

CONCERNING THE WAY

October 13, 2009

LESSON 77: THE GOSPEL OF JOHN



Introduction

The Gospel of John is generally known as the easiest book in the Bible to understand, which is why new believers are usually advised to start studying the Bible with this book. Yet it is also the most profound book in the Bible. In the book of John we have the most comprehensive picture of the Lord Jesus Christ, both in His humanity and His deity.

The book was written by the apostle John, a fisherman when Jesus first called him, son of Zebedee and Salome, the younger brother of James, a Galilean, apparently from a fairly well-to-do family. He could read and understand literature. He was known as a “son of thunder” (Mark 3), which tells us he must have had a temper. He could be selfish and ambitious, but later he was known as the apostle of love because one of his other books, 1 John, focuses so much on this. He was a leader in the early church (Acts 3), and pastored the church in Ephesus towards the end of his life. No author in the Bible is like John the apostle. No one had the ability to turn a phrase with few words like him. In one verse he can give you enough to talk about for an hour. All of John’s writings are incredibly profound.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke are called the Synoptic Gospels, which mean they are accounts which look at the person of Christ in a detailed chronological sense. John is very different than the other three. There is a chronology, but it is more about big themes, big picture items. John focuses more on the meaning of the events rather than the events themselves. Also, John was writing to the Gentiles. The apostle wrote his gospel much later than the others, and by that time there were many Gentiles in the church, and they apparently were having trouble understanding the gospel. They didn’t have a clear picture of who Jesus was and what salvation was. John wrote about the simplicity of the gospel, the belief in Christ as Savior, and focuses on what it means to be born again.

Church history and tradition tells us that all of the apostles except John were dead by 70 A.D., and most of them died as martyrs. John, however, survived and may have lived past the age of 100. Scholars believe he could have been as old as 100 when he wrote the book. Tradition tells us he even survived being boiled in oil, and that late in his life he had a stroke, and all he could say from then on was “Jesus is coming.”

John doesn’t record some of the events that we see in the other three gospels, and some things are chronologically out of order, because John is not trying to present a chronological history. But there are some things that John records that are not told in the other gospels.

“Although John deals with the same broad sequence of events to be found in the pages of the others, it is quite different in structure and in style. It contains no parables and only seven miracles, five of which are not recorded elsewhere. The discourses of Jesus in it are concerned chiefly with His person rather than with the ethical teaching of the Kingdom. Personal interviews are multiplied, and Jesus’ relationship to individuals is stressed more than His general contact with the public. The Gospel is strongly theological, and it deals particularly with the nature of His person and with the meaning of faith in Him.” Merrill C. Tenney

The themes of the book are belief in Christ, and the deity of Christ. Many people today think that there is very little evidence in the Bible about Jesus' deity, but nothing could be further from the truth. The fact that Jesus is God is said clearly throughout the New Testament.

The book of John was written around 90 A.D. John was in the "inner circle" of Jesus' disciples, and was one of His favorites. He is described as "the disciple whom Jesus loved".

John wrote the book to communicate who Christ was through His miracles and teachings, so that people would believe in Him, and so that they would have eternal life. Belief and Life are the two concepts repeated over and over in the book.

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

This is similar to Genesis 1:1, where creation is described. Here John introduces us to the creator before the creation. He puts Jesus right up front in the very first verse. Right off the bat you have one verse you could spend an hour talking about, it is a very profound statement. The "Word" (the Greek word "logos"):

Was in the beginning... Jesus has always existed, even at the beginning of all things He was there. So this is not an ordinary man.

Was with God - existed with God the Father - this tells us He was not God the Father, but with the Father. They are two persons. And the Greek grammatical structure here represents intimacy and communion; they had a face to face relationship.

Was God - distinct from the Father, but fully God Himself. He wasn't just with God, along for the ride. He was also God! How can that be? Well, we can't understand it but that's our God. Jehovah's witnesses in their bible put "was a God" instead of "was God". All Greek scholars agree that it is not "a God", the Greek grammar won't allow it, it is very clear.

So, what does it mean that Jesus is the *logos*, the Word? What John was trying to tell the Gentiles in his day and us today is that **Jesus is the ultimate expression of God**. And He has always been that, He didn't become the Word at some point in the past.

