

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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Testimony, Relationships and Experience

by Dan Trygg

“This is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent to him priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, ‘Who are you?’²⁰ And he confessed and did not deny, but confessed, ‘I am not the Christ.’²¹ They asked him, ‘What then? Are you Elijah?’ And he said, ‘I am not.’ ‘Are you the Prophet?’ And he answered, ‘No.’²² Then they said to him, ‘Who are you, so that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?’²³ He said, ‘I am a voice of one crying in the wilderness, “Make straight the way of the Lord,”’ as Isaiah the prophet said...³⁵ The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples,³⁶ and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, ‘Behold, the Lamb of God!’³⁷ The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus.³⁸ Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, ‘What are you seeking?’ And they said to Him, ‘Rabbi’ (which means Teacher), ‘where are you staying?’³⁹ He said to them, ‘Come and you will see.’ So they came and saw where He was staying, and they stayed with Him that day, for it was about the tenth hour (4:00 p.m.).⁴⁰ One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.⁴¹ He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, ‘We have found the Messiah’ (which means Christ).⁴² He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, ‘So you are Simon the son of John? You shall be called Kephas’ (which means Peter [‘Rock, Boulder’]).⁴³ The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, ‘Follow Me.’⁴⁴ Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.⁴⁵ Philip found Nathanael and said to him, ‘We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.’⁴⁶ Nathanael said to him, ‘Can anything good come out of Nazareth?’ Philip said to him, ‘Come and see.’”

John 1:19-23,35-46

John the Baptist was the son of a godly priest (Lk. 1:5-17). He was living in the wilderness, a very desolate and inhospitable place, until the Lord called him to begin his public ministry (Lk. 1:80). He lived a very ascetic and simple life, subsisting off of locusts and wild honey. He appeared one day, near the fords of the Jordan, across from Jericho, where pilgrims from Galilee would cross the river on the way to or from Jerusalem. His appearance was striking. He wore a camel hair garment, with a leather belt around his waist. This was reminiscent of the appearance of Elijah the prophet, who had lived nearly 900 years before. Elijah was described as “a hairy man with a leather belt” (2 Kg. 1:8). Whether intentional, or not, John’s appearance would have reminded people of Elijah. His manner, message and location would also have struck a chord with the people.

Elijah was a “sojourner” (‘Tishbite’ [1 Kg. 17:1] may not be a reference to the town of Elijah’s birth. The root word can mean “sojourner”.) **in the wilderness, on the eastern side of the Jordan. Where did John the Baptist appear? At Bethany beyond the Jordan (Jn. 1:28). What was his message? He was calling the people to “repent”, to “make ready the way for the Lord”, because the reign of God was near (Mat. 3:2-3). He was proclaiming a “baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins” (Lk. 3:3). This was a message of purification, renewal and consecration to God. He was saying, “God is coming, get your hearts prepared for Him.”**

As is often the case when someone stirs the pot, or calls for change, **those of the status quo ask, “Who are you? What gives you the right to say these things? What are your credentials? What do you say about yourself?”** Maybe that has happened to you. I know it has happened to me, numerous times. **In John’s case, they had a ready list of possible candidates for what John might be claiming for himself. There were some people that the scriptures had said would be coming. Was John one of them?**

According to Luke 3:15, **many of the common people were already thinking that John might be the Christ.** The word, “Christ”, means “anointed one”. It is the Greek parallel word for “Messiah” in Hebrew. **It was a title, meaning, “king” (Lk. 23:2).** It was prophesied, in several places, that a descendant of David would arise and come to power. He would reign over the nation of Israel, and His kingdom would spread and have no limit (Isa. 9:6,7; 11:1-16; Ezk. 34:13-24; Dan. 9:25; Mic. 5:2-4). **John volunteered, “I am not the Christ.”**

Then, some supposed that he might be Elijah. Elijah the prophet was one of the greatest prophets. If Moses represented the Law, then Elijah represented the prophetic ministry. His story is found in 1 Kings 17-2 Kings 2. **Elijah had called the people to return to Yahweh, much like John was doing, and certainly John’s physical appearance and manner of living were similar to Elijah.** One of the things that made Elijah so prominent in their minds is that he had never died. He went bodily into heaven (2 Kg. 2), and the last prophet, Malachi, declared that Elijah would return before the day of God’s judgment came upon the earth (Mal. 4:5,6). Although there were a lot of parallels between John and Elijah, and at the announcement of his birth the angel even said that he would come “in the spirit and power of Elijah” (Lk.1:17), he was not a return of that prophet. **When asked if he was Elijah, he replied, “I am not.”**

Then, there was “the Prophet”. “The Prophet” was someone that Moses had spoken of, some 1,400 years before. In Deuteronomy 18:15, Moses said, “Yahweh your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among

you, from your countrymen". What made *this* Prophet so distinct from typical prophets was that **he would know Yahweh as intimately as Moses did, and he would operate in powerful signs and wonders as Moses had** (Deut. 18:18; 34:10-12; Num. 12:6-8). **When asked, John said he was *not* this Prophet.**

John did not have the "credentials" that these religious leaders were looking for. He was not schooled in the rabbinic schools. He was not the Christ, Elijah or the Prophet. **So, what was the basis for his bold and radical message? "What do you say about yourself?"** they demanded.

