

John the Baptist Pointing to Christ (John 1:19–51)
Jaunting thru John: Message #4

Grace Chapel

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION TO JOHN'S GOSPEL TESTIMONY

AUTHOR: THE APOSTLE JOHN: beloved to the Lord

DATE OF WRITING:

1. **Prior to A.D. 70:** John 5² . . . *there is a pool*. It does not say "There was a pool."

2. **Prior to A.D. 44 (Acts 10)**

Absence of reference to Jesus' ministry to Gentiles

AUDIENCE AND PURPOSE FOR WRITING:

The readers/hearers (*you*) need to believe in Christ and they need life. In other words, the intended readers/hearers were unbelievers.

20³¹ But these [eight signs] are written that you may believe **that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God**, and that by believing [this] you may have life in His Name.

REVIEW OF EXPOSITION

1:1 Christ was eternally with God and also was (and is) God

1:2: The Word (Christ) has been with the Father for all of eternity

1:3: The Word (Christ) is the agent of all creation with no exceptions

1:4–5: Christ embodies life (death does not enlighten) so He (who embodies life) is the only light-source in the world, but the world did not apprehend His message

1:6–8 God sent John the Baptist (who was not the Light) to testify about the Light (Christ) to give everyone opportunity to believe (in Christ)

1:9–10 Although Christ gave Light to everyone who born into the world He created, the world ignored the Light (Christ)

1:11–13 Christ came to His own things (neuter: the world which He created), but even His own (people: masculine) rejected Him, but those who accepted Him (by believing in Him) become children of God: being born not by bloodlines, being born not by sexual lust, nor being born by a husband's will, but born by God

1:14 The Word was a tent-dweller among us (the eleven), so we saw His glory as God's only begotten Son, full of grace and truth

1:15–18 John the Baptist testified that Christ was the pre-eminent pre-existing One who came after him, who lavished divine grace and truth upon all (even beyond the grace given by Moses in the Law): namely, Christ proclaimed the Father

BACKGROUND ISSUES:

1. WHERE IS THE BETHANY THAT IS EAST OF THE JORDAN RIVER? (1:28)

Most expositors have assumed that John meant *Bethabara*, when he wrote *Bethany*, but no evidence exists for a town called Bethany east of the Jordan. The KJV and NKJV both read *Bethabara*, but the manuscript evidence strongly favors *Bethany*. The NAS and Logos 21 (Living Water) both correctly read *Bethany*.

This is an issue like *Buffalo Wings*.

A. Bethany across the Jordan can refer to the region of Batanæa

1. Josephus spelled *Batanæa* three ways in Gk: *Bataneā*, *Batanaia*, and *Bataneia*.

The vowels at the end of the word can sound alike.

2. The Greek spells Nazareth two ways: *Nazaret* or *Nazareth*, because some pronounced the Hebrew *t* in *Nazaret* as *th*, while others pronounced *t* as *t*. Likewise, some would have pronounced *Bataneā* as *Bathaneā*, while others pronounced it as *Batanæa*. The same would be true for *Bēthania*.
3. The pronunciation of the initial vowel of each word can overlap.

Probably, Galileans said/spelled *Bethania* & *Batanæa* the same: *Bēthania*.

Linguistics allow the possibility that John 1:28 refers to *Batanæa*.

B. John 1–2 shows Bethany east of Jordan to be about 25 miles from Cana of Galilee

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
1 <i>1:19–28</i>	2 <i>1:29–34</i> The next day	3 <i>1:35–39</i> The next day. They stayed w/ Him that day.	4 <i>1:40–42</i> It was about 4 p.m.	5 <i>1:43–51</i> The next day Go to Galilee	6 — (Sabbath) (No travel)	7 <i>2:1–11</i> On the 3 rd day Cana of Galilee

John 1:19–2:11 was a seven day period (although 1:35–42 might be one day, rather than two). 2:1's reference to the third day most naturally starts with 1:43 as day 1. If Jesus rested on the Sabbath, it would lie between 1:51 and 2:1. Therefore, I regard 1:43–51 as a Friday. In that case, Jesus arrived in Cana of Galilee on Friday afternoon or Sunday morning.

Either way, the distance between Bethania (east of the Jordan River) and Cana of Galilee could not be more than about 25 miles (one day of travel by foot).

C. John 10–11 shows Batanæa as about 4 days walk from Bethany (by Jerusalem)

1. John 10:40 is the same place where John baptized at first (across the Jordan)
2. John 1:26–28 shows that first place where John baptized across Jordan as Bethania
3. Jesus did not leave Batanæa (across Jordan) until 2 days after messengers said Lazarus was sick (John 11:6)
4. When Lazarus died, Jesus said that He wanted to go to Judea (John 11:7)
5. Meanwhile, Lazarus would have been embalmed as soon as possible after he died (Embalming would have been complete before the first day of Jesus' trip ended)
6. Four days elapsed between Lazarus' burial and Jesus' arrival (John 4:39)
7. The distance between Bēthania, east of Jordan (*Batanæa*) and Bēthania (near Jerusalem) is approximately four days.

D. Therefore, the location of Bethania (where John 1:19–42 occurred) is:

1. near the Jordan River (on the east side),
2. one day's travel from Cana of Galilee, and
3. four days travel from Bethany (near Jerusalem)

The region of Batanæa qualifies. I regard this as the best solution.

E. Why is this solution significant?

1. It is a more satisfying answer than "I don't know" when critics make charges,
2. It is better than relying on a weak textual reading *Bethabara* (as KJV and NKJV did),
3. A northern location accounts for five Galileans (Peter, [John], Andrew, Peter, Phillip, Nathanael) being there. It is much closer to Galilee than Bethabara.
4. It simplifies the chronology in John 1–2 and 10–11.

