

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this Bible study series you may learn how to build up the Christian Church. Two teachers will do Bible study together from John 1:19-51. We will use “the five steps” method of Bible study. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme.

(S) **STEP 1. READ**

Let us read John 1:19-51 together. When you are two or more people, take turns to read one verse each until you have completed the reading. Due to shortage of time, please read John 1:19-51 for yourself.

(T) **STEP 2. DISCOVER**

Let us discover and discuss some important truths in John 1:19-51. “Which truth in this passage is important for you?” or “Which truth in this passage touches your mind or heart?” Think and write your answer in your notebook. After a few minutes take turns to share your discoveries with one another.

(S) An important truth for me is in John 1:39 and 46 about coming and seeing. When the disciples John and Andrew asked Jesus where he was staying, he did not tell them, but instead invited them by saying “come and see”. Jesus *involved* other people into his life and into his home. He gave them an opportunity to get to know him from close by. He wanted them to know who he is and how he lives every day. He wanted them to see his life. Soon his disciples did the same. When Nathanael questioned if Jesus could be the Messiah, because he came from an insignificant place like Nazareth, Philip said to him, “Come and see”! The disciples also wanted other people to know Jesus and to get involved into the life of Jesus. Therefore they invited them to come to Jesus and see for themselves if he was the Messiah or not. If Christians want other people to know who Jesus is, what Christians are and how they live, then they must *involve* them into their lives and homes. I want to follow the example of the disciples. I too want to involve other people into my life and into my home so that they may be able to see how a Christian lives and get to know Jesus.

(T) An important truth for me is in John 1:42 about how to view people. When Andrew brought his brother, called Simon, to Jesus, Jesus looked him over and looked into his heart. Jesus knew that Simon was a big man with a small heart. He knew that Simon could make big promises, but really was afraid to carry them out. He knew that Simon was an impulsive man. But Jesus is the Prophet. He knows not only the present condition of every person, but also the future. He knew that Simon would be transformed and would become a stable, uncompromising and persevering person. Jesus did not just look at Simon as he was, but also as he would become in the future. Jesus predicted what the grace of God would accomplish in the life of his disciple. Therefore, Jesus gave him a new name and called him “Peter”, which means “the rock”. Later, in Matthew 16:18, Jesus predicted that he would build his Church on Peter, the rock. And in Acts we read how Jesus used Peter to plant the first church among the Jews, the first church among the Samaritans and the first church among the Gentiles. I want to be like Jesus. I want to view people not only as they are now, but also *as they can become through the grace of God*. The grace of God can transform every person on earth! I want to inspire hope in people that God’s grace can change them. Instead of criticising people and looking at all their faults, I want to encourage people and *look at the progress* they are making in their Christian growth.

(S) **STEP 3. QUESTION**

Let us try to understand all the truths in John 1:19-51 and ask our questions about the things we still do not understand. “Which question about anything in this passage would you like to ask to the group?” Think and write your question in your notebook. Then discuss the questions and try to find answers.

1st Question. (1: 21). Was John the Baptist “Elijah” or not?

(T) The Jews expected that the prophet Elijah himself would return to the earth before the Messiah would come. They based this on their literal interpretation of Malachi 4:5-6. However, in Luke 1:17, an angel of the Lord predicted that John the Baptist would be the forerunner of the Lord Jesus Christ and that he would do his work “in the spirit and power of Elijah”. He would bring the people of God back to the Lord their God. He would turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous. He would make ready a people prepared for the Lord. In Matthew 17:12-13, also Jesus called John the Baptist “Elijah”. Although John the Baptist was not literally Elijah, according to the angel of God and according to Jesus himself, he *fulfilled the prophecy* in Malachi 4. Jesus clearly says that Elijah had already come and finished his preparatory work, but the people of Israel did not recognise him and killed him instead.

2nd Question. (1:25). Why did John the Baptist baptise people?

(S) John the Baptist clearly said that he was not the Messiah or the kind of forerunner whom the Jews expected. The Pharisees then asked why he was baptising, that is, why he was performing the work which properly belonged to the Messiah or to his special ambassador. They expected that only the Messiah or Elijah or the Prophet could perform baptism. The Pharisees certainly knew that not just anybody was allowed to administer rites of purification. In Leviticus 14:1-7, only the priests were allowed “*to dip or baptise*” the life bird in the water mixed with the blood of the sacrificed bird and only the priests were allowed “*to sprinkle*” the infected person seven times with this water mixed with blood. Moreover, in the final analysis, the rite of cleansing people was distinctly a Messianic act. In Ezekiel 36:25 the sovereign Lord himself said, “I will *sprinkle* clean water on you, and you will be clean. I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols”. In Ezekiel 37:23 he said, “I will save them from all their sinful backsliding and I will cleanse them”.

