

John chapter 1 v. 19 to 51.

<sup>19</sup> Now this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" <sup>20</sup> He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ."

<sup>21</sup> And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No." <sup>22</sup> Then they said to him, "Who are you, that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?"

<sup>23</sup> He said: "I am 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Make straight the way of the LORD,'" as the prophet Isaiah said." <sup>24</sup> Now those who were sent were from the Pharisees.

<sup>25</sup> And they asked him, saying, "Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?" <sup>26</sup> John answered them, saying, "I baptize with water, but there stands One among you whom you do not know.

<sup>27</sup> It is He who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose."

<sup>28</sup> These things were done in Bethabara beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

<sup>29</sup> The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! <sup>30</sup> This is He of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me.'

<sup>31</sup> I did not know Him; but that He should be revealed to Israel, therefore I came baptizing with water."

<sup>32</sup> And John bore witness, saying, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him.

<sup>33</sup> I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' <sup>34</sup> And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God."

<sup>35</sup> Again, the next day, John stood with two of his disciples. <sup>36</sup> And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God!" <sup>37</sup> The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.

<sup>38</sup> Then Jesus turned, and seeing them following, said to them, "What do you seek?" They said to Him, "Rabbi" (which is to say, when translated, Teacher), "where are You staying?"

<sup>39</sup> He said to them, "Come and see." They came and saw where He was staying, and remained with Him that day (now it was about the tenth hour). <sup>40</sup> One of the two who heard John *speak*, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.

<sup>41</sup> He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated, the Christ). <sup>42</sup> And he brought him to Jesus. Now when Jesus looked at him, He said, "You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas" (which is translated, A Stone).

<sup>43</sup> The following day Jesus wanted to go to Galilee, and He found Philip and said to him, "Follow Me." <sup>44</sup> Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.

<sup>45</sup> 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." <sup>46</sup> And Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see."

<sup>47</sup> Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!" <sup>48</sup> Nathanael said to Him, "How do You know me?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you."

<sup>49</sup> Nathanael answered and said to Him, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!"

<sup>50</sup> Jesus answered and said to him, "Because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree,' do you believe? You will see greater things than these."

<sup>51</sup> And He said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

Last week in the introduction to John's gospel we discovered that the theme of the gospel can be found in John chapter 20: v. 30-31.

John wrote his gospel so that we might believe in Jesus Christ, and by believing we might have life in His name.

Therefore if you believe in Jesus you can have new life in his name.

We also discovered last week that John chapter 1 v. 1 to 18 introduced us to a number of themes, which we will later discover in the gospel of John.

These themes give us a clear picture of who Jesus is and why we should believe in him.

1. Jesus was pre- existent before the world began.
2. Jesus is the true light which destroys all the darkness.
3. Jesus Christ came to his own people the Jewish nation, however salvation is offered to all both Jews and gentiles.
4. To become a Christian you need to be born again of the Spirit of God and not of your own decision or merit.
5. John's gospel shows us the Glory of God through the life of Jesus Christ.
6. John's gospel shows us the difference between the Law of God and the Grace of Jesus Christ.
7. John's gospel links the Old Testament with the New Testament.

Today we can see clearly the link between the Old Testament and the New Testament.

John teaches us that Jesus Christ is the long awaited messiah taught through the prophets in the Old Testament scriptures.

In the passage that I read earlier from John 1: v. 19-51 there are 3 important things presented to us.

1. John the Baptist's relationship to Jesus. ( v. 19-28 )
2. John the Baptist's witness concerning the identity of Jesus.  
(v.29-36)
3. Jesus displaying his divinity and attracting His first disciples.  
(v.37-51)

We are told in the text that an official delegation came from Jerusalem to discover the identity of John the Baptist. The reason for their interest in John the Baptist is that according to Matthew 3: v. 5 and v. 7, he was attracting a large crowd of people from all over the area. The Jewish people

travelled quite a distance to hear John the Baptist preach and be baptized by him. John the Baptist was a Levite, the tribe that God set apart to serve Him in the Tabernacle and then later in the temple.

The Jewish rulers were particularly interested in the identity of John the Baptist because he was attracting so many followers.

We are not told the first questions that the Jewish rulers asked John the Baptist, we are only told his reply.

John said that he was not the Christ.

Then they asked John if he was Elijah because Elijah was anticipated by the Jews in some form before the arrival of the Messiah. ( Mal. 4:5 )

The Jews then asked John if he was the "Prophet". They were referring to Deuteronomy 18: v. 15-18 where a Prophet was promised like Moses.

The Jewish leaders thought that they had exhausted all the scriptural possibilities so they said, "well, who are you? so that we can give an answer to the leaders who sent us."

