

Epiphany II: John 1:29-41: The Lamb of God and His First Disciples

1. The Gospel of John, written later than the Synoptics, assumes knowledge of Jesus' baptism. But John gives us testimony of the Baptist not found elsewhere. Jn. 1:1-18 is called the prologue. 1:19-28 describes either one or two delegations from Jerusalem. (If one, vss. 19-28, if two, vss. 19-23 and vss. 24-28) In any case, vss. 24-28 describe one day. Vss. 29-34 the second day. And vss. 35-42, the third day. Our text dwells on the second and third days.
2. Furthermore, the Gospel of John does not mention the temptation of Jesus, fully described by Matthew and Luke and merely mentioned by Mark. At Jn. 1:29 the baptism and temptation of Jesus had already taken place.
3. Vs. 29: βλέπει, note synonyms Τεθέαμαι, 32, ἴδης, 33 and ἑώρακα, 34. In 36 we have ἐμβλέψας, in 38 θεασάμενος, in 39 ὤψεσθε and also εἶδαν. We point this out because Raymond Brown, a well-known redaction critic, says: "We cannot treat Jn. 1:35-51 simply as a historical narrative. . . . John has used the occasion of the call of the disciples to summarize discipleship in its whole development." That casts grave doubt on the historicity of this passage. In vs. 29 Jesus is approaching the Baptist. Evidently there were other people there because he says ἴδε "behold" "look there". On ὁ ἀμνὸς τοῦ θεοῦ: Ylvisaker: "The article 'the' characterizes this lamb as the true Paschal Lamb, the antitype of the lamb in the Old Covenant. 'The lamb of God' is the Lamb given of God, consecrated and set apart for our salvation. It points to passages in Is. 53 and Lev. 16:8,9, to which John evidently refers." τοῦ θεοῦ is subjective genitive as Kretzmann points out: "He was provided by God, sent out by God, He came with God's full consent and will." Westcott, ad locum, treats this phrase most thoroughly. It is too lengthy to quote here. On ὁ ἀμνὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, Bengel: "One who renders active and passive obedience, I Peter 1:19. . . . The Lamb of God first took the load of sin off the world on Himself, then rolled it off from Himself. τὴν ἀμαρτίαν τοῦ κόσμου, there was the one plague, which seized on all; He bore the whole; He did not so bear one part, as not to bear the other. The same singular number is interposed between plurals, Is. 53:6,8,12. . . . Sin and the world are equally widely extended." Luther (American Edition, vol. 22, pp. 169-170): "It is extremely important that we know where our sins have been disposed of. The Law deposits them on our conscience and shoves them into our bosom. But God takes them from us and places them on the shoulders of the Lamb. If sin rested on me and on the world, we would be lost; for it is too strong and burdensome. God says: 'I know that your sin is unbearable for you; therefore behold, I will lay it upon My Lamb and relieve you of it. Believe this! If you do, you are delivered of sin.' There are only two abodes for sin: it either resides with you, weighing you down; or it lies on Christ, the Lamb of God. If it is loaded on your back, you are lost; but if it rests on Christ, you are free and saved."
4. Vs. 30: This is obviously testimony to the people. Note emphatic ἐγὼ of the Baptist vss. 30, 31 (twice), 33 and 34. This vs. goes back to the same testimony given in vss. 15 and 27. Cf. Mt. 3:11 and Lk. 3:16. The Baptist had testified to Jesus even before Jesus' baptism. Here in Jn. 1:30 he says that he had already said (εἶπον). Christ is called ἀνὴρ, a true man. But He was before the Baptist because He is the eternal God. John knew that Christ was the God-man.
5. Vs 31: "And yet I myself did not know Him." This is repeated in vs. 33 where we shall discuss it. ἀλλᾶ, following a negative, is very strong "on the contrary" (though I did not know Him). The antecedent of διὰ τοῦτο is the ἵνα purpose clause. This makes the purpose clause very strong and prominent. This is the first instance of φανερώω in the Gospel of John. It occurs nine times and always refers to Christ or His works. It means "to make plain". Here: "in order that Christ be made plain to Israel". The Baptist's preaching and baptism was for Israel only. And how did he make

Christ plain? By baptizing with water. Did his baptism forgive Israel's sins? Of course it did.

