

John Ch 1:29-51

“Who is Jesus?”

The remainder of this ch basically is divided up into 2 very basic divisions. and Though this isn't the last we'll see of J.B., the remainder of this ch sort of signals the decline of John's ministry, and the dawning of the Jesus' ministry. John's ministry begins to ramp down around vs 36-37 and the segue, or the transition is made to the ramping up of Jesus' ministry. The focus begins to sway, and by the time this ch closes it's all eyes on Jesus.

We want to jump into it but before we do I promised you I'd answer a few questions that were kinda left hanging from our time together last week regarding the identity of J.B. One thing we know about J.B. is that he definitely didn't have an identity crisis; so many people go through what's been labeled as a “Mid-life crisis” because this complex of not really knowing who they are, or what their purpose is. “Maybe I need a change of pace, maybe I need a new job, or I need to relocate geographically.” and As they begin to look back over their lives and assess where they're at they wonder if maybe it's all been a wash, or if it's really counted for much. and Just so that you know, that mentality is completely unjustifiable biblically speaking and can be completely avoided if we just get the grip that J.B. had regarding his own identity.

You see the Israeli Supreme Court wanted to know who he was, he was making quite a stir out there in the desert, preaching repentance and all, and they wanted to know how it was that he was sanctioned to do what he was doing. Under whose authority he was placing these convictions upon the people? and So they just asked him, are you the Christ? and Of course he confessed and didn't deny (Vs 20), “I am not the Christ.” “I'm not claiming to be Mr. Fix it, I'm not life's problem solver, I don't need all eyes on me, it's not about me.” I'm not the Christ. Well then, “Are you Elijah?” Now why would they ask that? Because 400yrs previously the Lord had said through the prophet Malachi, “*Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.*” Mal 4:5

You remember that Elijah never died physically, he was whisked away in a chariot of fire and went up into heaven via a whirlwind. and So knowing that he's prophesied to come before the Messiah, they wanted to know, are you him. John sort of fit his physical description anyway, hairy, leather belt, are you Elijah? John said, “I'm not him either.” Now we know that he fulfilled the role of Elijah as far as Jesus' 1st coming is concerned.

Jesus said if you can receive it, he (J.B.) is Elijah who is come, in other words as the angel told Zacharias (John's dad) in regards to his ministry before the coming of Jesus, “*He will also 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 a people prepared for the Lord.*” Luke 1:17 But was he Elijah physically? No, well then, “Are you the Prophet?” Moses had told Israel, “*The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear.*” Deut 18:15

“Is this who you are?” John said, “No.” “Well than who are you?” “What are your credentials?” “What’s the point in all this?” “What do you say about yourself?” and John pulls from the prophet Isaiah the scripture that defines his ministry, and quite frankly yours and mine as well, (notice vs 23). “I’m not the Word, I’m a voice” “I’m not Elijah, I’m not the Prophet, I’m not an individual and grandeur or someone who deserves the limelight.” “I’m just a voice crying out, and baring witness of Jesus Christ that’s my whole purpose in life.”

Believe me your occupation is peripheral, your geographical location, is of secondary importance, you’ll never struggle with your purpose and place in life, if you’ll just allow this point to be assimilated into your being, you’re not the Christ, you’re not Elijah, you’re not the Prophet, you’re a voice, your purpose is to be a witness, and to share the reality of Jesus Christ with the people at work, or around you, where you live, in the class or wherever. You do those things, you’ll *fulfill* your purpose and never feel as though you have *no* purpose, this is every believers purpose, to know Jesus Christ and to make Him known. “To make straight the way of the Lord.” In other words to prepare people to receive Jesus Christ by causing them to see their need for a Savior, John is saying here, “I’m here to show you that you’re crooked, that you’re a sinner and you need straightened out.” and God wants to use our lives, not to nit pick and criticize people, but to unveil to them the reality of the depravity of man.