*"In Greek philosophical thought **logos** was used of the rational principle or Mind that ruled the universe. In Hebrew thought "the word of God" was His active self-expression, that revelation of Himself to humanity through which a person not only receives truth about God, but meets God face to face."* Lawrence Richards

This verse is the basis for everything else that follows in the book. It is also the final test of Christian orthodoxy. You cannot hold a false view of Christ and at the same time be correct on other important elements of theology. That's how important the doctrine of the deity of Christ is. The Bible clearly teaches that **Jesus Christ is fully God and fully human in one Person**. That is difficult to understand and explain.

There have been heretical views that have surfaced almost from the beginning. Docetism, which arose in the time of early Christianity, was the first formal heresy; it denied the reality of Christ's humanity. Ebionitism was another heresy, it denied Christ's full deity. Another heresy known as

Sabellianism said that Jesus is God the Father, who Himself became the Son by being born as a man, which denied the existence of distinct Persons within the Godhead.

But there were four major heresies that came about and were refuted by the church during the period between a.d. 325 and 451. Arianism might have been the most dangerous - it said that the Son is not eternal or immutable, and so is inferior to the Father. This heresy was condemned by the Council of Nicea (a.d. 325). Another view known as Apollinarianism claimed that Christ was fully God but not fully human. In a.d. 381, the Council of Constantinople condemned and rejected that view by declaring that Christ is both God and Man. The Council of Ephesus condemned Nestorianism in a.d. 431, which said that God was two separate natures and two separate persons. Eutychianism, the fourth major heresy, maintained that the union of the divine and the human resulted in one theanthropic (part God, part man) nature of Christ.

The council at Chalcedon in a.d. 451 refuted all the major heresies and produced the definitive creed of the church today. It proclaimed Christ as fully God and fully Man and established that in Him reside two natures without confusion, without change, without division, and without separation. Jesus Christ possessed undiminished deity (John 1: 1, 14, 18; Isaiah 9:6; Jeremiah 23:6; Micah 5:2; Malachi 3:1; Philemon 2:6, Colossians 2:9; Hebrews 1:2, 3; Revelation 19:16). At His incarnation (v. 14), He did not become man; He became God-Man. So He has genuine humanity (John 8:40; Acts 2:22; Romans 5:15; 1 Corinthians 15:21) yet without sin (John 8:46; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15; 1 Peter 2:22). He experienced human wants and sufferings (John 4:6, 11:35, 12:27, Luke 22:44, Hebrews 2:10, 18).

John 1:2 He was in the beginning with God.

John repeats again that He has always been with God. In eternity past, before the creation of the universe, the Father and the Son have always been in a loving communion with each other. Do you realize how unique Christianity is from other religions? No other religion has anything like Jesus Christ. In fact all other religions are only that, Christianity is The Truth. The deity of Christ and fulfilled prophecy is what makes Christianity so different than any other religion; it can't be made up by men.

John 1:3 All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.

This is also astounding information - Jesus was also involved in creation, the verse is very clear (also Colossians 1:16-17 and Hebrews 1:2). The Father created the universe through God the Son. So everything we see in the universe and many things we can't see were created by Jesus Christ. There is nothing that exists that was not made by Him. Wow! This is deep stuff, impossible for us to understand. The Colossians passage adds that everything is held together by Him.

Also note that this is past tense, creation is finished. Nothing new is currently being made, the creator rested from all His creation work after the six days of the creation week. So even before He was born as a man, He was showing us what God is like, through the creation. Look all around you at the created universe, it shows us who God is.

John 1:4 In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men.

John is saying here that life has always existed in Jesus Christ. Anything that has life has its origin

in Jesus. But John's point is that we do not truly exist apart from Christ, and I don't think he's just talking about biological life, but quality of life. Yes, Christ created everything that has life, but there is also no spiritual life without Him.

All of these things have been in the past tense ("was"), but now it seems that John is beginning to shift to speaking of what Christ was when He took the form of man. When He walked this earth as a man, He was bringing light to a dark world, and He Himself was the light.

John 1:5 The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

The light is continually shining in the darkness, but the darkness did not overcome it; it did not want to receive the Lord Jesus (John 3:19). The word translated **comprehend** can mean either to overpower or to understand. Either one would be true in this sentence.

John 1:6 There came a man sent from God, whose name was John.

This is not John the apostle, but John the Baptist. It was prophesied that he would come in the spirit of Elijah (Luke 1:17). Elijah himself will be the herald of Christ's 2nd coming (Malachi 4:5), John the Baptist was the herald of His 1st coming. (Malachi 3:1, Matthew 3, Mark 1, Luke 3). John the Baptist was a cousin of Jesus, about 6 months older than Jesus.

