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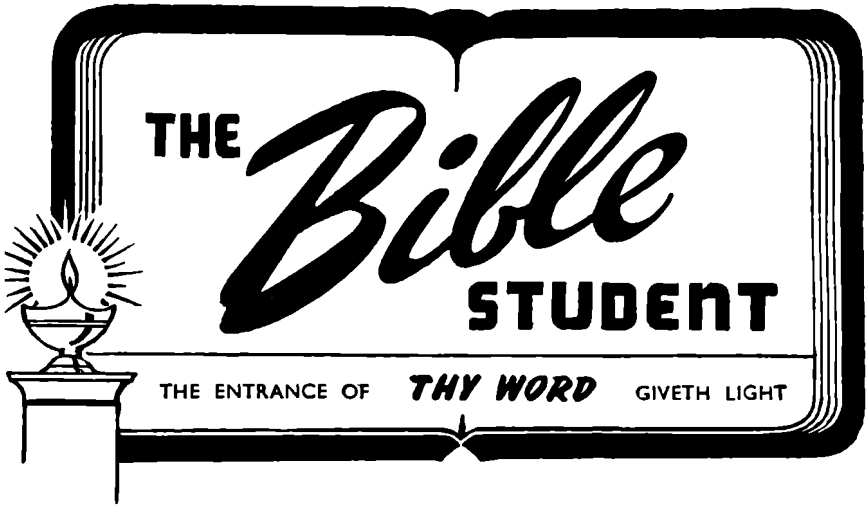
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Editor: A. McDONALD REDWOOD

AN EXPOSITORY STUDY OF ST JOHN'S GOSPEL

F. F. BRUCE, M.A.

II. Jesus Reveals Himself to the World (John 1:19-12:50)

(a) The witness of John the Baptist and the call of the first Disciples (John 1:19-51)

iii. *The First Disciples* (vv. 35-51)

v. 35—*Again on the morrow John was standing, and two of his disciples*—'The morrow' is the day after John's testimony recorded in vv. 29-34. The care with which the days are enumerated in this part of the narrative (Ch. 1, vv. 29, 35, 43; Ch. 2, v. 1) suggests that the narrator himself played a part in the events which he here records, and that he bore imprinted on his memory ever afterwards the detailed sequence of his first acquaintance with Jesus. There would, in fact, be nothing against the supposition that he was one of the two disciples of John mentioned here; the wording of the following verses (especially v. 40) lends it some support. John the Baptist had many disciples; although these two became disciples of Jesus, others remained in John's company throughout his life and continued to regard themselves as disciples of John after his death.

v. 36—*And he looked upon Jesus as He walked, and saith, Behold, the Lamb of God!*—As on the previous day, Jesus was seen walking past them, and John directed his two disciples' attention to Him, giving Him the same significant title as in v. 29, 'The Lamb of God.'

v. 37—*And the two disciples heard Him speak, and they followed Jesus*—Whether John intended or expected his disciples to respond thus to his words we are not told, but they immediately left John's side and hurried after Jesus, to catch Him up. Certainly they did not grasp the depth of meaning contained in John's words, 'The Lamb of God'; but it was plain to them that John was pointing this Man out as the Coming One, the expected Messiah. It was long before they began to understand the sacrificial implications of the title, but its messianic emphasis was clear enough. No wonder, then, that they wished to know more of this Man.

v. 38—*And Jesus turned, and beheld them following, and saith unto them, what seek ye?*—Some commentators make much of the fact that He said ‘*What seek ye?*’ and not ‘*Whom seek ye?*’ But it was evident that He was the object of their pursuit; by asking them what they wanted with Him He simply gave them an opportunity to say what was in their minds. Throughout this Gospel Jesus repeatedly seizes the ‘divine initiative’; compare His words to His disciples in the last discourse before the Passion: ‘Ye did not choose me, but I chose you’ (John 15:16).

And they said unto Him, Rabbi (which is to say, being interpreted, Master), where abidest Thou?—Emboldened by His initiative, they asked where He was staying. A few words exchanged with Him there and then, as they stood, would be good; but to be invited home with Him and have the opportunity of a more private and leisurely conversation would be better. The respectful title ‘Rabbi,’ by which they addressed Him, is translated ‘Teacher’ (Gk. *didaskalos*) by the Evangelist for the benefit of his Greek readers. It means literally ‘my great one’ and had lately come into use as a title of honour, especially for recognized teachers of the sacred law.

v. 39—*He saith unto them, come, and ye shall see*—The invitation which, perhaps, they had hardly dared to hope for, was forthcoming at once. And still to those who wish to know Him better and spend more time in His company He speaks the same words of welcome: ‘Come, and you shall see.’