2. WHO IS IT THAT QUESTIONED JOHN THE BAPTIST? (John 1:19 and 24)

Verse 19 speaks of priests and Levites—overwhelmingly they were Sadducees

Verse 24 speaks of Pharisees

The Sanhedrin (comprised of Sadducees & Pharisees) sent both Sadducees & Pharisees

Note John 3:1; 7:45ff. Cf. Matthew 3:7; 16:1, 6, 11f; 22:24; Acts 23:6–8

3. What does John mean by the term translated Jews (*Youдайos*)?

John was a Galilean. It is perfectly natural for him to speak of the inhabitants of the political entity of Judea as Judeans (*Youдайos*)

In this book, *Youдайos* means Judean. It does not refer to Jews in general.

The first line of evidence is that people belonging to one group talking to others belonging to the same group do not tend to name the group often. If a group of citizens of the United States are talking amongst themselves in the United States of America, it would be quite strange to refer to that discussion as: The Americans asked a question. The Americans answered the question. The Americans asked another question.

On the other hand, if a Canadian were present, he might say, “I asked the Americans a question. They answered. Then the Americans made another point.”

As a Jew, we should not treat John as if he treated Jews as a group to which he did not belong. Rather, he spoke of Judeans as a *they* group. Cf. John 7:1.

NEW EXPOSITION:

John the Baptist confessed before a delegation of priests and Levites (in Bathanaëa), that he was not the Messiah (under any title), but was the one about whom Isaiah spoke of as going to prepare the way for the Messiah (1:19–23)

John was not the Christ

John was not Elijah (Malachi 4:5)

Reconciliation of Matthew 17:10–13 in light of Malachi 4:5

Malachi 4:5 could be better understood if we added the word an to the text

Malachi 4⁵ Behold, I will send you an Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. ⁶ And he will turn The hearts of the fathers to the children, And the hearts of the children to their fathers, Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.

It does not demand that Elijah himself would be the one sent.

In Matthew 17:10–13, Jesus told the people that John the Baptist could have functioned in the Elijah role—if Israel had responded properly
Matthew 17¹⁰ And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?" ¹¹ Jesus answered and said to them, "Indeed, an Elijah is coming first and will restore all things. ¹² But I say to you that an Elijah has come already, and they did not know him but did to him whatever they wished. Likewise the Son of Man is also about to suffer at their hands." ¹³ Then the disciples understood that He spoke to them of John the Baptist.

A brief comment on the two witnesses of Revelation 11

One of the two witnesses will have an Elijah role, but will not be Elijah

John was not the Prophet (Deuteronomy 18:15–18)

John was not a do-it-yourselfer—Isaiah 40:3 prophesied his ministry

John the Baptist told the Pharisees (in Bathanaëa) not to infer any messianic pretensions from his baptism with water, because the Messiah (who was already present among them) who totally outclassed John himself (1:24–28)

Verse 24 should read: *Now some sent were from the Pharisees.*

This second group asks the questions in this section

These Pharisees wanted to trick John into saying that he was a do-it-yourselfer or to claim to be the Messiah. John continued preparing the way for Jesus as the Christ.

The next day John told (his disciples) that Jesus is the One of Whom he said that He outranks John and precedes John, but John did not previously know the identity of this One, but John baptized with water so that Israel would know Him (1:29–31)

Jesus takes away **all** the sin of the world: therefore, sin is not the issue for unbelievers

John was faithful to point to the Christ as One greater than John

The reason John testified that Jesus is the Son of God who will baptize with the Holy Spirit is because God told John how to identify Him: the Holy Spirit would descend like a dove and remain upon Him—as He did upon Jesus (1:32–34)

John did not know that Jesus was the Christ (until God revealed Jesus' identity as the Christ), but this does not mean that he had never met Jesus: They were related (Luke 1:36), so he had probably met Jesus before

The next day (at about 4 p.m.), when John again testified that Jesus is the Lamb of God, Andrew and [John] followed Him and answered His question, “What are you looking for?” with a recognition that He was their teacher and that they wanted to stay with Him; He invited them to come and see and they stayed with Him (1:35–39)

It was only those associated with the Roman government that followed Roman time, so 4:00 p.m. is much more likely than 10:00 a.m. Thus, it hints at another day transpiring.

The dialogue

Andrew, one of the two who stayed with Jesus (then) found his brother Simon Peter and told Him. “We have found the Messiah,” whereupon Peter followed him to Jesus, who pronounced him “Stone” (1:40–42)

Andrew’s response

Peter’s response

The next day, Jesus wanted to go to Galilee and told Phillip (a hometown friend of Andrew and Peter) to follow Him, whereupon Phillip found Nathanael and told Him that they had found the Messiah promised by the Old Testament, Jesus, the son of Joseph of Nazareth, which prompted Nathanael to question whether anything good (e.g., the Messiah could come from Nazareth; to which Phillip invited Nathanael to come to see Jesus for himself (1:43–46)

Phillip’s response

Nathanael’s response to Phillip

Nathanael’s response to Jesus

When Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, He called him a true Israelite without guile; to which Nathanael asked how Jesus could possibly know him (well enough to say that); whereupon Jesus made clear that He knew even fleeting details such as him being under a fig tree when Phillip greeted him (1:47–48)

The dialogue

Nathanael acknowledged Jesus as his teacher, as the Son of God, and as Israel's (Messianic) king; whereupon Jesus told him that they would see even greater things than these, seeing confirmation that Jesus is God's gateway between heaven and earth (1:49–51)

The dialogue

Why did Jesus allude to Jacob's vision at Bethel in Genesis 28?

CONCLUSION