**Monday Evening Bible Study**

**January 9, 2023**

**John 1:29-42**

**Immediate Context**

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| John 1:1-18 The Word Became Flesh | John 3:1-21 Nicodemus Visits Jesus |
| John 1:19-28 The Testimony of John the Baptist | John 3:22-30 Jesus and John the Baptist |
| **John 1:29-34 The Lamb of God** | John 3:31-36 The One Who Comes from Heaven |
| **John 1:35-42 The First Disciples of Jesus** | John 4:1-42 Jesus and the Woman of Samaria |
| John 1:43-51 Jesus Calls Philip and Nathanael | John 4:43-45 Jesus Returns to Galilee |
| John 2:1-12 The Wedding at Cana | John 4:46-54 Jesus Heals an Official’s Son |
| John 2:13-25 Jesus Cleanses the Temple | John 5:1-18 Jesus Heals on the Sabbath |

**Helpful Background Scriptures**

**Genesis 22:1-19** – Abraham and Isaac – “Where is the lamb for the burnt offering?”

**Exodus 12** – The First Passover

**Isaiah 53** – The Suffering Servant

**1 Peter 1:17-21** – “with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without defect or blemish”

**Revelation 5** – The Scroll and the Lamb

**Revelation 19:1-10** – The Marriage of the Lamb

**Revelation 21** – The New Jerusalem

**Key Words/Phrases**

**Lamb of God – ἀμνὸς –** The title with which John the Baptist twice greets Jesus at the beginning of the Gospel of John (1:29, 35). In Revelation, the lamb also appears a number of times as a symbol for Christ, although a different Greek word is used in Revelation (*arnion*) than is found in John’s Gospel (*amnos*). In Revelation, the lamb is specifically referred to as the “Lamb that was slaughtered,” invoking sacrificial imagery and implying that Christ’s death provided atonement for sin (5:6–14). This is probably the idea behind the phrase “Lamb of God” in John’s Gospel as well (cf. 1 John 1:7). It seems likely that the “suffering servant” of Isa. 53, who is likened to “a lamb that is led to slaughter,” has influenced this description of Jesus (cf. 1 Pet. 1:18–19). Notably, in the Gospel of John, Jesus dies on the afternoon before the Festival of Passover begins, at the hour when the Passover lambs were slain.

**Sin – ἁμαρτίαν –** that which is in opposition to God’s benevolent purposes for creation. The Hebrew Bible uses a number of terms associated with the concept of sin, but four are especially prominent. *Khata’* has a basic sense of missing the mark or failing to achieve one’s intention; e.g., Prov. 19:2 says that “one who moves too hurriedly misses [*khata’*] the way.” But the term takes on an ethical component when divine expectations for humanity are involved; a person who utters a rash oath and later realizes it must “confess the sin [*khata’*]” that he or she has committed (Lev. 5:5). ‘*Awon* carries the connotation of something that incurs guilt, such as a crime (cf. Deut. 19:15, “a single witness shall not suffice to convict a person of any crime [‘*awon*].” It is often used in the Bible with reference to disobedience to God’s commandments. The NRSV often translates this word “iniquity,” as in Exod. 20:5, which indicates that God punishes children for the “iniquities” (‘*awon*) of their parents. The word is used in parallel with *khata’* in Isaiah’s Servant Song: the servant will “make many righteous” and “bear their iniquities [‘*awon*]” (53:11); he will be “numbered with the transgressors,” though he “bore the sin [*khata’*] of many” (53:12). This demonstrates that the terms, despite some difference in connotation, can be used as virtual synonyms. *Pesha*‘ conveys the sense of deliberate and rebellious action. The NRSV often translates the word “transgression,” as when the psalmist prays, “O God, according to your steadfast love … blot out my transgressions” (Ps. 51:1). This word is frequently used in parallel with the other two (e.g. Gen. 31:36; Pss. 32:5; 51:3; Amos 1:3; Mic. 6:7). Ezek. 21:24 manages to use all three terms: “You have brought your guilt [‘*awon*] to remembrance … your transgressions [*pesha*‘] are uncovered … your sins [*khata’*] appear.” The primary Greek word for sin, employed throughout the NT and in the LXX is *hamartia*, which has a wide range of meaning (failing, disobedience, rebellion) and can be used to translate any of the three Hebrew terms cited.

