

WE HAVE SEEN HIS GLORY

Early Witnesses

Breaking Ground

Paul anticipated the possibility that other people will “. . . *come[s] and proclaim[s] another Jesus than the one [he] proclaimed . . .*” (2 Corinthians 11:4b, ESV). Of course we know that has happened. Islam believes Jesus is a prophet, but not God. Judaism believes that Jesus should be respected, he was a miracle worker, but he is dead because of his execution. Hinduism and Buddhism believe that Jesus was an enlightened teacher, but not God. Mormons believe that Jesus was created; that he was God’s firstborn. Jehovah Witnesses believe similarly and strongly deny that Jesus is God.

My question today is deeper than this. We of course reject these false views of God because they contradict the Bible. But I wonder if even professing Christians can have a functional false view of Jesus. We wouldn’t readily admit to it but if we examine ourselves truthfully we can easily find ourselves believing in “another Jesus”.

For some professing Christians Jesus is simply my divine friend. You know, life can go on and we give him little thought until we hit a place where we need help. Then we remember option 2, “Phone a friend.”

For others of us Jesus can be my divine therapist. I need Jesus to fix my marriage, fix my relations at work or even fix me. He can simply be my AA sponsor to help me with my addiction.

Sadly, for others, Jesus adds credibility to my life. We all like to drop names. There are some that love to add Jesus to their resume and their repertoire. He just adds credibility to my life have to have a little Jesus once in a while.

Main Point: John is writing to convince 2nd generation Christian Jews and Gentiles that Jesus is more than all that. Responding to Jesus as God in the flesh, that he is the Christ, is what brings eternal life. Those other imaginations are not real and will not save you. In this opening chapter and referring some key evidence from the first week of Jesus’ ministry, John is going to show us the real Jesus.

Text: John 1:19–51 (ESV)

Outline:

I. Four (4) witnesses to who Jesus is.

1. John the Baptist

The first to testify to Jesus’ identity was John (John the Baptist). To designate him as different as John the Apostle, I will simply refer to him as The Baptizer. The Baptizer was baptizing. John

doesn't say much about this activity for he assumes his audience has already read the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew to Luke). The Baptizer was preaching in Judea a message of repentance directed to his fellow Israelites. It was a message to repent and confess your sins. He called them to repent and be baptized in preparation of coming of the Lord and of judgment.

The Jews (these would refer to leaders who were often confrontational) came to him and asked him two questions:

1. Who are you? Jewish scholars anticipated the Endtimes appearances of the expected Messiah or the Prophet that Moses promised; and even Elijah who never actually died. John simply stated, "I am not the Messiah?" So that begged the second question.
2. What are you doing? Quoting from Isaiah 40, John said that he was preparing for the Lord's coming. In the OT this preparation was what would clear the path so that God's people could leave their exile and come home. The OT prophet was preparing the way for rebuilding of Israel. John says, "That's what I'm doing!"

The next day John baptized Jesus. Again, the other Gospels give the details. Remember John is providing the commentary on them to second generation Jewish believers. John identifies Jesus as the Lamb of God and after his baptism, John says that he saw ". . . *the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him*" (John 1:32, ESV). He then foretold that although he was baptizing with water, Jesus will baptize with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit hovering like a dove portrays several things, but the most important to the Jewish audience is that it is a direct fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah 11:2 of the anticipated son of David who was to come with the fullness of the Spirit in wisdom and judgment.

These are powerful images to the Jewish audience that Jesus is the fulfillment of the Messianic king, the son of David who would restore Israel. They needed to prepare for him by confessing and repenting of their sin. There were some more witnesses in this first week of Jesus' ministry.

2. Two Disciples, One of them Andrew.

Some presume the unnamed disciple was John the Apostle himself. But these two disciples were disciples of John. They heard what the Baptist said about Jesus and they witnessed Jesus' baptism. Notice they "heard" and they "followed" Jesus. They clearly saw Jesus as their Rabbi, their Teacher and Andrew told Peter (his brother) that this Jesus was the Messiah.

Another witness was Philip.

3. Philip

The next day Jesus left Judea and went to Galilee. There he found a man named Philip. Philip found a man named Nathanael. Philip said to Nathanael that this Jesus was “. . . *him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph*” (John 1:45 ESV). Philip is saying this Jesus is the anticipated Messiah that the Old Testament Scriptures anticipated.

And lastly there was Nathanael.

