he did so under the command of Elisha, who, like John, came in the spirit and power of Elijah¹³.

Unlike the ceremonial washings at the temple (or the more attractive Abana and Pharpar Rivers of Syria), the Jordan baptisms were about repentance: a humbling change of heart toward God. Sinners, recognizing their condition, would seek God to be cured of their spiritual leprosy. This was the preparation of the way toward which John urged the people. And the King who was coming would be the one to heal them.

Jesus answered them, "Those who are well don't need a physician, but those who are sick do. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

- Luke 5:31-32

I suppose many of Jesus' followers were first baptized by John, especially those who started out, like Andrew, as John's

disciples. (It was the Baptist's testimony that led them to follow the King of kings.) They began their journey with repentance, and this is a necessary step for all who would follow Jesus.

Preparation For Ministry – Part 1

John's ministry was flourishing. Great crowds of people were coming to hear him preach and be baptized. His message was meeting with success, for many urgently asked the Big Question of repentance, "What shall we do?"¹⁴.

Upon baptism, some had gone the next step and become disciples of John. They had recognized their need for a change of heart and life, and they knew they couldn't do it on their own.

But the Baptizer was not able to effect the change in his followers, for he struggled with a sinful heart himself¹⁵. So he proclaimed:

"After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

- Mark 1:7-8

To be baptized with the Holy Spirit – that is what we all need, said John. This coming One would have the power to do it.

Suddenly Jesus appeared, but he did not come as expected. John and his disciples had looked forward to being baptized by Jesus with the Holy Spirit, but instead Jesus came to be baptized by John in ordinary water:

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John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?"

But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness."

- Matthew 3:14-15

It would be over three years before the longed-for Holy Spirit would come upon them.

It has puzzled me why Jesus would need to be baptized. Why did the holy, sinless Son of God have to participate in an act meant for repentant sinners? I've read through the Old Testament more times than I can remember, and I don't recall seeing any ordinance of baptism given to the Jews in general. If it's in there, it's very well hidden!

On thinking about it, however, several reasons do come to mind:

First, those of us in Christ know Jesus as our High Priest. He represents us to God, and represents God to us. In order to execute the office of priest fairly, he needed to become like us in every way (apart from sin):

Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation¹⁶ for the sins of the people.

- Hebrews 2:17

Part of the Old Testament preparation for becoming a priest was ceremonial washing¹⁷. Commentator Adam Clarke wrote,

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“Our Lord represented the high priest, and was to be the high priest over the house of God: now, as the high priest was initiated into his office by washing and anointing, so must Christ: and hence he was baptized, washed, and anointed by the Holy Ghost.”¹⁸

This makes sense to me, and if it's true, there's another possible implication for us.

We know that when Jesus died, our salvation was accomplished in two complementary ways: he took all our sins upon himself, and in exchange he gave us all his righteousness. Every righteous act Jesus did was imputed to us just as if we did it. So when Jesus was baptized 'to fulfill all righteousness', he did so for our benefit.

In light of this, if Jesus' baptism can be seen as a washing of consecration to priesthood, do you think it has any significance toward those of us in Christ being made a kingdom of priests¹⁹? I don't know, but I like to think it does.

Second, Jesus' baptism marked the beginning of his ministry. It was his public declaration that he was going to live in submission to his heavenly Father, and not to please himself. Of course, Jesus already was obedient to his heavenly Father²⁰, but it was necessary to declare this publicly in a more formal way.

Mark quotes Malachi 3:1 in describing the ministry of John:

...Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way...

- Mark 1:2

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While John came to prepare the people for their Lord's coming, it is also true that John prepared Jesus for his ministry when he baptized him. Perhaps Mark's quote can be understood in this way: "...Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare you for your way (ministry)."

Third, we like to think of baptism as an event that is over and done with. But the significance of baptism is really life-long. For the next three and a half years Jesus would show us what baptism is all about. As we see Jesus selflessly serve and obey his heavenly Father through teaching, healing, loving, self-denial, enduring persecution, and submitting to a shameful death, the meaning of baptism becomes more crystallized in our own minds. We begin to see what a life of repentance and following Jesus is all about. We will hopefully approach baptism a little more seriously. But it is not enough for us to merely know what it's about...

Fourth, Jesus was baptized as the Leader for us to follow. After salvation, baptism is the first step in our walk with Jesus. It's also not an over-and-done-with event, but the beginning of a life-long journey. Just as Jesus laid aside his will to do his Father's will, so are we to do the same. Just as Jesus served others, so are we (as in John 13). Just as Jesus gave his life for us, so are we to give our lives for others²¹.

There are probably other reasons why Jesus needed to be baptized, but these are what occurred to me. What do you think?

Preparation For Ministry – Part 2

Before Jesus came to be baptized, John proclaimed him as a mysterious Person: “He who is coming after me is mightier than I ... He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.”

