

# 3

## *Disciples and the Worship of Jesus (1:19–51)*

### **First Day: John’s Testimony to Jewish Leaders (1:19–28)**

The narrator announces that “this is the testimony of John , when the Jews from Jerusalem sent [ἀπέστειλαν] priests and Levites, that they might ask, ‘Who are you?’” (1:19).<sup>1</sup> This reminds the audience that John, in contrast, came as one “sent [ἀπεσταλμένος] from God” (1:6) for “testimony, that he might testify about the light, that all might believe through him” (1:7). John was sent from God to testify about the light that was the divine life eternal that had come to be in the Word (1:3–4), who “became flesh and dwelt among us” (1:14) as the personified place for worship by those who believe. That the Jews from Jerusalem sent priests and Levites, those in charge of worship in the temple in Jerusalem, indicates their concern with how John and his testimony might impact their worship.<sup>2</sup>

John “confessed [ὡμολόγησεν] and did not deny but confessed [ὡμολόγησεν], ‘I am not the Christ!’” (1:20), reaffirming that he “was not the light” (1:8). This emphatically negative “confession” that John is not “the Christ” accentuates for the audience that the Jesus who is the “Christ” through whom came to be the gift of the truth (1:17), which includes the gift to become children of God (1:12) and share in divine life eternal, is the one, not John, that they are positively to “confess” in worship.<sup>3</sup> John’s increasingly

1. “[T]he Jews’ (οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι) serves here and throughout the Gospel as an umbrella term for both priestly and scribal leaders in Israel, especially in Jerusalem” (Michaels, *John*, 95–96).

2. “That they are identified as ‘priests and Levites’ alerts readers that they will be interested in John’s activity as it pertains to ritual purity and the purification rites that he may be initiating” (Brown, *Gift*, 97).

3. In John “confess” refers to the worship that expresses faith. In 9:22 it is stated that the Jews had already agreed that if anyone “confessed” (ὁμολογήσῃ) Jesus as the

abrupt and emphatic replies that he is not even one of the other expected messianic figures—“I am not!” to the question whether he is Elijah and “No!” to the question whether he is the Prophet (1:21)—underscore that Jesus Christ, not John, is the messianic figure that believers in the audience are to confess in their worship.<sup>4</sup>

Having identified himself negatively, John is pressed to identify himself positively (1:22). The John who emphatically declared that “I [ἐγώ] am not the Christ!” (1:20), with another emphatic “I,” declares that “I [ἐγώ] am a voice of one crying out in the desert, ‘Make straight the way of the Lord’ [Isa 40:3], as Isaiah the prophet said” (John 1:23). Although John is not the Christ who is “the Word” (1:14, 17) nor “the Prophet” (1:21), he is a “voice” who speaks prophetically in the words of “the prophet Isaiah.”<sup>5</sup> John came to testify that all might believe in the Word, Jesus Christ, who was “coming” into the world after John (1:9, 15). His prophetic appeal to make straight the “way/coming” of the Lord is thus a metaphorical appeal to believe in, and implicitly to worship, the one coming after him. Through the prophetic voice of John, the prophet Isaiah’s reference to the way of the Lord God now refers to the way/coming of Jesus Christ as Lord, the Word and unique divine Son, worthy to be worshiped as God (1:1, 18) along with God the Father whom he came to make known (1:18).

In addition to the priests and Levites some Pharisees also came to John (1:24), likewise with concerns about worship, as they ask him, “Why do you baptize [βαπτίζεις]?” referring to a ritual cleansing for proper worship, if he is not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet (1:25).<sup>6</sup> With another emphatic “I” John answered that “I baptize with water; in the midst of you stands one whom you have not known” (1:26).<sup>7</sup> That “I baptize [ἐγώ

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Christ, he would be put out of the synagogue, a place for Jewish worship. And in 12:42 it is stated that many believed in Jesus, but because of the Pharisees they would not “confess” (ὁμολόγησον) and thus worship, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue. “John’s apparent denial is actually a confession of his faith in ‘the Christ,’ so that ‘the Jews’ and their delegation are thwarted” (Michaels, *John*, 97).