6. Vs. 32: Nestle makes a subparagraph here. Perhaps it denotes a different group of people. We can't be sure. But it must have been on the same day. μαρτυρέω occurs once in Matthew, once in Luke, nowhere in Mark, but thirty-one times in John! It means "to tell the truth". This testimony concerns what happened when Jesus was baptized. It was treated in last week's text at Mt. 3:16. We make only two additional remarks here: ἐξ οὐρανοῦ modifies καταβαίνων, not περιστερῶν. The subject of ἔμεινεν is the dove. It remained long enough to make an impression on John. The Spirit rested on Jesus permanently.
7. Vs. 33: This vs. contains some remarkable material: "And yet I myself did not know Him, but, on the contrary, the One Who sent me to be baptizing with water, that One said to me etc." In 31 and 33 we have forms of οἶδα, not γινώσκειν. οἶδα means "to know without being told." Commentators argue about whether John and Jesus knew each other personally before this time. That is beside the point here. The point here is that God Himself, by some private revelation, told the Baptist that he would receive an unmistakable sign as to the identity of the Messiah. Note ὁ βαπτίζων ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ. Some translations mistakenly make βαπτίζων future "who will baptize." The text says "who is baptizing." Clearly the Baptist means that in his water-baptism Christ is baptizing with the Holy Spirit. Nothing else makes sense. In Jn. 3:1-13, where Jesus speaks to Nicodemus, Jesus says: "Verily, verily I say to you, unless anyone is begotten of water and Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God." Unmistakably Jesus was speaking of the Baptist's baptism. There is only one baptism. Eph. 4:4. And at Acts 19:4 Paul says: "John baptized a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe in the One Who was coming after him." John's baptism was Christian. It differed from that of Mt. 28:19 in only two respects: a) It was for Israel only; b) It was under the Old Covenant whereas that of Mt. 28:19 took place after all had been fulfilled. Some commentators call it "preparatory" but that does not mean that it was not a true means of grace. Furthermore, read Jn. 3:26 and 4:1,2. Jesus' disciples baptized Israel, before Pentecost, too. All instances of baptism, whether of the Baptist, of Jesus' disciples, or of the general commission in Mt. 28:19, were truly a means of grace.
8. Vs. 34: "And I myself have seen and therefore I have testified that this One is the Son of God." God Himself gave the Baptist the unmistakable proof which led to the unmistakable testimony that Jesus is, in very truth, the eternal Son of God. Note that both verbs are in the perfect tense. John's testimony lives to this day. This reminds us of Jn. 20:31. The whole Gospel of John was written for this testimony.
9. Vs. 35: Scholars have determined that vss. 19-28 took place on a Thursday, vss. 29-34 on a Friday and vss. 35-42 on a Saturday. See Fahling and Edersheim for details. Note πάλιν εἰστήκει "again he was standing". In keeping with his testimony, the Baptist was fascinated with the person of Christ. We know for certain that Andrew was one of the two disciples (vs. 40). Commentators agree that the other must have been John, the Evangelist.
10. Vs. 36: ἐμβλέψας, this is the intensive form of βλέπει, vs. 29. "He looked intently at." περιπατοῦντι, this time Jesus was not coming toward the Baptist. KJV, RSV and NASB: "as he walked". NEB, NIV and AAT: "as he passed by". Hendriksen: "Today Jesus is evidently walking away from him (the Baptist), toward the place where he was staying for the time being (38b and 39)." The Baptist repeats, in abbreviated form, what he had said of Jesus the day before.
11. Vs. 37: ἀκούω takes the genitive of the person as direct object. On ἤκουσαν: Fahling: "But now

that they heard it again, they immediately left John and followed Jesus. A loss for John, it is true; but it was in accordance with his mission -- to prepare the way for Christ." Lenski: "Here is an example of the Word rightly heard." Ylvisaker: "When the disciples followed Jesus, it was a result of the persuasion of the Father through the Spirit." God worked through the Word of the Baptist to cause his own disciples to follow Jesus. Cf. Jn. 3:31. What a selfless servant of the Lord!