At some point I imagine John asking, “Lord, you sent me on this mission to prepare your people for the Messiah. When he arrives, how can I be sure of him so I can say to the people ‘*This is the One I’ve been telling you about?*’” And God said:

... ‘He on whom you see²² the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’

- John 1:33b

When Jesus came, John recognized him as the One he was looking for²³, and yet he did not *know* him (John 1:33, Greek *eido*). John believed, but it was not the inward, conscious certitude of the heart. (I think the plea in Mark 9:24 echoes this: “I believe, help my unbelief!”). John needed supernatural revelation to be certain that Jesus was the Anointed One.

...And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”

- Matthew 3:16-17

It happened just as God had said, with a couple extra convincers thrown in for good measure: the heavens opened,

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the Holy Spirit came down in *visible* form and remained on Jesus, and God gave his utterly incontrovertible testimony: "This is my beloved Son. I am fully delighted with him." It would take an act of will (or "won't") to doubt now.

Those who had previously heard John's testimony now witnessed a greater one. They even witnessed fulfillment of prophecy, for over 700 years earlier Isaiah wrote:

There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, ...

- Isaiah 11:1-5

Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations.

- Isaiah 42:1

When the Spirit came down on Jesus, it was not just some theatrical effect designed to create a sense of awe in the onlookers. The Spirit's visible presence on Jesus confirmed John's claim that he would be the One to baptize with the Holy Spirit.

Now John *knew* the One he was proclaiming. From this point on, whenever he saw Jesus, he said, "This is the Son of God," "Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"²⁴.

The Holy Spirit also served another purpose here. While John prepared Jesus by baptizing him in water, it was the Holy Spirit who really prepared Jesus for his ministry. The Spirit

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never left him. For the next three years Jesus would minister, not in his own power, but in that of the Holy Spirit²⁵.

These two things, the testimony and the preparation of the Holy Spirit, apply to us as followers of Jesus.

First, just as at his baptism, the full, internal knowledge of who Jesus is comes about through the testifying work of the Holy Spirit. We can acquire knowledge of Jesus through the scriptures and come to believe in a way, but full knowledge of him always takes special revelation from God²⁶. I need the Spirit to testify to me about Jesus, and I need the Spirit to help me tell others about him.

Secondly, we need the Holy Spirit to prepare us for ministry. While Jesus certainly had the ability to minister in his own power, we don't have the choice. And even if we did, since our Lord chose to walk in the Spirit, we need to do the same. There is no other way to follow him.

Preparation For Ministry – Part 3

And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing during those days. ...

- Luke 4:1-2

You would think, having been baptized and filled with the Spirit, that Jesus was now ready for his public ministry. But the Holy Spirit took him out of the spotlight one more time for a

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final stage of preparation. Jesus was compelled to leave the life-giving Jordan for the barren desert to prove his baptismal commitment.

He went alone. As yet, there were no disciples, no train of followers, curiosity seekers, needy people in search of miracles, or self-righteous hypocrites. Other than the wild animals²⁷, Jesus' only companion was the ever-present Holy Spirit... and that was enough.

Oh... and Satan was there, too – an integral part of God's plan²⁸. If you're wondering how he came to be involved, perhaps it went a little like this...²⁹

Scene: Heaven.

Time: While John is baptizing Jesus at the Jordan.

The angels appear before God's throne to give their reports, and Satan also shows up.

God: Satan, what have you been up to?

Satan: Oh, you know me. Same old thing: going to and fro on the earth and walking up and down on it.

God: Have you considered my only begotten Son, how there is none like him? Just look at him down there at the Jordan: absolutely sinless, righteous, and submitted to me. And he allows not one evil thought to enter his mind. You see why I love him so much, don't you?

Satan: Well, what do you expect? He's your favorite! You always protect him. Every

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time I try to get at him, you snatch him away. I almost had him that one time, and then you whisked him off to Egypt!

God: And your point is?

Satan: I just want you to play fair! Your son is imprisoned in a weak human body now... a body afflicted with needs and desires. Anyone will trust and obey if you bribe him with blessings. But touch even your son in the areas of his human limitations and he will stumble; self-preservation will kick in. He has to satisfy his own needs and wants sometime. Come on, prove me wrong!

God: Satan, my Son is in your hands. Do what you need to do to prove your point, but do not kill or physically harm him.

As Satan leaves the presence of God with high hopes, a loud Voice from behind calls down to earth, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

Jesus was in the desert forty days. During that time, Satan tried to get him to sin, but could not. During that time, Jesus ate nothing. But the Holy Spirit who drove him into the wilderness also miraculously sustained him. He felt no hunger until the forty days were over³⁰. Then the lack of food caught up with him, and the three temptations recorded in the gospels occurred.

