

LESSON 2

THE MANIFESTATION OF JESUS AS MESSIAH

John 1:19-3:36

Introduction

After defining Jesus as the divine Word who existed eternally with the Father and assumed human flesh, the author John focused attention on man's recognition of who Jesus was. John the Baptist emphasized that his assignment was to introduce the Christ, but he was not to be identified as the Christ. He described Jesus as "the Lamb of God" and "the Son of God." Andrew identified Jesus as the Messiah to his brother Peter. Nathanael recognized Him as Rabbi, Son of God, and King of Israel. In the Synoptics as well as John's Gospel, Jesus referred to Himself as the Son of Man. John also used "the only begotten Son of God." To the woman of Samaria, Jesus identified Himself as the Messiah. The different Old Testament titles which described the expected deliverer of God's people were applied to Jesus, and only in Him were the separate concepts unified and attributed to one historical person.

The Witness of John the Baptist

1:19-34

John's denial that he is the Christ (1:19-28)

The author's purpose was to build the evidence that Jesus is God's Son, the anointed King. Luke tells us that all Israel was in great expectation for the coming Christ (3:15). Since the voice of prophecy had been silent for several centuries, the appearance of John the Baptist in the wilderness wearing the raiment of a prophet and eating the diet of a prophet raised speculation that Elijah had returned. The prophet Malachi had stated that "I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers" (4:5f.). According to Matthew 17:12, Jesus identified John the Baptist with Elijah, but John the Baptist denied he was Elijah in John 1:21. Some scholars have concluded that the Fourth Gospel was written to counteract an excessive veneration of John the Baptist. It seems more likely that the author's design was to emphasize John's decrease in importance and the increase of Christ.

John's appearance created great excitement, and the people were ready to follow him. The Fourth Gospel shows how loyalty to John the Baptist was

Jesus is described in John's Gospel by the following titles:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Some believed that John the Baptist was the prophet _____.

(Elijah)

Name an Old Testament prophet who said that Elijah would come before the Messiah?

(Malachi)

transferred to Christ who was introduced by the Baptist as having existed before him and, therefore, being greater than he. The author's account of John the Baptist presupposes that his readers were acquainted with the Synoptic account. He does not give a chronological description of what happened but an interpretation of the significance of the events.

The Jews, the title used by John for Judaism and its official leaders, sent priests and Levites, who acted as temple police, to question the identity of John the Baptist (v. 19). The author's purpose appears to have been to introduce the conflict between Jesus and Judaism which centred in Jerusalem. The author had already stated that the Word came to His own (the Jews) but was not received or known by them. John the Baptist denied that he was the Christ and gave witness to One who stood among the Jews but was not known by them. By the time the Gospel was written, Jewish Christians had completely severed from Judaism.

Apparently there was some speculation that John the Baptist was the Messiah. He denied emphatically that he was the Messiah or Elijah. There was the belief, based on Deuteronomy 18:15, 18, that a prophet would appear to instruct the people in the commandments of the Lord and to turn them to righteousness in preparation for the coming of the Lord. John denied also that he was that prophet. Perhaps the reason that John's denials are emphasized in the Fourth Gospel is because Jesus Himself is presented as the Teacher and Saviour who would turn the people from their sins. Turning the people to righteousness could not be the accomplishment of man but must be the work of the Word who is the only begotten of the Father and is full of grace and truth (v. 14). As Teacher, Jesus is truth; as Saviour, Jesus is divine grace, the Lamb of God which takes away the sins of the world. Since Jesus fulfilled the role of prophet and rabbi and instructed the people in the way of the Lord, John the Baptist could be neither Elijah nor "that prophet" (v. 21). The Baptist did fulfil the role of "the voice of one crying in the wilderness" who prepared the way for the coming Lord (v. 23; Isa. 40:3). This preparation involved announcing that the time had arrived and pointing to Jesus as the Christ who was greater than John (v. 27) and had existed before him (v. 30). To accomplish his mission, John the Baptist had to redirect attention from himself to the One who had come after him. John's mission required that he decrease in order that Jesus as the Christ could increase.

The representatives of the Pharisees were persistent in finding out about the work of John the Baptist. Their questioning him as to why he baptized since he was not the Christ or Elijah implies that the Messiah, Elijah, or the prophet was expected to baptize. Baptism had arisen in Judaism as a purification ritual required of proselytes for admission into Judaism. John's baptism differed from that of proselyte baptism in that John required Jews as well as Gentiles

Besides Malachi, what other Old Testament book predicted the appearance of a prophet to prepare for the coming of the Lord?

(Deuteronomy)

John the Baptist identified himself as "the _____ of _____ in the _____" who prepared the way for the coming Lord.