John the Baptist replied by quoting the Prophet Isaiah chapter 40 v. 3.

This quotation is significant because the book of Isaiah is full of promises to God's people in exile. They were promised that their exile would not go on forever. There will be a time of rescue when God will lead His people home. God the rescuer will come in the form of a triumphant conqueror who would also be a suffering servant.

John the Baptist says his ministry is only to prepare people for the coming of the Messiah.

The Jewish leaders then challenge John the Baptist about his ministry to baptize people if he is not the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet. Why then is John the Baptist doing all these Baptisms in the wilderness?

John doesn't answer the question. Immediately he points away from himself to someone else who is far greater than him. He says that he is not worthy to untie the sandals of this person.

John the Baptist displays great humility within the context of the society of that day.

A student of that day was expected to do anything for his master that a slave would be expected to do, except take off his dirty sandals. John was saying that he was not even worthy to untie the sandals of this person.

John the Baptist's relationship to Jesus was one of great humility. What an example to us as we serve Jesus in our community here at OIC.

## 2. John the Baptist's witness concerning the identity of Jesus (v. 29-36 )

John now tells us about this person whom he humbly says that he is not worthy to untie his sandals. John describes this person as "The lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" ( v. 29) Q. What's that all about?

Well in order to understand that statement you must have an understanding of the sinful nature of everybody born into this world and how God dealt with that sin through the death of an animal as described in the Old Testament writings in the Bible.

- a) In Genesis chapter 2& 3 we read an account about how men and women became sinful in their nature. God created man perfect and then created a woman from the man to be his supporter or helper. They were given complete freedom in God's created world to do what they like, except for one condition. They could not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. ( Gen.2:v. 17 ) If they did disobey, God promised death. God meant both physical death and

death to the relationship with God, which they enjoyed. Sadly Adam and Eve disobeyed which meant that they were separated from God both physically and spiritually. They were cursed and the ground also.

God had mercy on them and killed an animal to provide covering for their nakedness. ( Gen. 3:v. 21 ) This was the first time we hear of God killing an animal to provide a covering for sinful man and woman.

The next time we hear of an animal being killed to provide forgiveness of sin is in Genesis chapter 4 where we read the story of Cain and Able.

A thorough study of the Bible leads us to believe that God communicated with Cain and Abel and told them to take an animal, kill it, and let its blood run out on an altar, this was a stone where the sacrifices were made.

The thought of doing this makes us feel horribly repulsive. What reason would God have for this instruction?

Well if we turn to Hebrews 9: v. 22 we read “ ...without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin..”

God was saying that man’s sin-debt could only be paid, or forgiven, if there was death. But why blood? Why not drowning?

Leviticus 17: v. 11 tells “for the life of a creature is in the blood, and have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one’s life..”

The concept of a blood sacrifice has two aspects:

Firstly SUBSTITUTION – Normally man would die for his own sin. But now, based on certain future events, God was saying that He would accept an innocent animal’s death in man’s place – as a substitute. It was life for a life, the innocent animal dying in place of the guilty person. God’s justice was fulfilled, sin must be punished with death as God promised.

The SECOND aspect of a blood sacrifice was that of ATONEMENT - God said that the blood would make atonement for sin. The word atonement means covering. The shed blood would cover man’s sin. Therefore when God looked at man, He would no longer see the sin. Man would be viewed as righteous and therefore acceptable by God. The relationship would be restored. Man would still die physically, but the eternal consequences for his sin would not apply. (Bible reference here)

Throughout the Old Testament in the Tabernacle and Temple, whenever you came to worship of God, an animal sacrifice was provided to make atonement for your sin.

Now we come back to this person that John the Baptist identifies in v. 29. He is described as the “Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world..”

We know that usually an innocent lamb was sacrificed for sin, but John here says, he is the Lamb of God. In other words, God was going to provide someone, who would do the same job as the lambs did in the Old Testament, but this lamb was going to be a person and this person was going to be sacrificed to TAKE AWAY the sin of the world.

The physical lambs acted as a covering for sin, but now the Lamb of God was going to TAKE AWAY sin. How wonderful is that. There would no longer be a need to sacrifice animals for our sin.

John the Baptist also said that this person was not only going to be the Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world, but also was going to Baptize His followers with the Holy Spirit.

Later on in John’s gospel in chapter 14: v.16, 26 John records Jesus’s promise that the Holy Spirit will come to His disciples. That promise was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost.( Acts 2)

However we will deal with the Holy Spirit later on in the series.

The third identification of this coming person was that it had been revealed to John the Baptist that he is the Son of God. In v. 32 we are told that John witnessed the Spirit descending from Heaven like a dove, and remaining upon Him. He was told by God that this is how he would identify the Son of God. John said in v. 34 “ ...I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God.”

