

Dr. David Turner, Gospel of John, Session 4, John 1:19-2:12

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This is Dr. David Turner in his teaching on the Gospel of John. This is session 4, John's Testimony and Jesus' First Sign in Galilee. John 1:19-2:12.

Hello, David Turner again and we're working on our fourth video in the John video series for biblical-elearning. We just completed our video on the prologue to the Gospel of John, in which we looked at the way John has very carefully structured the prologue and has laid it out, carefully stressing themes that he is now going to show us as the narrative proceeds. So, from here on out in John, we'll be looking at the narrative.

The prologue, of course, is a rather different genre than the narrative. So, we're looking more at historical movement from the beginning to the end of an episode or a scene in the Bible. We'll be trying to take it scene by scene, even when we do more than one scene in each video so that we interpret the story as story.

We spoke before about the genre of the Gospel of John and how this book makes meaning. It makes meaning by telling stories installment by installment. And so instead of just picking verses out at random that might strike us as important for whatever random reason in our life that we've experienced that day, we do well when we look at any narrative book of the Bible, let alone John, to see how the verses that we like are placed in a story that is being told and make sure we understand them in that context before we begin to make application to ourselves and put them on nice fonts and put them on plaques on the kitchen wall.

So, let's try to avoid the immediate the plaque-ifying of John and look at it as it comes to us in the story and then construct the plaques if necessary after we've done that sort of work. So, we're in this video trying to understand the flow of the Gospel of John from chapter 1 verse 19 over to chapter 2 and verse 12. It will be our practice in all these narrative pericope videos to first discuss the narrative flow, to just give an overview of what is presented as happening.

Then we will think about the way in which what happens has been arranged in the structure if there's something interesting about the way the story has been told. Then we'll just pick out things from that story that seem to be of value and of interest for further discussion. Sometimes it will be grammatical things, sometimes the background things, historical or geographical things, and sometimes just as exegetical and theological questions.

So, then we'll start with just a summary of what's in the passage and we'll think about how the passages have been presented to us structurally and we'll try to just take some topical things that seem to be of most value for additional study. So, when we begin to look at the narrative flow of John 1:19 to chapter 2:12, we're looking at how John the Baptist, who has been mentioned in the prologue to the book, is now sort of beginning to point people to Jesus. And it might have been a sort of a depressing situation for John had he not known what his mission from God was, because as the chapter goes on he is losing his disciples because he's pointing to Jesus and his disciples are getting the message and they're going over to follow Jesus.

There are some later words from John to the effect of he must increase and I must decrease in chapter 3, but here we have in chapter 1 seeing that play out before our eyes. So, when we look at John chapter 1 verses 19 through 34, we see John giving his testimony as it were and the first thing he talks to is a group of people who have come out into the desert of Judea, evidently from Jerusalem, to understand what he was doing out there. Evidently, reports had reached the authorities in Jerusalem and they wanted to know what was happening out there in the desert.

Perhaps they were afraid of a popular messianic movement that would tend to revolt against Rome and they wanted to know about that and keep that from causing a big problem. So, we begin reading in 1:19 there this is John's testimony. That's very significant that the narrative of John begins that way because we've been told about John's testimony in the prologue and now the very first words of the narrative begin with this was John's testimony.

This is the testimony of John when the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem, the priests, and Levites, asked him who he was. So, he says I am not the Messiah and so we have this interesting interrogation that sort of checks off the list. Okay, not the Messiah check.

They ask him then who are you? Are you Elijah? Nope. Check that box. Are you a prophet? Nope.

Check that box. Then finally they say well then who are you? That was all the boxes they had. Give us an answer.

So, John replies in the words of Isaiah, I am the one of the voice calling in the wilderness. Make straight the way for the Lord. Referring then to Isaiah chapter 40 where Isaiah seems to be speaking of something of a new exodus and flattening out the hills and valleys of the wilderness in order to allow the Lord's path to be cleared.