(voice, one crying, wilderness)

to be baptized. Baptism may have also been an act of self-dedication to God. According to the Synoptics, John linked the rite of baptism to the coming Kingdom of God. Baptism symbolized the proper preparation for the expected Day of the Lord. Since John denied that he was one of the three persons associated with the coming Day of the Lord, his inquisitors naturally asked him why he baptized (v. 25). John answered that his baptism prefigured the baptism of the Messiah and the prophet.

John answered that he baptized with water. The Synoptics have taught us to expect the statement to follow that the One who would come after him would baptize with the Holy Spirit. However, this statement is not made until verse 33. Instead, the Baptist shifted the focus of attention from his baptismal work to the Christ whom the Pharisees and their emissaries had not accepted (v.26). According to the author of the Fourth Gospel, the purpose of John's baptizing was to reveal Jesus as the Christ; therefore, his shift of attention from water baptism to the One greater than he whose sandals he was not worthy to untie is logical (v. 27). In comparison to the Messiah, John was unworthy to do even the work of a slave.

John's identification of the Messiah (1:29-34)

As Jesus approached, John identified Him as the "Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (v. 29). Two lambs were offered daily as burnt offerings in preparation for the meeting of the priests (representatives of the people) with the Lord (Exod. 29:38-42). Christ as a lamb is the sacrifice through which the people are prepared to meet God. According to Isaiah 53, God's Servant was afflicted and suffered for our transgressions. He was led like a lamb to the slaughter (cf. vv. 4-7). Since the nations recognized that God's Servant was afflicted for them (Isa. 52:13-53:12), John the Baptist described Christ as the Lamb of God who would bear the sin of the world. Jesus is the Messiah, but He is also the Suffering Servant who became an offering for sin to enable unrighteous man to come before the holy God. The Fourth Gospel emphasizes that the Son of God was not recognized by the leaders of Judaism. This failure resulted from Jesus' not fulfilling their expectations of a victorious political messiah. Instead, He was described as the despised Servant of Isaiah 53 who would not attract men to Himself because of His lowly role of suffering and service. The sacrifice of the Lamb was not just for Jews but for the world. Even though Jesus as the Messiah was not attractive to the leaders of Judaism because He taught that He would die on the cross, John emphasized again that Jesus was greater than himself (v. 30).

John the Baptist, like the leaders of Judaism, was unable to identify Jesus as the Messiah by physical appearance or by social and political position. Since John's purpose was to manifest the Messiah to Israel, divine revelation was necessary to inform John

John's answer concerning his baptism was that it prefigured the baptism of _____.

(Jesus)

Related to the sacrificial system of the Old Testament, John identified Jesus as the _____ of _____.

(Lamb, God)

The Old Testament passages which refer especially to the lamb are _____ and _____.

(Exodus 29, Isaiah 53)

that the One upon whom the Spirit descended at His baptism was the One who would baptize with the Holy Spirit (v. 33). When David was publicly anointed with oil to indicate that he was king (messiah) of Israel, the Spirit of the Lord came upon him (1 Sam. 16:13). Oil was used in the public ceremony of dedicating the person to God's service. In John's time, baptism was a public dedicatory ceremony. As Jesus was baptized, John witnessed the coming of the Spirit upon Him. He described the Spirit's descent as being like a dove from heaven (v. 32). This event left no doubt that Jesus was the chosen Messiah. In the time of David, the Spirit came only upon Israel's leaders to enable them to serve God. In the New Kingdom, the King would bestow the Holy Spirit upon all those who are born into the Kingdom to serve God; therefore, the Christ would baptize with the Holy Spirit. David was promised that the throne of his kingdom would be established forever and the chosen king would be a son of God (2 Sam. 7:13f.). John the Baptist gave witness that the One upon whom he had seen the Spirit descend was the Son of God (v. 34).

The Witness of the Disciples

1:35-51

The account of the calling of the disciples in the Fourth Gospel differs from that in the Synoptics. In the Synoptics, the disciples were called to be apostles who would announce that the Kingdom of God had arrived. Instruction is stressed in the Fourth Gospel; therefore, the emphasis is on Jesus as a rabbi calling His disciples into association with Himself. John the Baptist pointed his own disciples to Christ (v. 36). An emphasis on teaching in which the disciples abode with Jesus, their rabbi (teacher), characterizes the Fourth Gospel rather than chronological details like the Synoptics.

