

COMMENTARY ON JOHN

LESSON NUMBER 14

“ JOHN 1:35 *Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples;* ³⁶
And looking upon Jesus as He walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!
³⁷ *And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.*”

..... John 1:35-34)

BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD

INTRODUCTION

We are being exposed to the setting up of the Kingdom of which Daniel prophesied: *“And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever”* (Dan 2:44). These were the days of the kingdoms of which Daniel prophesied – kingdoms that would all be destroyed and swallowed up by the kingdom that started small, and has never ceased to grow. All other kingdoms only consisted of people who were alive in the flesh during their dominance. However, the Kingdom of which Daniel spoke increased its citizenry with each generation. In earthly kingdoms, when people die, they lose their citizenship in that kingdom. However, in the Kingdom of God death only means they move to another realm where there is only improvement, and opposition ceases (2 Cor 5:8; Heb 12:22-24).

Those familiar with the Prophets knew a different kind of Kingdom was coming. It would be one of continual increase, established with justice and judgment (Isa 9:7). It would be global, and would involve unquestionable dominion. Daniel saw a vision depicting the coming Messiah receiving this kingdom: *“I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed”* (Dan 7:14). There was not enough revealed about this coming Kingdom to form clear and concise thoughts concerning it. However, it was absolutely unique, and its dominance was unquestionable. This is the Kingdom John the Baptist preached (Matt 3:2). It is also the Kingdom Jesus preached (Matt 4:17; 10:17; Mk 1:15), and Philip (Acts 8:12), and Paul as well (Acts 20:25; 28:31). In the Gospels alone there are ninety references to *“the Kingdom,” “the Kingdom of God,”* and *“the Kingdom of heaven.”* Jesus said that beginning with John the Baptist, *“the kingdom of God is preached”* (Lk 16:26). We will now be exposed to the manner of that Kingdom – a manner that is unique, and separate from all Kingdom manners prior to it. It is imperative that we pick up on these unique and spiritually profitable manners, for they will assist us in identifying whether or not we are a part of that Kingdom.

THE NEXT DAY

“JOHN 1:35 *“Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples.”*”

AGAIN. The word *“again”* is translated from a word having the following meaning: “NEW, AGAIN; RENEWAL OR REPETITION OF THE ACTION 1B) AGAIN, ANEW.” ^{THAYER} This is not mere repetition, such as was common under the Law (Heb 9:10; 10:11). The function of the high priest, for example, was repetitive, as were all of the feasts and special days and years. But this is not the kind of thing that is meant by *“again”* in this text. The idea of newness is in it, separating it from routine or habit. What is reported in this text is not simply the repetition of what took place before.

For example, when the Lord Jesus is said to *“come again”* (John 14:3), it certainly is not a repeat of the first time He *“came into the world”* (1 Tim 1:15). In Christ Jesus we are not called into a routine way of living – although it may appear to some that this is what we are doing. There is the *“renewing of your mind”* (Rom 12:2), the *“inward man”* being *“renewed”* (2 Cor 4:16), being *“renewed in the spirit of your mind”* (Eph 4:23), the *“new man”* which is *“renewed in knowledge”* (Col 3:10), and the *“renewing of the Holy Spirit”* (Tit 3:5).

In true spiritual life there is no monotony because it is always characterized by newness, growth, advance, progression, reaching forward, and pressing. Thus we read of running the race (Heb 12:1-2), fighting the good fight (1 Tim 6:12), growing up (Eph 4:15), reaching forth (Phil 3:13), pressing toward the mark Phil 3:14, etc. These are concepts that were not in place under the Old Covenant, and certainly not before it. A careful examination of the lives of previous saints will confirm that spiritual advancement was exceedingly rare – unless there was some revelation granted to them. Even then, adapting to that revelation differed significantly from what we experience in Christ Jesus.

THE NEXT DAY. This is the second time we read of *“the next day”* (John 1:29,35). Commencing with John the Baptist we see a certain continuity that was not found in old time. John the Baptist’s ministry was not like that of Moses or Aaron – or even the Prophets. It is apparent from the text that he was ministering every day. His ministry was not seasonal or periodic. The same will be true of Jesus when He begins His ministry.

