

# The Christian Arsenal

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## JOHN 1:19-51

Last week, we saw as the Apostle John gave us the profound truth of the **deity of the Lord Jesus Christ**. And we saw how very important this truth is to the Christian faith.

John introduced us to **John the Baptist** last week. John told us that John the Baptist was sent from God *to bear witness of the light*. And in today's lesson we're going to see more of this man.

John the Baptist had been preaching to multitudes of folks and he had told all of them that someone was coming after him and this someone had a higher rank than he did. John the Baptist told of the grace and truth these folks had received from God.

We saw all that and more last week. Let's see what else the Apostle John tells us about John the Baptist in today's lesson.

### **Verses 19-24...**

Now, we see here that a delegation was sent to find out who this man was and what he was up to...

Who came? **Priests and Levites**. Who sent them? **The Pharisees** (we see that in **verse 24**).

We need to understand what these folks were doing. Here is a man gathering a large following by preaching and baptizing and telling the people that someone was coming who would be *light* and *take away sin* and these folks couldn't stand it.

The bottom line is that **they** were the "religious experts" of the day. If anyone was to speak in the name of God, **they** were the ones to do it. They simply could not stand for anyone to be encroaching on their territory!

We need to remember that although they were religious experts, God wasn't using them. God was not speaking through these people.

In fact, God had been silent for 400 years. We have no record of God speaking to man from the time that Malachi laid down his pen until the time the angel appeared to a priest named Zacharias to announce the coming of a baby to his household.

But God broke His silence when He sent the angel to announce the coming birth of John the Baptist,

- and when He sent Gabriel to announce the coming birth of the Lord Jesus,

- and God broke His silence by calling the first prophet in 400 years...the first prophet since Malachi and he came making a way for the Lord Jesus Christ!

Israel had **plenty** of religious experts. Israel had the Pharisees and the Sadducees and the Levites and the scribe and the priests. What Israel did not need was another priest or religious expert...what Israel needed was a prophet!

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These priests and Levites asked John the Baptist a series of questions...

**Verse 19...** "Who are you?"

John the Baptist very quickly told them "*I am **not** the Christ.*"

John the Baptist never claimed to be more than he was. He knew what God had called him to do and it was to point folks to the Christ.

Then they asked him, "Are you Elijah?"

The religious experts knew that Malachi had said that Elijah must come before the Messiah.

But John the Baptist said, "*No, I'm not Elijah, either.*" However, we know from the book of **Luke** that John the Baptist came in the spirit and power of Elijah.

Then these religious experts asked John the Baptist if he was "**the** Prophet."

They knew that Moses had promised God's children that one day **the** prophet would come from their own people, and they wondered if John the Baptist was he.

John the Baptist was **a** prophet, but he was not **the** Prophet of whom Moses had spoken.

John the Baptist finally told them,

"I am a voice of one crying in the wilderness 'make straight the way of the Lord...'"

You know, you can't see a voice...you can only hear it. John the Baptist didn't want to be seen, he just wanted folks to hear him point them to Jesus!

Back before real roads were ever built, folks traveled on foot across paths that had been beaten down across fields. But when word came that the king would be visiting a particular area, a highway would be built for the king to travel on...

**And that's what John the Baptist was doing. He was building a road for the King to travel on...**

I want to ask you...

- when we read our Bibles and pray...when we have our "quiet time"...

**have we first cleared a way for the Lord in the wilderness of our hearts?**

- when we come to church to worship...

**have we first made the desert of our dry spirits ready for God to meet with us?**

If God seems distant in our lives, maybe **it's because we need to do some road work...**

maybe there is **sin to be confessed...**

maybe there is **repentance that must take place...**

maybe there is **fellowship to be restored.**

God sent John the Baptist to prepare the hearts of the people to meet the Messiah. And I believe our hearts need to be prepared to meet with God. I'm afraid that many times we get "gospel-hardened" and we get too familiar with spiritual things.

There are folks who just love good preaching and good teaching and good singing. I mean, they can just come to church and be fed.

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And there's nothing wrong with that. I believe our church has Sunday School to ground folks in the Word of God. Then, we go into the sanctuary we hear the pastor teach us again and also explain the Gospel for the lost folks who may be among us. We're so blessed to have a pastor who not only explains the Gospel, but also expounds the Scriptures.