If John the Baptist was not the Messiah or the kind of forerunner they expected, why then did he baptise? It is clear that the Pharisees did not understand who John the Baptist was. They did not understand him when he said that he was the one about whom the prophet Isaiah prophesied in Isaiah 40:3, the one who would make straight the way of the Lord. Hereby John clearly stated that he was “the forerunner” of the Messiah. In John 1:33, John the Baptist said that he only “baptised *with* water”, but that the Messiah would “baptise *with* the Holy Spirit”. John made it very clear that there would be a great difference between himself and the Messiah. While he only administered “the sign”, consisting of water, the Messiah, Jesus Christ, would administer “the thing signified”, consisting of the cleansing power of the Holy Spirit!

John said to the Jews that this Messiah was already standing right in their midst and that they did not know him! He warned the Jews that in their eagerness to expose false Messiahs, they were ignoring the true Messiah! In John 1:31, John the Baptist said that the reason why he baptised with water was to reveal the Messiah to Israel. Mark 1:4 says that John the Baptist came preaching “a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins”. He preached that the Jews should repent from their sins and prepare their hearts to receive the Messiah. He baptised them as a sign that they were preparing their hearts to receive the Messiah. The water of baptism symbolised their need of spiritual purification, which symbolises of regeneration and justification! And the only Person who could purify people spiritually was the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Thus, John the Baptist baptised Jews in order to prepare them to receive the Messiah. Through his preaching and baptism, he focused all Israel’s attention on the Lamb of God, who would take away the sin of the world.

3rd Question. (1:29). Why is Jesus called “the Lamb of God”?

(T) Jesus Christ is called “the Lamb of God”, because he fulfilled the various types (illustrations) of lambs in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament there were several lambs that functioned as types for the future Messiah.

One. There was the Passover lamb.

The Passover lamb was slaughtered on the Passover and its blood was applied to the door posts of believers in Egypt in order to turn away God’s judgement on the unrepentant people in Egypt. 1 Corinthians 5:7 calls Jesus Christ “our Passover Lamb”. 1 Peter 1:19 says that he was sacrificed on the cross in order to turn away God’s righteous and holy anger against our sin. By his precious blood we were redeemed from the empty way of our life.

Two. There were the lambs for the daily burnt offerings.

According to Numbers 28:4, the priests had to slaughter a lamb every morning and every evening. According to Leviticus 1, the lamb had to be without defect, symbolising the sinlessness of Jesus. The priest had to lay his hand on the head of the lamb, symbolising that the sin of the person was laid on Jesus. In the Old Testament, “the burnt offering” was accepted on behalf of this person to make atonement for his sin. Likewise, in the New Testament, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross is the only effective way of making atonement for our sins.

Three. There was the lamb prophesied in Isaiah 53.

Verse 6-7,10 says, “We all, like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way. And the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He ...was led like a lamb to the slaughter...It was the Lord’s will ...to cause him to suffer ... and to make his life a guilt offering”. Leviticus 5:14-16 teaches that “the guilt offering” was brought in order to make restitution for what a person had failed to do in regard to things that God required him to do. The guilt offering made atonement, that is, it took away God’s holy anger against his sin. Thus we conclude that all three lambs in the Old Testament are “types” or “illustrations”, which find their “antitypes” or “fulfilments” in Jesus Christ in the New Testament!

4th Question. (1:32). Why was it necessary for Jesus Christ to receive the Holy Spirit?

(S) When Jesus received the Holy Spirit at his baptism, he received it *in his human nature*. He was anointed with the Holy Spirit, that is, he was ordained by God for his specific task as Mediator: as the Final Great Prophet, as the Final Great High Priest and as the Final Great King. He was equipped with the Holy Spirit to carry out these tasks on our behalf. In Luke 4:18-19, Jesus himself teaches that the prophecy in Isaiah 61:1-2 had been fulfilled in him. It says, “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.” And in John 3:34, John says that God has given the Spirit to Jesus without limit! This means the same as what Paul says in Colossians 2:9, “In Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form”!