AND TWO OF HIS DISCIPLES. The word *“disciple”* in any form occurs a single time prior to Matthew – *“Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples”* (Isa 8:16). It occurs twice in the NIV (Isa 8:16; 19:11). The latter reference has to do with a proposed statement made to Pharaoh – *“a disciple of the ancient kings”* (Isa 19:11).

We do have the example of Elisha following Elijah (1 Kgs 19:20-21). Even in that case, God had told Elijah to *“anoint”* Elisha *“to be a prophet in thy room”* (1 Kgs 19:16). God told Moses that Joshua would lead Israel following his departure (Deut 31:14). Prior to that he was not a disciple of Moses as disciples are described after John the Baptist. There simply are not many examples of followers and students of great godly leaders prior to the appearance of John. Unlike Moses and the prophets John had *“disciples”* (Matt 9:14; 11:2; Mk 2:18; Lk 5:33; 7:18-19; 11:1; John 1:35; John 4:1).

Therefore, we are being introduced to a Kingdom manner that, to this very day, is not satisfactorily perceived by multitudes of professing *“Christians.”* As compared to the single time *“disciple”* in any form is found prior to Matthew, the words *“disciple”* and *“disciples”* occur two hundred and fifty-five times from Matthew through Acts. It occurs twenty-nine times in the book of Acts, whereas *“believers”* only occurs once (Acts 5:14). On one occasion certain Jews who did not believe on Jesus said they were *“Moses’ disciples”* (John 9:28).

The point is that those who enter the Kingdom of God are characterized as “*disciples*” – a word that means, “ONE WHO FOLLOWS ONE’S TEACHING,” ^{THAYER} “ONE WHO DIRECTS HIS MIND TO SOMETHING LEARNED; DISCIPLE, PUPIL,” ^{FRIBERG} AND “APPRENTICE.” ^{GINGRICH} In English, the word means “ONE WHO ACCEPTS AND ASSISTS IN SPREADING THE DOCTRINES OF ANOTHER.” ^{MERRIAM-WEBSTER} **Jesus is the Teacher, and His disciples are those who listen to Him, are led by Him, and join Him in His work as He directs.**

The commencement of men becoming disciples and gathering to John first, then to Jesus, is a commentary of sorts. It defines for us the kind of Kingdom over which Jesus is presiding. While He has the power to forcibly subdue every foe (which He will eventually do), that is not what He is doing now. He is rather orienting His followers, giving them an understanding of God Himself (1 John 5:20), and preparing them to “*take the Kingdom*” in the world to come (Dan 7:18,22,27). His “*disciples*” are being readied to be “*joint heirs*” with Him (Rom 8:17) – to “*reign with Him*” (2 Tim 2:12). Now, in this world, they have been commissioned to reign over their own bodies, bringing them into subjection (1 Cor 9:27). They have also been placed in His body by the Father Himself (1 Cor 12:18), and given a dispensation of grace that uniquely qualifies them to effectively minister to Christ’s own brethren – the sons of God. This kind of activity is not possible unless a person is one of Christ’s disciples – following Him, being taught by Him, and becoming a profitable part of His body. All of this is introduced in our text.

LOOKING UPON JESUS AS HE WALKED

³⁶ ***And looking upon Jesus as He walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!***

LOOKING UPON JESUS. Other versions read, “*He saw,*” ^{NIV} “*He watched,*” ^{NKJV} “*looked at,*” ^{RSV} “*seeing,*” ^{CJB} “*beholding,*” ^{DOUAY} “*beheld,*” ^{GENEVA} “*gazing at,*” ^{NET} and “*gazing intently.*” ^{MONTGOMERY} Lexically, the word translated “*looking upon*” means: “TO TURN ONE’S EYES ON; LOOK AT,” ^{THAYER} “AN ATTENTIVE LOOKING ON SOMEONE OR SOMETHING, FIX ONE’S GAZE (EARNESTLY) ON, LOOK AT ATTENTIVELY,” ^{FRIBERG} “TO DIRECT ONE’S VISION AND ATTENTION TO A PARTICULAR OBJECT – TO LOOK STRAIGHT AT, TO LOOK DIRECTLY AT,” ^{LOUW-NIDA} “TO LOOK IN THE FACE,” ^{LODELL-SCOTT} and “CONSIDER.” ^{GINGRICH}

This was not a casual or fleeting glance. It was a focused gaze in which John’s attention was focused on Jesus, and the awareness of other things paled. It is the kind of “*beholding*” in which believers are changed from glory unto glory by the Spirit of God (2 Cor 3:18). John was enthralled with the sight of Jesus. He beheld more in Him than the casual observer. When some people looked at Jesus they saw the person who lived in their community, whose brothers and sisters were there also (Matt 13:55). Other’s saw a “*carpenter*” (Mk 6:3). Some saw another Teacher (John 3:2). Some even saw a blasphemer (Matt 26:54).