**But, when we come to church, the primary reason we have come is to worship...to just acknowledge the worthiness of an Almighty God to be praised and loved and adored by His children.**

**And I believe sometimes this is lost in our determination to be blessed ourselves...by preaching and teaching and singing. I said all that to say that we need to do some road work before we come to church. We need our hearts prepared to worship the Lamb of God!**

## **Verses 25-28...**

These folks not only questioned who John the Baptist was but they also questioned what he was doing. Really, they were questioning his **authority** to baptize, weren't they?

They were questioning why he baptized. If he's not the Messiah and he's not Elijah and he's not the Prophet...then why in the world was he baptizing?

We tend to think of baptism as a church ordinance only...and of course it **is** a church ordinance. But folks way back **then** were baptizing. If a Gentile wanted to become a follower of the Jewish faith, that Gentile must be baptized. All his family was baptized and all the males in the family were circumcised.

**Gentile baptism was done to wash away the defilement of being a Gentile.**

And the thing these religious leaders were so mad about was the fact that John the Baptist was not limiting his baptism to Gentiles...he was also baptizing Jews! Hey! **They** weren't defiled! **They** were the chosen people of God!

Now, if John the Baptist were the Messiah or someone closely associated with the Messiah, they might have seen some justification for his doing this. I mean, who could tell the Messiah what to do? But John the Baptist had firmly denied he was any of these folks, hadn't he?

And again, we see John the Baptist shift the attention **away** from himself **to** the Lord Jesus Christ. "I baptize in water, but among you stands  
stands One whom you don't even know..."

They didn't know Jesus **then**, and the sad thing is most of them would **never** know Him!

By the way, twenty years after Jesus' resurrection, Paul found about twelve disciples of John the Baptist at Ephesus. And even now, there's a sect of folks in Iraq, south of Baghdad, who, although hostile to Jesus, still claim an ancestral link to John the Baptist.

**This is exactly what John did not want to happen. He came pointing folks to Jesus!**

## **Verse 27...**

As rough and as straightforward as John the Baptist was, he was truly a man of humility. He had spent his life proclaiming the message of the Messiah, yet he said, *"I'm not worthy to untie His sandals."*

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The roads and paths were dry and dusty and when a person came into a home their sandals were taken off and his feet were washed by the servants or slaves of the home.

And John the Baptist said he was not even worthy to be a slave or to do a slave's task where the Lord Jesus was concerned.

How many preachers and messengers of God's Word start out in humility, but they end up filled with pride in themselves? This did not happen to John the Baptist. He never lost sight of his calling. Later we'll see him say, "He must increase, and I decrease."

## **Verses 29-34...**

"Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world."

What could have been **more meaningful** to the Jewish nation? Ever since Moses, the people had lived under the sacrificial system...they had offered one sacrifice after another...for their sins.

But, here was the Lamb of God...

- **their** lambs only took away the sin of Israel...**this** Lamb would take away the sin of the **world!**
- **their** lambs must be sacrificed year after year after year... **this** Lamb would be sacrificed only **once!**

At this time...

Notice that John the Baptist didn't present Jesus as the Son of God,  
nor as the Christ of God  
nor as the Holy One of God  
nor as the Word of God...

John the Baptist went right to the heart of **Israel's** need...and **our** need...the **Lamb of God** who takes away the sin of the world!

When John the Baptist baptized his followers, it was a baptism of **repentance**...but they needed **more** than repentance...they needed **redemption!**

No amount of water could remove the stain of sin...

No amount of animal's blood could remove the stain of sin...

**"Oh precious is the flow that washes white as snow...  
No other fount I know, nothing but the blood of Jesus."**

John the Baptist proclaims the deity of Jesus Christ in **verse 30...**

This is the second time in this one chapter that we hear him saying, **"He existed before me."**

You see, John the Baptist had quite a following. He wanted his disciples to know, as well as others who were there, to know and to understand that this Lamb of God had pre-eminence over himself and pre-existed himself. The ministry of John the Baptist was **never** self-serving!

**Verses 31-34** gives us a picture of the baptism of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And God had to reveal to John the Baptist just who Jesus was, didn't He?

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Had they met before this day? We know that John the Baptist leaped in his mother's womb when Mary came to tell Elizabeth that she was pregnant.

Had they played together as children? Maybe they had...maybe they hadn't. John the Baptist more than likely grew up where he was born, in the hill country of Judah. And Jesus was raised in Nazareth.

Perhaps they had met as children, but not as adults.