4. On Jesus as the new Elijah in John’s Gospel, see Gunawan, “New Elijah,” 29–53. The designation “the Prophet” alludes to the promised “prophet like Moses” whom God would raise up for his people according to Deut 18:15, 18. Jesus is identified as this prophet like Moses in Acts 3:22; 7:37.

5. “Though Jesus is the Word, the Baptist is ‘a voice’ directing his audience to Jesus” (Köstenberger, *John*, 62). See also Michaels, *John*, 100–1.

6. “Most likely, there was only one delegation of Jewish leaders, some of whom were Pharisees” (Köstenberger, *John*, 63). See also Bruner, *John*, 77.

7. “Behind John’s strange remark lies a traditional Jewish notion of the hidden Messiah who comes into the world but remains incognito until it is time for him to be revealed” (Michaels, *John*, 103).

βαπτίζω] with water” resonates with and complements John’s previous emphatic declaration that “I [ἐγώ] am a voice crying out in the desert” (1:23). His voiced appeal to make straight the way of the Lord (1:23) by believing is complemented by his ritual activity of baptizing as part of his testimony that all might believe through him (1:7). But that in their midst stands one whom they have not known places the Pharisees among his own people who did not accept the Word (1:11), among the world who did not know the Word (1:10) as the light in whom came to be the divine life eternal for all human beings (1:3–4). They thus have not recognized him as worthy to be worshiped.

The Pharisees have not known the Word as the one coming after John (1:27a; cf. 1:15), the Word who “became flesh and dwelt among us” (1:14) as the personified place for the true worship of God. Resonating with his emphatic declaration that “I am not the Christ!” (1:20) is John’s characterization of himself as a lowly servant. He emphatically declared the superiority over him of the Christ, the Lord, coming after him—“I am not worthy that I might loosen the strap of his sandal” (1:27).<sup>8</sup> This accentuates that the Christ coming after him and actualizing the “way of the Lord” (1:23), not John, is the Lord to be worshiped. This first day concludes with the notice that “these things happened in Bethany beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing [βαπτίζων]” (1:28). This reaffirms that John was baptizing with water (1:26) as a ritual cleansing that was part of his testimony that all might believe in (1:7), and thus worship, Jesus Christ as the Word in whom came to be divine life eternal as the light for all human beings (1:3–4).<sup>9</sup>

## Second Day: John’s Testimony that Jesus Is the Sacrificial Lamb of God (1:29–34)

The next day John saw Jesus “coming” toward him (1:29a), the one after him “coming” (1:27), recalling that the true light, which was the divine life eternal that had come to be in the Word (1:3–4), was “coming” into the world (1:9). John’s pronouncement, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (1:29b), identifies Jesus as both the sacrificial Passover lamb (Exodus 12) and the Suffering Servant, who like a lamb was

8. “The task of untying the thong of the sandal was given to the least and lowest of all in the hierarchy of servants and slaves” (Moloney, *John*, 58).

9. In the Gospel of Mark it is reported that the Pharisees and all Jews do not eat a meal, which they considered to be an act of worship, unless they are “baptized” (βαπτίζονται), ritually cleansed, beforehand (Mark 7:4). With reference to this practice Jesus applied to them a scriptural quotation (Isa 29:13) which includes the words “in vain do they worship [σέβονται] me” (Mark 7:7).

led to a sacrificial death for sins (Isa 52:13–53:12).<sup>10</sup> That he takes away the sin of the “world” recalls that he was in the “world,” and although the “world” came to be through him, the “world” did not know him (1:10). By his sacrificial death, then, he takes away the sin of not knowing or believing in him in order to become children of God (1:12) and share in divine life eternal. Jesus is not only an object of worship who makes known the God to be worshiped (1:14–18), but, as the Lamb of God who was led to death, he himself performs a sacrificial act of worshiping God.