When John pointed his disciples to Christ, two of them followed Him (v. 37). They answered Jesus' question concerning what they sought by addressing Him as Rabbi and inquiring where He lived. The implication of their question is that they planned to visit Him on occasions and hear further teachings. Jesus invited them to come and see where He lived, and they responded by abiding with Him. It was the custom for disciples to abide with their teacher. Jesus' invitation to John's followers to see where He lived was an invitation to discipleship. The author gave the event a historical relation by referring to the specific time of 4 p.m. (the tenth hour—v. 39).

One of the followers of John who heard Jesus speak was Andrew (v. 40). Although John the Baptist had spoken of Jesus as the Lamb of God to His disciples, Andrew identified Jesus to Simon his brother as the Messiah (v. 41). According to the Synoptics, a heavenly voice at Jesus' baptism quoted the Messianic passage in Psalm 2:7 and the Suffering Servant

The event which assured John that Jesus was the awaited Messiah was the _____

(descent of the Spirit at His baptism)

The title rabbi for Jesus denotes emphasis on His _____.

(teaching)

passage in Isaiah 42:1 and thus identified the Messiah with the Suffering Servant. According to the Fourth Gospel, this identity came through the Baptist's reference to Jesus as the Lamb of God and Andrew's calling Jesus the Messiah. It is interesting that the author of the Fourth Gospel used the transliterated form of the Old Testament word *Messiah* and gave the Greek translation of it as *Christ* (v. 41). The form of this statement may indicate that the author was writing to Jews of the Dispersion who knew the doctrine of the Messiah but were more familiar with the Greek language than with the Hebrew.

Jesus' supernatural power to know man is emphasized by the giving of a new name to Simon. Cephas is the Aramaic word for stone, and Peter is the Greek word for it (v. 42). Simon would become a building stone in the work of the Kingdom. In the Synoptics, the name Peter was given in response to Simon's confession of Jesus as the Messiah (cf. Mark 8:29 and parallels). This confession came much later in the ministry of Jesus in the Synoptic accounts than in the Fourth Gospel. John's Gospel gives no indication of secrecy being imposed on the disciples after they recognized Jesus as the Christ. The difference in the two approaches may be accounted for by John's purpose to emphasize themes and to interpret teachings rather than to give a chronological account. Apparently the people were already familiar with the events of the Synoptics. John's desire was to give a theological interpretation of the teachings about Jesus.

After the calling of three or possibly four disciples in Judea, Jesus departed for Galilee where He found Philip and commanded him to become a disciple (v. 43). Philip's name was Greek, but this does not deny that He was a Jew. His home was the strongly Hellenized town of Bethsaida on the northeast shore of the Sea of Galilee. Philip found Nathanael, a Jew of nearby Cana of Galilee. Nathanael is a Semitic word meaning "God gives." Nathanael was invited to see Him "of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write" (v. 45). Although there is no specific Messianic reference in the Pentateuch, the Law of Moses and the Prophets referred to the Old Testament. Our historical books which contain Messianic references were classified in the Jewish Bible as part of the Prophets. Since Philip associated Jesus with the obscure town of Nazareth, which is not mentioned in the Old Testament, and to the little-known family of Joseph, Nathanael's retort was "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" (v. 46). Rather than argue with Nathanael, Philip invited him to see Jesus for himself. As Nathanael approached, Jesus revealed a supernatural knowledge of his character. Nathanael was described as a true Israelite; that is, he would listen with understanding and obedience to the Old Testament which speaks of Jesus as the Messiah. He was described as one who had no pretense or deceit but was direct in expressing his views. Nathanael was surprised that Jesus already knew him. Jesus' response

The concepts of Jesus as the Suffering Servant and Messiah are identified by John the Baptist's reference to Jesus as the _____ of _____ and Andrew's calling Him the _____.

(Lamb, God, Messiah)

The reason the chronological order of the Synoptics was not followed by John in his Gospel was probably because his purpose was to give a _____ of the teachings about Jesus.

(theological interpretation)

Who asked Philip if any good thing could come out of Nazareth? _____

(Nathanael)

Underline the true sentence.

- 1. Philip tried to convince Nathanael that Jesus was the Messiah.*
- 2. Philip invited Nathanael to come see Jesus for himself.*

(Sentence 2 is true.)

that He knew Nathanael while he was yet under the fig tree may have been connected with an event which demonstrated Nathanael's lack of pretense (v. 48). His response was to recognize Jesus as Rabbi and Son of God. It has been pointed out already that the promised Davidic Messiah would be the Son of God (v. 49). Jesus responded that Nathanael's belief thus far was based upon a miracle of supernatural knowledge (v. 50). Nathanael would see greater things than this miracle. He would learn a deeper meaning for the title Son of God than was contained in the reference to David as son of God. Nathanael would become aware that in Jesus the heavenly presence of God was being manifested as it was to Jacob when the angels ascended and descended on the ladder (v. 51). The presence of God was being made known through the Son of Man who, according to Daniel 7:13, is a heavenly being. The Kingdom of the Son of Man is in the world but it transcends the world since the presence of God is manifested in the King.

