

Disciples Begin to Follow Jesus

John 1:35-42

John 1:35-42 - *“Again, the next day, John stood with two of his disciples.³⁶ And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, “Behold the Lamb of God!”*

³⁷ The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.³⁸ Then Jesus turned, and seeing them following, said to them, “What do you seek?” They said to Him, “Rabbi” (which is to say, when translated, Teacher), “where are You staying?”³⁹ He said to them, “Come and see.” They came and saw where He was staying, and remained with Him that day (it was about the tenth hour).

⁴⁰ One of the two who heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother.⁴¹ He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which is translated, the Christ).⁴² And he brought him to Jesus.

Now when Jesus looked at him, He said, “You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas” (which is translated, A Stone).”

Background Notes

The phrase, *“which is translated”* occurs three times in these verses. Verse 38, *“They said to Him, “Rabbi” (which is to say, when translated, Teacher), “where are You staying?”* Verses 41-42, *“He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which is translated, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus. Now when Jesus looked at him, He said, “You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas” (which is translated, A Stone).”*

The phrase *“which is translated”* indicates that John was writing to a wide audience, not just to Jewish people. After all, John wouldn’t have had to tell a Jew that Rabbi means teacher, or that Messiah means the Christ! The name Cephas (v42) is the Aramaic equivalent of Petras (Peter) in Greek, which means a rock or a stone.

So John, who wrote his Gospel in Greek, was thinking of a much wider audience than just Greek-speaking Jews of the 1st century. John’s purpose for writing his Gospel is found in John 20:31: *“But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.”* The “you” in this verse is not just referring to Jewish people, but to everyone who would read this Gospel - and that includes you and me! Have you come to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and believing in Him you have life in His name?

Verse 39 says that *“it was about the tenth hour”* - probably about four o’clock in the afternoon, according to the Jewish reckoning of time. I wonder how late in the evening these two disciples stayed there, talking with the Lord?

Who were those two disciples, who changed from being disciples of John the Baptist to become disciples of Jesus? Verse 40 tells us that one of them was Andrew. Who was the other disciple? Most likely it was John himself, the author of this Gospel. John never names himself throughout his Gospel, and the fact that John was able to write all of the details connected with this event is a good indication that he was the other disciple.

Doctrinal / Teaching Points

1. Jesus was God's Lamb.

Look again at verse 36: *“And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, “Behold the Lamb of God!”* We have already learned that the main idea in this phrase “Lamb of God” is **sacrifice**, but now another question: Is the use of the phrase “Lamb of God” meant to convey the idea that “the Lamb is God”? Or is it the idea that “the Lamb belongs to God” - the Lamb is “God’s Lamb”?

We might assume that it is probably the former idea because we know that Jesus **is** God. That is clearly taught in this chapter, as we have seen. However, the thought in view here is probably the latter idea - that is, in the phrase “Lamb of God” the primary thought that Jesus Christ is “God’s Lamb.”

In the Old Testament individuals brought their own lambs for sacrifice. When Abel brought a lamb to the place of sacrifice, it was Abel’s lamb. When Abraham brought a lamb to the place of sacrifice, it was Abraham’s lamb. When a family sacrificed a lamb at Passover, it was the family’s lamb. But when the sin of the world was being taken away, **God brought His Lamb to the place of sacrifice** -not to atone for **His own** sin, because He had no sin - but to atone for the sin of the world. As John the Baptist said, *“Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”* **This was God’s Lamb.**

A further thought: many of the lambs that were brought to Jerusalem for sacrifice were born and raised in nearby Bethlehem. When Jews from around the Roman Empire came to Jerusalem to sacrifice, they didn’t bring their lambs from their far-away homes. Many of them would buy lambs that were raised in Bethlehem.

A very special Lamb was born in Bethlehem about 2,000 years ago. His name was Jesus. He was a perfect Lamb. He was *God’s Lamb*. When the fullness of time came, God brought His own Lamb to the place of sacrifice in Jerusalem. God’s Lamb died for the sin of the world. Jesus was God’s Lamb

2. Jesus is - and must be - *more* than just a friend.

When John the Baptist directed his two disciples to the Lord Jesus, he didn’t say, “Look, there’s Jesus! He’ll be a wonderful friend for you! Follow Him!” No, he said *“Behold! The Lamb of God!”* Jesus is, and must be, **more** than just a
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Friend. The Lord Jesus is a wonderful Friend, but He must be *more* than just a Friend. He went to the cross as God's Lamb to die for your sins and to die for my sins. He must be received in that way, as God's Lamb.