The Jesus whom John saw “coming” (ἐρχόμενον) toward him and identified as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (1:29) he further identified: “This one is he for whom I said, ‘After me is coming [ἐρχεται] a man who before me had come to be, for prior to me he was!’” (1:30). This accentuates the superiority over John of Jesus as “the one after me coming [ἐρχόμενος]” (1:27). And it reaffirms John’s testimony regarding Jesus as the preexistent Word who became flesh (1:14): “This one was he of whom I said, ‘The one after me coming [ἐρχόμενος], before me had come to be, for prior to me he was!’” (1:15). It indicates for the audience that the Jesus who, as the Lamb of God, offered himself as a sacrificial act of worship to God, is also the preexistent Word who was with God and was God (1:1–2), and thus himself an object of worship.

When John, with an emphatic “I,” explained to the Pharisees that he is not the Christ, because “I [ἐγώ] baptize with water,” he added, with an emphatic “you,” that “in the midst of you stands one whom *you* [ὑμεῖς] do not know” (1:26). But now, again with the emphatic “I,” John admits, “And *I myself* [καὶ ἐγώ] did not know him, but that he might be manifested to Israel, on account of this I [ἐγώ] came baptizing with water” (1:31). This not only explains the role of John’s baptizing with water as a ritual act of worship, but

10. “The primary background must be that of the (sacrificial) Passover lamb, as many scholars have contended, although combinations with other sources like the Suffering Servant remain feasible. . . . the writer undoubtedly viewed the Passover as a form of sacrifice. (The LXX uses John’s term here for sacrificial lambs approximately one hundred times.)” (Keener, *John*, 1.454). The identification of Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of world “appears to combine the imagery from Deutero-Isaiah of the servant-witness who bears the sin of many and is led as a lamb to the slaughter with that of the Passover lamb . . . one of the ways in which this Gospel’s narrative portrays Jesus is as the sacrificial victim, whose death removes the primary obstacle to the world’s reception of the divine gift of life” (Lincoln, *John*, 113). “While the Gospel writer never speaks of ‘the blood of the Lamb,’ and stops well short of attributing to John the explicit notion of cleansing from sin through Jesus’ blood, he nevertheless allows John’s testimony to evoke for his readers just such imagery. . . . the Gospel writer presents him here as ‘the Lamb,’ but a lamb like no other in that he himself initiates the sacrifice . . . Jesus is priest and sacrifice at the same time” (Michaels, *John*, 111). See also Bruner, *John*, 83–84.

further implies that the Christ who is Jesus (1:17), the Lamb of God (1:29), will baptize differently.

John, who came to testify (1:7–8, 15, 19), testified further, saying, “I have observed [τεθέαμαι] the Spirit descending like a dove from heaven and it remained upon him” (1:32). This resonates with and reinforces for the audience the communal doxological confession that “we observed [έθεασάμεθα] his glory, glory as of the unique one from the Father, full of a gift of truth” (1:14b).<sup>11</sup> That the divine Spirit “remained” or “abided” (έμεινεν) upon him accords with Jesus being the personified place for the presence and worship of God as the divine Word who “dwelt” (έσκήνωσεν) among us (1:14a).

John emphatically reiterated that “*I myself* [κάγώ] did not know him” (1:33a; cf. 1:31a). But John then reported that the one who sent him to baptize with water, namely God (1:6), said to him, “Upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon him, this one is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit” (1:33b). This makes explicit the implication that Jesus in continuity with John would also baptize but in a different way. Whereas John baptizes with water as a ritual cleansing in preparation for worship, Jesus is not only the personified dwelling place for worship (1:14), but he baptizes with the Holy Spirit, providing a divine agent for the proper worship of God.

This second day of John’s testimony concluded as he emphatically confessed that “*I myself* [κάγώ] have seen and have testified that this one is the Chosen One of God!” (1:34).<sup>12</sup> That Jesus is “the Chosen One of God” (ό έκλεκτός του θεου) as the one upon whom “the Spirit” (τò πνεύμα) of God descended and remains (1:33) coincides with his being “the Lamb of God” (ό άμνός του θεου), the chosen Passover lamb/Suffering Servant, who takes away the sin of the world (1:29). It alludes to God’s pronouncement of the Suffering Servant as “my chosen one” (ό έκλεκτός μου), the one to whom God gave “my Spirit [τò πνεύμά μου]” (LXX Isa 42:1). John’s testimonial confession of faith not only reaffirms that Jesus is the Lamb of God chosen by God to sacrifice himself as an act of worship to God, but provides the

11. “θεάομαι in John conveys a more pronounced note of *perception* than other ‘seeing’ verbs” (Köstenberger, *John*, 69n46; emphasis original). John “becomes here the spokesman for all who have ‘looked,’ whether literally or spiritually, at the Word in human flesh, and seen ‘glory as of a father’s One and Only’ (v. 14)” (Michaels, *John*, 113).