**World – κόσμος –** The NT employs two Greek words for world, *kosmos* (transliterated into English as “cosmos”), which generally refers to the physical world, and *oikoumenē*, which generally refers to the inhabited world, or the “people of the world.” This distinction does not always bear out, however, and the words can be used as synonyms. A third term, *aiōn* (“eon” or “age”), has temporal connotations and is used in some English Bibles in such phrases as “the world to come.” In the Gospel of John, the world is the object of God’s salvation in Christ (3:16; 12:47). It is God’s creation through Christ (1:3, 10). Yet the world apart from Christ stands under judgment (16:8–11), hating Jesus’s followers, who have been separated from the world and are not of the world (17:16). The dualism between God, Christ, and the disciples, on the one hand, and the world, on the other, is described in terms of a sharp antinomy. Disciples are urged to have nothing to do with the world, especially to not love it (cf. 1 John 2:15–17). At the same time, Jesus does not pray for disciples to be taken out of the world (John 17:15).

**Holy Spirit – ἅγιος πνεῦμα** – the mysterious power or presence of God that operates within individuals and communities, inspiring or empowering them with qualities they would not otherwise possess. The term “spirit” translates Hebrew *ruakh* and Greek pneuma, words denoting “wind,” “breath,” and, by extension, a life-giving element. With the adjective “holy,” the reference is to the divine spirit, i.e., the Spirit of God.

**Son of God –** a person with a special relationship to God, often with a special role in salvation history. In pre-Christian Judaism there are three notable uses of the term “son of God.” First, it is predicated of Israel as a collective role for the nation as a whole. God says to Pharaoh, “Israel is my firstborn son” (Exod. 4:22; cf. Hos. 11:1). Second, it is a title given to the monarch at the time of enthronement (e.g., Ps. 2:7, a coronation psalm). Third, in Wisdom of Solomon, the term is used to mean “a righteous person” (2:18; NRSV: “child”). It is a matter of dispute whether the term “son of God” was already current in pre-Christian Judaism as a messianic title, as Mark 14:16 would seem to suggest. Yet in view of the discovery of Ps. 2:7 with a messianic interpretation in the Dead Sea Scrolls (4QFlor 10–14) it is probably safe to conclude that it was at least beginning to be used in this sense prior to the time of Christian origins. The singular expression “Son of God” takes on new meaning in the NT, where it is applied as a principal title for Jesus Christ, identifying his status and authority based on a unique relationship with God. The Synoptic Gospels all indicate that, when Jesus was baptized, God spoke from heaven, identifying Jesus as “my Son” (Matt. 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22); this affirmation is repeated later at his transfiguration (Matt. 17:5; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:35).

In the Gospel of John, John the Baptist (1:34), Nathanael (1:49), and Martha (11:27) all identify Jesus as the Son of God, and Jesus refers to himself as the Son of God several times (e.g., 3:18; 5:25; 11:4)—something he does not do in the Synoptic Gospels. The explicit reason that his opponents give for wanting him put to death is that “he claimed to be the Son of God” (19:27). In a concluding passage, the author of John’s Gospel says that the book has been written so that readers “may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that, through believing … have life in his name” (20:31). John’s Gospel also presents Jesus as referring to himself as “the Son” and to God as “the Father” or as “my Father” who has sent him into the world. For example, “God so loved the world that (God) gave (God’s) only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life” (3:16).

**Disciples – μαθητής –** Greek word for “learner,” an apprentice or pupil attached to a teacher or movement; one who allegiance is to the instruction and commitment of the teacher or movement. Isaiah called his followers disciples (8:16). Most NT references to “disciple” designate followers of Jesus, including both his closest associates (the twelve) and a larger number who also followed him (Luke 6:17); eventually, the term “disciples” was used as a virtual synonym for “Christians” (Acts 6:1). Other people, however, are also said to have had disciples, e.g., John the Baptist (Luke 11:1; John 1:35) and the Pharisees (Matt. 22:16; Mark 2:18). In John 9:28, some Pharisees claim, “We are disciples of Moses.”