The fact that we’ve all sinned and fall short of God’s glory, and that we need a Savior, to save us from the penalty of that sin, until I know that I’m a sinner I don’t see the need for a Savior. But once I realize that good morals, good intentions and sincerity aren’t enough, but that God requires perfection, something I’m radically short of, now I’m open to options. and There’s only one, Jesus alone fulfilled all righteousness, He alone is the door through which I can pass into eternal life, He alone was in all ways tempted as I’m tempted and yet with out sin, and so no one comes to the Father but through Him. So John was out to “Make straight the way of the Lord” to prepare people for His coming to them so that as He came to them, they might receive Him. Vs 25 reads (read).

So you can see that these guys really weren’t to concerned with who J.B. was, he was out there causing a stir, drawing people out to hear his message and it made the religious leaders nervous and so they’re looking to find fault with him. To somehow shipwreck his ministry, because if you can cast suspicion on a man, you cast suspicion on all that man has to say, and there’s a few million people in Jerusalem at this time because it’s just before Passover. and So everyone is going out to check out what’s going on out there in the desert and these guys don’t like it, John’s a threat to their traditions.

What John has to say is radical, because at this time baptism was practiced by the Jews, but not on Jews, now there were ceremonial washings and baptisms of that sort. The priests would be washed with water before they served in certain capacities and all, but that’s not the baptism of John. The baptism of John was the baptism of repentance.

Since the Jews believed that they were saved simply because they were Jews, they had the Law, they were descendants of Ab, and so by right they were saved they basically believed they inherited it. and So the baptism of repentance was reserved for gentiles who were being converted to Judaism, but John was out there baptizing Jews, and so what John was saying is that your ethnicity, or lineage does nothing for you in the eyes of God, your circumcision doesn't save you. There's nothing you can do in and of yourself to make yourself clean, and Jew and Gentile alike are unclean before God. and So for the Jewish people to come to John and be baptized was a huge deal, they were saying that they were sinners just like everyone else and needed to be made right *with* God, and clean *before* God, by a means other than their own.

We read there in vs 28 where these things were being done in Bethabara which as I said last week means, "House of Misery" or "House of Depression." God used John's life powerfully from the house of misery, the place of depression. and There are those times when God will call upon us to bare witness of Him from that place of depression, when things are just miserable in our lives, because when we're weak His strength is made perfect in us, and He wants to glorify Himself through your life. Look at vs 29

Vs 29

So Jesus makes His way onto the scene in John's gospel here and from the very dawning of His ministry He's greeted with the words that remind Him of His destiny. His sacrificial death upon the cross for the sin of humanity, so from the very inception of His ministry, the cross was overshadowing Him. and When we read here, "The next day" we're brought into the order of a certain chain of events, now it seems most probable that this was directly following Jesus 40 day Satanic temptation recorded for us in the synoptic gospels. We'll see in a moment that Jesus had already been baptized at this time and we know from Marks gospel that directly following his baptism, "*Immediately the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness.*" Mark 1:12 Meanwhile J.B. has been ministering and preaching repentance, and 40 days went by and Jesus shows back up, and as John sees Him coming He cries out, "*Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!*"

Now we have to bear in mind the Jewish mindset regarding a comment like this, they were very familiar with sacrificial lambs and what the idea behind them was. Even as John is speaking they're there in Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover, and there'll shortly be hundreds of thousands if not more lambs being slaughtered as a substitutionary sacrifice for the sins of each family. The sacrificial lamb has been ingrained in their very beings as a culture, and as a people, and as a nation. Even from the beginning God was beginning to instill in them the need for sacrificial atonement by the innocent on the behalf of the guilty. We recall Abel bringing a lamb as his offering which was acceptable to God.

We're reminded of Abraham climbing Mt Moriah with Isaac his 33yr old son who was carrying the wood on his back for the altar. and He looked around and said, "Dad, I see here we

have the wood, we have the fire, but where's the lamb?" "Where's the sacrifice?" and Ab made that prophetic statement there in responding to the question that basically rings throughout the OT, "Where's the lamb?" He said, "God will provide Himself a lamb for sacrifice."