12. For the reasons to choose the variant reading “the Chosen One of God” rather than “the Son of God,” see Quek, “Textual-Critical Study of John 1.34,” 22–34; Köstenberger, *John*, 71; Bruner, *John*, 97–98. Note also that if “the Son of God” were the original reading, it would detract from the dramatic rhetorical progression in 1:19–51 in which “the Son of God” title is a climactic confession (1:49).

testimony for the audience to worship Jesus as well, indeed, as the divine Lamb of God, the divine Chosen One of God.<sup>13</sup>

### Third Day: First Disciples Prepare for the Worship of Jesus (1:35–42)

The next day again John was “standing,” away from two of his disciples (1:35). This associates John with Jesus as the one who “stands” among those who do not know him (1:26). But John made the identity of Jesus known. Looking at Jesus walking by, John said, “Behold, the Lamb of God!” (1:36), recalling that Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (1:29). His two disciples heard John speaking and followed Jesus (1:37), implying that they are now becoming disciples of Jesus. This is confirmed as Jesus, turning and observing them following, said to them, “What are you seeking?” (1:38a). They addressed him with the Jewish designation “rabbi,” whose Greek equivalent is “teacher” (1:38b), indicating Jesus’ relevance as a teacher not only for these two Jews who are now becoming his disciples but for the rest of the (mainly Greek speaking) world as well (cf. 1:9–11).

Based on the context, the implied answer to Jesus’ question, “What [τί] are you seeking?” (1:38), is that they are seeking the Holy Spirit that “remains” or “abides” (μένον) upon Jesus and with which he baptizes (1:33), as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (1:29, 36).<sup>14</sup> Their reply to Jesus with their own question, “Where are you abiding/remaining [μένεις]?” (1:38) confirms this. They are asking where Jesus abides/remains, as the one upon whom the Holy Spirit abides/remains, the one who “dwelt among us” as the personified place for worship (1:14). After Jesus’ invitation for them to come and “you will see,” the two disciples came and “saw” where Jesus, the one who made known the God no one has ever “seen” (1:18), “was abiding/remaining [μένει]” (1:39). They in turn “abided/remained” (ἔμειναν) beside him that day at a specific time—“the hour was about the tenth” (1:39). This places them at a definite time in a close relationship with Jesus, who baptizes with the Holy Spirit for the proper worship of God.

13. “The two perfect tenses—‘I myself have seen and have testified’—emphasize the continuing present significance of John’s witness as a testimony that remains on record for the readers. The ordinary language associated with the stance of an eyewitness is now used instead to speak of the insight of belief that leads to confession” (Lincoln, *John*, 114).

14. The neuter interrogative pronoun “what [τί]” (1:38) points back to the neuter noun “Holy Spirit [πνεύματι ἁγίῳ]” (1:33).

Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, was one of the two disciples of John who heard John and followed Jesus (1:40).<sup>15</sup> After having been with Jesus, the first thing Andrew did was to find his own brother and say to him, “We have found the Messiah!” (which is translated “Christ”) (1:41). The two disciples of John, who abided/remained beside Jesus (1:39) after “seeking” where Jesus abides/remains (1:38) have “found” that Jesus is not only the Messiah for the Jews but the Christ for the whole world. In finding Jesus as the Christ they have found the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (1:29, 36), the one upon whom the Spirit abides/remains, enabling him to baptize with the Holy Spirit (1:33).