The Symbolical Meaning of
the First Miracle
2:1-12

John's interest in miracles was not in the details of what happened but in the symbolical meaning or theological interpretation of the events. The author referred to miracles as signs (2:11, 18, 23; 3:2; 4:55; 6:2, etc.). In John's Gospel, the word sign refers to a symbolical anticipation or showing forth of a greater reality than the miraculous event observed on a physical level. The Fourth Gospel sees miracles as signs which reveal Jesus as the Christ who was already invading the kingdom of evil and defeating Satan in his own realm. John's stated purpose for the Gospel was that his readers "might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name" (20:31). John presented miracles as signs which increased the faith of Jesus' followers. The miracles were historical events but were beyond the natural order. Their greater significance for John lay within the theological interpretation discovered through the eyes of faith. The supernatural element cannot be understood through sense experience but must be interpreted theologically. Divine revelation comes through the action of the supernatural order on the historical. Man must respond to divine revelation by faith.

The purpose of John's including the turning of water into wine at the wedding in Cana was to record the reaction of the disciples—"his disciples believed on him" (v. 11). The author gave the miracle a historical setting by referring to the time (third day) and location (Cana). The persons identified as participating in the wedding feast were: Jesus, His disciples, His mother, the servants, the master of ceremonies, and the bridegroom. *When the supply of

Use the following words to complete the meaning of John 1:51:

- presence
- ascended
- Nathanael
- Jacob
- ladder

_____ would realize that in Jesus the heavenly _____ of God was being manifested as it was to _____ when the angels _____ and descended on the _____.

(Nathanael, presence, Jacob, ascended, ladder)

Underline the correct statement below.

1. John's emphasis was on the details of the miraculous occurrences.
2. John's emphasis was on the symbolical or theological interpretation of the miraculous event.

(Sentence 2 is correct.)

Is the following statement true or false?

For John a sign was a symbolical anticipation or showing forth of a greater reality than the miraculous event observed on a physical level. _____

(true)

wine was exhausted, the mother of Jesus turned to her son with the problem. Jesus addressed His mother as woman in verse 4. He also referred to her in such a manner when He was on the cross. This address called attention to a sharp distinction between Mary and her son. Even though Jesus was her son, she had no claim on Him because His supernatural nature exalted Him above human relationships. Jesus replied that the hour when man might expect to see the divine glory manifested had not yet come (v. 4). Mary was not affronted by her son's reply but requested the servants to obey Him (v. 5).

The six water pots were used in Jewish purification rituals and represented the total ceremonial observance of Judaism (v. 6). Jesus instructed the servants to fill the water pots with water, to draw some out, and to take it to the governor of the feast (vv. 7f.). After he had tasted the water which had become wine, he marvelled that the bridegroom had not followed the tradition of serving the best wine first instead of last (vv. 9f.). (Men who had already become intoxicated would not be aware that an inferior wine was being served.) John comments that this miracle of turning purification water into new wine manifested the glory of Jesus and evoked a response of faith from the disciples (v. 11). Perhaps John had in mind the statement in Matthew 9:17 that new wine cannot be put into old wine skins. In that statement, Jesus compared His new teachings to new wine, and they could not be contained within the traditional forms of Judaism. In a parallel teaching (John 2:6), the water representing Jewish purification was changed into new wine which represented all that Christ came to do. The superior quality of wine provided by Jesus was contrasted to inferior Jewish ceremonialism. Although the hour had not come for manifesting His glory, the miracle gave a partial and preliminary manifestation to the disciples so that they might believe (v. 11). Belief in Jesus as Messiah was based on the experience of seeing what Jesus did as well as the fulfilment of Old Testament predictions. Verse 12 is a transitional statement. It gives the information that Jesus, His family, and His disciples went to Capernaum for a few days.

The Cleansing of the Temple

2:13-25

The turning of water into wine revealed that Jesus' teachings and work were superior to those of Judaism. His activity in cleansing the Temple revealed that His authority was superior to that of Jewish religious leaders. The event came during the time of the Passover which was the major public celebration of the Jews. The pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the Passover was made by thousands of Jews. This highlight of Judaism was marked by dishonest commercial activity in the temple area. The emphasis of the religious

Why did Mary as Jesus' mother not have a claim on Him? _____

What did Mary tell the servants to do when Jesus told her His time had not yet come? _____

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Match the elements involved in the changing of water into wine with what they represented.