Of course in that Ch you see where God provided a ram not a lamb for Ab to sacrifice, why? Because the fulfillment of God Himself being the Lamb of sacrifice was yet to be fulfilled, and so Isaac asked the question, "Where's the Lamb?" Here J.B. answers that question as he points to Jesus and says, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" and Of course when we get to Rev Ch 5 we see the multitudes of Heaven erupt in praise singing forth, "*Worthy is the Lamb!*" Rev 5:12

So in the volume of the book it's written of the Lamb, of Jesus Christ, the OT, "Where's the Lamb?" The NT, "Behold the Lamb" and the summation of eternity, "Worthy is the Lamb!" and I love how the scope regarding the ministry of the Lamb only grows wider throughout the scriptures. with Abel the sacrifice was for him individually, in Ex at the Passover the Lamb was sacrificed for the family collectively, of course the Day of Atonement brought about a sacrifice for the nation, and now here we read of the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Notice not the "sins" of the world in the plural sense of the word, but the "sin" singularly; our sins result from the sin nature, the sin that's of our essence. Jesus didn't die for the peripheral issues; He died for the root or the primary issue, our sin. Because all of our sins are encompassed and atoned for by His dying for our sin, does that make sense to you?

All of our sins spring forth from our "sin" and so Jesus died for our *sin*, He takes away our *sin*, the bible says, "*He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*" 2 Cor 5:21 You see all the things that we do and think, and say that are wrong are manifestations of sin in our lives, they are the outpouring of our sin, and it's for that sin that Jesus died. and John would have us to focus upon Jesus primarily as just that, our sin bearer."

He didn't say, "Behold" or "Gaze upon" "The Lamb of God who works miracles among you!" Or, "Who articulates the principals and precepts of God like no other!" No, "Who takes away the sin of the world!" He is our Redeemer, our Savior, and we're to see Him as such, the Atoning One, the Lamb of God, not the Orator, but Who takes away the sin of the world. This speaks of salvation.

So the crux, or the primary purpose of J.B.'s ministry was to reveal the Messiah, to point Him out, now he's done that. and In part that's why he was given the ministry of baptism, he says, "That's why I came baptizing." Because God had somehow communicated to John that He was going to reveal to him who the Messiah was by the affirming work of the Holy Spirit in His life at the time He would be baptized. and So John got out there and got to baptizing, so as the Messiah came to him and was baptized, the Father would reveal Him. (Notice)

Vs32-34

So the Father would reveal the Son by a 2-fold witness of His Spirit's work in and upon His life, #1 The Spirit would descend upon Him and #2 it would remain or (abide) upon Him. Now obviously the Holy Spirit was always in Jesus, but here we're reading where the Holy Spirit would come "upon" Jesus. and This is that word "Epi" that we speak of from time to time, that "upon" experience of the Holy Spirit which empowers one supernaturally for service.

That's why Jesus wasn't called into service until the Spirit came upon Him, not because He couldn't handle it, but because it wasn't the appointed time for Him to be called upon in the capacity that the Father would use Him to witness as to the reality of who He (the Father) is. But as soon as the Spirit came upon Him, He was driven out into the wilderness and His ministry commenced. You see Jesus was never any less God than He'd ever been, but Phil teaches how He willingly laid aside certain prerogatives to become a man, and He waited for the power of the Holy Spirit to come upon Him before He was commissioned to begin His ministry, and we do well to follow His example. We need the power of God's *Holy Spirit* upon our lives if we're to fulfill God's *calling* upon our lives. and John saw these 2 things happen in Jesus' life, you can read of and see it there in Matt 3:16, Mark 1:10, and Luke 3:22.

The question comes up, why did Jesus get baptized, we know that baptism is an outward declaration of an inward transformation of the heart. But Jesus was with out sin; He had nothing to repent of. Couple of things to briefly consider, #1 Jesus said it was necessary if He were to fulfill all righteousness, He had no sin, but if He were to identify with sinners then this was a part of it. Because baptism confesses the fact that this is where I die to self, and by faith am resurrected in the newness of life to walk therein.