Andrew then led his brother Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, “You are Simon, the son of John. You will be called Cephas” (which is interpreted “Peter”) (1:42). That Jesus “looked at” (ἐμβλέψας) Simon continues the transferal of disciples of John to Jesus that began when John “looked at” (ἐμβλέψας) Jesus and pointed him out as the Lamb of God (1:36) to two of his disciples (1:35), who then followed Jesus (1:37). Jesus’ address to Simon as “the son of John” has a double meaning for the audience. Simon is not only the literal son of someone named John, but the metaphorical “son” of the John who baptizes with water (1:26, 31, 33), the only “John” who has been mentioned previously (1:6, 15, 19, 26, 28, 32, 35, 40).<sup>16</sup> In authoritatively renaming Simon as Cephas/Peter, Jesus has indicated that Simon Peter is no longer a disciple of the John who baptizes with water, but now has been named and claimed as a disciple of Jesus, the Messiah/Christ who baptizes with the Holy Spirit (1:33), a divine agent for the proper worship of God.<sup>17</sup>

#### Fourth Day: A Disciple Worships Jesus (1:43–51)

The next day, the fourth in this sequence, Jesus “found” and invited Philip to “follow” him to Galilee (1:43), as Philip, along with Andrew and Peter, was from Bethsaida in Galilee (1:44). Jesus continued the process begun by Andrew of “finding” individuals to be disciples who “follow” Jesus rather than

15. On the role of Peter in the Gospel of John, see Cassidy, *Peter*, 85–107; Blaine, *Peter*.

16. “The only ‘John’ mentioned so far is the one who has just proclaimed Jesus as ‘Lamb of God’ (v. 36), and it is at least as likely that Jesus is addressing Simon as an adherent or disciple of John as that he is making reference to Simon’s actual father” (Michaels, *John*, 124).

17. “In OT times, God frequently changed people’s names to indicate their special calling (e.g., Abraham, Jacob). Giving someone a new name demonstrated authority (2 Kings 23:34; 24:17)” (Köstenberger, *John*, 77).

John (1:37–38, 40, 41). Philip in turn repeated this process, as he “found” Nathanael and said to him, “The one about whom Moses wrote in the law, also the prophets, we have found [εὐρήκαμεν], Jesus, son of Joseph, from Nazareth” (1:45). This recalls that when Andrew “found” his brother Peter, he said to him, “We have found [εὐρήκαμεν] the Messiah/Christ” (1:41). The Jesus Christ through whom the gift of the truth came to be in place of the gift of the law given through Moses (1:16–17) is thus identified as the Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph, about whom Moses and the prophets wrote.

But Nathanael said to Philip, “From Nazareth can there be anything good?” (1:46a), which stands in ironic contrast to Andrew’s declaration that the Jesus who is from Nazareth is the Messiah/Christ (1:41).<sup>18</sup> And so Philip said to him, “Come and see” (1:46b). This echoes Jesus’ invitation, “Come and you will see,” to those who were seeking where he abides/remains (1:39), which resulted in Andrew’s declaration that after abiding/remaining with Jesus they found him to be the Messiah/Christ (1:41). It also echoes John’s invitation to “behold/see” that Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (1:29, 36). What is the messianic “good” that Philip’s invitation will lead Nathanael to see in Jesus from Nazareth?

But Jesus “saw” Nathanael “coming” toward him (1:47a), before Nathanael can “come and see” what good there can be from Nazareth (1:46). Jesus then points out Nathanael to the audience as one whose significance is to be seen: “Behold/see, truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit” (1:47b). Nathanael is an ideal representative of Israel, since unlike Jacob/Israel, who took away his brother’s blessing with “deceit [δόλου]” (LXX Gen 27:35), in Nathanael “there is no deceit [δόλος].” He is thus an ideal representative for the manifestation to Israel of Jesus, the Christ and Lamb of God, the reason for which John came baptizing with water (1:31).<sup>19</sup>

After Nathanael then asked Jesus, “Whence do you know me?” Jesus replied, “Before Philip called you, I saw you under the fig tree” (1:48). That Nathanael was “under the fig tree” indicates that he, as truly an Israelite (1:47), was anticipating the fulfillment of the messianic peace and rest, symbolized by being under a vine and fig tree, which a messianic figure (see

