

John 1:35-42

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[0 : 00] I would ask you to turn with me again to the passage that we read in John chapter 1. And I'd like to take as our text tonight verse 36.

When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, look the Lamb of God. When he, that is, John the Baptist, saw Jesus passing by, he said, look the Lamb of God.

And we can use that text, that verse, as a focal point for our thoughts tonight as we look at this passage. So I'd like to look in particular at the passage 35 to 42 and some of the background to it. And what we can learn from Jesus, learn about Jesus from it. And also how it can be applied in our own lives. So we see in these verses, verses 35 to 42, the first two disciples.

Andrew is named in verse 40. Verse 40 says, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus.

[1 : 14] Now John was the second disciple. He's not named, but by inference it was John. John is the author of the whole gospel that bears his name. And this account is full of detail, incidental detail, that implies an eyewitness.

In verse 39, for example, it says, So they went and saw where he was staying and spent that day with them. It was about the tenth hour. There's no particular reason for the mention of the tenth hour there.

But it speaks of the whole incident remaining very strongly in the memory of John. It meant a lot to him. So this passage tells of Andrew and John's reaction to being shown the Lamb of God.

It tells of the beginning of their walk with Jesus. And it tells how these two men, Andrew and John, were first of all concerned, and then how they were challenged, and ultimately how they were convinced.

So we'll take that as our three main points. First of all, let's look at some of the background leading up to this particular verse.

[2 : 28] And if we look at the exchange between John the Baptist and the Jews in verses 19 to 28, two days before this instant where Andrew and John met Jesus, a delegation from the religious establishment in Jerusalem had come to question John.

And we read in verse 19, Now this was John's testimony when the Jews of Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. There was a great deal of speculation at the time among the Jews as to who would be the Messiah when this great leader would come.

And this was very much derived from their understanding of the Old Testament. As far as they were concerned, the Messiah would be either a great Davidic king or a great prophet.

And if it was a Davidic king, he would be a great political leader, one who would deliver Israel from the oppression of the Romans. But John was not this Messiah.

He says in verse 20, He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, I am not the Christ. I am not the Messiah. Which means the anointed one.

[3 : 53] As the kings of Israel were anointed when they were made king. And they thought if he was not the Davidic king, then he would be the great prophet. And the great prophet, as far as they were concerned, was either Elijah or Moses.

Now, in Malachi chapter 4, Malachi prophesies that Elijah will return. Malachi chapter 4, verse 5 says, See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the Lord.

Malachi forecasts that Elijah will return to Israel before the day of the Lord. But John was not this Elijah. In verse 21 we read, They asked him, Then who are you?

Are you Elijah? He said, I am not. Just as an interesting little aside, Jesus elsewhere actually identifies John as Elijah.

In Matthew chapter 17, after the transfiguration, Jesus actually says that John is Elijah. John's denial here might be due to him not presuming to identify himself with Elijah.

[5 : 07] Or even not wanting to confuse the whole issue as to who the Messiah was. However, that's only speculation and we're not really looking at that tonight. And if the Messiah was going to be a great prophet, the other Old Testament figure that they identified was Moses.

Now it talks about a great prophet like Moses in Deuteronomy chapter 18. Deuteronomy chapter 18, verse 18 says, Moses was a great figure from the Old Testament.

He delivered the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt. He was a mediator between God and God's people. He was a lawgiver, a great figure from the Old Testament.

But John was not the prophet like Moses. Again in verse 21 he says, they ask him, are you the prophet? And he answered, no, he was not the prophet.

Again, as a little aside, the mention of these two figures, Moses and Elijah, is of great interest because it was Moses and Elijah that met with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration.

[6 : 26] the picture of the Old Testament and the New Testament together, the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. Moses and Elijah are often taken to represent the law and the prophets.

But again, that's not an area that we wish to look at here. So John had denied that he was in any way to be identified with the Messiah.

Finally in verse 22, they said, who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself? And John replies in verse 23.

He replies in the words of Isaiah the prophet, I am the voice of one calling in the desert. Make straight the way for the Lord. John is the herald. One calling in the desert.

Prepare the way for the Lord. The forerunner for the one who would deliver his people. And then after that discussion or confrontation between John and the commission of inquiry from Jerusalem, we read in verse 23, sorry, in verse 29, John declaring Jesus to be the Lamb of God.

[7 : 39] Now Jesus was possibly returning from the time of temptation in the desert at this time. That's not mentioned in John, although that time of temptation is mentioned in the other Gospels.

And we read in verse 29, the next day, John saw Jesus coming towards him and said, look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

So this title for Jesus that John gives him, the Lamb of God, why did John use that designation? What did he mean by it?

It's almost as if John, as the last of the Old Testament prophets, makes a great prophetic statement here. With our New Testament understanding now, we're familiar with the concept of Jesus as the Lamb of God.

But we're not sure if even John understood what he meant when he designated Jesus as the Lamb of God. And the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world also implies some kind of sacrificial association with Jesus.