Why was it necessary for Jesus to be driven into the desert to be tempted of the devil? I can think of several reasons, but primarily I think it was to prepare our great High Priest to faithfully and compassionately represent us to the Father:

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For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect³¹ through suffering. ... Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

- Hebrews 2:10,17-18

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

- Hebrews 4:15

It's a mystery why the all-powerful God in human flesh would need to suffer this way to help me in my temptations. I'll never understand it, but I'm exceedingly grateful he did. Jesus learned in an experiential way what it means to endure suffering and temptation³². I now have an advocate who remembers what it was like to go through the difficulties I experience. This comforts me and helps me trust him.

As followers of Jesus, what can we learn from this time in our Master's life? In what way are we to follow him? Again, I can think of multiple answers to these questions. Here are a few:

First, whether or not Jesus needed the Holy Spirit to resist Satan may be up for debate. All I know is my constant need for the Spirit. I have found walking in the Spirit rather than my own strength is the only way to have victory over temptation.

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But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

- Galatians 5:16

Second, when suffering, learn to forget the pity party and look forward to the benefits that will come about through endurance. I can't see Jesus complaining, "Why me?" during his trials. He even endured the cross, looking forward to the joy that would result³³.

Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

- James 1:2-4

To 'count it all joy' doesn't come naturally, but it does come through the power of the Holy Spirit. Otherwise James would have given us an impossible command. Have I attained to this? No. But I am making progress.

Third, prepare to respond to temptation as Jesus did. This is not just a matter of memorizing scripture verses so you can throw them back at Satan when he appears. It's about knowing and trusting in God, being confident of his protection and provision. It's also about abiding in Christ, and being led by the Spirit. Jesus knew his Father so well that the scriptures he quoted came naturally. And he always countered Satan's attacks by taking the focus off his needs and wants, and placing it on God. This is how we are to respond to temptation.

First Followers

The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

- John 1:29

John was busy. His ministry had really taken off. Great crowds were coming to him to be baptized³⁴, and he had a number of disciples under his teaching. Many had heard John speak of the coming Messiah, and were eagerly looking for his arrival. Some had actually seen him and witnessed the extraordinary events at his baptism. But afterwards, nothing was heard or seen of Jesus until over a month had passed.

When Jesus reappeared, John recognized him and immediately proclaimed to those around him, "Look! The Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

Those who had not been at the baptism might have doubted that Jesus could be the Promised One. Forty days of fasting had severely affected his appearance. He was gaunt, emaciated. It looked like he shouldn't be able to stand, and yet he was obviously full of Life, for Jesus walked in the power of the Holy Spirit³⁵. God's power was revealed through his physical weakness.

For the undecided and doubters John gave his account of what he saw weeks earlier:

"I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but he who sent

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me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God." ³⁶

- John 1:32-34

John was all about shining the spotlight on Jesus. At every opportunity he told his listeners of the Messiah. He fed a hunger in them for the Promised One: "Someone is coming who is greater than I." They were now on the lookout for that Someone.

So it was only natural the next time John saw Jesus and pointed him out, two of his disciples did the no-brainer: they left their master for a new One.

The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus.

- John 1:35-36

One disciple was Andrew and the other was likely John, the writer of the fourth gospel. (John shows more familiarity with the Baptizer than the other gospel writers, and while he names other disciples in his gospel, he avoids mentioning his own name.)

The Baptizer had performed his mission well.

We have a similar mission: pointing people to the Lamb of God. How well are we doing it?

Invitations

*... Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them,
"What are you seeking?"*

*And they said to him, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where
are you staying?"*

He said to them, "Come and you will see."

*So they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed
with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour.*

- John 1:38-39

At this point, John's ministry begins to fade and Jesus' ministry starts to grow. Read the gospels, especially Mark, and you'll notice Jesus' followers increasing exponentially. One day he's virtually unknown, and it seems a week later great crowds follow him everywhere. And the crowds only get bigger as time goes on. In Acts, Jesus' followers increase by the thousands per day. Today, there are hundreds of millions of people who at least claim to follow Jesus.

It all began here with a multitude of two. Messiah-spotters Andrew and (presumably) John, having found the One they were looking for, immediately follow Jesus.

Jesus, noticing them, turns around and asks them what they want. And they respond with a title and a destination.

The young men called Jesus 'Rabbi', a term of great respect. As far as we know, they're the first to address Jesus this way. It's a title they previously applied to the Baptizer. Now they gave Jesus this title, hoping that he would be open to having them become his disciples.

Seeing Jesus (Free Preview)

The destination, 'where are you staying?', expressed this desire further. A disciple wants to be with his master. Andrew and John wanted to spend time getting to know the Lamb of God. If Jesus invited them, then becoming his disciples was practically guaranteed.