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| _____ water | 1. all Christ came to do |
| _____ new wine | 2. Jewish purification and ceremonialism |

(2-water, 1-new wine)

Jesus' cleansing of the Temple showed that He was the _____ Son of God.

(authoritative)

festivities was on the legal performance of rituals rather than relationship to God.

John placed the cleansing of the Temple at the beginning of Jesus' ministry in contrast to the Synoptics which placed it at the close of His public ministry. Whether different cleansings were referred to or theological concerns caused it to be placed at opposite ends of the story is uncertain. Perhaps John placed it at the beginning because it reinforced his purpose of showing his readers that Jesus was the authoritative Son of God. The Synoptic writers placed it at the end as a climax to the ministry of Jesus. John first told who Jesus was and used historical events to support his teaching. The plot of the Synoptics focuses on discovering who Jesus was and on His conflict with Jewish leaders. This conflict reached a climax when Jesus cleansed the Temple.

Jesus was appalled when He entered the Temple, perhaps the court of the Gentiles, and found oxen, sheep, and doves being sold and money-changers taking advantage of the pilgrims. Every Jewish adult male was required to pay a temple tax of half-shekel. Larger coins needed to be changed into smaller coins, and Roman coinage was unacceptable since it contained the image of Caesar. The function of the money-changers was to change the money of the pilgrims into the only kind of coin which was acceptable to the temple authorities. Although a moderate charge of two to four percent was acceptable for this service, the greed of the money-changers often led to a charge of 25 percent.

Since it was inconvenient for pilgrims to bring sacrificial animals with them, they would buy animals within the temple courts. Priests served as official inspectors to see that the animals did not have blemishes. If an animal was bought outside the temple area, the purchaser stood in danger of having the inspector reject it. Approved animals sold inside the temple area were much more expensive. Instead of expressing loving concern for the pilgrims who came in sincerity to worship, the religious leaders were making tremendous gains from this business. Jesus made a whip or scourge from cords and drove the sheep and oxen from the temple area (v. 15). The statement indicates that He drove all the men engaged in the trade from the Temple also. It is not stated that He used the whip on the men, but He did overturn the tables of the money-changers and commanded those selling doves to depart immediately with their merchandise. Jesus objected to His Father's house being turned into a place of merchandise (v. 16).

The disciples expressed the gravity of Jesus' actions with a quotation from Psalm 69:9 (v. 17). The Jews immediately counteracted with a demand to see a sign which would prove His authority for interrupting the temple proceedings (v. 18). Jesus answered that the sign would be the destruction of "this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (v. 19). The Jews thought Jesus referred to the temple building which

Underline the correct words.

- 1. The Synoptics place the Temple cleansing at the (beginning, end) of Jesus' ministry.*
- 2. The Fourth Gospel places it at the (beginning, end) of Jesus' ministry.*

(1. end, 2. beginning)

The temple tax had to be paid with coins which did not bear the image of _____.

(Caesar)

Pilgrims who came to worship bought animals at the Temple for sacrificing because of the _____ of bringing them.

(inconvenience)

Herod had begun about 20 B.C. but which had not been completed. The "forty-six years" mentioned in verse 20 placed the cleansing of the Temple at about A.D. 27. The fact that the Jews could conceive of only the external structure of the temple building symbolized the superficiality of their religion. John explains that Jesus was speaking of the temple of His body which would be raised in three days. Actually, no immediate sign of His authority was given, but His resurrection by the power of God proved that Jesus' life and ministry were approved by God. When Jesus was put to death on the cross, the Jews concluded that God had rejected Him. The resurrection reversed the conclusion and showed that God approved of His Son and rejected the decisions of the Sanhedrin and of Pilate who condemned Him. Apparently the disciples did not understand the sign until after His resurrection (v. 22).

Interpret Jesus' words concerning the destruction of the Temple and its being raised up in three days (2:19).

1. The Temple meant _____.
2. Destruction meant _____.
3. Raising up meant _____.

(1. Jesus' body, 2. Jesus' death, 3. Jesus' resurrection)

In speaking of His body as a temple, Jesus had reference to the unique indwelling of the Father in the Son. The Word, which was God, was housed in a fleshly body which became the only true Temple. It would be destroyed in death, and raised up in three days. The disciples understood little of His teachings until His resurrection (v. 22).

In referring to His body as a temple, Jesus meant the unique indwelling of the _____ in the _____.

(Father, Son)

Reference is made to the miracles or signs which Jesus did while in Jerusalem at the Passover, but none is described (v. 23). Many believed as a result of seeing the signs, and Nicodemus was drawn to Jesus by them (cf. 3:2). Although Jesus' confrontation with the temple leaders and His signs made Him a popular hero with the masses, He knew their superficial faith could not be trusted (vv. 23f.). Jesus was not fooled by the outward enthusiastic actions of men for He knew their inner fickleness (v. 25).