Jesus received the Spirit in the visible form of a dove. Although the Holy Spirit has no body and therefore cannot be seen with the physical eyes, God allowed Jesus and John the Baptist to see the Holy Spirit under the symbolism of a dove. God chose the form of a dove probably because a dove is the symbol of “purity”, “gentleness” and “peace” and these are the characteristics of the Holy Spirit in an infinite degree. The Holy Spirit is *pure*. All kinds of sin grieves the Holy Spirit (Eph 4:30). The Holy Spirit is *gentle*. He does not force people into the truth, but gently convinces people of sin, of righteousness and of judgement (Jn 16:8,13). The Holy Spirit is *peace*. He does not do anything that would cause people to stumble, but only does whatever builds them up (Rom 14:17-20). The Holy Spirit remained visibly on Jesus for some time. The voice of God the Father from heaven clearly said that this was the Son of God, whom the Father loved and with whom he was very pleased. Here we see how “the Triune God” (Trinity) manifests himself to mankind as the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

5th Question. (1:47). Why does Jesus call Nathanael “an Israelite in whom there is nothing false”?

(T) The reference in verse 51 to “the stairway with angels descending and ascending” shows that Jesus had the patriarch, Jacob, in mind when he addressed Nathanael. In Genesis 27:35-36, Isaac says to Esau that his brother Jacob had come *deceitfully* and had taken Esau’s blessing as the firstborn from him. Esau said that his brother was rightly named “Jacob”, which means “he deceives”. However, this use of trickery for selfish advantage not only characterised Jacob. It also characterised Jacob’s sons and further descendents, the Israelites! In Genesis 34, Jacob’s sons *deceitfully tricked* the men of a city, killed them and robbed them of all their possessions. A real and honest Israelite, a Jew without tricks and deceitfulness, had become such an exception that when Jesus saw Nathanael he immediately exclaimed, “Here is a true Israelite in whom there is nothing false.” Deceitful trickery is probably a characteristic of people from all nations. In John 2:24-25 we read that Jesus knew all men and he also knew what was in a man. Jesus knows me and knows everything that is in me. He knows my thoughts, motives and attitudes. He also knows when I tend to be deceitful. Therefore it is important that I allow the Holy Spirit to transform my mind, my motives and my attitudes.

6th Question. (1:51). What is the meaning of seeing the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man?

(S) Jesus is still thinking about the patriarch, Jacob. In Genesis 28, Jacob saw in his dream a stairway between earth and heaven and he saw the angels of God ascending and descending on it. The Lord himself stood at the top of the stairway, blessing Jacob. He promised Jacob saying, “I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go... I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you... All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring.” Now here in the Gospel of John Jesus points out that “the type” or “illustration” of the stairway of Jacob finds its “antitype” or “fulfilment” in Jesus Christ! Jesus Christ himself is the only real link between heaven and earth. He is the only stairway between heaven and earth, by which God descended and dwelt amongst us. He is the only Mediator between God and man. By his sacrifice on the cross, he will reconcile God with sinners and sinners with God. Jesus says that Nathanael would see greater things. What are these “greater things”? The disciples had already seen that Jesus had sovereign and penetrating knowledge and that he was able to look right into the heart of Nathanael. From now on the disciples would see “*more* divine attributes of Jesus”. They would particularly see his crucifixion and how by the cross heaven is thrown wide open, God draws near to man and man is reconciled to God (Jn 8:28; 12:32). And finally they would see Jesus at the Judgement Day, invested by God with universal authority to judge and afterwards to rule on the new heaven and new earth (Dan 7:13-14).

(T) **STEP 4. APPLY**

Let us brainstorm with one another and record a list of *possible applications* from John 1:1-18.

- (S) 1:29 Look at Jesus Christ as a sacrificial Lamb that took away all your sins.
- (T) 1:39 Go and see how Christians live and worship God.
- (S) 1:50-51 Expect to see the greater things: to know God and to know what God has done for you.
- (T) Afterwards consider which possible application God wants you to turn into a *personal application*.

(S) **STEP 5. PRAY**

Let us take turns to pray about one truth that God has taught us in John 1:19-51.

Dear Father in heaven, I want to commit myself to go and see how Christians live and what Christians do. I desire to know you better and better. Please let me join a house fellowship, a discipleship group or a Bible study group where I can learn to grow and know you more and more.

(T) Dear Father in heaven, I thank you that you have encouraged me today. Although you know everything about me, I thank you that you do not criticise me and condemn me, but that you have given me hope that I will change. You already see me as I will be in the future! In Jesus name. Amen.

(S) **ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK**

First. Make a commitment to do Bible study every week. Prepare next week's Bible study. Use "the five steps" method to prepare John chapter 2.

Second. Join a house fellowship that does Bible study. See the workbooks "Go and build Christ's Church" and Internet on www.dota.net.

Third. Listen every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY on the radio to "Discipleship training on the air".