

Gospel of John Chapter 1, Part 2 - John Karmelich

In my last lesson, I talked about a big theological question that always puzzled me. Here's another one that I think about as it's personal to me: It's why did God pick who He picked to be a witness for Jesus? He didn't get religious or government leaders to be His disciples. Instead it's a bunch of nobodies, so to speak. Consider that none of the disciples had any experience at religious speaking. I think about this because I have a business background and never went to a Bible college. Still, God made it obvious to me over time that He wanted me to preach His word. (The evidence is lots of people read this!) Still, it makes me ponder, "Why me"? I'm not anti-religious education. I'm just saying God picks who He uses who He uses and we must accept it! My Bible education came through listening to of sermons. Still, I ponder at times, "God, You've got people who have been professionally trained for this, so why me?" I'm not saying all of this to brag, but just stating God picks who He picks and that's that!

OK John, good for you, why should we care? In this text, Jesus deals with John the Baptist (if you did not know, they're first cousins. John didn't know Jesus was the Messiah until the "big baptism" scene!) Meanwhile, we get mentions (directly and indirectly) of the disciples who became part of Jesus' "inner circle." In the text, we also have a few lines about Jesus dealing with a few other disciples that became part of the "12." Again, God picks who He picks! These weren't professionally trained or Jewish study experts. We just get a bunch of nobodies that God chose. Even John the Baptist (no relationship to the author John BTW) didn't realize Jesus was the Messiah until about a few months prior to the event that occurred in this chapter. As we study this text, think about the fact that God choose each of us (yes you too) to be a witness for Him! Not all of us aren't called to write or even to "street preach", but each of us are called to be a witness for Him! With that said, let me talk about the second half of Chapter 1:

The text opens with a dialogue between John the Baptist and representatives from the religious Jewish leadership who ask John in effect, "What's the deal with what you are doing?" I admit the question of how JTB (John the Baptist) got started fascinates me. I picture him standing by the Jordan River as he's yelling out that people need to repent because the Messiah (someone who'll rule the world) is coming! I picture shepherds seeing him and the word spread till large crowds came! Realize that the Israelites wanted someone to overthrow Rome, and if that meant confessing sins and being dunked in water, so be it! This led to what we read in the text that representatives of the religious leaders asking John who He was. He bluntly said he's not the Messiah, not Elijah, nor "the prophet." Let me explain: Malachi (last book in the Old Testament) states that Elijah would come before the Messiah "takes over." In the gospels, they state JTB was "Elijah-like" in his mission, but he's not him. In the other gospel accounts, Jesus appears on a mountaintop with Moses and Elijah. John (the gospel writer who was there) never stated JTB was Elijah. I believe Elijah appears again in Revelation 11, but his name is not stated in the book of Revelation (Chapter 11 Verse 2). The religious leaders also asked if JTB was "the prophet" (a reference to Deuteronomy 18 Verses:20-22, which I'd argue is talking about Jesus) and JTB says he is not "the prophet." OK, so much for who John the Baptist was not!

Then JTB quotes Isaiah 40:3 to say in effect, I'm just who God said to prepare the way for the Messiah. JTB said "make straight the way of the Lord." He's not saying to get a bulldozer to pave the road, but to prepare one's heart that Jesus is coming. How does that differ for what we're called to do? Judgment is coming and God wants us to preach the word about that! We learn where JTB was "doing his thing," which was near a small town across the Jordan, which would be part of the country of Jordan today!

Then the scene moves to the next day. John (the Gospel writer) was a JTB disciple and that's how we know these details. The next day, Jesus shows up. This was probably a few months after JTB saw the

Holy Spirit descend on Jesus. As I said earlier, I'm sure as cousins they knew of each other growing up, but it wasn't until the Spirit descended on Jesus that John learned Jesus was the Messiah. We then go to the next day (all of this was a 3-day dialogue scene)! JTB doesn't refer to Jesus as God or even the one who created the world, but as the "lamb of God." That implies JTB understood Jesus' mission! Two of JTB's followers were John (the gospel writer) and Andrew, the brother of Peter. Both of them left JTB to become Jesus' disciples! Christians are to lead others to Jesus, so we are reading of a model of what we're called to do! Bottom line, those two disciples left to be with Jesus. The next thing we know, they get Peter and the three of them became part of the "12." Those disciples became an inner circle to Jesus and saw more things than the other disciples did!

The last few verses deal with two of the other "12." These two in effect, minor characters through all the Gospels. I suspect they were picked here to show that all disciples of Jesus (us too!) are important, and, in effect, we're each called to be a witness for Him, so "deal with it." What's fascinating to me is we see how Jesus works to change our perceptions of not only Him, but to not look down on those we think are inferior to us. A disciple named Nathanael insults Jesus' hometown to say in effect, "Nothing good can come from that place." Obviously, Jesus corrects Him by proving He is God by stating that He knew who Nathanael was even before they met.

The final verse of the chapter seems a bit strange until one understands the reference. He tells this new disciple (Nathanael) that he will see angels of God "ascending and descending on the Son of Man." It's a reference to a dream Jacob had where he saw angels going to and from heaven via a ladder. (Genesis 28:12). Jesus is saying in effect, He is the bridge between heaven and earth, and Nathanael will see lots of proof that Jesus is God (the miracles) that occur and discussed in the Gospels.

Bottom line is we get references to a handful of people Jesus picked to point people to Him. Whether we like it or not, we are picked! If you believe Jesus is God and died for every sin you'll ever commit, I would argue that you're picked as well. OK now what? Pray to God about how He wants to use you as a witness for Him, if you don't already know that. We need to use the gifts God has given us (things we are good at or enjoy doing) to be a witness for Him, just as those people did. God did not call us to be a JTB or one of the "12," but He did call us to preach of His Second Coming. The fact that everyone will be judged by Him and, unless we're 100% perfect (we're not), it's necessary that we lead people to Jesus as these disciples all did as that's what God requires of us!

For those of us who are "veterans" and all of this is old news, let me remind us of something important I learned many years ago. A famous pastor who read his Bible daily all of His life would start with the prayer to ask God to show him of "old truths" that we need to keep in mind, those truths we need to use our lives to make a difference for Him. Remember, the issue isn't being "more saved," just to live as a witness for our Lord (key word)! Hopefully, we'll all use our lives to glorify Him, which is why we're created in the first place. Prayer, study of His, and doing what is logical based on that lifestyle leads us down the path He desires we go.

If you liked this little study, I wrote a more detailed account about twenty years ago! To read the other one, click on one of the two links on this page. Thanks again for reading this. John.