Jesus' Instruction of Nicodemus

3:1-21

Nicodemus is identified as a Pharisee and a ruler of the Jews. As a Pharisee, he was zealous for the Law. His identification as a ruler of the people indicates that he was a member of the Sanhedrin. During the conversation, Jesus made reference to the fact that he was a teacher of Israel (v. 10).

Nicodemus was a P _____, a member of the S _____, and a t _____ of Israel.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Nicodemus came to Jesus by night perhaps because of the desire to keep his visit a secret (v. 2). The theological interpretation the author implied is that Nicodemus came from darkness into the presence of the true light. By using the plural pronoun, Nicodemus probably represented those who believed because of the signs that Jesus did—"we know" (v. 2). Before Nicodemus stated the purpose for which he came, Jesus took the lead in the conversation and informed him that he must be born from above to even see the Kingdom of God. The Pharisees believed that God would restore the Kingdom to Israel when the Law was kept perfectly for a day. They conceived of a political kingdom with geographical boundaries which could be seen. Jesus

spoke of the necessity of being born from above in order to see the Kingdom of God, for God's Kingdom supersedes the kingdoms of this earth (cf. 18:36); therefore, it is impossible to see it as men see kingdoms of this world. The Kingdom of God is the rule and reign of God in the lives of His servants. To be born from above means to be born of the Spirit which is God's abiding in the life of a believer to control and empower him as a kingdom servant. Such a new birth means to enter the Kingdom (v. 5). Before God's presence can abide in the heart of man in the person of the Spirit, the life must be cleansed from sin and purified—"born of water" (v. 5). Perhaps being born of water has reference to baptism which is a symbol of being cleansed of sin.

Nicodemus failed to understand the meaning of being born anew or from above. He understood Jesus was saying that he must be born again—a second physical birth (v. 4). Jesus further explained that He was speaking of a spiritual birth and not a second fleshly birth. Nicodemus' birth into the Jewish nation did not qualify him for the Kingdom of God. It is easy for one to misunderstand the teaching of being born from above if he thinks the Kingdom of God will be established by his efforts in keeping the Law. Jesus contrasted the fleshly order of this world to the spiritual order from above. Entrance into the Kingdom requires a birth of the Spirit (v. 6).

Both the Hebrew and Greek words for spirit can also be translated breath or wind. Jesus illustrated the mystery of the spiritual birth by referring to the wind which cannot be seen but can be heard and felt (v. 8). Since it cannot be seen, a person does not know from whence the wind comes nor where it goes; nevertheless, he does not question the reality of it because of its effects on his senses of hearing and feeling. Likewise, man might not understand the Spirit, but he can know its activity in his life by the effects it has on him. It was necessary for Jesus to teach the teacher of Israel who did not understand the spiritual nature of God's Kingdom (v. 10). Since the leaders of Judaism had not experienced a spiritual birth, they could not give witness to something they did not know or had not seen (v. 11). Again, reference is made to the fact that the Jews did not receive the witness of Jesus. Jesus spoke of a kingdom which must be entered in the realm of the Spirit. His witness did not match the concept of the Jewish leaders concerning the Kingdom.

Beginning in verse 11, Jesus was no longer addressing an individual but a group. Since man's sensory experiences are designed to apprehend material or earthly things, the heavenly or non-sensory reality must be explained with earthly illustrations. Birth and the blowing of wind were used parabolically to point to Christ and God's activity in Him. Earthly man has not ascended into heaven; therefore, he cannot directly know God who is transcendent. The Son of Man who was with the "Ancient of Days" in heaven

Because the Kingdom of God supersedes the kingdoms of this earth, it is necessary for one to be _____ from _____ in order to see God's Kingdom.

(born, above)

Rearrange these groups of words to explain being "born of water."

<i>to baptism</i>	<i>a symbol</i>
<i>cleansed of sin</i>	<i>has reference</i>
<i>which is</i>	<i>Being born of water</i>
<i>of being</i>	

(Compare your answer with the text. See first paragraph of the text.)

What is the translation of both the Hebrew and Greek words for spirit?