John simply said, "I am a voice." "I am a voice crying in the wilderness, make straight the way for the Lord," as Isaiah the prophet had said. This was a simple declaration. **He was a voice, a voice like Isaiah the prophet had spoken about (40:3).** By quoting this verse, John was able to make a simple, straightforward claim. **He was doing nothing inconsistent with what the scriptures had said.** In fact, he was doing the very thing that Isaiah had spoken of some 700 years before. **His authority for his ministry was the word of God.**

Isaiah's message here was a message of comfort, a calling of God's people back to Himself. It was an offer of forgiveness and pardon. They were to prepare their hearts for the coming of God's glory. **God was going to come to His people, and all humanity would see it. This was a message of good news. But they were to prepare themselves by repentance, confessing their sins, and calling on God's mercy. The washing of baptism that John was preaching represented cleansing and dedication to God.** It was a way to humble themselves, and start fresh with Him.

What would *you* say to this? What is the basis *you* would have to talk about Jesus? Do you know that Christ has commissioned *you* to testify about Him, and that He has qualified *you* by virtue of the Holy Spirit which is in you? Do you have a verse that describes *your* heart, *your* calling and *your* vision for the ministry God has for you?

After this interaction with the religious authorities, John's ministry took on a new dimension. **He was sent by God to bear witness to the Light** (Jn. 1:6,7). He spoke of Him as "the One coming after me, who existed before me", "One whose sandal I am not even worthy to untie", and "the One who will baptize in the Holy Spirit" (1:15,27,31-33). **God gave John a specific sign to watch for, in order to identify Him.** He was to watch for the Holy Spirit to descend upon this person. **John saw this, and he testified that Jesus was the One.** He was the Lamb who would take away the sin of the world, the "son of God" (a title for the Messianic king – Psalm 2). **He began to point others to Jesus, beginning with his own disciples** (vss. 35,36).

Two of John's disciples began to follow Jesus, to see where He was staying. Jesus noticed that they were following Him, and asked what they were looking for. **When they said that they were wanting to know where He was staying, He said, "Come and see."** He invited them to spend the rest of the afternoon and evening with Him. They were all pilgrims from Galilee, who had travelled up to Jerusalem for a feast. Now, they were preparing to go back. It was not difficult to have two more guests at the campsite, and it gave them opportunity to talk with Jesus. **Having come to know Him, they quickly became convinced that He was indeed the Messiah.**

One of these two was Andrew. His first reaction to having come to this realization was to seek out his own brother, Simon, and tell him that they had found the Messiah. He brought Simon to Jesus. The next day, as they were intending to return to Galilee, Jesus found Philip, a friend from the same home town as Andrew and Simon Kephas. Philip was soon convinced that Jesus was the Messiah, and Jesus called him to "follow" Him. **Philip then went and found Nathanael, another friend, and told him that they had found the One of whom Moses, the Law, and the prophets had spoken of, Jesus of Nazareth. When Nathanael first heard of Jesus' background, he was scornful.** Nazareth! Nazareth was just a small obscure village of about 400 people. It was located in a bowl-shaped area about 400 feet up the cliffs above the Jezreel Valley (aka the valley of Armageddon), on the northern edge. Houses were made of rock, some even carved into the limestone cliffs. Nathanael was from Cana, just a few miles to the north. Nathanael's negative remark may be from local rivalry, or because there was no prophetic reference to anyone significant coming out of Nazareth. In fact, it is not even mentioned in the Hebrew scriptures. **Philip's response was "Come and see."** When he met Jesus, however, Nathanael was rapidly convinced, as were the others. Jesus told him about himself, describing things that he could not have humanly known. Nathanael exclaimed, "You are the Son of God. You are the King of Israel." Jesus told him he would see much greater things.

There are three things to highlight for us. **First, if we start to tell people about Jesus, we should not be surprised if they may challenge us,** "Who do you think you are? What are your credentials? Why should I listen to you?" We can simply respond, "I am just one voice. I am telling you what I have seen and heard, and what I have experienced. I am not saying anything that is new. In fact, I am describing what the scriptures have always taught. It may seem new or different to you, but it is consistent with the word of God." Like John, we don't have to convince, we just are to bear witness to the Light. **Second, notice that people generally come to Christ through relationships they have with others.** Family members, friends, co-workers often share their new faith with those they know. **Finally, we always want to encourage people to "Come and see."** We want them to encounter Jesus for themselves.