So to sum up the three things John identified about Jesus.

Firstly He was the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.

Secondly He was going to baptize with the Holy Spirit.

Thirdly He was the Son of God.

We now move on to the third section of our text. This is Jesus displaying His divinity, proving Himself to be God in human form and also attracting his first disciples.

The point of this passage is to take us from the witness of John the Baptist to the call of Jesus.

There is a transferable principle here, we witness about Jesus, but Jesus calls people to Himself.

We can't do the work of the Holy Spirit, but we can witness about the life and work of Jesus on the cross. It is up to the Holy Spirit to the work of conviction of sin.

It says in John 16: v. 8 “And when He has come (Holy Spirit) He will convict the world of sin and of righteousness, and of judgment.”

In v. 35-36 John the Baptist witnesses again about Jesus in the presence of two of his disciples. John declared Jesus again to be the “Lamb of God”.

Immediately the two disciples followed Jesus.

It is interesting to note what Jesus said. – “What do you seek” To put it in easy English we would say – “What are you looking for?” or “What do you want?”

The first question that Jesus asks His first disciples is “What is in your heart and mind”

Today around the world too many people are following Jesus for the wrong reasons. They want health, wealth and prosperity.

The problem with this is when they are sick or become poor they feel that God has let them down and they turn away from following Jesus. Jesus wants us to examine our reasons for following Him. We must align our reasons with the clear call of Jesus, to forsake all and follow Him, whatever the cost, however difficult the journey. Having all of our sins forgiven, past, present, and future, having an eternal home in Heaven and a personal relationship with Jesus should be enough, whether we are sick, poor or disabled, it matters not.

For the benefit of the Greek readers John translates Rabbi to Teacher. The answer from the first two disciples was one of humility and respect for Jesus. They were following for the right reasons.

Andrew was the first disciple to hear John the Baptist and Jesus, he immediately found his brother, Simon and introduced him to Jesus.

Jesus looked at Simon and said “You are Simon the son of Jonah, You shall be called Cephas”

The word that Jesus used in Aramaic was probably “kepa” which is a word meaning ROCK.

We know that Simon/Peter failed Jesus many times but eventually God's Holy Spirit made him like a rock. Jesus knew Peter's heart and He knew the potential in that young life to Glorify God.

If we seek to follow Jesus with a sincere heart, He can change our lives so that they will glorify God. We may fail like Peter, but failure is often an opportunity for spiritual growth and development. We only know the present but Jesus sees the future. You can trust Him with your life.

Jesus knows you, Jesus loves you, Jesus cares for you, and Jesus will give the very best to those who leave the choice to HIM.

Next in the text we discover that Jesus wanted to go to Galilee where He found Philip.

Philip introduced Nathanael to Jesus.

Nathanael was very skeptical about Jesus, the Messiah, but Philip replied, "COME AND SEE"

When Nathanael met Jesus he changed his mind about Him.

Jesus then displayed his Omniscience (All knowing) by telling Nathanael that He saw him under the fig tree before Philip called him.

It was at this point that Nathanael acknowledged Jesus as the Son of God and the King of Israel.

Jesus replied to Nathanael promising greater things than His "All Knowing" attribute.

Jesus highlighted one of these greater things by saying that one day they would see Heaven open and Angels of God, ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.

Why did Jesus say this? And what was He referring to?

The image is drawn from Genesis 28: v. 12, where we read an account of Jacob's dream.

What the disciples are promised is a Heaven sent confirmation that the person they have acknowledged as the Messiah has been appointed by God. Every Jew honored Jacob, the father of the 12 tribes of Israel, now everyone must recognize that this same God has appointed Jesus as his Messiah.

Applications for us here today at OIC in Japan.

The application to us must follow the same lines as the application to the people of that time.

Firstly – We should listen to what John the Baptist has to say about Jesus and the purpose of this long awaited Messiah. Remember Jesus had come to deal with sin in our lives as the main purpose of His coming.

Secondly – We should recognize that Jesus examines our motives. What are we really looking for in our life with Jesus? Take a moment this week to examine the motives in following Jesus. What do you really want? Does this align with God's purposes for you? I have found that the best way to discover God's purpose for your life is to completely surrender your whole life to Him. It's not easy to do this, because you never know where God may lead you or what God may require of you. However, God gives the very best to those that leave the choice to Him.

Although I fully surrendered my life to Jesus when I was 28 years old, about 18 months ago I felt that I had to re-dedicate my life to God, in order to check that I was fully aligned to His purposes. He clearly led me back to Japan.

Thirdly – In v. 50 Jesus promised greater things in the future for His disciples. Jesus may well have greater things for the OIC fellowship. Are we willing to align ourselves to what God has for OIC?