12. Vs. 38: στραφεῖς, this seems to indicate that Jesus was walking away from, not toward, the three men. Jesus forces Himself on no one. Cf. Lk. 24:28. But He was not disinterested. θεασόμενος, the root from which the word "theater" is derived, denotes more than mere seeing or looking. He was interested in them. He does not say: "Are you looking for me?" He says: "What are you seeking?" This clearly indicates His sinlessness. Ordinary sinners would have been flattered and would have said: "Did you want to see me?" They called him Rabbi which means Teacher. Hendriksen remarks: "Their interest has been fully aroused by the testimony of the Baptist, who, accordingly, proved that he was a true herald and way-preparer." ποῦ μένεις: Ylvisaker: "They express thereby a desire to speak privately, to know Him better, to hear Him explain the Scriptures."
13. Vs. 39: ἔρχεσθε καὶ ὄψεσθε, a beautiful command and promise. On the place of dwelling Fahling says: "Most likely it was at a modest and temporary dwelling-place in the neighborhood of where John was preaching and baptizing, probably some sort of tent or booth, which served as the only shelter to the hundreds who had come to the baptism of John." Lenski: "He opens the door to them on the instant just as if he had been waiting for them. . . . Nothing is easier than to get an audience from the King of kings at once." In vs. 38 Jesus' question implies that they want to see Him. Their question implies that they wish to speak to Him. His command and promise clearly imply that their wish will be granted. It is a very courteous scene. They stayed with Him that day. John gives the exact time, the tenth hour. If by Jewish reckoning of time, 4 p.m. (thus NEB and NASB fnt.). If by Roman reckoning, 10 a.m. (thus AAT). These notes suggest the latter. Consult Lenski and Hendriksen for a full discussion. Lenski is too pessimistic about the solution. Hendriksen sees no great problem here. The crucial passage is Jn. 19:14.
14. Vs. 40: This is a subparagraph in Nestle's text. The reason should be obvious. Andrew is mentioned first. Cf. vs. 44. Likely he was older than Peter. But later Peter became superior in the circle of the disciples. If we read πρῶτον, an adverb, it means "the first thing he did etc." Thus NEB and NIV. If we read πρῶτος (variant), an adjective, it means "he first finds etc." which assumes that the other, John the disciple, did the same. Thus KJV, RSV, NASB and AAT. A wonderful instance of mission work. Bengel: "A wonderful find, expected by the world for about forty centuries." Note the perfect form εὐρήκαμεν. Hendriksen: "The expectation of the coming of the Messiah, the testimony of the Baptist with reference to Jesus (1:29.36), and especially the day-long visit with the latter at his temporary abode near the Jordan, had paved the way for this joyful exclamation." Jesus must have opened the Scriptures for them as He did for the Emmaus disciples, Lk. 24:13-27. Lenski: "Their highest hopes were coming to fulfillment: they have found the Messiah himself. The Baptist had called him 'the Son of God', 34, and most emphatically 'the Lamb of God'. This Andrew now restates in his own way just as Philip does a little later." Kretzmann: "Andrew and John were convinced that Jesus was the Christ. That conviction was the result of their conversation with Jesus." Stoeckhardt: "To this day in the Gospel Jesus calls sinners to Himself. He says: 'Follow Me, come to Me, I will quicken you!' And through that call He takes hold of men's heart and will, and draws men's souls to Himself so that they believe, hear and serve Him." Ylvisaker: "Andrew makes the direct assertion that they had found the Messiah. Out of the OT he gathers the truth that if Jesus is the Lamb of God and God's Son, then He must be the Messiah."

15. One final note about vs. 29: It has been called "the masterpiece of the Holy Ghost" (Reiger quoted by Ylvisaker). It is quoted at least five times in the *Book of Concord*, especially concerning the universal atonement in F.C., S.D., Art. XI, Tappert 620, with many other passages. It is the basis for a chorus and an alto Aria in Bach's Mass in B Minor. It is found in the Catechism and in the Communion Order of Service just before distribution. And the Handbook to TLH lists six hymns based on this verse: 142, 146, 147, 165, 328 and 652. But Henriksen (Reformed) says bluntly about this verse: "The passage does not teach a universal atonement. The Baptist did not teach that, nor does the Evangelist, nor Jesus Himself." What a tragedy!!