

**The Glory of the One and Only: A Series on the Gospel of John**  
**The Glorious Beginning of the End - John 1:19-51**  
**October 6<sup>th</sup>, 2019 // Daniel Hickinbotham**

- Open your bible to John Chapter 1, we will be covering verses 19 through 51 this morning... Before we dive in, I want to hammer home two contextual points that are important in studying rest of this book:
  - Point 1: John assumes we have a working knowledge of the other Gospels, and at minimum an awareness of the overall story around the life of Christ. (EX: We are going to talk about JTB today, and the writer just kind of assumes you know him, his general backstory and his ministry.)
  - Point 2: If John 20:31 is the pithy thesis Statement of the Gospel of John, then the Prologue (v 1-18) is the expanded Thesis Statement. (You remember thesis papers right?)
    - From now on, the rest of the content of this book is like the support texts for the claims made in the prologue.
  - SO: We need to read this book with the larger context of the 3 Synoptic gospels in mind, and with the prologue ringing in our ears. Which is why we are trying to memorize verses 1-18 as a church!
- This morning we are shifting out of the expanded thesis, and into the narrative, which we are going to cover a lot of.
  - Starting with verse 19:

19 This was John's testimony when the Jews from Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him, "Who are you?" 20 He didn't deny it but confessed: "I am not the Messiah." 21 "What then?" they asked him. "Are you Elijah?" "I am not," he said. "Are you the Prophet?" "No," he answered. 22 "Who are you, then?" they asked. "We need to give an answer to those who sent us. What can you tell us about yourself?" 23 He said, "I am a voice of one crying out in the wilderness: Make straight the way of the Lord[a]—just as Isaiah the prophet said." 24 Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. 25 So they asked him, "Why then do you baptize if you aren't the Messiah, or Elijah, or the Prophet?" 26 "I baptize with[b] water," John answered them. "Someone stands among you, but you don't know him. 27 He is the one coming after me,[c] whose sandal strap I'm not worthy to untie." 28 All this happened in Bethany[d] across the Jordan, where John was baptizing.
- We are going to label this first part:

**The Last Old Covenant Prophet or the First New Covenant Herald**

  - JTB is such an interesting figure. He was a wild man, scrounging a living out in the desert, but still possessed the spiritual fortitude and wherewithal to stand up to the religious and political elites. He had his own band of disciples and his own ministry of baptism, which drew plenty of crowds. It is no surprise that he became a bit of a celebrity, and as with all celebrity religious figures, it is no surprise that a cult sprung up around him, which JTGW will address. Let's establish what he truly was: the last in a long line of Prophets.

- The role of the Old Testament Prophet was to do one thing. Where the Priest was to act as a representative of the people to God, the Prophet was to act as a representative of God to the people.
  - Prophets revealed God's nature, God's instructions, God's plans, to the people - as an emissary of God
  - He was a herald, an official messenger bringing news.
- But there hadn't been an Old Covenant prophet for nearly 400 years
  - The Religious Elites (henceforth described by John as "The Jews") recognized he was something special, which is probably why they sent out the priests and their Levite security forces to interrogate him about his role and tidings. So what was he heralding?
- We will see that John's prophetic message consists of 3 things:
  - **The Reality of Humanity**
    - Put yourself in JTB's shoes for a minute... you have
      - Tremendous momentum in ministry,
      - Crowds are flocking to you out in the desert like hipsters going to Burning Man,
      - Big wigs of the day starting to flex on you because you smell like a threat to their spiritual monopoly
      - The national media spotlight is on you...
    - Wouldn't the temptation to self-aggrandize be pretty huge?
  - It's an amazing testimony to the grace of God that John, consistently, does the exact opposite of that.
    - In providing the transcript of the interrogation, the gospel writer is likely trying to address the 1<sup>st</sup> Century issue of a cult following of JTB.
      - Verse 6-8 of the prologue is dedicated to repudiating the idea that JTB was the Messiah, and in verse 20 we get it directly from the horse's mouth.
        - "He didn't deny, but confessed, "I am not the Messiah""
  - In fact, JTB's denial uses the exact same language as Jesus' own affirmation of His Messiahship and Deity.
    - In the book of John, there are 7 I Am statements that Jesus makes to affirm His deity... (Light, bread, before Abraham was, etc.)... "Ego Eimi"...
      - JTB says in the Greek here Ego NOT Eimi... I NOT AM... I AM NOT... the Messiah.
  - He doesn't just deny the title and role, but in verses 26-28 JTB recognizes that in his fallen state, he isn't even worthy to be the Messiah's slave.
    - It was the slave that took off the master's dirty sweaty feces covered sandals, and JTB says he isn't even WORTHY to do that...
  - Under the onslaught of questions from the religious KGB, rather than exalting himself to a place of honor or authority, **he embraces anonymity** and says simply "I am a voice of one crying out in the wilderness..."
- The other Gospels reveal that part of John's ministry is calling people to this same thing, to recognize their neediness before God, to repent of their sin and attempts at self-salvation, and be reconciled to God.