Over the years I have become convinced that great masses of professing “Christians” have never really seen Jesus. They have given themselves to the acquisition of lesser knowledge, and have allowed other priorities to actually obscure the Son of God. No one can possibly see Jesus as He is until they **gaze** at Him, fix their attention on Him, and make knowing Him the priority of life – as Paul did (Phil 3:7-14). There is such a need to focus on Jesus Christ, and determine to know Him more fully.

AS HE WALKED. Prior to this, Jesus was seen walking toward John (John 1:29). This time He appeared to be walking by, going somewhere else. This is confirmed by the events that follow, which finds two of John’s disciples following Jesus to see where He was staying.

To me, this speaks of knowing what Jesus is doing, and where He is going, apart from my own person. I must not think of Jesus only in regards to myself, although that is important. What is He doing? If you spend enough time with Jesus, you will hear Him say

something like this: *"I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also: for therefore am I sent"* (Luke 4:43). The work of Jesus is exceedingly large, and it is to our advantage to become familiar with it. Some day He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob (Rom 11:26). Some day He will judge the world in righteousness (Acts 17:31). Some day He will return, and His reward will be with Him (Rev 22:12). Some day He will come and *"consume"* the wicked one *"with the spirit of His mouth"* and *"the brightness of His coming"* (2 Thess 2:8).

When Jesus walked among men He said things in the desert (Mark 8:1-4), on a mountain (John 6:3), by the sea side (Matt 13:1), saying and doing things in the Temple (Matt 21:14; Mk 12:35), preached in the synagogues (Matt 4:23), visiting Samaria (John 4:4,40-41), Tyre and Sidon (Matt 15:21), and Nazareth (Lk 4:16-20). There was *"a village of the Samaritans"* that *"did not receive Him, because His face was as though He would go to Jerusalem"* (Luke 9:53). They wanted Him all to themselves, while others followed Him wherever He went. Even so, there are still people who only have an interest in Jesus if He is focused on them. They do not follow Him, but want Him to follow them. *"Legion"* is their name!

BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD. This is now the second time that John has made this statement. This was intended to draw attention not only to the Person of Jesus, but to why He was in the world. Later, the apostles will draw attention to this cause. Paul wrote, *"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners"* (1 Tim 1:15). John wrote, *"For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil"* (1 John 3:8), *"that we might live through Him"* (1 John 4:9), and *"to take away our sins"* (1 John 3:5). Jesus Himself said, He came to *"bring a sword,"* making a distinction among the people (Matt 10:34), to *"call sinners to repentance"* (Mk 2:17), to *"do the will"* of the Father who sent Him (John 6:38), *"to save the world"* (John 12:47), and *"to bear witness unto the truth"* (John 18:37).

Earlier, John saw Jesus in the crowd and said, *"Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world"* (John 1:29). He was drawing the attention of the people to Him while He was among them. This time, however, Jesus was *"walking,"* going elsewhere. The first time John pointed out *"the Lamb of God,"* it was to make the people aware that He was in their presence. The second time it was to induce the people to follow Him.

It should be pointed out that becoming aware of Jesus, and then following Him, is directly related to the revealed reasons for Him coming into the world. The Lord Jesus will not be turned from these reasons. If, for example, a young man comes to Him saying, *"Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me"* (Luke 12:13). Jesus, refusing to be turned aside, replied, *"Man, who made Me a judge or an arbitrator over you?"* (Luke 12:14). Following Jesus will not yield profitable results unless it is directly related to **why** He came into the world. He will not arbitrate any of our grievances.

THEY FOLLOWED JESUS

"³⁷ And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus."

