

Gospels class 13-Jesus makes His first disciples, turns water to wine
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Good morning/afternoon,

Today we'll pick up the story in the Gospel of John, chapter 1. Last time we talked about the Jerusalem religious establishment sending priest and Levites out to question John the baptizer, and he said he was not the Messiah or the Prophet like Moses, or Elijah, but was the voice in the wilderness crying out, "Make straight the way of the Lord." And then he identified Jesus and the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world and testified that Jesus was the Son of God. We then talked about the prophecy of Daniel 9 that foretold that the Messiah would appear in the year 27 A.D., which was the year in which Jesus appeared and began His ministry. Now we pick it up today with events that follow right after those we covered last time.

John 1:35-51

35 Again, the next day, John stood with two of his disciples.

"The next day"—notice John 1:29, verse 35 here, verse 43 and John 2:1.

John 1:29—

29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

43 The following day Jesus wanted to go to Galilee . . .

This is showing what happened on the next three days after the events we talked about last time, when the Jerusalem religious establishment sent priests and Levites out to question John. I mention this to show that sometimes John gives a great deal of detail about events that take place in a short period of time. We find this is particularly true when he writes about the events of the last few days of Jesus Christ's life. He does this here at the beginning of Christ's ministry, and he does so again at the end of that ministry.

Another things to notice here is that John the baptizer has disciples, too. This shows that he is considered a notable rabbi, because you didn't have disciples unless you were a notable rabbi. We need to understand this training system of rabbi and disciple, so I want to spend some time on that. I gave an entire sermon on that last January, and will probably give some others before this series is through. But we need to understand it, because that's what we're called to be a part of and that's a key reason why we're doing this series of going through the Gospels in such detail.

We are all called to be **a student, a learner, a disciple**—or, as the Bible calls it, a *talmid*. That was the Hebrew word. "*Talmidim*" is the plural. Collectively, we are *talmidim*. We are a group of disciples, learners, students, which is what this Hebrew word means. In Greek the equivalent word is *mathetes*.

So if one is a student, a learner, a disciple, one must have a teacher or leader or master. What was this teacher called in the Bible? A *rabbi*. Who is the most famous rabbi of the Bible? *Jesus Christ*. A dozen times in Scripture Jesus' followers call Him "Rabbi," which was a term of great honor and respect. In Hebrew it means "master" "a great one." Twice in Scripture Jesus is called *rabboni*, which means "great master" or "most honorable of all." Similar terms in Scripture would be "teacher" or "Lord," both of which are used quite often of Jesus Christ.

You could say that *Rabbi* wraps up all of these meanings—*teacher, master and great one*—all in one term. Yes, a rabbi was a teacher, but his followers also saw him as a great master. And yes,

he was a master, but his followers also saw him as a great teacher. And yes, he was a great one, but his followers also saw him as a teacher and master. All of these meanings are wrapped up in the term *Rabbi*, which they applied to Jesus.

And the followers of a rabbi were called, in Hebrew, *talmidim*, or in Greek, *mathetes*. And yes, it meant disciple, or student, or learner, but it meant *more* than that. Because a disciple or student or learner wanted to do more than just *learn* what the teacher or rabbi knew. He wanted more than that. *He wanted to be just like the teacher*. He wanted *to be like him in every way*. That is what a true disciple is.

In Galilee of that day, this kind of teaching was done much like an apprenticeship. There was a certain amount of classroom instruction that was done at the local synagogue. There boys and girls would go to learn the Hebrew Scriptures in a classroom. And they would also learn a trade outside of the synagogue. Most boys would learn the trade of their fathers—farmer, builder, metalworker, potter, fisherman, or whatever. They would've gone to school at the local synagogue for part of the day, and part of the day helped out on the family property and learning the trade of their fathers.

As we've covered previously, from about age five or six to about age 12 the boys and girls would've gone to school at the synagogue where their schooling focused on the Bible. They would learn large portions of Scripture. They would learn things like history too, but it would be the history of Israel and the biblical heroes and kings and other characters. They would learn things like geography, but it would be the geography of the Holy Land. So it wasn't *all* Bible, but their education was certainly centered around the Bible.

In this schooling, the boys were expected to *memorize the entire Torah*, the five books of Moses—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy—by age 12. Of course, not all Jewish boys were capable of doing this, but the small minority who were able to memorize the entire Torah then moved on to the next level of learning, where they would go on to study the rest of the Hebrew Bible with the goal of memorizing the entire Tanakh, or what we would call the Old Testament.

Again, most of them would not be able to do that, so at some point, either at age 12 or beyond, they would end this formal study and learn their family trade—such as farmer, potter, builder, metal worker, leather worker or whatever. Those who were really gifted and had that aptitude for learning and understanding Scripture would then typically search out a rabbi to follow, or be invited by a rabbi to become one of his *talmidim*, or students.