Their wish is granted. Jesus invites them to come, and they spend the rest of the day communing with him. As they talk with him, and listen to what he has to say, they're even more convinced Jesus is the Messiah (just like the Samaritans later in chapter 4). Andrew is so thrilled, he can't keep the good news to himself...

One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which means Christ). He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon the son of John. You shall be called Cephas" (which means Peter).

- John 1:40-42

I don't think Simon was a disciple of John, but his brother had likely kept him up-to-date on all John had taught. Now Andrew was excitedly telling him, "The Messiah is here! In town now! I've seen him and talked with him! Simon, come and see!"

When they get back, Jesus speaks Simon's name ('You are Simon Johnson'), and then foretells what he will be known as: Peter, a stone... whatever that means. Jesus doesn't explain right away.

Discipleship - Then and Now

Not that it matters. Jesus doesn't call him 'Peter' again until three years later, when he approaches Jerusalem for the last time³⁷.

The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me."

- John 1:43

Chronologically, Philip is the first recorded person that Jesus called to follow him. The others, Peter, Andrew, and John, would receive their formal calling later.

Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see."

- John 1:44-46

Like Andrew, Philip wasted no time in spreading the good news. He found Nathanael (most scholars identify him as Bartholomew) and said the equivalent of 'We have found the Messiah.' Philip mistakenly calls him the son of Joseph, an error Jesus will rectify over time. In response to Nathanael's skepticism, Philip gives the familiar invitation: 'Come and see!'

Have you seen Jesus? To 'come and see' is an invitation to know him. In Greek, one of the words for 'see' is *eido*, which, when used in the perfect tense, also means full, conscious knowledge. Jesus spoke of this kind of knowledge when he told the Pharisees they didn't know him or his Father:

Seeing Jesus (Free Preview)

They said to him therefore, "Where is your Father?" Jesus answered, "You know neither me nor my Father. If you knew me, you would know my Father also."

- John 8:19

The Pharisees saw Jesus, and yet didn't see him. For the most part they didn't believe he was the Messiah. But Andrew, Peter, John, Philip, and (soon) Nathanael believed. Their knowledge surpassed the religious experts from the beginning.

Perhaps you are like the Pharisees: seeing and yet unseeing. Maybe you believe in Jesus the historical figure, or the good man, or perhaps you're having trouble overcoming doubts. You haven't arrived at full, conscious knowledge of who Jesus really is. If so, the invitation is still open: come and see!

END OF PREVIEW

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Endnotes

A GOSPEL TRAVELOGUE

¹ Acts 11:26.

² John 10:27.

³ John 10:4.

⁴ Matthew 13:55.

⁵ Luke 2:46-47.

⁶ Mark 6:3.

⁷ John 1:33. The words 'Christ' and 'Messiah' are equivalent. They refer to the one God promised would reign on David's throne forever.

⁸ Luke 1:43,68-79.

⁹ Mark 1:3.

¹⁰ Matthew 3:2.

¹¹ John 1:19-28.

¹² Joshua 3:17.

¹³ 2 Kings 2:9-15, Luke 1:17.

¹⁴ Luke 3:10-14, Acts 2:37.

¹⁵ As a member of the human race, John suffered from a sinful heart just as we all do (Jeremiah 17:9, Ecclesiastes 7:20).

¹⁶ A propitiation is what allows God to pardon sin while remaining true to his holy character.

¹⁷ Exodus 29:4.

¹⁸ *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, Adam Clark (1762-1832).

¹⁹ Revelation 1:6.

²⁰ Luke 2:49.

²¹ 1 John 3:16.

²² Perhaps John thought, “I’m going to *see* the *invisible* Spirit of God descend on the Messiah? This should be interesting!”

²³ Matthew 3:14.

²⁴ John 1:29,34,36.

²⁵ Matthew 12:28, Acts 10:38.

²⁶ John 16:12-15, 1 Corinthians 2:1-16, 12:3.

²⁷ Mark 1:13.

²⁸ Matthew 4:1.

²⁹ Obviously, what follows is conjecture. I based it on the dialog between God and Satan given in Job 1:7-12. I see Job as a ‘type’ (picture) of Christ. Job wasn’t sinless, but he did suffer for righteousness sake. God allowed Satan to test Jesus just as he allowed Satan to test Job. He also allows Satan to test us at times.

³⁰ Luke 4:2.

³¹ This word means ‘complete’.

³² Hebrews 5:8-10.

³³ Hebrews 12:2.

³⁴ Luke 3:7.

³⁵ Luke 4:14.

³⁶ The account of Jesus’ baptism in the gospel of John must have happened some time after the event. The other gospels say that, following his baptism, Jesus was immediately led into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. Also, it would have been silly for John to give his testimony while Jesus was coming up out of the water: the people could see the Holy Spirit and hear the voice of God for themselves!

³⁷ Matthew 16:18.