Then they ask him a question about his baptism and he says I baptize in water, verse 26, but among you stands one you don't know. He comes after me and I'm not worthy to unstrap his sandals. Sometimes I like to say I'm not worthy to shine his shoes, but I guess that would be a different cultural situation.

So, this is the initial encounter of John's testimony when he is explaining his identity and what he's doing to the Jewish leaders, but we move on and then the next section of it where he is speaking about Jesus directly when he sees Jesus coming toward him in verse 29 and uses language to the effect, behold or look the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. When he uses the term lamb to describe Jesus he conjures up all the language in the Old Testament about the sacrificial lamb perhaps focusing on the Passover and all the other temple sacrifices involving the lambs. We could even unpack the way in which Jesus takes away the sin of the world not only by forgiving the sin of those who turn to him but by judging those who do not and removing sin from the world.

Certainly, both of those are part of the work of Jesus Christ. So, John continues to describe Jesus in this section and speaks of him as the one who is going to be baptizing with the Holy Spirit in verse 33. This will become a very important part of the narrative of John when Jesus speaks of the Spirit particularly in the farewell discourse as the one who will come along to continue with the disciples the presence of God that Jesus has been manifesting.

So, John's testimony to Jesus is that he is the Redeemer, he is the Lamb of God and he knows who Jesus is this person because the Spirit is the one who comes down upon him, verse 33, and remains. I think the idea that the Spirit comes down and remains upon him is a crucial point there. How exactly John saw that happen and envisioned that is unclear in John.

In the Synoptic Gospels of course we have the context that this happened when John baptized Jesus and there was something of a theophany there where the Spirit of God was able to be seen as a dove descending upon Jesus. The baptism and the dove account are not really present here in John but John tells us something about the Spirit coming down from heaven as a dove whether he saw something that looked like a dove or that's just an analogy isn't clear to me in verse 32 but he says I know and I testify that this is God's chosen one. So, at this point, Jesus' first disciples begin to come to him and of course, they are people who have been followers of John.

So, we first see Andrew and Peter in verses 35 to 42 and Philip and Nathanael in verses 43 through 51 and it's interesting to see how these people interact with Jesus and how they interact with each other. The first two fellows, Andrew and Peter, are interesting because they are sort of just following Jesus around not saying much evidently so he turns around and sees them following and says what do you want which is sort of an interesting way of beginning to follow Jesus. So, they say where are you saying he says come and you will see that's sort of an enigmatic way to describe things and come and you will see more than you realize I'm sure.

As the chapter ends and Jesus is speaking to Nathanael in chapter 1 verse 51, he says if you are surprised that I was able to understand you were under a fig tree when you made your comment about nothing good coming out of Nazareth you haven't seen anything yet you will see heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending on the son of man. Interesting that verse 39 come and you will see sort of anticipates verse 51. So, we have then the first two people Andrew and Peter and then we have Philip and Nathanael in 43 and following.

The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee finding Philip he said to him follow me. Philip like Andrew and Peter was from the town of Bethsaida when Philip found Nathanael and told him we had found the one Moses wrote about in the law about whom the prophets also wrote Jesus of Nazareth the son of Joseph. Nathanael's reply was very interesting he basically said what came to his mind and didn't sugarcoat it a bit he exclaimed Nazareth can anything good come from there and Philip said simply come and see reiterating pretty much in verse 46 what Jesus had said to him in verse 38.

So, Jesus sees Nathanael approaching saying here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no guile. Somehow Nathanael realized that when Jesus said that he looked right into his heart and understood who he was and implied even that he had heard him say what he had said about Jesus. Nathanael says how do you know me? Jesus says I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you. This is enough for Nathanael to say rabbi you are the son of God you are the king of Israel and Jesus essentially says to him an expression we hear in pop culture all the time you ain't seen nothing yet and by the last words here in chapter 1 verse 51 he sort of goes back to the book of Genesis and describes the experience of Jacob in the book of Genesis.