But to follow a rabbi meant a great deal more than just sitting in a classroom and absorbing his lectures. It involved *literally following* the rabbi. The disciples would travel with, live with, eat with, and imitate their rabbis, learning not only from what they *said* but from what they *did* at all times—from the activities of everyday life as well as from the manner in which they lived. The goal of the disciple was to become *as much like his master and teacher as possible*.

You might say this was like an apprenticeship program. For thousands of years, up until the last century really, the way people learned their occupation was through an apprenticeship program. That method of learning was common for many centuries. Most of us today are hardly aware of this method of teaching and learning, but it was and is very effective.

This was precisely the way Jewish boys and girls learned in His day. The usual method of

learning was through hands-on experience, imitating someone who knew and practiced the skills they wanted to learn. Learning wasn't so much about retaining data as it was about absorbing essential knowledge and wisdom from those around him. This was also the method by which rabbis trained their talmidim.

And it's important for us to understand this because *we too are followers of a rabbi*, a rabbi by the name of Jesus Christ. Like Jesus' first talmidim, we also are to become His faithful followers, men and women who want to become just like Him. And like them, in turn we are called by our Master to "go and make disciples of all nations" as Jesus tells us to do in Matthew 28:19. We are to teach others to become like Jesus Christ. But we cannot do that *unless and until we become like Jesus Christ ourselves*.

As I discussed in that sermon back in January, there are **three keys to becoming a disciple:**

1. A disciple must spend as much time as possible with his master.

2. A disciple must be totally committed to his master.

3. A disciple must serve his master.

The point is to transform our lives so that we become like the master, the teacher, the rabbi, Jesus Christ. Again, that's why we're spending so much time going through the Gospels. We are not just to *learn from Him*; we are to *become like Him* in every way. And we can't become like Him if we don't understand *what He was like*.

A truism of life is that we will become like whatever we surround ourselves with or by whatever we allow into our minds. If we surround ourselves with negativity, we will become more negative. If we are with friends who are gossips, it will make us more careless about how we speak. If we are surrounded all the time with people who don't care about God's laws or are lax about them, we will grow lax about them ourselves. None of us is so mature and spiritually strong that we cannot or will not be influenced by those around us.

The question we have to always face is: Who or what do we want to shape our lives? Something is always shaping us. Will it be the culture and the world around us that shapes us, or will it be our master and teacher, Jesus Christ? Let's notice a passage that describes what the purpose of the ministry is in the Church. We find it in **Ephesians 4:11-13—**
Ephesians 4:11-13 (NIV)—

11 It was he [Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church] who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers,

12 to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up

13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

That's what we're doing here—becoming knowledgeable of the Son of God that we may mature and attain to the fullness of Christ—in other words, to become like Him in every way. So that's the point and the purpose of what we're doing. We're continuing the system that was in place in the first century that Jesus used to train His disciples.

So back to John 1:35-51—

35 Again, the next day, John stood with two of his disciples.

36 And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God!"

37 The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.

This is unusual. A rabbi definitely didn't point his disciples to another rabbi like this. But John did. John now understood that Jesus was the Messiah, the Lamb of God, and he wasn't afraid to point his disciples to Him. He wasn't jealous of Jesus; he knew that Jesus was destined to be first

and not him. He knew that he was to prepare a people for the coming of the Messiah, and this is what he did with these disciples—he pointed them to Jesus Christ.

38 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?”

Let’s notice several things here. First. These two disciples are following Jesus from a distance. And this was also typical of the culture of the day. If you wanted to follow a rabbi, you didn’t just march up and say you wanted to follow him. You hung back until he noticed and asked if you had a question or wanted to say something. That was the respectful way to approach a great rabbi. So Jesus notices these two and turns around and initiates the contact. He reaches out to them. You might say He meets them halfway. And that’s the way God works with us. He reaches out to us. He initiates the contact by calling us. No one comes to God unless the Father calls him, as John says later.

And notice the question Jesus asks them: **“What do you seek?”** Not *“Who do you seek,”* but *“What do you seek?”* Back then, like today, people seek different things. Some are just curious—religious hobbyists, you might say. They don’t really want to change their lives; they’re just curious and want to learn some new thing, like the Athenians who heard Paul.

Some, like the Pharisees of that day, wanted to know more than anybody else. They wanted to know every little minutia of the law so they would be smarter than everybody else. So they would go from rabbi to rabbi or teacher to teacher and pick up things here and there so they could show they were smarter than everybody else.

Some, like the Sadducees and Herodians, wanted power and control. They were ambitious and liked the good life and their prestige and position, and they wanted to hang onto it.