4. Nathanael

When Nathanael met Jesus, he said with great affirmation: “. . . *Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel*” (John 1:49, ESV)!

So, John in these opening pages to his Gospel has lined up 4 significant people to give testimony to who this Jesus is. Remember that Jesus is a least a generation away from his audience. Jesus is gone. Jerusalem is gone. The Temple is destroyed. John is telling the story of Jesus to an audience that he wants to convince is the Christ, the Son of God; and by believing in Jesus they can have eternal life. So he moves from his glorious explanation of who Jesus is, to what credible witnesses have said about him. Notice the six key identifiers that these witnesses provide about Jesus.

II. Six (6) identifiers to who Jesus is.

1. Jesus is the LORD (Jehovah). The Baptizer quoted Isaiah 40 showing that this Jesus whom he is preparing for is none other than Jehovah God in the flesh. He is the unchanging, eternal, self-existent God, the "I am that I am". He is the covenant-keeping God that Israel was so familiar with.
2. Jesus is the Lamb of God. In this first week of Christ's ministry we learn that he is the Lamb of God. Undoubtedly John had in mind the lamb that was killed in the Jewish Passover, but the Old Testament builds on that when Isaiah writes, "*He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth*" (Isaiah 53:7, ESV). This is the appointed, sinless, spotless lamb that is sacrificed for Israel's deliverance. This is he.
3. Jesus is the Branch (the Son) of David. After portraying the destruction of arrogant human evil as seen in the leveling of a forest (10:33–34), Isaiah presents the Messiah as a shoot or twig growing from a stump – a stump of Jesse. One greater than David is prophesied. He is filled with the Spirit. Think of the relevance to this audience. Twenty years earlier, their beloved homeland was leveled by the Romans. And now one is appearing, as prophesied, out of this tarnished mess comes a greater son of King David.

4. Jesus is the Messiah – the Christ, the King of Israel. These early witnesses clearly saw that this Jesus is the Messiah. Along with his prophetic and priestly role, he was to a king. He has royal blood in his veins. He was destined to rule and to reign eternally.
5. Jesus is of whom Moses wrote in the Scriptures. The coming of the Prophet was predicted by Moses in Deuteronomy 18:15, 18. When Peter preached in Acts 3, he reminded the people that they were to listen to this Jesus for he was the coming Endtimes Prophet.
6. Jesus is the Son of God. Jesus is not God's son in the sense of his offspring or child. The Bible speaks of Christ's Sonship in terms that he is the same nature as God; that he is the very radiance of God's glory. He is God manifest in the flesh. *"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation . . . He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell . . ."* (Colossians 1:15–20, ESV).

III. One (1) all-inclusive conclusion to this passage.

At the end of John's record of the first witnesses, Jesus says to Nathanael about himself: *"And he said to him, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man'"* (John 1:51, ESV). The Son of Man is Jesus' favorite designation of himself. Jesus draws this instruction from an Old Testament event where Jacob saw a vision of a ladder going from earth to heaven with angels going up and down. Jesus tells Nathanael that he is that ladder. He is that bridge between heaven and earth. Jesus makes the amazing assertion that he alone is man's way to God; and he alone is the means by which God can relate to mankind.

Summary. In the very first week of Christ's ministry on earth he is accredited by several witnesses to be the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. He is Jehovah in the flesh. He is One who will set up an eternal kingdom and reign forever and ever. He will vanquish God's enemies. He is the priest who does not sacrifice for our sin, but rather he becomes the sacrifice for our sin. He is the anticipated prophet who speaks for God, demanding that we listen and obey Him. He is the only mediator between God and man.

Application

The very first words of Jesus that John chose to record were these in verse 38: *"Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, 'What are you seeking?'"* I wonder if Jesus was here in the flesh and asked us that question, how we would answer.

Would we say we are seeking a good moral teacher, perhaps someone at the end of a help line, or maybe even a therapist or someone to add a little authenticity to my life?

John comes to us and says none of that. John reminds us that Jesus is God and to truly believe he is God he deserves a lifetime of worship. John reminds us that Jesus is the eternal King and demands our service. John reminds us Jesus is the Prophetic voice that demands that we listen and follow him. John reminds us that Jesus is God's sacrifice for our sins and there is no forgiveness apart from genuine faith in him. John reminds us that Jesus is the only way to God, and God's only way to us; and there is no rest, no satisfaction apart from Jesus.

So we are left with the question, "What are you seeking?" My prayer is like Philip and Andrew you can truly say, "We have found him!"