

“Would you call your first witness, please?”

Drawing Near: God, I ask You to open the eyes of my heart as I read Your Word this week so I can see the fullness of Your glory in Your Son Jesus. Amen.

1. Can you think of a time when someone promised you something but it seemed to you that they would never deliver on their promise? What did you think, do or say as you waited?

King David was remembered as the greatest king the nation of Israel ever had. After his death the nation went through hard times, fracturing into northern and southern kingdoms. Over time they were overthrown by foreign powers and sent into exile. They longed for another king like David who would restore power and prestige to their nation. This hope rested upon God's promise of a continuation of the Davidic line (Jeremiah 33) and the coming of a glorious king (Isaiah 9, 11). Generation after generation they waited for their king, the Messiah (word derived from the Hebrew word *masah* meaning “anoint, smear with oil”). In Jesus' day some believed that the long-awaited Messiah would be a national king who would lead them out from under Roman occupation (see introduction). Others believed He would not come until the end of time to establish the kingdom of God on earth. It is here that John's narrative of the life of Jesus begins.

Read John 1:19-51.

2. What do you notice about the **sequence** of events in this section (verses 29, 35 and 43)?

As you study the book of John you might get the feeling that you are the judge in a courtroom drama that is playing itself out before you. John brings forward witnesses to give their testimony of what they know about Jesus. He enters other evidence (miraculous signs) into the record so that you can make an informed decision. Review John 20:31 as a reminder of the import of your final decision. In chapter one John the Baptist testifies as our first witness.

Read verses 19-28... Day 1.

3. Make note of what more you learn about John the Baptist from the following verses.
Luke 1:5-17, 67, 76-80

Luke 3:1-3

Mark 1:2-6

4. In your opinion is John the Baptist a credible witness? Why or why not?

Find Jerusalem on your map. From John 1:19-28 we know that a religious delegation from Jerusalem traveled to *Bethany on the other side (east) of the Jordan* to investigate John the Baptist. These Jewish leaders considered themselves protectors over religious thought and purity. They would naturally think it necessary to check out this unusual, popular preacher.

5. What did John the Baptist say in response to their questions (verses 19-21) and what seems to be the tone of his response? (*Christ* is the Greek form of the Hebrew word, *Messiah*.)

Note: The Jews believed that Elijah would come back to earth to anoint the Messiah to His kingly office. The Prophet promised in Deuteronomy 18:15 was also believed to be associated with the coming of the Messiah.

6. The delegation needed to take back a report so they continued to press John (verse 22).
 - a. What imagery was John the Baptist thinking of from Isaiah 40:3-5 as he testified about himself and what did he say was the role he had (verse 23)?
 - b. How did John the Baptist view himself in relationship to this One who was coming after him (verses 26-27)? Note: Untying sandals was a *menial task, fit for a slave. Disciples would perform all sorts of service for their rabbis, but loosing sandal thongs was expressly excluded.* (NIV Study Bible)
 - c. The verb *stands* in verse 26 is in the perfect tense indicating an ongoing condition that had lingering effects of profound importance. From this observation and your answer to part a. and b. describe the *One* who stood among them they did not know.

As we continue our study of John, hold onto your hats! We will encounter these Jewish leaders many more times as they set themselves in opposition to Jesus. Tensions will grow and the area in and around Jerusalem will become the place where this conflict plays itself out.

Read verses 29-34... Day 2.

7. From the following verses, what might John the Baptist have been thinking as he proclaimed Jesus as the *Lamb of God*?
Exodus 12:21-28

Exodus 29:38-42

Isaiah 53:4-7

8. How was John so sure Jesus was the *Lamb of God*? (John 1:32-34; Matthew 3:13-17)
9. What testimony does John the Baptist give of Jesus in verse 34? (For those who want to dig deeper, what meaning is behind this title?)

Read verses 35-51... Days 3-4.

10. As this chapter comes to a close we see the beginnings of faith in Jesus' first followers.
 - a. It is helpful to know that the verb tense for the word *come* (verse 39) is present imperative meaning to *keep on coming* as a lifestyle. What do you think Jesus meant by His invitation, *Come...and you will see*?
 - b. List Jesus' first disciples by name and by whose testimony/call they came to follow Him.
 - c. Who delivered the final testimony (verse 51) and what title was given?

Note: This title is Jesus' favorite self-designation (used 81 times in the gospels). It is taken from Daniel 7:13-14 speaking of the Messiah, the anointed king, who would come in divine glory and establish an eternal Kingdom.

11. It is in John's gospel that we get a fuller picture of John the Baptist and Jesus' disciples.
 - a. What possible character qualities do you see in John the Baptist as he pointed Andrew (and probably the apostle John) toward Jesus (verses 35-36)?
 - b. What can we know about Andrew from verses 40-42 that is consistent with his actions in John 6:8-9 and John 12:22?

- c. Throughout the book of John we will observe Simon as impulsive, boastful and unstable. Nevertheless as Jesus looked at him (gazed deeply) He said, “You will be called Cephas,” meaning *rock* (verse 42). From Jesus’ statement what can you anticipate will happen in Peter’s life as he follows Jesus?

Note: From Old Testament history, renaming occurred when people had encounters with God that marked their lives and changed their relationship with Him. In Acts we read that Peter was one of the leaders in the early church.

- d. As Jesus traveled to Galilee (verse 43) He found and invited Philip to follow Him. What was on Philip’s heart as evidenced by his conversation with Nathanael?
- e. It is thought that Nathanael (name mentioned only in John) is another name for Bartholomew who is listed among the disciples in the other three gospels. Like Philip, he was from the region of Galilee in which the town of Nazareth was located. What do you learn about him as he talks with Philip and then with Jesus?

12. In summary:

- a. What do you see in the life of John the Baptist that honored God and His Son?
- b. From this chapter how did Jesus’ disciples show honor?

Personal Reflection: Personalize the prayer from Colossians 1:9-14 and then consider how you might honor God with your life. Write down some thoughts.

- 13. Review the entire chapter. List all the names or descriptions given to Jesus. Thank God for keeping His promise by sending Jesus, the Messiah, who is beyond all our expectations and descriptions.

*Oh, Lord, our Lord, how excellent Your name is, how excellent Your name in all the earth.
Your glory fills the heavens beyond the farthest star, how excellent Your name in all the earth.*