So it's a picture of death and resurrection, death to self, resurrected in Christ, so Jesus needed to identify with us through baptism, and there are those who see this as a foreshadowing of His own death and resurrection that He was submitting to. But then also #2 It's quite possible that He's speaking of the ministry of His priesthood as He speaks of the need to be washed to fulfill all righteousness, or the letter of the Law.

In Lev Ch 8 we see where when Aaron and his sons were consecrated into the Priesthood that they were 1st of all washed with water, they received a water "baptism" of sorts. Then 2^{ndly} they were anointed with oil, they received the "baptism" by oil. Of course oil in the scriptures always speaks of the person and work of the Holy Spirit.

Then 3^{rdly} they received a “baptism” by blood as the blood of the ram was placed upon the tip of their right ear, their right thumb and the big toe and their right foot, that they might give ear to the Lord, do His work, and walk in His ways, that they might be fully consecrated and set apart to Him. Of course we see the same pattern in Jesus’ life, baptism by water, by oil (or the Holy Spirit) and by blood, as He shed His own. and In these things He fulfilled all righteousness.

Vs35-36

Notice this time he doesn’t mention, “Who takes away the sin of the world!” We’re seeing a progression here, and as to where his last statement speaks of salvation this statement speaks of sanctification. We’ve dealt with the sin issue, now lets focus on the sanctifying work of Christ. Notice it was the “walk” of Jesus that he called them to behold. “Looking at Jesus as He walked” we’re to model our lives after that of Christ, behold His walk and pattern yours after His. Imitate His walk, live as He lived, allow the Spirit to rule in your life as He let the Spirit reign in His life, pay attention to Jesus’ walk.

Vs37

I love this vs, they heard John speak, so they followed Jesus. Do people want to follow Jesus after they hear you speak, or after I’m finished speaking, is the result that people follow Jesus? Or are they drawn to me, or somehow enticed to compromise? What are the results of our conversations, and proclamations, when John was heard, people followed Jesus.

Vs 38

That’s an interesting question Jesus posed to them, “What do you seek?” “What do you want from Me?” I find that all kinds of people follow Jesus for all kinds of reasons, some for prominence, or prestige, others think He’ll make them rich, others want to use Him like a good luck charm or a Genie, who they can call on in time of trouble and once He serves their purpose it’s, “See ya later, I’ll look you up next time I have a problem.” Let this question probe your heart, “What do you seek?” They’re answer was correct, they just wanted to be with Him, to be where He was, to get to know Him and to be near Him. It wasn’t about what they got from Him, it was about Him, “Where are you staying?”

Vs 39

Jesus gives them the invitation, “Come and see.” They came to Jesus and He received them. Jesus said, *“The one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.”* John 6:37 It doesn’t matter who you are, where you’ve been, what you’ve done, how old you are, how young you are, if you come to Jesus, He’ll receive you. But notice it was more than that, “They remained with Him.” It wasn’t, “I’m in trouble can you help me out for the moment.” “They remained with Him” this speaks of an ongoing relationship of a close personal nature. If you’ve called upon Jesus, and have come to Jesus, you need to remain with Jesus, abide in Him; stay near to Him. This encounter was so meaningful to them that John even recalls the very hour in which they met Him.

Vs40-41

You know not much light is cast upon Andrew in the gospels, and I got to be honest with you, I kind of admire him in that he seemed to be real content being the #2 fella always in the shadow of his brother Peter. I mean if this were me I'd be all, "Hey, I met Jesus 1st these things should read, 'Simon Peter, Andrew's brother.'" But he never makes a fuss over the deal he just silently yet consistently brings people to Christ, God used him tremendously and yet if you're not careful you'll miss it because he never sought a position of prominence. He took after his mentor J.B. sought to stay out of the limelight, didn't need the record to show, "Simon Peter, Andrew's bro." He just met Christ, and immediately shared Christ, and don't you know his reward is great in Heaven. He brought the apostle Peter to Jesus, countless souls won to Christ as the result, do the research, you'll find that Andrew was the one who brought the little boy to Christ with the 5 loaves and 2 fish and as the result the deepest hunger of 5,000 men not counting women and children was satisfied and filled and ministered to. When some certain Greeks were seeking Jesus, it was Andrew who took them to Him, he's just always leading people to Jesus, didn't need the spot light, just loved the Lord and shared Him with everybody. But 1st of all with his family, how important that is.