18. On the irony in 1:46, see Duke, *Irony*, 84–85.

19. “It was Jacob, whose name meant supplanter or deceiver (cf. Gen. 25.26; 27.35–6), who was first given the name Israel after wrestling with God (cf. Gen. 32.28; cf. also 35.10). Nathanael surpasses the original Israel in being without guile or deceit. His response to Jesus can therefore be viewed as paradigmatic for those who would be faithful Israelites and as what is meant to happen when Jesus is revealed to Israel (cf. 1.31)” (Lincoln, *John*, 120). On the character of Nathanael in John, see Bennema, *Encountering Jesus*, 64–68.

Zech 3:8) would bring, as prophetically promised for Israel in the OT: “On that day,’ says the Lord almighty, ‘you will call together, each his neighbor, under a vine and under a fig tree” (LXX Zech 3:10). And in the eschatological age (see LXX Mic 4:1), “each will rest under his vine and under his fig tree” (4:4).<sup>20</sup>

As the ideal representative of Israel (1:47), Nathanael then acknowledged Jesus as the messianic figure for whom the people of Israel were hoping. With a confession of faith that serves as an exuberant act of worship, which provides a model for the audience, he proclaimed, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel!” (1:49). The Nathanael who disparagingly asked, “From Nazareth can there be anything good?” (1:46a), now confesses that Jesus from Nazareth is not only “son” of Joseph (1:45) but the messianic “Son” of God.<sup>21</sup> As the ideal Israelite, Nathanael appropriately confessed Jesus as the messianic King of Israel, thus signaling that the reason John came baptizing with water—that Jesus might be manifested to Israel as their Christ (1:31)—has been realized.<sup>22</sup>

In reply to Nathanael’s confession of faith Jesus said, “Because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? Greater things than these you will see” (1:50). The expression of Nathanael’s faith in an act of worship continues to indicate that the goal of John’s testimony is beginning to be realized, as John came that “all might believe through him” (1:7), with the implication that worship gives expression to faith. Although his own people in general did not accept Jesus (1:11), Nathanael was among those who did receive him, “those who believe in his name,” enabling them to become children of God (1:12).

Jesus continues to address Nathanael, but with a climactic revelatory pronouncement directed to a plural “you”—“Amen, amen, I say to you

20. Koester, “Messianic Exegesis,” 23–34.

21. “The Gospel writer and his readers know that Jesus is God’s Son in a more profound sense than Nathanael could have understood (see 1:14, 18), yet he allows Nathanael to speak for him and for the entire Christian community. Nathanael’s confession anticipates the writer’s hope that all who read, ‘might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and believing have life in his name’ (20:31). To Nathanael, within the story, ‘King of Israel’ defines what ‘Son of God’ means, but for the author and his readers ‘Son of God’ defines what ‘King of Israel’ means” (Michaels, *John*, 132). On the contrast between Jesus as “son” of Joseph and as “Son” of God, see Nicklas, “Unter dem Feigenbaum,” 195, 197.

22. “The second title, ‘the King of Israel,’ is precisely what we would expect from ‘a true Israelite.’ Nathanael, as ‘Israel,’ acknowledges ‘Jesus, son of Joseph, from Nazareth’ as his King and Lord. The designation of Israel’s king as God’s son goes all the way back to the biblical Psalms (compare Pss 2:6–7; 89:26–27), and in the present context the two are virtually synonymous ways of affirming Jesus as ‘the Christ’ or ‘Messiah’ (compare vv. 41, 45)” (Michaels, *John*, 132).