They came therefore, and saw where He abode; and they abode with Him that day: it was about the tenth hour—So they went with Him to His lodging, and spent the rest of the day there. It was about four o’clock in the afternoon, the time when men began to leave their work for the day. (Throughout the Grecio-Roman world, the hours of the day were at this time reckoned from sunrise, and, despite the arguments of Westcott, Bornhäuser and others, it is unlikely that our Evangelist reckoned them otherwise. But a fuller discussion of the subject will be appropriate when we come to Ch. 19:14.) What He said to them is not recorded, but it sufficed to assure them that they had not misunderstood the Baptist when they took him to mean that this was the Messiah, and to make them want their friends to share their wonderful experience.

v. 40—*One of the two that heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother*—In later Christian decades Simon Peter's name was so familiar that Andrew is here identified as his brother, even if Andrew makes his appearance on the stage of our Evangelist's history before Peter does. The other disciple is unnamed. But the conclusion seems irresistible that he was the Evangelist himself. 'It is his way throughout his Gospel, when alluding to himself, to use a periphrasis, or to leave, as here, a blank where his name should be.'*

v. 41—*He findeth first his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, we have found the Messiah (which is, being interpreted, Christ)*—Andrew's first act after making Jesus' acquaintance himself was to bring his brother Simon to make His acquaintance too. It is commonly inferred from the emphasis of this first clause that the Evangelist also found *his* brother (James the son of Zebedee) and brought him to Jesus. This is very probable, although it cannot be inferred from Gk. *idios* (translated 'own' in A.V. and R.V.), for *idios* at this time was tending to lose its emphasis and to be used as a simple possessive pronoun (cf. R.S.V., 'He first found his brother Simon'). (Another example of this 'exhausted' use of *idios* is in Acts 24:24, where even R.V. translates *tē idia gynaikei* simply by 'his wife' in the text, reserving the more literal rendering 'his own wife' for the margin. In v. 11 above the double occurrence of *idios* is more emphatic because there no substantive follows.)

When Andrew found Simon, he said, 'We have found the Messiah'. This Semitic form of the verbal adjective meaning 'the anointed one' appears in the N.T. only in this Gospel—here and at Ch. 4:25. In both places the Evangelist adds the equivalent Greek term *Christos* (the verbal adjective from *chriō*, 'I anoint'), for the benefit of readers who might be unacquainted with the Hebrew or Aramaic form. In the O.T. prophets, priests and kings were anointed for their sacred offices, and while the messianic expectation of the Jews at this time assumed a predominantly royal

* A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve* (6th edn., 1903). p. 2. The first chapter of this book is a helpful study of John 1: 29-51.

form, yet the Coming Deliverer of prophecy was to be both prophet, priest and king; and in the actual fulfilment Jesus showed Himself to be the Messiah *par excellence* in all three rôles.

What exactly did Andrew mean at this time by calling Jesus the Messiah? Probably he could not have given a very definite account himself of what he understood by the term at this early stage. The testimony of the Baptist, which he had heard, had been confirmed in his mind by his first interview with Jesus; but no doubt his conception was largely coloured by the contemporary longing for a royal warrior who would repeat, but on a grander scale, the exploits by which his ancestor David had won independence and empire for his people. As time went on, however, it became increasingly evident that Jesus had not come to be that kind of Messiah; it was therefore a much deeper confession of faith that Peter voiced later on at Caesarea Philippi when he acknowledged that Jesus, although He showed no sign of fulfilling popularly cherished hopes, was indeed the promised Christ of God.

v. 42—*He brought him unto Jesus*—And in later years, as Peter performed such mighty works in the cause of Christ, in Jerusalem on the first Christian Pentecost, in Caesarea when Gentiles first received the divine gift through his ministry, and in places much farther afield; what satisfaction it must have given to Andrew to recall the day when he introduced his brother to the Master! None of us can foresee, when he brings a man to Jesus, what Jesus will make of that man.