It must be remembered that multitudes of people came out to hear John the Baptist. It is written, *"Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins"* (Matt 3:5-6). And again, *"And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins"* (Mark 1:5). Yet, in

this next, there were not multitudes standing with John. It appears that most of the people, having come to John, confessing their sins, and being baptized, had gone their way. If this is true, they were like a lot of professing disciples of Christ today. Once their perceived need is met, they go on about their business, not adopting the Lord's agenda and living for Him.

THE TWO DISCIPLES. These are the disciples mentioned in the previous verse: *"Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples"* (John 1:35). Later one of these disciples was identified – *"Andrew,"* brother to Simon Peter (John 1:40). The other unnamed disciple is presumed to be John himself, who never refers to himself directly in this Gospel. The quality of these men is seen in the fact that Jesus called them both (Matt 4:18-22), and made them both apostles (Matt 10:2). Note that these two were interested in the prophet God sent to prepare the way for the Messiah. They will stay with John until they have an opportunity to follow Jesus, who selected the ones who could remain with Him and represent Him (Lk 6:13; 10:8). But it all began right here, where they made a deliberate decision to follow Jesus.

This is the manner of the Kingdom. Further exposure to the truth of God follows faithfulness to what we have already been given. This is owing to a certain condition to which the Lord Himself alluded: *"He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much"* (Luke 16:10). God will not ignore this revealed principle. He will not grant an abundance of truth on an emergency basis, so to speak. Spiritual growth and advance postulates the need for this arrangement. Neither are even possible within the context of unfaithfulness.

HEARD HIM SPEAK. Other versions read, *"heard him say this,"* ^{NIV} *"Hearing what he said,"* ^{BBE} *"heard this,"* ^{NLT} *"heard his exclamation,"* ^{WEYMOUTH} and *"heard him when he said [it]."* ^{MRD}

The idea is that they heard what John said **when** he said it. It was not something they went home and thought about. They did not ask John what he meant, or why he said this. They were alert, and heard with understanding – the *"hearing of faith"* (Gal 3:2,5). This kind of response still exists. Paul writes that the *"sound"* of the word of the Gospel has went into all the world, but not all who heard that *"sound"* have believed–i.e. *"But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world"* (Rom 10:18). There are. However, some to whom faith *"comes"* by *"hearing"* – that peculiar faculty referred to as having been given *"ears to hear"* (Deut 29:4).

There is that generation of people to whom much has been said. They have been exposed to the sound of truth – like those to whom Stephen preached (Acts 7:57), or the philosophers in Athens who heard Paul (Acts 17:32). In Antioch of Pisidia, Paul delivered a remarkable message. Some people liked what they heard, and pursued Paul to hear more (Acts 13:43-44), and the Jews became envious and spoke against the things Paul said (Acts 13:43-45). What was the difference. Some took hold of what was said, and some rejected it. Some had ears to hear, and some did not.

AND THEY FOLLOWED JESUS. Other versions read, *"went after Jesus,"* ^{BBE} and *"went with Jesus."* ^{CEV} They did not ask Jesus to follow them, but instead they followed Him. They did not ask Him where He was going, in case they might not want to go there. When they heard this was *"the Lamb of God,"* they wanted to go with Him wherever He went. Their entire reason for living would change at this point. They would become absorbed with Jesus, and if He would allow them to do so, they would stay with Him. And why was

this so? Because they had believed what John said, and thus John had prepared the way for them. See, preparing the way has to do with not only knowing who Jesus is, but where He is going, and what He is doing.

Note that Jesus did not have to say to them at this time, *"Follow Me."* Because they comprehended what John had said, they did so without having to be told. Later, they will receive a special call from Jesus – a summons to *"follow"* Him (Matt 4:19-22). That will be a higher and more involved calling to special privileges and commissions. Any person desiring such a call needs to be like Mary, and sit at the feet of Jesus when He is available (Lk 10:39). Jesus said Mary had *"chosen that good part"* (Lk 10:42). She took advantage of the availability of Jesus, and the opportunity she had to hear Him teach.

Many a poor soul is trapped in the caldron of ignorance because they did not seize an opportunity to be with and hear from the Lord Jesus through some of His servants. When Paul was at Troas, the brethren spent all night with him listening to what he had to say (Acts 20:7-11). What kind of listener are you? Can you detect when opportunities are set before you?