[8 : 48] There's a lot of speculation again as to what John might have meant by that. Is this a reference to a specific sacrifice in the Old Testament? Possibly Abraham.

You recall that when Abraham was asked to take Isaac as son and sacrifice him, he was about to do that at God's command when he was told to resist.

And a substitute was provided. There was a ram caught in the bushes behind. And that's one possible reference to a sacrifice. Another possible reference is to the Passover Lamb.

Again, you'll recall how each family at the time of the Exodus was told to take a lamb and to kill the lamb and to eat it and to put its blood on the doorposts so that those inside, the firstborn of all the families and the firstborn of all the animals would be preserved.

Or is it possibly a reference to the sacrifices that were made both in the tabernacle and in the temple? There were regular sacrifices made for sin there.

[9 : 59] Well, none of these are seen as the primary reference behind this title for Jesus. Rather, the meaning is seen as being found in the passage that we read in Isaiah.

Now, in Isaiah there are four great servant songs as they're called and they commence in Isaiah chapter 42. In the chapter that we read, Isaiah chapter 53 is the fourth and last of these servant songs.

And in that song, in that fourth song, in Isaiah chapter 53, verse 7, it speaks of a lamb. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth.

He was led like a lamb to the slaughter. And as a sheep before a shearer is silent, so he did not open his mouth. John is here identifying Jesus as the suffering servant.

He's represented here as a lamb being led to his death, the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world through his death on the cross. So that's some of the background that we've looked at, some of the background to this encounter between Andrew and John and Jesus.

[11:19] Jesus. So if we move on to the points that we identify, the first thing there is that these two men were concerned.

They had a spiritual concern. And that's obvious from the fact that they were with John. We read in verse 35, the next day John was there again with two of his disciples.

These men, Andrew and John, were disciples of John, John the Baptist, with all that implied before they were pointed towards Jesus. And as disciples, they would have been prepared to spend time learning from John.

They'd have been prepared to accept the message of John. And what do we think the message of John was? Well, again, we can read about that in one of the other Gospels.

In Matthew chapter 3, verses 1 and 2, it says, In those days, John the Baptist came preaching in the desert of Judea and saying, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.

[12:24] John brought a message of repentance, of turning away from sin. And if they were disciples of John, as well as listening to his teaching, they'd probably also been baptized.

And again, what did that mean? I think it meant that John was saying to people, it was not enough just to rely on being a Jew to find acceptance with God.

There was a personal commitment required for an acknowledgement of the need for cleansing. And again, in Matthew chapter 3, verse 6, says about those who came to John, confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

And as well as listening to the teaching of John, and probably having been baptized, they may even have been present at the baptism of Jesus himself.

The baptism of Jesus appears to have taken place some weeks before this. It's not recorded by John, and we can only speculate that Andrew and John had been present at it.

[13:33] So with all this background, the teaching of John, their probable baptism, possibly the previous baptism of Jesus, and John's denial that he was a messianic figure, which we looked at as part of the background, which had taken place just two days before.

John's declaration that Jesus was the Lamb of God had come the day before. When they were shown, when they were pointed towards Jesus passing by, it says in verse 36, when he saw Jesus passing by, he that is John, he said, look, the Lamb of God.

These two men were prompted to find out more. So they followed Jesus. It says in verse 37, when the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus.

They'd followed John because they were concerned spiritually. Now they followed Jesus because of what they'd heard and experienced when John pointed towards him.

They knew that this man that John had identified as the Lamb of God was specially chosen by God, but I'm sure they didn't fully understand just how special he was, as was shown by some of their conduct in later times.

[14:55] So their spiritual concern was serious. It wasn't a casual thing. They were already seeking God, and they'd shown that by their association with John, and they responded to being shown the Lamb of God.

And how do we apply this to ourselves in our own lives? I think we must ask, are we concerned? Do we have a serious, genuine interest in spiritual things?

Do we see our need for repentance? And do we understand the consequences of sin? when we are pointed towards Jesus as Andrew and John were, do we want to find out more?

And how do we respond to being shown the Lamb of God? So these two men were concerned.

They were concerned for their own spiritual welfare. And then we see that they were challenged.

That's the second main point that we have. They were challenged when they began to follow Jesus as we read in verse 37. Jesus confronts them.

[16:06] In verse 38 we read, turning round, Jesus saw them following and asked, what do you want? It's not what might be expected, but it didn't put them off.

I think Jesus was asking, what is your interest? Is your interest genuine? Are you prepared to take this further? God's answer?

And their response, they said, Rabbi, which means teacher, where are you staying? Again, a very neutral response, but they hadn't been put off by the challenge of Jesus.

Their response was respectful, but neutral, and it showed that they were willing to take the whole matter further. together. And again, Jesus responds to them and says in verse 39, come, he replied, and you will see.

Come and see, it was an invitation to come and spend time with him to learn more about him. And again, what's the application for us here? What's our interest in Jesus?

