

## John 1:29-42

Read the passage: [The Message](#) or [The New Revised Standard Version \(NRSV\)](#).

Click [here](#) for an easy to print or email Adobe PDF version of this note.

Click [here](#) to read my quick introduction to how to read the Gospel of John.

This text is John's introduction to Jesus.

When reading the New Testament, it is crucial to remember that in his own time, and in the lifetimes of the writers of the Bible, Jesus was a complete unknown outside of his circle of followers.

Therefore, it is best to read Matthew, Mark, Luke and John not with 2,000 years of hindsight, but with the perspective of a First Century Judean:

Just exactly who is this guy from that dinky, remote, nowhere-ville hamlet - Nazareth? Is that what it's called? And did you say he was the bastard son of Mary? That Joseph must have been a real loser to hook up with her. No honorable man would marry a woman like that. So we don't even know who his real father is?

The Gospels all begin with the baptism of Jesus in which signs from heaven are done which proclaim the status of Jesus in heaven (unlike his status in earthly terms): the Spirit descends like a dove; a voice from heaven declares, "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased."

In the Gospel of John, it is John the Baptist who sees the sign of the dove (there is no mention of a voice), and it is John who testifies to the heavenly status of Jesus: Lamb of God, Son of God.

*(Aside: It's a bit confusing to keep all the Johns separated. There are three different ones. John, the disciple of Jesus and the author of this book. John the Baptist. And John the father of Simon and Andrew.)*

There then follows an interesting exchange between two of John the Baptist's disciples and Jesus. Imagine being one of those disciples. Imagine having the questions and opinions above, and then hearing John the Baptist say, "There is the Lamb of God; the Son of God." (Verses 1:34 and 36)

Note that when the disciples first approach Jesus, they use the much safer - and lower - status of "Teacher" to address him. "Teacher" is a big step above "Bastard son of Mary," but not even in the same ball park as "Son of God." They are moving in Jesus' direction, but still hedging their bets.

Notice too that it is Jesus who notices them following him, and it is he who turns to them. There then follow two questions and an invitation that are at the heart of the Gospel of John:

- What are you looking for?
- Where are you staying?
- Come and see.

The question, "What are you looking for?" is one of the great spiritual questions. What AM I looking for? It is a question that provokes searching and seeking for ... well, what are YOU looking for?

The theme of seeing / light / revealing (or their opposites blindness / darkness / hiding) runs through every passage of John.

Now, why is "Where are you staying?" the disciples answer to Jesus' question to them? In the logic of the Gospel of John, how is that a response to the question? (And in John, a second question in response to the first one IS an answer.)

A second dominant theme in John is staying, remaining and abiding. For example, in John 14, Jesus says that he is going to prepare a place for his followers so that where he is they may be also. In John 15, Jesus says, "Abide in me as I abide in you." The issue of where-is-Jesus-so-that-I-might-be-with-him is crucial in John.

Thus questions about staying, remaining, and abiding are not merely questions about the logistics of locations. They are questions of intimate, enduring relationships. Mounce's Dictionary gives these meanings to the underlying Greek word used here:

stay, continue, dwell, lodge, sojourn, rest, settle, last, endure, persevere,  
be steadfast, abide, be in close and settled union, indwell.

Jesus' invitation to "come" (a location changing verb connected to the theme of staying, remaining, and abiding) and "see" (an insight changing verb connected to the theme of seeing, light, and revealing) is precisely the invitation to which the rest of John's Gospel is the response.

And, in my humble opinion, these two questions and the invitation are still at the heart of our being Jesus' followers today.

- What am I looking for when I come to church?
- Where is what I am looking for staying? Where might I find what I am looking for?
- Come - leave where you are
- See - open yourself to new insights, new ways of being in the world.

David Ewart,  
[www.holytextures.com](http://www.holytextures.com)