So, we have then Jesus' first disciples Andrew and Peter Philip and Nathanael we should probably also mention here something we neglected a moment ago which is to say Jesus refers to Peter in verse 42. Jesus looked at him and said you are Simon son of John you will be called Cephas which is Aramaic evidently Kepa is related to the Greek word Peter which we are going to hear him described later on in this gospel. So having now received his first disciples we're now told that Jesus is invited to a wedding feast in Cana of Galilee and there is an embarrassing problem there which leads him to do his first miracle his first sign.

The mother of Jesus comes to him and says they don't have any wine they've run out of wine. It's probably difficult for those of us in the United States and other countries around the world perhaps to understand the role of wine in this ancient culture. Some of us are perhaps from religious backgrounds where the use of alcohol in any form is frowned upon and some have been taught to abstain from any sort of alcoholic beverages as a religious principle.

Others are only too well aware of the damage that alcoholism can cause in families and in communities. In ancient times particularly in Israel, neither of these views of alcohol would be that well known because alcohol wine was simply a matter of subsistence. So, you can have a vineyard and have grapes you can eat all you want but you can't eat them fast enough and you can't really preserve them very well so you make wine and so you subsist on that and you mix it with water you don't drink it straight in ancient times.

So having run out of wine at a big religious marriage feast on that day was a very embarrassing thing to the host of the feast to the family particularly to the father of the bride if he was hosting or the bridegroom whoever was hosting the feast. So, when Mary comes to Jesus and says they have no wine it's not so simple as to go down to the convenience store and buy a new box or whatever. You have to go to the next village or whatever to get it or you can't make it from scratch obviously very quickly.

So, Jesus handles the solution by a very almost hidden means. He simply takes the water that was there in the stone vessels for purification and turns it into wine without even letting very many people know well what's going on. Only the servants who took the water originally knew what had happened we're told here in verse 9. However, once the people had begun to drink the wine that Jesus had made from the water the master of the banquet the head of the feast called everybody the bridegroom aside and said everyone else has the good wine first and then after people had drunk a while and perhaps are not quite as discerning then the cheaper wine.

But he said you have saved the best until now. I wonder what the person who was told that was thinking since he probably was aware that the water had that they'd run out of wine entirely. So that must have been quite an amazing thing for him.

So, we have a comment here at the end of the section in verse 11 which says Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory. So, we remember now from the prologue that we just looked at in the last tape that Jesus came to be the ultimate revelation of God's glory the very exegesis of God and by this act of changing water into wine, he is indeed revealing the glory of God. Perhaps we have difficulty in understanding all that in our culture but I think in the ancient culture we can have a better understanding of it because of the way in which wine was used as a matter of subsistence and as well as a matter of prophetic prediction about God's blessing in the future.

We'll come back to that a bit later. So, we now turn to one way scholars have looked at this section from 119 to 212 and I'm going to lay it out there for you. I'm not so sure I think it's all that important but I think it is clear from the prologue to John that John is speaking about new creation.

Jesus is the one who brings light and life to the world just as he was the original creator. So, he is once again bringing light and life to the world through his message. So, we have in a sense implied in the prologue to John a renovation a renewal of creation.

Some take that view and then say what we have in chapter 1:19 through 2:12 is we have the seven days of the new creation. So, 1:19 through 28 would be a day then we have the next day, second day, third day, fourth day, and then on the third day after that four plus three equals seven. So, the wedding feast at Cana of Galilee then would have been the end of that first week I guess you'd say seven days of the new creation.

I'm not so sure that I think this is a big deal but there are those who study John who think it is so I bring it to your attention for your own study if you care to look at it later. In some geographical details we have high priests from Jerusalem representatives from them at least visiting John out in the wilderness and we have the reference to Bethany across the Jordan to Galilee to Bethsaida, Capernaum, and Cana. So here is the wine feast the wedding feast up here at Cana of Galilee.