(Compare your answer with the text.)

had descended from heaven to earth (cf. Dan. 7:13ff.). Since the Son of Man knew the Father in a heavenly experience and had entered into man's earthly experience, He was qualified to convey heavenly teachings (v. 13). In His earthly body, heavenly things became visible. His earthly sojourn would be temporary, however, for He must be suspended on a cross between heaven and earth like the serpent in the wilderness, and He would be resurrected to ascend back to heaven (v. 14). The comparison is not between the nature of a serpent and Christ but rather the lifting up of each on a standard or cross. The serpent placed on a standard in the midst of Israel reminded the people of their helplessness and need of God. When the people look to the cross, they see God in the Son who is providing for their salvation. Whoever looks to the cross and believes in the Son of Man has eternal life (v. 15). Eternal life is first mentioned after the only references in the Gospel to the Kingdom of God (3:3, 5). Eternal life in "John resembles 'kingdom of God' in the synoptic gospels."¹

Verse 16 is the favourite verse of many people. John had been describing what the divine Son had done for man by descending from heaven and being lifted up on a cross. Verse 16 gives the reason and purpose for His actions. The reason He came to earth and gave His life on the cross was because of God's unmerited love for the sinful people of the world. The incarnation of the Son and His crucifixion are God's gifts to sinful man, but the gifts become effective only in the lives of those who believe in Him. The purpose of God's gift was to deliver sinful men from perishing in order that they may have eternal life. Since man is created by God, existence and life depend on his relationship to God. Sinful man who separates himself from God brings destruction upon himself. Man cannot exist apart from his Creator for he is a dependent creature. His sinful pride and selfishness which lead him to think that he can live independently of his Creator are the causes of his destruction. Those who believe that life is only in the Son of Man have eternal life.

According to Zephaniah 1:14-16, the Day of the Lord or the coming of the Lord was to be a time of terrifying judgement. That day would mean punishment not only for the Israelites but also for the unrighteous of all nations. Joel preached that it would be a day of destruction for God's enemies but a day of hope for His people (3:13-18). John explained that the coming of the Son of God was not the day of judgement but the day of salvation (v. 17). The world—sinful man in rebellion against God—deserved to be judged, but God's unmerited love offered the world forgiveness and deliverance through His Son. Whoever

¹C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John* (London: S. P. C. K., 1967), p. 179.

Jesus was qualified to reveal God because He knew the Father in a _____

(heavenly experience)

According to John 3:16, state the reason and purpose for God's gift of Christ on the cross:

Reason-- _____

Purpose-- _____

(Reason--God's love for sinful people, Purpose--To save men from perishing to eternal life)

According to the prophets, God would bring--

_____ to

His enemies;

_____ to His people.

Jesus' first coming signified

_____.

(judgement and destruction, deliverance, salvation)

responds by believing in Him is not judged, but whoever rejects God's offer of grace is judged or condemned already (v. 18). Although God sent His Son on a mission of love to save sinful man, the rejection of that love would have the effect of judgement. Rejection determines the sentence of condemnation to be given at the final judgement. Sinful man is already under condemnation. His only hope is to be delivered by God's grace. His rejection of that grace seals his condition in condemnation; therefore, whoever believes on Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is already condemned (v. 18). Man is already in darkness. If he loves evil deeds to the extent of rejecting the light or way of righteousness which God has sent into the world, he will continue under condemnation (v. 19).

Truth is the revelation brought by and revealed in Jesus. The life of the Christian must conform to that revelation—"the one who is doing the truth comes to the Light" (v. 21). He who does the truth lives according to God's purposes, and it becomes evident that all he has done has been done through God.

The Second Witness of John

3:22-36

After the cleansing of the Temple and the conversation with Nicodemus and with those who joined him, Jesus and His disciples departed from Jerusalem and went to the surrounding district. Only John mentioned that Jesus baptized (v. 22). He modified the statement in 4:2 by pointing out that the disciples of Jesus actually were doing the baptizing. The author's emphasis was to show that although Jesus and John the Baptist were doing the same work, the meanings of their work were different. John's baptismal activities were related closer to the Jewish ritual of purification (v. 25). Even in the activity of baptizing, Jesus was replacing John: "and all men come to him" (v. 26).

The author specified that the simultaneous activities of the Baptist and Jesus were limited to the early part of the ministry of Jesus before John was cast into prison (v. 24). The disciples of John the Baptist were concerned that the popular following was shifting to Jesus to whom John had borne witness (v. 26). John informed his disciples that this change indicated Jesus' superiority and should be interpreted as the will of God (v. 27). John himself had testified that he was not the Christ but was sent to prepare the way for Him (v. 28). John used the relation of the best man to the bridegroom as an illustration of his own relation to Christ (v. 29).

The best man gladly gives way to the bridegroom and rejoices with the good fortune of the bridegroom. John came to prepare the way for Christ. Even though John led in the initial stages, Christ was to be the head of the new Israel. John was able to rejoice greatly when Christ replaced him as leader of the new movement.

Rejection of God's Son determines the sentence of _____.