- John's message correctly recognizes and diagnosis the state of humanity, and both assumes and promotes a position of humility in light of who is about to appear on the scene.
- And when Jesus DOES arrives on the scene John's message shifts to reveal:
- **The Goodness + Greatness + Graciousness of God**
  - I have big vocabulary but I can't think of one word that incorporates Goodness, Greatness, and Graciousness so I just put the little plus signs in there so you can add them together in your head.
- LOOK AT VERSE 29: "29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, 'Here is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! 30 This is the one I told you about: 'After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me, because he existed before me.' 31 I didn't know him, but I came baptizing with water so he might be revealed to Israel.'" 32 And John testified, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and he rested on him. 33 I didn't know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The one you see the Spirit descending and resting on—he is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' 34 I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God." [e]"
  - JTB sees Jesus and immediately begins to extol his nature, attributes, and role in redemptive history!
    - And in these few short statements he testifies that Jesus is the one anointed by God's Spirit, identifying him as the Messiah. He identifies him as the being the eternal Son of God, and the one to whom the Holy Spirit is obedient. He calls Him the Lamb of God, who graciously fulfills the obligations and roles of the Old Testament Law.
      - John is doing what Prophets do: He is expositing the person of Jesus for those around him and to us... explaining and proclaiming who God is and what He is doing... He is heralding the goodness, greatness, and graciousness of Jesus!
  - NOW... If we were to read just that... not check any cross references in other Gospels or in OT... the image that comes into focus of who Jesus is amazing...
    - But... we GET to interpret scripture in the context of all of scripture...
- Let me share a story to illustrate what is happening in this passage:
  - About a year ago, the fashion company Oscar De La Renta leased a commercial space in the luxury shopping district of Paris... now I know it is shocking that De La Renta hasn't had a boutique in Paris for 10 years but, thankfully my friends, that dark season for humanity is over... now, I'm talking the \$12,000 a month for a 2 Bedroom 300 square foot apartment district... so imagine how expensive a commercial space with a store front is... the term "stupid amounts of money" comes to mind. In preparation for stocking this valuable storefront with their \$7,000 dresses and \$2,500 handbags, they renovated it. And as they tore out old building materials they made a shocking discovery: hidden behind a false wall was glued a 9 foot by 18 foot oil painting created in 1674 by the Old French Master Arnould de Vuez. It is a depiction of a French delegation entering Jerusalem during the time of the Ottoman Empire. No one knows how, when, or by who, but it is likely that the painting was

hidden this way during WWII to prevent it being looted by the Nazis. It will remain in the store for the life of the lease as part of the décor, adding some aesthetic value of course, but adding the most value due to its thrilling connection with the history of Paris and the French people.