**The point is simply this...John the Baptist needed divine revelation from God...he needed the Holy Spirit to assure him that this was indeed the One he had been sent to proclaim.**

God made it very clear to Him...The Apostle John doesn't tell us the entire story of what happened that day. Let's go to the **Gospel of Matthew** to see it...**Matthew 3:13-17...**

Let me ask you...**why did Jesus request baptism?** John the Baptist baptized for repentance. Jesus needed no repentance.

Some say identification with humanity.

Some say to set Him aside as Priest.

Some say because it was symbolic of death, burial and resurrection.

Some say it was an example for us to follow.

**I believe it's probably all of the above.**

The Holy Spirit's descending like a dove here is significant. In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit came upon men for specific purposes. At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came to the hearts of believers and He came to remain! **He came to abide!** Just as He did that day when Jesus was baptized!

What would we do without the Holy Spirit's guidance, direction, conviction and enlightening?

**Verse 34...**Praise God, we have, too!!!

Well, in the rest of this chapter, we see the ministry of John the Baptist begin to give way to the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. Although the Lord doesn't begin preaching until a little later, He begins teaching in today's lesson.

**Verses 35-39...**

Here we see the first mention of disciples of John the Baptist following Jesus. Who are these two men? We know that one of them is Andrew (**v. 40**), but the other one is thought to be John. Aside from the book of **Revelation**, John didn't mention himself by name in any of his writings.

Think about this...It's not easy in this life to gather followers around oneself in a good cause. But once they have been gathered, how many leaders or preachers do you know who could say to his followers, "I have taken you as far as I can. Leave me and follow Him." But this is exactly what John the Baptist did!

**Verse 37...** "they followed Jesus"

**Verse 38...** Jesus asked a very searching question... "What do you seek?"

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This was the same sort of question God asked in the Garden of Eden when He inquired as to the whereabouts of Adam and Eve. God knew exactly where they were...He wanted **them** to be aware of where they were.

And here Jesus knew **exactly** what John and Andrew were seeking...He wanted **them** to be aware of what they were seeking.

I believe we should be asked the same question...

**“What do you seek?”**

When we open God’s Word, are we searching for knowledge of the Scriptures alone? Or are we seeking truths from His Word that will change our lives?

When we come to God’s house to worship, are we coming only for the wonderful **fellowship** and great **singing** and **preaching**, or are we coming to get a Word from the Lord and to **praise** Him and to **adore** Him? **What do we seek?**

**Verses 40-42...**

The very first thing Andrew did upon following Jesus was to bring someone else to Jesus!

And look who he brought! PETER!!

Jesus looked at this man and saw beyond what the man standing before Him was on that day. In fact **“looked”** in the Greek describes

***“a special, concentrated, penetrating gaze that would pierce into the soul of a person”***

Then Jesus said, “Simon, you’re the son of John, but from now on you’ll be called Peter.”

Jesus didn’t see a perfect man when He gazed into Peter’s soul, but He saw a heart that would one day be **strong** for the cause of Jesus Christ!

Certainly Jesus knew Peter’s weaknesses and shortcomings.

Certainly Jesus knew that Peter would fail...but He also knew what would happen **after** the failure.

Aren’t you glad Jesus uses failures? We saw that in the life of David, didn’t we? When I think of how many times I have failed my Lord...

The times I **haven’t** done those things I should have done...

The times I **have** done those things I should not have done...

The times I’ve failed to give Him first place in my life...

The times I’ve failed to share Him with others...

And yet, He still loves me!

You know, we come to Jesus as the old invitational hymn says, “Just As I Am”...we don’t have to good enough in order to come to Jesus...

We come just as we are, but the good news is that we don’t stay that way... ***“old things are passed away, behold all things become new...”***

This doesn’t mean we’ll never sin again...but it does mean that when we sin the Holy Spirit convicts us...the Holy Spirit breaks us...

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Peter sinned against the Lord...but he didn't stay in that sin. Jesus forgave him and used him mightily for His kingdom.

I'm so glad God uses broken pots that He has mended!!

We're going to learn so much from the life of Peter in this study of **John**...not only how Jesus **called** him but how he **taught** him and how He **forgave** him and how He **used** him.