(condemnation)

As the ministry of both Jesus and John the Baptist progressed, the plan of God unfolded through the i _____ of Jesus and the d _____ of John.

(increase, decrease)

The reason for the increase of Christ and the decrease of John involves more than human ability. Christ is from above; therefore, He is above all who are of the earth (v. 31). The Son of Man is the supreme Ruler of humanity. John had seen the Spirit in the form of a dove descend from above and had received divine revelation that Jesus is the Son of God. Since He is the Son of God who has seen and heard the Father, He is able to bear witness concerning the Father, but Judaism rejected His witness (v. 32). Throughout the Fourth Gospel, emphasis is placed on the Jewish leaders' refusal to accept the testimony that Christ is the Son of God. The man who accepts the witness of Jesus that He is the Son of God certifies that God is true, for God has also given witness through His Spirit that Jesus is His Son (v. 33). Since Christ is God's envoy who has received the Spirit without limitations, His words are the Word of God (v. 34). In the Old Testament, prophets could speak the Word of God when they were endowed with the Spirit of prophecy. Since the Spirit came to abide with Jesus, all His words were through the Spirit. To accept the testimony of Christ means to certify the truth of God.

A father would not likely commit his possessions and affairs into the hands of a disobedient and wayward son, but he would to a son who was obedient and beloved by the father. The heavenly Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hands (v. 35). The Son has complete authority to act in the Father's name. Believing the Son's word that His coming was the supreme revelation of God's love and salvation brings eternal life. The one who rejects the Son and disobeys His words is rejecting God and rebelling against the Word of God; therefore, he stands condemned under the wrath of God (v. 36).

Christ's increase was due to His being the _____ of God and supreme _____ of life.

(Son, Ruler)

Home Study Exercise

Basic activity (Levels 1, 2, and 3). After reading the study guide text, answer the following questions.

1. List six titles used by John to identify Jesus. _____

2. Why did the representatives from the Jews ask John whether he was Elijah or the prophet?

3. How did John describe himself? _____

4. What was the purpose of John's baptism? _____

5. Why did John identify Jesus as the Lamb of God? _____

6. What event enabled John to identify Jesus as the Messiah? _____

7. Why does the Fourth Gospel place an emphasis on rabbi as the title for Jesus? _____

8. How are the concepts of Jesus as Suffering Servant and Messiah related in the Fourth Gospel? _____

9. Why did John not follow always the chronological order of the Synoptic Gospels? _____

10. Why did Nathanael question Philip's witness about Jesus and how did Philip answer? _____

11. What is the meaning of John 1:51? _____

12. How is sign used in John's Gospel? _____

13. Why did Jesus address Mary as woman instead of mother? _____

14. What truth was taught by the changing water into wine at the wedding feast? _____

15. What did the cleansing of the Temple show about Jesus? _____
16. Why were money-changers and sellers of animals found in the temple area? _____

17. What sign did Jesus say would be given to the Jews to show His authority? _____

18. To what did Jesus refer in speaking of His body as a temple? _____

19. What three things are known about Nicodemus? _____
20. Why must men be born from above in order to see the Kingdom of God? _____

21. What is meant by being born of water? _____
22. Why did Jesus use the wind to explain being born of the Spirit? _____

23. What qualified Jesus to reveal the Father? _____

24. Give the reason and purpose of God's gift of Christ on the cross. _____

25. According to the prophets, what would happen in the Day of the Lord, and what did Jesus' coming signify? _____

26. What is the primary emphasis of 3:22-36? _____

Supplementary activity (Levels 2 and 3). Read pages 33-49 in Filson and answer the following questions.

1. Summarize the witness John the Baptist bore to Jesus.
2. Describe the change in Nathanael's attitude toward Jesus after meeting Him.
3. What conditions in the Temple caused Jesus to react with indignation?
4. According to 3:31-36, what are Christ's origin, witness, and work?

Alternate supplementary activity (Levels 2 and 3). Read pages 49-74 in Tasker and answer the following questions.

1. Briefly outline the events during the first five days of Jesus' week of witness and revelation.
2. What significance does Tasker give to the cleansing of the Temple?
3. What does the author interpret to be required of those who are born again?
4. What is Tasker's view of the purpose of baptism?

Advanced activity (Level 3)

Prepare your own outline of John 1:19-3:36.

Seminar Discussion

1. What was the purpose of John the Baptist's work?
2. What is the significance of identifying Jesus as "the Lamb of God"?
3. Explain the symbolic meaning of the first miracle.
4. How was Jesus' authority revealed in the cleansing of the Temple?
5. Explain John 3:3, 5.
6. How did Jesus' coming relate to the Day of the Lord?