Isaiah 40:1-3 "Comfort, O comfort My people," says your God. (2) "Speak kindly to Jerusalem; And call out to her, that her warfare has ended, That her iniquity has been removed, That she has received of the LORD'S hand Double for all her sins." (3) A voice is calling, "Clear the way for the LORD in the wilderness; Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God.

Understand that highways in those days were not smooth and level like we have today. They were generally bumpy, uneven, and rocky. But if a king was coming, they would go out and smooth the road that he would be arriving on, so that the porters would not stub their toes and drop the king!

Matthew 3:1-3 Now in those days John the Baptist *came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, (2) "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (3) For this is the one referred to by Isaiah the prophet when he said, "THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, 'MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT!'"

The kingdom of heaven was at hand, because the King was coming! And notice that John wasn't preparing the way for a man, but for God. Now John the apostle goes on to tell us more about John the Baptist:

John 1:7-8 He came as a witness, to testify about the Light, so that all might believe through him. (8) He was not the Light, but he came to testify about the Light.

John came to introduce the Jews in that time to their Messiah, to tell people that He was coming, so that they might all believe in Him. Here we see the first mention of the concept of belief in Jesus as the Word, the light of men, the Messiah. The word "**believe**" is used about 100 times in this book. To "believe" in Christ is not just to believe He exists, because even demons believe that. True belief means to trust or have faith that Christ is sufficient to save you in exactly the way He promised.

John 1:9-10 There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man. (10) He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.

“Enlightens every man” does not mean universal salvation or “inner illumination”. This could be speaking of general revelation (creation), or it could be speaking of the fact that Christ as the Light shines on each person illuminating their sin and coming judgment. Again we see that the world was made through Him, but the world doesn’t get it; they don’t see Him as their creator, the true light. They would rather believe in evolutionary chance.

John 1:11 He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him.

This is a very sad verse. “His own” were the Jews. The Word went to His own people, the nation Israel, but they rejected Him. He was the long promised Messiah that was spoken of by so many of the prophets, but His people did not want to accept who He was.

John 1:12-13 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, (13) who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

His own rejected Him, so He gave the right to become His children to the whole world. John is focusing on the issue of personal salvation in these verses. Verse 13 speaks of being born again. Those who believe in His name are born again and become children of God. The Jews didn’t understand it then and most of the world still doesn’t understand it, because they don’t truly seek the spiritual things of God. The Jews who rejected Christ hated and despised Him, and the world will hate those of us who belong to Christ today. This will only get worse, because people who don’t have the light are intimidated by us who do have it.

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

In one verse John tells us the mystery of the incarnation. God becoming a man, a God-man, still fully God, but also fully a man, with a human nature. He grew up from a baby - burped, cried, messed in His diapers, went through puberty, got tired, got hungry, you name it, he was like us. Again, this is something that we can’t understand but only accept. This was a truly radical concept in John’s day, as Greek philosophy taught that it was impossible for humans to become gods and vice-versa.

The reason why this doctrine is so important is because only a God-man could save us. He has to be human to be able to suffer and die, and He has to be God to make that death effective for sin. If He was only a God, then He couldn’t have truly died, so we would still be lost - sin would not be paid for. If he was only human and not divine then His death couldn’t pay for anything and again, we would still be lost.

John continues to tell us who Jesus is, this Word that has always existed with God, and was God Himself. He became human and lived among us. The Greek word translated “dwelt” literally means tabernacled, or pitched a tent, which tells us that His stay would be temporary. “Only begotten” means He is the unique and only Son of God, there is no other.

When did John see Jesus in His true divine glory? The apostles witnessed His glory in His grace, in the truth of His teachings, when He did miracles, and a few (John, Peter, and James) saw His full heavenly glory at the transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-5).

“The God-man possessed all the attributes of deity (Phil. 2:6) and the attributes common to humanity (apart from sin), and He will exist forever as the God-man in His resurrected body (Acts 1:11; Rev. 5:6). Only the God-man could be an adequate Savior; for He must be human in order to be able to suffer and die, and He must be God to make that death effective as a payment for sin.” Charles Ryrie

John 1:15 John *testified about Him and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.'"