Some, like the zealots, wanted to gather recruits and find a great military commander who would lead them to kick out the Romans and build a new society based on God as they viewed him.

And some were humble men, sincere men, quietly seeking God and realizing they needed something greater than themselves to turn their lives around. What are you seeking for? Hopefully we fall in this last category—humble men and women, sincere, quietly seeking God because we know we need something greater than ourselves. So what are you seeking?

(So) **They said to Him, “Rabbi” (which is to say, when translated, Teacher), “where are You staying?”**

So they acknowledge Jesus as rabbi, meaning “teacher” or “master” or “great one.” And then they basically say, “We need to talk—where are you staying?” They’re telling Him that they want to talk with Him and spend time with Him and learn more to see if He really is who and what John said he was. And Jesus responds—

39 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).

So they stayed with Jesus the rest of that day and probably well into the night or overnight as well.

The “tenth hour” is about four o’clock in the afternoon, with John using the Jewish measurement of time by which days began at 6:00 a.m. What’s interesting is that John wrote his gospel in the 80s or 90s A.D., 50 to 60 years later, and he includes this little detail—that this took place at around 4:00 in the afternoon. This shows that it’s a personal account written by someone who

was there. Otherwise you wouldn't make up a detail that tiny.

Why does John translate terms such as "rabbi" here and "Messiah" in verse 41 and "Cephas" in verse 42? He's writing to a non-Jewish audience. Jews would've understood the terms, so they wouldn't need to be translated. This tells us that John wrote his Gospel primarily for a non-Jewish audience. This doesn't mean it wasn't for Jews also, but just that his primary audience was non-Jews.

40 One of the two who heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.

We see here that two of John's talmidim, hearing John say that Jesus was "the Lamb of God," started following Jesus. One is identified as Andrew, brother of Peter. Who do you suppose is the other one? Let's look at some information and ask some questions and see if we can find the most likely answer.

First, notice how much detail John includes about events around this time. John's Gospel contains much more detail than the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, who don't mention these things at all. Notice also that John's Gospel includes tiny little details like the fact that this happened at 4 o'clock in the afternoon, which tells us that John himself was an eyewitness to these things. If you put these little details together, the conclusion that's most likely is that John himself is most likely the other disciple who is mentioned here.

And this isn't the only place this happens in John's Gospel. We see something similar in **John 18:15-16**, describing events that took place after Jesus was arrested and taken to the residence of the high priest.

John 18:15-16—

15 And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple. Now that disciple was known to the high priest, and went with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest.

16 But Peter stood at the door outside. Then the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to her who kept the door, and brought Peter in.

Here John is writing about himself, but without explicitly stating that. We find another example in **John 21:20-24**, describing events at the Sea of Galilee after Jesus appears to the disciples after His resurrection.

John 21:20-24—

20 Then Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following, who also had leaned on His breast at the supper, and said, "Lord, who is the one who betrays You?"

21 Peter, seeing him, said to Jesus, "But Lord, what about this man?"

22 Jesus said to him, "If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you? You follow Me."

23 Then this saying went out among the brethren that this disciple would not die. Yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but, "If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you?"

24 This is the disciple who testifies of these things, and wrote these things; and we know that his testimony is true.

So if you put all of these clues together, it seems pretty clear that John is the other disciple of John the baptizer who, with Andrew, begins to follow Jesus Christ.

Back to John 1:41—

41 He [Andrew] first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated, the Christ).

As we talked about last time with the prophecy from Daniel 9, there was this prophecy that foretold the year that the Messiah would appear, and people were clearly expecting that. As for the Hebrew word *Messiah* or the Greek word *Christ*, they both mean “Anointed” or “Anointed One.” And I gave a sermon earlier this year about the significance of this as it relates to Jesus Christ—that anointing was done to set someone apart as king, to set someone apart as priest, to set someone apart as prophet, and to dedicate someone or something as holy for God’s use. And all four of these apply to Jesus Christ.

42 And he [Andrew] brought him [Simon] 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).

So Jesus renames this Jewish fisherman Simeon as *Kepha* in Hebrew or *Peter* in Greek, both of which mean “stone” or “rock.” You might say He gave him the name Rocky. It’s not uncommon in the New Testament for a person to have two names. Another disciple is called Thomas in Hebrew and Didymas in Greek. Another notable person in the New Testament was called Shaul in Hebrew and Paul in Greek.

We find this also in the book of Genesis where God renames people when he starts working with them in a new relationship. We see it when God changed Abram’s name to Abraham—from “exalted father” to “father of a multitude” or “father of nations,” and Jacob to Israel—from “supplanter” to “God prevails.” And now he changes a name from Simeon, which means “heard,” to Kepha or Peter, which means Rock or Stone—meaning that Peter is going to be a rock in the early Church, part of its solid foundation.