**Rabbi – ῥαββί –** In Hebrew, the word Rabbi means “My great one,” a title that took on a general meaning of respect, “my master,” or a specific meaning, “my teacher.” In Greek the word is transliterated into Greek letters. It is used only in the gospels of Matthew, Mark and John and the only person addressed as rabbi is Jesus. Matthew’s gospel, however, seems to offer a distinctive take on the world. In Matthew, Jesus criticizes the scribes and Pharisees as people who like to have people call them “rabbi” (23:7), and then he tells his disciples that they are not to be called rabbi, because they have one teacher (Gk. *Didaskalos*) and they are all siblings (23:8; Gk. *Adelphoi*; NRSV: “students”). In Matthew, the only disciple to call Jesus “Rabbi” is Judas (26:25, 49); the other disciples address him as “Lord” (Gk. *Kyrie*; 8:21, 25; 14:28, 30; 18:21).

**Cephas** – **Κηφᾶς** – From the word for *rock* in Aramaic (*kepha*) and Greek (*petra*), respectively. Peter – Πέτρος. This kind of name change has precedents in the Old Testament. God told Abram, “Neither will your name any more be called Abram, but your name will be Abraham; for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations” (Genesis 17:5). God told Jacob, “Your name will no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have fought with God and with men, and have prevailed” (Genesis 32:28). Such name changes indicate the beginning of a new life—a new purpose—a new relationship with God.

**Messiah – Μεσσίας –** from Heb. *mashiakh*, “anointed one”), an anointed agent of God appointed to a task affecting the lot of God’s elect. The claim that Jesus was the Messiah (whether Jesus’s self-claim or that of his followers) would have implied for most Jewish people of the day that he was the one anointed by God to restore the fortunes of Israel, delivering God’s people from their oppressors (cf. Luke 24:21; Acts 1:6). Or, in an eschatological vein, he might have been expected to execute the final judgment and usher in a messianic age of peace and prosperity (cf. Matt. 3:7–12).

**Anointed – Χριστός –** The Greek term *christos* (“Christ”) was used in the LXX to translate Heb. *mashiakh* (“Messiah”; cf. John 1:41). In the earliest writings of the NT it has already become the virtual surname of Jesus: he is called Jesus Christ (Gk. *iēsous christos*, 1 Thess. 1:1, 3; 5:9; Gal. 1:1; 1 Cor. 1:1). Paul sometimes inverts the names as Christ Jesus (*christos iēsous*, 1 Thess. 2:14; 5:18), possibly because he perceived Christ (Messiah) as a title rather than a name. In this one verse we find both the Hebrew *Messias* and the Greek *Christos*, both of which mean “anointed.” This and 4:25 are the only two places where the word *Messias* is found in the New Testament, and both of these verses also include the word *Christos*. Anointing with oil was used for various purposes (healing, burial, expressing grief or joy). Most especially, it was used to designate a person for a significant role. In the Old Testament, prophets were anointed (1 Kings 19:16). Priests were anointed (Exodus 40:13-15). Kings were anointed (1 Samuel 10:1; 16:3, 12-13; 2 Samuel 23:1; 1 Kings 1:39). The New Testament speaks of Jesus as anointed (John 20:31; Acts 5:42; Hebrews 1:9, etc.). His anointing set him apart for his unique role as prophet, priest, and king.

**Staying** – **μένω** – This Greek verb, *meno*, which is repeated three times in verses 38-39, has special meaning in this Gospel. Jesus says, “He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives (*menei*) in me, and I in him” (John 6:56)—and “Remain (*meinate*) in me, and I in you. Just as the branch can’t bear fruit by itself unless it remains (*mene*) in the vine, so neither can you unless you remain (*menete*) in me” (John 15:4)—and “As the Father has loved me, I also have loved you. Remain (*meinate*) in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will remain (*meneite*) in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments and remain (*meno*) in his love” (John 15:9-10). Abiding (staying with, remaining with) Jesus, then, clearly has deeply spiritual significance.