Some Jews thought that John the Baptist was the Messiah, but John said No, He's higher than me. Again we see that Jesus always existed, He didn't just come into existence when He was born as a man.

John 1:16-17 For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace. (17) For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ.

Jesus gives one gracious gift after another! John is comparing the grace given to us through Jesus to the Law given through Moses. The Law had no power to save, we did not have the power to keep it, and Jesus came to completely fulfill it. We have everything we could ever need for personal fulfillment and service for God in Jesus Christ when we accept Him as Savior.

John 1:18 No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.

He's speaking of God the Father, of course. The Father is spirit (John 4:24), so no one has ever really seen Him (Exodus 33:20). What about the theophanies in the Old Testament (God appearing to people, like Moses, Abraham, and Jacob)? Well, some of those may have been pre-incarnate appearances of Jesus. Jesus is the incarnate member of the Trinity. If God the Father has appeared to anyone, then He caused Himself to be seen in a certain physical way. But that is not the Father's nature, He is not confined in a physical form (Colossians 1:15, 1 Timothy 1:17).

The next part of the verse confuses some people, especially in some translations, but it is saying that Jesus is the one who has explained or revealed the Father:

“In this final verse of the prologue, the climactic and ultimate statement of the earthly career of the Logos, Jesus of Nazareth, is reached. The unique One (John 1:14), the One who has taken on human form and nature by becoming incarnate (became flesh, John 1:14), who is himself fully God (the Word was God, John 1:1 (i.e., John 1:1c)) and is to be identified with the ever-living One of the Old Testament revelation (Exodus 3:14), who is in intimate relationship with the Father, this One and no other has fully revealed what God is like. As Jesus said to Philip in John 14:9, "The one who has seen me has seen the Father.” The NET Bible translation notes

So, Jesus came into the world not just to die for our sins, but also to show us what God is like.

That was the prologue of the book, telling us who Jesus is in His divine nature, now Jesus will be introduced in His human nature. This is where Jesus' ministry begins on earth, and the text gives us

information about the first seven days.

John 1:19 Now this was John's testimony when the Jewish leaders sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?"

John the Baptist was not your normal preacher. He lived in the desert, ate locusts and wild honey, wore a camel-hair robe, and told people to get their act together. He drew a lot of attention among the people.

The Jewish Sanhedrin would have been responsible for checking out anyone that seemed to be a prophet, to see if the person was true or false. The Sanhedrin included Sadducees and Pharisees, the ones who came to question John the Baptist were Pharisees. This may have been pretty unusual, John would have had to have been creating quite a stir among the people to get the religious leaders to send priests out of the city and come to talk to him. They must have been seriously considering whether he was the Messiah or not. Remember that the Jews were looking very intently for their Messiah to come in those days, to free them from Roman rule.

John 1:20 He confessed — he did not deny but confessed — "I am not the Christ!"

He made it very clear that He was not the Messiah...

John 1:21 So they asked him, "Then who are you? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not!" "Are you the Prophet?" He answered, "No!"

Malachi 4:5 says Elijah will return before the Messiah's 2nd coming. Of course, they didn't know it would be His second coming then. So they thought maybe he was Elijah come again. Then they asked if he was the Prophet. That prophecy they are referring to is probably Deuteronomy 18:15. It is clear to most Christians and Jews that is a prophecy of the Messiah, but apparently at least some Jews at that time thought it referred to another forerunner of the Messiah. John denied that he was either of those. In fact, he didn't want to talk about himself at all; he just wanted to point people to the Messiah.

Jesus did identify John with Elijah in Matthew 17:10-13, but He seems to be referring to John having the spirit of Elijah, not the physical Elijah himself. Some believe that John was really Elijah, but he didn't realize it yet and so he denied it. Others believe that there is double fulfillment in Malachi 4:5 - that John was the first fulfillment, but Elijah will return again before Christ's 2nd coming. Jesus said in Matthew 17:11 that Elijah would come and "restore all things", which John the Baptist did not do.

John 1:22-24 Then they said to him, "Who are you? Tell us so that we can give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" (23) John said, "I am the voice of one shouting in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way for the Lord,' as Isaiah the prophet said." (24) (Now they had been sent from the Pharisees.)

John said, "I'm the guy in Isaiah 40:3, I'm the Voice!" Do you think that these priests and Levites really wanted the Messiah to come? I doubt it, they were probably only worried about the competition. The priesthood by this time was mostly corrupt, which wasn't the first time in Israel history that this was the case.