## **Verses 43-48...**

**"Jesus purposed to go to Galilee..."** and He found Philip and Philip followed Jesus and then the next thing we see is Philip finding Nathanael and telling him that they had found **"the One prophesied by Moses and the Prophets."**

We're not told how Philip knew this...maybe he accompanied Jesus to Galilee and as they walked Jesus taught him all these things. **Jesus always teaches us when we walk with Him!**

Nathanael didn't think much of Nazareth, did he? Nazareth was a small town. It lacked sophistication and culture. Maybe Nathanael thought that surely the Messiah would come from Jerusalem, the most important city in Israel.

Jesus knew Nathanael's thoughts and when He saw Nathanael coming toward Him, He said, **"Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile."**

The word for "guile" here has the same meaning that the word Jacob has. It means deceit...Jacob was a conniver, a cheat, a deceiver before he met Jesus.

Jesus was using a play on words...

"Behold an Israelite in whom there is no Jacob."

It's a humbling thing to me that Jesus knows all about us...

- He sees beyond the image that we display for others...
- He knows the times we're smiling on the surface, but we're not smiling on the inside...
- He knows our thoughts, our attitudes, even the very intents of our heart...

## **All things are open and laid bare to the eyes of the Lord Jesus!**

Here was a man just sitting and relaxing under a fig tree and Jesus came along and changed his life.

And we also see in this passage that Nathanael confessed Jesus as

- Rabbi - "Teacher"
- Son of God - "Deity"
- King of Israel - "Sovereign"

## **Verses 50-51...**

We've all known about Jacob's ladder since we were little children learning to sing the little song, "We Are Climbing Jacob's Ladder". But, we need to remember what happened.

Jacob had left home because of he was afraid. Jacob had connived and gotten his brother's birthright and then he had deceived his own father and gotten his brother's blessing. But, God had put His hand on Jacob a long, long time before and He had a plan for Jacob's life.

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So, while Jacob was on his journey he had a dream...all this is found in **Genesis 28**, by the way...and in the dream God assured him that He would be with him, that He would one day give the land of Canaan to him and to his descendants. **God was actually renewing and reaffirming the Abrahamic Covenant with Jacob.**

**What Jacob had sought through deceit and conniving, God was going to give him all along!**

**And in that dream, Jacob saw a great ladder on the earth and its top reached into heaven...and the angels were ascending and descending upon it.**

When Jacob awoke from his dream, he was aware of the fact that God would be with him...  
and that God would keep him and protect him...  
and that God would one day bring him back home...

Now, I know you've sat here and listened to a long lesson, but I don't want us to miss a couple of important and encouraging truths here in **verse 51**.

The first thing I want us to see is this: Jesus told Nathanel, "I am that ladder." God was showing Jacob and Nathanael and us, as well, that we must climb God's ladder in order to get to heaven.

***"No man cometh to the Father, but by Me."***

And very quickly I want to point out to you that these angels were **ascending** and **descending**...not the other way around. I believe this teaches that there are angels on earth, in enemy territory, so to speak.

The Bible teaches us that there are angels who watch over children (**Mt. 18:10**), there are angels who watch over believers (**Heb. 1:14**), and there are angels who watch over churches (**Rev. 2 & 3**). The book of **Daniel** also tells us there are angels over the nations.

I believe we'd be **astounded** if God would allow us to see the angels all around us – right here, right now!

**Well, let's close our lesson today by saying this. We've seen the Lord Jesus begin to call those who will be taught by Him for the next 3½ years. Along the way, He called seven more.**

These men would grow in their faith and John is going to tell us a lot about that. They would learn by the Lord's preaching and teaching and the example of His life. They would be ready after Pentecost to carry His message to the uttermost parts of the earth!

By the way – I'm so grateful that the relationship we have with Jesus when we first come to Him is not all there is!!

Just as these men would grow in **their** faith, we must grow in **our** faith as well.  
**Some things we can learn in an afternoon...**  
**Some things we can learn over a period of days...**  
**Some things we can learn over a period of years...**  
**Some things however, take the rest of our lives!**

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We can never, ever plumb the depths of the Word of God, nor can we ever draw upon all the promises of our Lord, but we must never stop learning! We will learn from Him for the rest of our lives...

How to walk by faith and not by sight.

How to trust in His Word.

How to commit to witness for Him as Philip was willing to do.

My prayer is that all of us in this room are believers in the Lord Jesus. I really don't believe you'd go to the trouble of getting up and coming at 8:15 if you weren't...but I never take that for granted. I'm asking the Lord to do a work in all of our lives as we study the ***Gospel of John***.

**But, it's not going to happen by osmosis. You must get into this book on your own. And I hope you'll do that.**