Jesus looked upon him, and said, thou art Simon the son of John: thou shalt be called Cephas (which is by interpretation, Peter)—But Jesus Himself saw what He could make of Andrew's brother, and expressed His purpose in His salutation. 'Simon Bar-Yohanan' was the name by which he was known at this time. In the form 'Simon Bar-Jonah' of Matt. 16:17 'Jonah' or 'Yona' is an abridgment of 'Yohanan' (John)—although some have voiced the improbable suggestion that we should read in both places the noun *baryona*, which is a form used in the Talmud to denote a rebel against Rome. Jesus, however, discerned in Simon a firmness and stability which perhaps nobody else would have suspected at

the time. With such a man as this He could begin to found His community of followers. Henceforth his name should be *Kepha*, an Aramaic word meaning 'rock' or 'stone', which the Evangelist explains by the Greek equivalent *Petros*. How well Simon's new name fitted him is a matter of history. (It is really beside the point to press the distinction between Gk. *petra*, 'rock', and *petros*, 'stone'. Whichever shade of meaning Jesus had in mind—and the Aramaic word He used covers both—Simon, being a man, must inevitably be called by the masculine Greek form *Petros* and not by the feminine *Petra*. The relation between the name 'Peter' and the 'rock' on which, according to Matt. 16:18, Jesus said He would build His church, belongs to the exegesis of that Matthaean passage rather than to our present text. But it is not necessarily implied in Matt. 16:18 that the name Cephias or Peter was first given to Simon at Caesarea Philippi. The emphasis is more on the suitability of the name which Jesus had already given him: 'I tell thee, Peter, that on this *petra* I will build my church'—for so our Lord's words there may be rendered.)

v. 43—*On the morrow He was minded to go forth into Galilee, and He findeth Philip: and Jesus saith unto him, follow me*—"The morrow" is presumably the day after 'the morrow' of v. 35. Andrew had found Simon and brought him to Jesus in the course of the evening of the day whose events are related in vv. 35-42. The lack of explicit subjects to the verbs 'was minded' and 'findeth' introduces some ambiguity into the present verse. Who 'was minded to go forth into Galilee'? Jesus, no doubt. But who 'findeth Philip'? Naturally we may assume that the subject of 'findeth' must be the same as the subject of the preceding verb 'was minded', in which case it was Jesus who found Philip. But why then is the noun 'Jesus' inserted before the next verb 'saith', as if there were a change of subject? May not Andrew or Peter have found Philip, who was (v. 44) their fellow-townsmen? And if it was Andrew who found him, that gives additional point to the word 'first' in v. 41; the first person whom Andrew found and brought to Jesus was his brother Simon, but the next person whom he found was Philip. But in view of the formal ambiguity of the language, we cannot be certain. It may be that Jesus, setting out

upon the road to Galilee, found Philip making the same homeward journey from the place in Peraea where John was baptizing, and invited him to join the company of His followers. Jesus had not been in Galilee since He left Nazareth to seek baptism at the hands of John several weeks before. But we are still dealing with a time considerably earlier than the beginning of His Galilean ministry as recorded by the Synoptists (contrast Matt. 4:12 and Mark 1:14 with John 3:24).

v. 44—*Now Philip was from Bethsaida, of the city of Andrew and Peter*—Bethsaida was a town on the Sea of Galilee, a little way east of the point where the Jordan enters the sea from the north. It thus lay in the tetrarchy of Herod's son Philip, who rebuilt it and renamed it Julias, after Julia, the daughter of the Emperor Augustus. But Philip the disciple's home is in John 12:21 called more fully 'Bethsaida of Galilee', which would suggest a site not in the realm of Philip the tetrarch but in that of his brother Herod Antipas. It was in the vicinity of Bethsaida-Julias that the Feeding of the Five Thousand took place (cf. Luke 9:10 with John 6:1), but after that incident Jesus sent His disciples back across the lake 'unto Capernaum' (John 6:17), or 'to Bethsaida' (according to Mark 6:45). It looks therefore as if there were two places called Bethsaida on the lake—one east of the Jordan and one in Galilee, and that the latter one is the place referred to here and in Ch. 12:21. The name simply means 'House of the Fisherman'. The western Bethsaida has been located at Et-Tabigha, about a mile and a half south of Tell Hum (usually identified with Capernaum).* We infer from the Synoptic Gospels that Peter and Andrew's home was at Capernaum in the days of the Galilean ministry (Mark 1:29, etc.).

* See W. M. Christie, *Palestine Calling* (1939), pp. 59 ff.

PSALM 27. WHAT IS GOD TO ME?

God was his Confidence—vv. 1-3.

God was his Companion—vv. 4-6.

God was his Consolation—vv. 7-14.

^a *Unto Thee, O LORD, do I lift up my soul*' Ps. 25: 1.