The Pharisees were the Orthodox Jews. There were about 6,000 of them then and they were very influential. They interpreted the Law very strictly and held to many oral traditions.

John 1:25-27 So they asked John, "Why then are you baptizing if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?" John answered them, "I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not recognize, (27) who is coming after me. I am not worthy to untie the strap of his sandal!"

When you see baptizing here, don't think of Church baptism. The Church didn't exist yet. Old Testament Jews would wash themselves not as an expression of faith, but to cleanse themselves for a variety of things which made them unclean. John was apparently doing something new by immersing people in water for repentance of sins, so that was freaking out the religious leaders.

John 1:28 These things happened in Bethany across the Jordan River where John was baptizing.

There were several towns named Bethany, this one was across the Jordan River, in what would be the country of Jordan today. These things happened on the first day of this narrative.

John 1:29 On the next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

This is the second day; John sees Jesus and recognizes Him as the Messiah. But the people would have been surprised at the title he gave Jesus. The Jews were waiting for a powerful King to come and rescue them, but John refers to Him here as an animal that was used in sacrifice, and not only that, but said He would take away the sin of the world, not just Israel! So their religious expectations blinded them from recognizing Jesus as their Messiah.

This is a good lesson for us today. Some churches are teaching a different Jesus today - in many different ways, but not as God who came as a lamb to die for our sins. Are there any religious expectations that are keeping you from seeing the real Jesus? John is getting this title for Jesus from Isaiah 53:7:

Isaiah 53:7 He was treated harshly and afflicted, but he did not even open his mouth. Like a lamb led to the slaughtering block, like a sheep silent before her shearers, he did not even open his mouth.

And we saw the apostle John referring to Jesus as the Lamb of God all through our study on the book of Revelation. Jesus took away the sins of the world by bearing them in His own body (1 Peter 2:24).

The picture here is of the two goats (Leviticus 16:7-22), offered on the annual Day of Atonement. One would die for the sins of the people; the other ("the scapegoat") would carry away all their sins into the wilderness. But "it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins" (Hebrews 10:4). Sacrifices were offered every day, but they could "never take away sins" (Hebrews 10:11). Their blood was only a temporary "atonement" (or "covering"), until the Lamb of God could come to take away the "sin," not just "sins", of the whole world!

John 1:30-31 This is the one about whom I said, 'After me comes a man who is greater than I am, because he existed before me.' (31) I did not recognize him, but I came

baptizing with water so that he could be revealed to Israel."

John was Jesus' cousin, and they probably played together when they were children. John's mother, Elizabeth (Luke 1) apparently knew that Mary's son was the Messiah, but may not have told anyone else. John was saying he didn't recognize Him as the son of God before (would you guess one of your cousins is the son of God?). Jesus did not reveal His deity until His time came for His ministry to start, as we'll see in the next chapter. I'm sure He came across to everyone as very intelligent and very good boy, but I doubt if anyone suspected He was anything more except for His parents.

Also, John's parents were much older than Jesus' parents, so John may not have spent much time with Jesus as the boys grew older. But John understood what his purpose was. He was to prepare the way for the Messiah.

John 1:32 Then John testified, "I saw the Spirit descending like a dove from heaven, and it remained on him."

Notice John is saying "like a dove", he didn't say he saw a dove. We don't really know what John saw, it may have even been just an impression He was given. But he's probably saying this was the moment that he got it, when he recognized who Jesus really was.

John 1:33-34 And I did not recognize him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'The one on whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining — this is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' (34) I have both seen and testified that this man is the Chosen One of God."

Who spoke to John to tell him to begin his ministry? We don't know, it could have been an angel, since angels were used to proclaim both his birth and the birth of Jesus. Matthew speaks of this as well:

Matthew 3:16-17 After Jesus was baptized, just as he was coming up out of the water, the heavens opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming on him. (17) And a voice from heaven said, "This is my one dear Son; in him I take great delight."

Wow, imagine what it would have been like to be there and hear the voice of God!

John 1:35-36 Again the next day John was standing there with two of his disciples. (36) Gazing at Jesus as he walked by, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God!"

This is the third day. Again John uses the title for Jesus from Isaiah 53. He was saying, "Hey, look, here's Jesus, don't miss Him!" The two disciples of John the Baptist here are Andrew and the John who wrote this book.