After I left employment as a research engineer, and before I went to seminary, I worked with the Young Life ministry for several years. Young Life is a Christian ministry with high school teens. In my early days with Young Life, my talks often centered around inviting Jesus in to your life as a Friend: "Hey, you have problems? Accept Jesus, He is the best Friend you could ever have. He'll help you with your problems." I didn't emphasize the fact that Jesus is the Lamb of God, the One who died for our sins.

One night I had a vivid dream in which I saw an escalator in mid-air, and going down the escalator were a large group of teens. They were all smiling, having fun, and partying. They didn't realize it, but they were dropping off the bottom end of the escalator. I could see what was happening, but they couldn't. They were dropping off into an abyss, the abyss of hell. I could hear the cries coming up from the abyss, and I was trying to get a message to them: "Stop! Get off before it is too late!" – but I couldn't communicate. And then in the dream, one of the girls got caught right at the end of the escalator, and she could see what was happening down below. As she was dangling there, she looked straight at me and said three words – "**Preach the Cross!**"

I woke up in a cold sweat, and I realized that God had sent me that dream. I have never forgotten it. From that moment on I presented the gospel in every talk that I gave to those Young Life teens. Jesus is not just the best Friend you can have - He is the **Lamb of God!** He went to the cross and died for your sins. You must trust in Him as your Savior to escape the judgment of hell.

This is true for each one of us. Jesus is and must be *more* than a Friend! He is the Lamb of God. He died for your sins. You must trust in Him in that way, as the Lamb of God!

Practical Application

1. Are we willing to lose, if the overall result is gain?

If we were talking about financial investments, I think we would all agree – we'd be willing to take a small loss this year if we knew for sure there would be an overall gain in the next few years. But suppose the Lord said to you, "I want you to step aside from the job you're doing for Me, and I want someone else to take your place. I want you to serve Me in a position that will be perceived by others as a 'lower' position. You don't understand why now, but it is for My glory." That would be very hard to do! But John the Baptist and the disciple Andrew were willing to do exactly that.

John the Baptist didn't get uptight when two of his own disciples left him and followed Jesus. Why not? Because the Lord Jesus was receiving glory! John lived what he preached. In reference to the Lord, John said, "*He must increase, and I must decrease.*"

Andrew brought his brother Peter to Jesus, but there's no indication that Andrew became jealous when Peter began to take a more prominent role. No sibling rivalry! Notice that Andrew is referred to as "*Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.*"

When John wrote this Gospel late in the 1st century, Andrew – the one who brought Peter to the Lord in the first place – was already known simply as "Peter's brother"! Both John the Baptist and Andrew were willing to step down personally for the glory of Jesus Christ.

Are we willing to "lose," if the overall result is gain? Suppose the Lord were to say to you or to me, "I want you to step aside - I want bring someone else into the role you're enjoying right now. In fact, I'm going to take you home to heaven, so you won't get in the way!" Would we be willing to submit? Are we willing to lose, if the overall result is gain?

2. Have we brought all our unsaved relatives to Christ?

Notice that I didn't say, "Get them saved!" No - I said, "Bring them to Christ." Although Andrew brought his brother Peter to Jesus, Peter still had to personally believe in and follow Jesus - but Andrew made the effort to bring him!

Have we introduced all our unsaved relatives to Christ? You might be thinking, "But they live too far away." Or maybe you don't even know some of them. But you can do two things to bring them to Christ. First, write to them. Even if you've never communicated with them before, you can send them something to read, or a DVD, or perhaps build an online relationship them. And second, we can all bring our unsaved relatives to the Lord in our prayers.

This past week one of my students asked me to pray for him. Mike had been asked to share at his cousin's funeral service. His cousin was a homosexual, and he had died of AIDS. The good news is that Mike had shared the gospel with his cousin before he died. Even though he didn't really want to go to see his cousin, Mike had made a definite effort to visit and share the gospel with him. And his cousin made a profession of faith! Mike was concerned about his unsaved cousin, and he made a diligent effort to introduce him to Jesus before he died.

Have we introduced all of our unsaved relatives to Christ?