- This passage in John is like that valuable store front. On it's face, with a plain reading, the narrative is immensely valuable in what it explicitly reveals about who Jesus is.
- But if we start to push a little, dig past what is initially obvious, we discover treasure veiled behind the walls of our own unfamiliarity with Ancient Near East Jewish culture.
- JTB's obfuscation regarding his identity, his reluctance to take a title, actually connects us back to a passage in Isaiah 40 where a totally anonymous voice cries out in a wilderness.
  - When the New Testament references a line from the Old Testament, it is usually referencing that line AND the surrounding context.
- Now, Isaiah 40 is one of my favorite passages in the bible, and not just because I had to memorize it in Bible College.
  - Its because after 39 Chapters of almost exclusively doomful proclamation of coming judgement and exile, there is a shift... notice, the first words of the passage are
- “Comfort, comfort my people,” says your God. 2 “Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and announce to her that her time of forced labor is over, her iniquity has been pardoned, and she has received from the Lord’s hand double for all her sins.” 3 A voice of one crying out: Prepare the way of the Lord in the wilderness; make a straight highway for our God in the desert. 4 Every valley will be lifted up, and every mountain and hill will be leveled; the uneven ground will become smooth and the rough places, a plain. 5 And the glory of the Lord will appear, and all humanity[b] together will see it, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.
- What is happening here?
  - Isaiah is prophesying (BEFORE ANY OF THIS STUFF EVER HAPPENED) that there will be an end to the coming Exile of the nation of Israel, and that the glory of God will return to Jerusalem... and he welds these two ideas (end of exile + return of the Glory of God) together... (Mention Nehemiah?)
- Why is the glory of God returning to Jerusalem part of this prophecy? Well, get ready to trip out a little bit: The prophet Ezekiel, whose prophecies begins while he is IN the exile that Isaiah prophesied about, has a vision:
  - Ezekiel sees the glory of the Lord that resides in the temple, which Pastor Jeff talked about last week, he sees that glory lift itself out of the Temple, move to the Eastern gate of the city... and depart into the wilderness to the East...
  - Where does the prophecy in Isaiah command for a road, a straight and level path to be built? In the wilderness... because the Glory of the Lord is going to return from the same direction it left...
- Want to trip out even more?
  - Where did Jesus enter the city of Jerusalem in the triumphal entry?
    - From the mount of Olives in the East, through the same Eastern gate that the glory had departed from.

- Where did Jesus ascend to heaven from? The mount of Olives, right outside the Eastern Gate...
  - Now this is debatable, but where does traditional Christian eschatology have Jesus returning to in the second coming? The mount of olives.... And he will enter in through the Eastern Gate.... Then there will be the new Jerusalem, the new Garden City, where the dwelling place of God will be with men...
- What John the Baptist is linking us to in claiming to be the “voice crying in the desert” is not just the end of Israel’s exile from the land, but the return of the glory of God... and
- **The Beginning of the End of Exile** from the presence of God...
  - Brothers and sisters, we were exiles... exiles from the Garden because of our sin, sin that cut us off from the place of intimate fellowship in the presence of God...
  - So when JTB proclaims “Here is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” he is saying “here is the end of your exile from the Garden... from the presence of God... because God is dealing with the wages of your sin”
    - In this proclamation JTB is echoing Isaiah 40 again...
      - Look at verse 9 in Isaiah 40: “Zion, herald of good news, go up on a high mountain. Jerusalem, herald of good news, raise your voice loudly. Raise it, do not be afraid! Say to the cities of Judah, “Here is your God!” 10 See, the Lord God comes with strength, and his power establishes his rule. His wages are with him, and his reward accompanies him. 11 He protects his flock like a shepherd; he gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them in the fold of his garment. He gently leads those that are nursing.
  - John is completing his task as an Old Covenant prophet, by directing everyone’s attention to the perfect fullest revelation of God: the incarnate Word, Jesus of Nazareth
    - John’s message of The Reality of Humanity, The Goodness + Graciousness + Greatness of God, and the Beginning of the End of Exile is all summarized in that short phrase: “Here is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.”
      - And that message is transformative. Which leads us to the 2<sup>nd</sup> part of the passage which I have titled:
- **The First Disciples or the Continuing Heralds.**
  - In the Gospel narrative, at verse 35 a shift takes place... we go from simply HEARING about these things from a prophetic mouth piece, to discovering that, in Christ, these things are experiential...
- First we experience the **Reality of Humanity.**
  - Read with me from verse 35: 35 The next day, John was standing with two of his disciples. 36 When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, “Look, the Lamb of God!” 37 The two disciples heard him say this and followed Jesus. 38 When Jesus turned and noticed them following him, he asked them, “What are you looking for?” They said to him, “Rabbi” (which means “Teacher”), “where are you staying?” 39 “Come and you’ll see,” he replied. So they went and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day. It was about four in the afternoon. Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, was one of the

two who heard John and followed him. 41 He first found his own brother Simon and told him, “We have found the Messiah”[r] (which is translated “the Christ”), 42 and he brought Simon to Jesus. When Jesus saw him, he said, “You are Simon, son of John.[s] You will be called Cephas” (which is translated “Peter”).