Vs42

Now at the time Jesus said this Peter was about as stable as water, but Jesus saw the finished work. and Jesus sees the finished work in you to; surely you have a long way to go, as do I. But the bible is clear; "*He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.*" Phil 1:6 Jesus sees His finished work in you; your sin is like scarlet, He sees you white as snow.

Vs43-46

Notice vs 43, Jesus *found* Philip, so many times we use the phrase, "When did you find the Lord." and We understand what that means, but the fact is the Lord was never lost, I was, He found Me, and He found you, He invited *us* to follow *Him*. We didn't choose Him, He chose and appointed us, but then we do just like Philip and say to our friends, "We found Him!" But let the record show (vs 43) He finds us. and Philip found Nathaniel and invited him into the mix, but Nate being a student of the Word says, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth." The scriptures say Messiah will be born in Bethlehem, now Jesus was, we know that, but they didn't yet. How can anything of God come out of Nazareth, Nazareth means "A sprout." It's bean town, Hicksville, Alba, or Asbury or something, but I like that Philip didn't try to reason with him philosophically, or debate theologically, he just said, "Come and see." "Come and check out the reality of Jesus Christ for yourself." We don't have to know it all and have all the answers, though we do well do study and know the Word of God, the bottom line is that we want people to come and experience Jesus personally.

Vs47-49

Now since the fig tree is the biblical symbol for Israel, in that day Rabbis would commonly have their students study the scriptures under a fig tree. That's where they would hang out and meditate, and study the word and have their devotions, so it's probable that Nathaniel was studying the scriptures when he was under the fig tree. and Because of Jesus' conversation it's believed he was in Gen 28, what's in Gen 28? That portion of scripture where Jacob was running for his life from his bro Esau, because he'd deceived him out of his birthright, and his inheritance as the eldest. Jacob means "Deceiver", or "One who trips up", "Heel snatcher."

In the Septuagint when Jesus uses the Word, "Deceit" there in vs 47 it's literally the word "Jacob." Now Jacob was later given the name "Israel" which means, "Governed by God." and So Jesus is making a play on words and referencing the portion of scripture that Nathaniel was very likely contemplating earlier that day. He's saying, there's no "Jacob" in you, like you were thinking about earlier. and Nate doesn't get it until Jesus just tells him, "I saw you studying it earlier." Then the lights came on and Nate was blown away, "How could you've known that? I was there alone, You are the Son of God, the King of Israel!"

Vs 50-51

You see it's in Gen 28 that Jacob pulls up a rock in the desert and goes to sleep and when he's sleeping he has a dream and he sees and latter, and angels ascending and descending upon it. and He wakes up and says surely God is in this place and I knew it not. and Jesus reaches back into that text where Nate was thinking what's the deal with that latter? and He's meditating on that, and Jesus says, "Nate, God is in this place." "I'm the latter in Jacob's dream." "I'm the link between Heaven and earth, that's what that's all about." Jesus is the mediator between God and man, He bridges the gap, Job said He needed someone who could place their hand on him and on God and be a bridge builder, or a latter between the 2. Jesus says, "That's me." Paul said, "*There is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus.*" 1 Tim 2:5 Who is Jesus? According to what we've seen today, He's the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, the Messiah, The fulfillment of all the OT pointed to, the Son of God, The King of Israel, the link between Heaven and earth.

Maybe you feel like Job, you need someone who can place their hand on you and place their hand on God, and mediate between you because your sin has separated you from Him. Jesus is that Mediator, He's the way the truth and the Life and no one comes to the Father but through Him. and He came, and fulfilled all righteousness, to the point of His baptism even of blood. Shedding His blood for you that you might receive the remission of your sin. Being delivered up for your transgression, and raised up for your justification, but if you're to have, and walk in, the newness of life you need to come to Him, and receive Him into your heart and into your life, allowing Him to be your personal Savior and your Lord, and if you're ready to receive Him today, He's ready to receive you.