John 1:37-39 When John's two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. (38) Jesus turned around and saw them following and said to them, "What do you want?" So they said to him, "Rabbi" (which is translated Teacher), "where are you staying?" (39) 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.

John the Baptist wasn't angry that John and Andrew left him and went with Jesus - that was his ministry - to point people to Jesus. Jesus asked the two men what they wanted to make sure they were following Him for the right reasons, and He took them with Him and no doubt spent that evening answering their questions and telling them about His ministry.

The title Rabbi was a Jewish title of honor literally meaning "my great one" or "my honorable sir". It was used by Jews to address their teachers. As the disciples came to understand who Jesus was, they used it less and less. The fact that they used it at all shows us they didn't really understand who He really was.

John 1:40-41 Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, was one of the two disciples who heard what John said and followed Jesus. (41) He first found his own brother Simon and told him, "We have found the Messiah!" (which is translated Christ).

The other disciple was the John who wrote this book. John never refers to himself by name, but always as "the other disciple" or "the one who Jesus loved." It is assumed by most that John also found his brother James on this day and brought him to Jesus also. Notice John put this little note in here for Gentiles who didn't know that "Messiah" meant "Christ". Both words mean "Anointed One".

John 1:42 Andrew brought Simon to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon, the son of John. You will be called Cephas" (which is translated Peter).

Andrew came to Jesus first, and then brought his brother Simon, who we know as Peter, and became one of the most famous disciples. "Cephas" is Aramaic for "rock", someone who is steady and strong. It would take some time for Peter to live up to his new name, but he eventually did. Jesus saw Peter's heart and the man he could become. That's how Jesus looks at us, too! He looks at us, our potential, what we can become if we follow Him.

John 1:43-44 On the next day Jesus wanted to set out for Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." (44) (Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the town of Andrew and Peter.)

On this 4th day, Jesus now has at least three disciples - Andrew, John, Peter, and possibly James. Jesus wants to leave for Galilee, presumably for the wedding in Cana. But before they leave, Jesus found another disciple, Phillip. Phillip is an important character in this book, as he is mentioned several times, but only mentioned in the other three gospels whenever there's a list of all of them.

John 1:45-46 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." (46) Nathanael replied, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip replied, "Come and see."

Phillip apparently believed that Jesus was the Messiah already, and went and found Nathanael. Nathanael was more skeptical, though, thinking how could the Messiah come from a place like that?

In the lists naming the 12 disciples, Nathanael is not mentioned (see Matthew 10:2-4), he is only mentioned in this chapter and chapter 21 of this book. Traditionally he is identified as Bartholomew, who is listed after Phillip in the lists. It is assumed his full name is Nathanael

Bartholomew, because Bartholomew means “son of Ptolemy”.

Nazareth must have had a bad reputation. The name for the town Nazareth comes from a Hebrew word for “branch” or “shoot”, which is a prophecy in Isaiah 11:1. Nazareth still exists in Northern Israel today, although most of the inhabitants are Arabs.

John 1:47-49 Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and exclaimed, "Look, a true Israelite in whom there is no deceit!" (48) Nathanael asked him, "How do you know me?" Jesus replied, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." (49) Nathanael answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the king of Israel!"

Jesus recognized Nathanael as an Israelite who lived up to the covenant. This was the highest compliment a Jew could receive! Nathanael quickly recognized that Jesus was the Messiah.

John 1:50-51 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." (51) 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."

Some scholars speculate that Nathanael was reading or pondering the account in Genesis about Jacob’s vision of the ladder with the angels ascending and descending, and Jesus said this to Nathanael is to prove to him that he even knew what he was thinking.

“Son of Man” is a title no one else calls Him, but he uses for Himself more than any other title. That by itself makes this a very significant title. It emphasizes His humanity, the representative man.

So Jesus has called six disciples at this point, men who He can teach and spend quality time with, and who after He leaves, will then take His message to the world.

Titles of Christ in John 1			
Verse	Title	Verse	Title
1	Word	29	Jesus
1	God	29,36	Lamb of God
4	Life	30	A Man
4	Light of Men	34,49	Son of God
9	True Light	38	Rabbi
14	Flesh	38	Teacher
14	Only begotten from the Father	41	Messiah
17	Jesus Christ	45	Jesus of Nazareth
18	Only begotten God	45	Son of Joseph
20	Christ	49	King of Israel
23	Lord	51	Son of Man