- These two disciples who initially follow Jesus, are experiencing some measure of desire to be around Him.
  - Notice, it was when they heard John call Him the Lamb of God that they decided to follow.
    - Was it a longing to be forgiven of sin that inspired their leaving John? Was it fascination with ancient religious ritual? Did they just think him a cooler teacher than JTB?
    - Whatever it was, there was something they weren’t getting from JTB that they thought Jesus might have.
  - That feeling of neediness is written into our very existence because we were made to live in dependence upon God.
    - Isn’t that part of our experience when being drawn to the Lord?
      - All of our on-ramps into Christianity are different, but they all involve some measure of needing something deep down.
    - Even if your conversion was largely a mental exercise, there was still the need to find intellectual rest in something...
  - I think Jesus affirms this very human reality, with his question: What are you looking for?
- And here they start to experience the **Goodness + Greatness + Graciousness of God**
  - The two disciples answer to Jesus question seems funny to me, “Uhhh.... We want to know where you live.”
    - But the passage tells us that it was getting late in the day, they were probably getting hungry and worried about where they were going to stay that night.
    - The rules of hospitality would have required Jesus to provide rest and refreshment for these two if he took them to where he was staying.
  - And what do we see Jesus do? Be gracious to them and invite them over!
    - “Come, and you will see” he said... Come, I promise I won’t turn you away, I won’t put you out, I won’t reject you... Come, I’ll provide shelter and food for you...
- And what starts to happen? These people who experience the goodness and graciousness of God in Christ become Heralds of that God... they go and find their family and friends and start to tell them about Jesus...
  - Then their family and friends start to experience the power and greatness of God...
    - Jesus gives Simon a new name... in the OT only God has the power to give people new names...
    - Look what happens with Nathanael:
      - 43 The next day Jesus[u] decided to leave for Galilee. He found Philip and told him, “Follow me. 44 Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the hometown of Andrew and Peter. 45 Philip found Nathanael and told him, “We have found the one Moses wrote about in the law (and so did the prophets): Jesus the son of



Joseph, from Nazareth.” 46 “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Nathanael asked him. “Come and see,” Philip answered. 47 Then Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said about him, “Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit.” 48 “How do you know me?” Nathanael asked. “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you,” Jesus answered. 49 “Rabbi,” Nathanael replied, “You are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel!” 50 Jesus responded to him, “Do you believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than this.”

- Jesus reveals His divine greatness in his Omniscient understanding of who Nathanael is and where he has been, and that greatness draws him in... draws him closer to a saving knowledge of who Jesus is...
- Finally, let's not miss what is obvious here simply because it is so obvious. As each disciple comes into relationship with the Lord, for their variety of reasons, what they are experiencing is:
- **The Beginning of the End of Exile.**
  - Although it is INTENSELY HUMBLE:  
God is once again dwelling with His people... Once again revealing His glory among them...  
Once again providing light and understanding and life.
- As it says in the passage from Isaiah 40, He is gathering His sheep as a shepherd, tenderly caring for them, and they are going out and bringing in the other exiles...
- Everyone in the room is a direct spiritual descendant of our first parents who were exiled from the Garden... we were born in exile... and for most of us we have longed to return to Eden... to peace, to prosperity, to life... we have lived our lives with a subtle awareness that we are not where we should be... that thorns and thistles and toil and enmity with the creation and with one another IS NOT WHAT WE WERE MADE FOR... we were made for citizenship, not exile...
- For those of us who are believers in Christ, we are all direct spiritual descendants of JTB... He was the first to proclaim Christ to the exiles... and his disciples became Jesus disciples who made other disciples... other Heralds proclaiming the good news about the end of exile and the return of the glory of the Lord... until finally someone proclaimed the Good News about Him to you...
- FOR THE CHRISTIAN HERE IS OUR APPLICATION: WHO AND WHAT ARE YOU HERALDING WITH YOUR LIFE?
  - When we become disciples of Jesus, we are commissioned into the role of Herald.
  - It doesn't matter whether you want to be or not, its just what you are...
  - So what message are you proclaiming to your family, your neighbors, your coworkers...
  - Is it the false Gospel of the American Dream? The poisonous Gospel of Self Pity? The unmerciful Gospel of Self-Sufficiency and Rugged Individualism?
  - Or is it the Good News of Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world?
    - Because that is your family's, neighbors, coworkers greatest need... that the penalty of sin be removed from their account and they be reconciled to God.

- **FOR THE UNBELIEVER:** The beginning of the end of your exile can start today because the Lamb has come... He knows your need... He knows your humanity... He is offering his goodness, his greatness, his grace to you...