What does this mean for us? It means that when God looks at us, He isn’t looking at what we are now. He’s looking at our potential, and He sees something great in us. He sees what we’re going to become. In Peter he didn’t see a Galilean man who smelled like fish, he saw a man who could become a pillar in His Church.

I’m reminded of a story I read about the famous Italian sculptor Michelangelo, who was in his studio chipping away at large mass of marble stone. A visitor stopped by and asked Michelangelo what he was doing. Michelangelo responded, “I’m releasing the angel imprisoned in this marble.” And like Michelangelo with that piece of marble, God sees something wonderful in each of us that He wants to work with to bring it to its full potential.

Continuing in verse 43—

43 The following day Jesus wanted to go to Galilee, and He found Philip and said to him, “Follow Me.”

So now the scene shifts up the Jordan River valley to Galilee. And we see an invitation from Jesus, the rabbi, offering to let Philip become His talmid by telling him, “Follow Me.” And this is what a disciple, or talmid, was to do—to follow his rabbi and try to become like him in every way. And that’s what we are to do also.

44 Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.

We’ll talk more about Bethsaida later, but for now I’ll just say that it was one of a number of fishing villages along the shore of the Sea of Galilee. It was also the hometown 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 And Nathanael said to him, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Philip said to him, “Come and see.”

Nazareth wasn’t anything to write home about. It was a small village of several hundred people up

in the hills. It wasn't notable for anything. And thus it was viewed as kind of back in the sticks by some people. An interesting piece of background information on this is that Nathaniel was from Cana, as we see in **John 21:2**—

2 Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of His disciples were together.

Cana mentioned here was likely **Khirbet Kana, several miles north of Nazareth**. So there was probably some degree of rivalry between the two towns, just as we see today. Everybody thinks their town is better than the one next door. And it seems that Nathaniel is the same way. But I like Philip's response to Nathaniel—"Okay, if you don't believe me, come and see for yourself." And Nathaniel got to see his answer pretty quickly.

47 Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!" And that is a very high compliment. Any of us would like to hear such a compliment from God.

48 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."

Fig trees were a good resting place because they provided a lot of shade and a considerable amount of privacy. What was Nathanael doing under the fig tree? Presumably, from the way this is worded, he must have been meditating or praying or both. Maybe he was meditating on the Messiah or praying or the Messiah. And then this man comes up who can tell what he was doing in private.

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

It was stunning for Nathanael to come to face-to-face with someone who told him something that he thought no one else knew.

50 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."

51 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."

This seems like a strange statement, but it's a *remez* to something. What does this remind you of? Does it sound familiar? It's a *remez* back to **Genesis 28:12** where we read this about Jacob—**Genesis 28:12**—

12 Then he dreamed, and behold, a ladder was set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.

What does this have to do with Nathanael? There are several possibilities. One is that perhaps Jacob's dream is what Nathanael was thinking about under the fig tree, and Jesus points out to Nathan that He knew what he was thinking.

Another possibility is that this is a reference to Jesus Christ's return to earth, when Nathanael as a resurrected saint would see the heavens opened and Jesus Christ surrounded by angels as He returns to earth.

When Jacob had this dream he was fleeing from his brother Esau, and he dreamed of these angels ascending and descending on a ladder—or more likely a staircase. And he woke up and said, "God is in this place," and he named it *Bethel*, or "place of God." Another possibility is that just as Bethel was the place where God was revealed, maybe Jesus is pointing to Himself as the place and the way God is now being revealed.

Another possibility is to point back to the point of Jacob's dream. For Jacob's sake, the purpose

of the dream was to reassure him that God had not abandoned him. It was to show Jacob that, even though he was fleeing for his life, running away from his family and roots to become a wanderer, there would be a relationship between God and him as represented by this ladder or stairway between heaven and earth. In referring to this, Jesus may be telling Nathanael that he is going to witness a relationship between God in heaven and Him on earth to a degree and in a way never before seen by men. In other words, “If you think that relationship between Jacob and God was something, wait until you see the relationship between My Father in heaven and Me.” So these are several different possibilities, and I’m not sure which is intended—or possibly some combination of these or something else I haven’t thought of.

And of course, “**Son of Man**” is a *remez* here back to **Daniel 7:13-14—**
Daniel 7:13-14—

13 “I was watching in the night visions, and behold, one like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him.

14 Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one Which shall not be destroyed.

This is obviously a messianic prophecy, and by applying this title to Himself, Jesus is claiming to be this very being who in Daniel’s vision is given an everlasting Kingdom by God the Father. Jesus applies this term to Himself more than 80 times in the Gospels.

We’ll stop here for today. Any questions?