[ὁμῖν]” (1:51a), which includes Nathanael, his fellow disciples, and ultimately the audience of the Gospel: “You will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man” (1:51b).<sup>23</sup> When Jesus invited the two disciples to “come and you will see” (1:39), it resulted in their discovery of Jesus’ identity as the Messiah/Christ (1:40). And now he promises that “you will see” his identity as the “Son of Man.” Jesus is thus not only “son” of Joseph and the “Son of God,” but the “Son of Man,” a heavenly figure with divine authority (see LXX Dan 7:13–14), who has come to earth. Others have pointed out that Jesus is the Lamb of God (1:29, 36), the Messiah/Christ (1:41), the Son of God and the King of Israel (1:49), but Jesus refers to himself as the Son of Man.<sup>24</sup>

Jesus’ promise that “you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man” (1:51) alludes to Jacob’s dream in which he saw “a stairway erected on the earth whose head reached into heaven and the angels of God were ascending and descending upon it” (LXX Gen 28:12). When Jacob awoke, he declared that “this place is none other than the house of God” (28:17), that is, the place for the presence and worship of God. The vision of “heaven” opened and the angels of God “descending” upon the Son of Man recalls John’s testimony that he saw the Spirit “descending” from “heaven” and remaining on Jesus (John 1:32), indicating that he is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit (1:33) for the true worship of God.

Thus, Jesus is not only the messianic Son of God and the King of Israel (1:49), but the heavenly Son of Man who has come down from heaven to be the personified place for the presence and worship of God on earth, the divine Word who became flesh and dwelt among us (1:14). Jesus is the divinely chosen (1:34) Lamb of God who takes away the sin, not just of Israel, but of the whole world (1:29). He is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit (1:33) so that all who believe might truly worship God in and through him.<sup>25</sup>

23. “The double ‘Amen’ formula occurs 25 times in John’s Gospel as a way of solemnly attesting the truth of what is about to be said. . . . In a sense, the double ‘Amen’ formula here solemnly attests the truth of *all* that Jesus will say from here on” (Michaels, *John*, 134–35; emphasis original).

24. “‘Son of man’ is not a title someone else gives to Jesus, but one that he claims for himself, just as in the other Gospels” (Michaels, *John*, 138).

25. “As has been noted, the Jacob story has already been invoked in the conversation with Nathanael. Now it is made clear that this true Israelite will see something greater than Jacob saw. He will see not simply a ladder but a person, the Son of Man, as the connection between earth and heaven. For Jacob the place of his dream became Bethel, the house of God, and the gate of heaven (Gen. 28.17, 19). For the evangelist Jesus now embodies God’s address on earth, fulfilling all that was previously represented by

### Summary on 1:19–51

On a first day (1:19–28) John emphatically confessed that he is not the Christ (1:20). His increasingly abrupt and emphatic replies to the priests and Levites in charge of temple worship that he is not even one of the other expected messianic figures (1:21) underscore that Jesus Christ, not John, is the messianic figure that believers in the audience are to confess in their worship. Through the prophetic voice of John, the prophet Isaiah's reference to the way of the Lord God (1:23) now refers to the way/coming of Jesus Christ as Lord, the Word and unique divine Son, worthy to be worshiped as God (1:1, 18) along with God the Father whom he came to make known (1:18).

The Pharisees have not known the Word as the one coming after John (1:27a; cf. 1:15), the Word who “became flesh and dwelt among us” (1:14) as the personified place for the true worship of God. Resonating with his emphatic declaration that “I am not the Christ!” (1:20) is John's characterization of himself as a lowly servant (1:27). This accentuates that the Christ coming after him and actualizing the “way of the Lord” (1:23), not John, is the Lord to be worshiped. This first day concluded with a reaffirmation that John was baptizing (1:28) with water (1:26) as a ritual cleansing that was part of his testimony that all might believe in (1:7), and thus worship, Jesus Christ as the Word in whom came to be divine life eternal as the light for all human beings (1:3–4).

On a second day (1:29–34) John's pronouncement, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (1:29), identifies Jesus as both the sacrificial Passover lamb (Exodus 12) and the Suffering Servant, who like a lamb was led to a sacrificial death for sins (Isa 52:13–53:12). That he takes away the sin of the “world” recalls that he was in the “world,” and although the “world” came to be through him, the “world” did not know him (1:10). By his sacrificial death, then, he takes away the sin of not knowing or believing in him in order to become children of God (1:12) and share in divine life eternal. Jesus is not only an object of worship who makes known the God to be worshiped (1:14–18), but, as the Lamb of God who was led to death, he himself performs a sacrificial act of worshiping God.