[17 : 11] Is it genuine? Are we prepared to spend time in his company to find out more about him? Are we prepared to take our spiritual concerns to the next day's stage?

Jesus challenges those who think of following him. He'll challenge us as well if we wish to follow him, as he challenged Andrew and John. Are we willing to take the risk that's implied here, of finding out more about him?

Are we wholehearted in our desire to come to know him? So we've seen how Andrew and John were concerned spiritually, then we've seen how they were challenged by Jesus and last of all we can look at how they were convinced.

In verse 39 we read, so they went and saw where he was staying and spent that day with him. It was about the tenth hour. John and Andrew spent the whole day with Jesus and during that day they heard enough, they saw enough, they learned enough, not everything, but enough to become convinced that Jesus was very different.

So much so that Andrew for one is convinced that Jesus is the Messiah. We read in verse 41, the first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, we have found the Messiah, that is the Christ.

[18 : 39] Christ. And even at that early stage we read that Andrew began to serve Christ. Andrew brought Peter to Jesus. We read in verse 42, and he brought him to Jesus.

Jesus looked at him and said, you're Simon, son of John, you will be called Cephas, which when translated is Peter. Peter is important to God. He was important to the future of the church and to God's plan for his people.

Again, how do we apply this to ourselves? They were convinced. Are we convinced? Are we prepared to spend time with Jesus, reading about him in his word, in prayer to him?

Are we prepared to spend time with his people in fellowship? Are we prepared to take the first steps of that journey of faith that Andrew and John took on that particular day?

So we've seen how Andrew and John were concerned spiritually, and then we've seen how they were challenged by Jesus to take their interests further, and we've seen how they were ultimately convinced as to who Jesus was.

[20 : 00] We've also seen how John, John the Baptist, almost in a prophetic way called Jesus, the Lamb of God, and how this prompted the interest of Andrew and John in Jesus.

So just looking briefly at that theme of the Lamb of God, we've already seen in Isaiah 53 how the prophet refers to the Messiah to come, and again that verse in Isaiah 53, verse 7, John, he was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth.

He was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before a shearer's is silent, so he did not open his mouth. The chosen one would be the suffering servant, led like a lamb to be sacrificed.

And in the Gospel of John, we've seen also how John the Baptist points Andrew and John to Jesus in a prophetic way, as a lamb of God, as a suffering servant, not the great king, not the Davidic king that the Jews expected, and not one of the great prophets like Elijah and Moses, as again the Jews expected.

Jesus was pointed as the lamb of God, implying a life of rejection, suffering, and death. And Jesus as the lamb leads us to another book written by John, the book of Revelation looking towards the end of the age, where a lamb is again referred to.

[21 : 34] And in Revelation, this time in the great vision of John, the lamb is in the center of the throne. We read in Revelation chapter 5 verse 6, Then I saw a lamb looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders.

Jesus again is the lamb of God, but this time he's the glorified lamb in this rightful place at the center of the throne of the universe, worshipped by all creation.

And the throne is surrounded by 24 other thrones. We read in Revelation 4 verse 4, Surrounding the throne were 24 other thrones, and seated on them were 24 elders.

They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads. The 24 thrones are taken to represent the Old Testament and the New Testament church together, the Old Covenant and the New Covenant united in the worship of God and the Lamb.

And on the 24 thrones are the 12 heads of the tribes of Israel representing the church before Christ and also on the other 12 thrones are the 12 disciples or the apostles of Jesus representing the New Testament church.

[22 : 59] And by implication among them are Andrew and John, the two men who began to follow Jesus that day. They followed the Lamb from the Lamb of Isaiah 53 to the Lamb that would die on the cross to ultimately the Lamb who sits on the throne of the universe.

So again it comes down to how serious is our interest in Jesus? Andrew and John responded to being shown Jesus as the Lamb of God.

They were concerned spiritually, they were challenged by Jesus, but ultimately they were convinced as to who he was. Are we concerned spiritually? Are we interested in God? if there is a God, what does that mean for us? And do we understand about our sin and about our need for cleansing from sin? Jesus challenges us.

He challenges us to spend time with him, to find out more about him through reading and studying his word, through spending time in prayer to him, and through joining in fellowship with his people.

[24 : 15] And are we convinced ultimately as to who Jesus is? In verse 34 of that first chapter of John, we read Jesus declared as the Son of God.

And he's also acknowledged by Andrew in verse 41 as the Messiah. And are we convinced as to what Jesus has done, how he gave his life as a sacrifice for sin, as a Lamb of God?

If so, we should begin that journey of faith. We should begin to make being a disciple a priority in our lives, as Andrew and John did on that day.

So the disciples that we've looked at tonight, Andrew and John, they had their first encounter with Jesus in this passage, and it was prompted by John the Baptist's identification of Jesus as the Lamb of God.

And as a result, they began their journey of faith. They started to follow Jesus. Their commitment to him became the most important thing in their lives.

[25 : 24] And it led to a life of service, a life of suffering, but ultimately to glory beyond their imagining. Amen. Let's pray.