John reported that the one who sent him to baptize with water, namely God (1:6), said to him, “Upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon him, this one is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit” (1:33). This makes explicit the implication that Jesus in continuity with John would also baptize but in a different way. Whereas John baptizes with water as a

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such locations as Bethel, the tabernacle or the temple (cf. also 1.14; 2.19–21; 4.21–4)” (Lincoln, *John*, 122). See also Perrin, *Jesus the Temple*, 53.

ritual cleansing in preparation for worship, Jesus is not only the personified dwelling place for worship (1:14), but he baptizes with the Holy Spirit, providing a divine agent for the true and proper worship of God.

This second day of John's testimony concluded as he emphatically confessed that "*I myself* have seen and have testified that this one is the Chosen One of God!" (1:34). That Jesus is "the Chosen One of God" as the one upon whom "the Spirit" of God descended and remains (1:33) coincides with his being "the Lamb of God," the chosen Passover lamb/Suffering Servant, who takes away the sin of the world (1:29). It alludes to God's pronouncement of the Suffering Servant as "my chosen one," the one to whom God gave "my Spirit" (LXX Isa 42:1). John's testimonial confession of faith not only reaffirms that Jesus is the Lamb of God chosen by God to sacrifice himself as an act of worship to God, but provides the testimony for the audience to worship Jesus as well, indeed, as the divine Lamb of God and the divine Chosen One of God.

On a third day (1:35–42) the implied answer to Jesus' question to the two following him, "What are you seeking?" (1:38), is that they are seeking the Holy Spirit that "remains" or "abides" upon Jesus and with which he baptizes (1:33), as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (1:29, 36). Their reply to Jesus with their own question, "Where are you abiding/remaining?" (1:38) confirms this. They are asking where Jesus abides/remains, as the one upon whom the Holy Spirit abides/remains, the one who "dwelt among us" as the personified place for worship (1:14). After Jesus' invitation for them to come and "you will see," the two disciples came and "saw" where Jesus, the one who made known the God no one has ever "seen" (1:18), "was abiding/remaining" (1:39). They in turn "abided/ remained" beside him that day (1:39). This places them at a definite time in a close relationship with Jesus, who baptizes with the Holy Spirit for the proper worship of God.

On a fourth day (1:43–51), as the ideal representative of Israel (1:47), Nathanael acknowledged Jesus as the messianic figure for whom the people of Israel were hoping. With a confession of faith that serves as an exuberant act of worship, which provides a model for the audience, he proclaimed, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel!" (1:49). The Nathanael who disparagingly asked, "From Nazareth can there be anything good?" (1:46a), now confesses that Jesus from Nazareth is not only "son" of Joseph (1:45) but the messianic "Son" of God. As the ideal Israelite, Nathanael appropriately confessed Jesus as the messianic King of Israel, thus signaling that the reason John came baptizing with water—that Jesus might be manifested to Israel as their Christ (1:31)—has been realized.

Jesus' promise, addressed not only to Nathanael but to the broader audience, that "you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man" (1:51) alludes to Jacob's dream in which he saw "a stairway erected on the earth whose head reached into heaven and the angels of God were ascending and descending upon it" (LXX Gen 28:12). When Jacob awoke, he declared that "this place is none other than the house of God" (28:17), that is, the place for the presence and worship of God. The vision of "heaven" opened and the angels of God "descending" upon the Son of Man recalls John's testimony that he saw the Spirit "descending" from "heaven" and remaining on Jesus (John 1:32), indicating that he is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit (1:33) for the true worship of God.

Nathanael confessed Jesus to be the messianic Son of God and the King of Israel (1:49). But Jesus referred to himself as the heavenly Son of Man with divine authority (LXX Dan 7:13-14) who has come down from heaven to be the personified place for the presence and worship of God on earth. He is the divine Word who became flesh and dwelt among us (1:14). Jesus is the divinely chosen (1:34) Lamb of God who takes away the sin, not just of Israel, but of the whole world (1:29). He is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit (1:33) so that all who believe might truly worship God in and through him.