The representatives from Jerusalem coming up here to visit John earlier on where John ministered is a matter of some controversy. Some think that John ministered just to the northeast of the Dead Sea. Others think that he ministered up in the area here of the Yarmouk River on the east side of the Jordan and we'll talk more about that later when Jesus comes back to this area at the end of John chapter 10.

So those areas are implicated as is a reference to the village of Bethsaida which is sort of at the north slightly to the east side of the Sea of Galilee. Also references to Capernaum which is on the northwest side of did I say the Dead Sea the Sea of Galilee and also of course Cana the village of Cana. So that's the geographical implications of the text.

So, we have images of places that very well may be Cana of Galilee in ancient times although there is some debate about that. It's a village about three miles northeast of Nazareth. It's traditionally been associated with the Cana of Galilee.

You can see that it derives its name far Cana probably from the New Testament. So in this town, there is a place that they actually call the wedding church and on the wedding church here on the balcony, you have a nice Latin inscription. They were having a wedding in Cana of Galilee and the mother of Jesus was there.

So that's the caption for the statue there of them. So, in the basement of that church, there is an interesting old stone vessel which has been turned into a shrine for prayer and so people will leave their prayers in a rack there on top. I have no idea

whether archaeologists have checked out this old stone vessel to determine whether it has anything to do with the type of vessel that would have been used in John chapter 2. The vessels were made out of stone because according to rabbinic law a stone did not acquire ritual impurity and it could be kept much longer.

Pottery vessels would have to be broken, and thrown away if they had inquired any sort of ritual impurity. In another church in Cana of Galilee, there is a similar vessel. This is a Greek Orthodox church.

The previous one was a Roman Catholic church but you see another situation there. So, tourists to what may very well be Cana are shown a couple of different places that have relics from the time of Jesus. Perhaps, who knows? I don't.

We also have Capernaum implicated here in the text. So, here's an aerial view of Capernaum just after the excavations in 1972.

The octagonal structure here is the location traditionally where an ancient memorial was built over lower ruins yet which supposedly were the house of Peter. The tradition of that goes back to the early centuries. To the right of it here is what is sometimes called the White Synagogue, the synagogue at Capernaum.

As we know from the Gospels, Jesus spent much time in this synagogue at Capernaum. However, the synagogue that we see today in the ruins is from the third or fourth centuries and the best that we could hope for would be that this synagogue is perhaps built upon the foundation of a previous synagogue where Jesus ministered. This is looking more from the north at the bottom toward the south a bit and here you can see the earlier rectangular stone walls over which the octagonal memorial structure was built to Peter in ancient times.

This would be the synagogue here and the rest of the village would be in between. More of a close-up there of the traditional St. Peter's house. Some person has attempted to show what that might have looked like before all the secondary memorials were built upon it.

Since those pictures were taken, a Roman Catholic church has been built over the top of the house of Peter, the traditional house of Peter. As you can see they have restored somewhat the synagogue with building blocks that they have recovered on site and put them back where they were originally. So, if you view Capernaum today, you go to Israel as a tourist, you have to go into the church here with these steps right here.

Once you get inside the church, the center is open. You can look down upon the traditional house of Peter there in Capernaum. Interesting there that some of the archaeological remains include a Star of David, I think one of the earlier ones that's

ever been discovered, as long as an interesting portrayal of the Ark of the Covenant with wheels.

But I don't think that was the way it was supposed to have been built according to the Torah. So, when we think about John the Baptist and Jesus moving then from the geography to the testimony of John, it's interesting to notice in detail of what we were told about John in the prologue and how that plays out. We were told in the prologue John was not the light and we're told in verse 15 that John said, he who comes after me was before me.

So, what he says in chapter 1 as the narrative begins very much plays into that. I am not the Christ, I simply baptized with water. Behold someone else is the Lamb of God, not me.

He upon whom you see the spirit descend and remain is who you need to look for. Behold the Lamb of God. The testimony of John is quite clear here and we'll see more of it later on in chapters 3 and 5 and even as late in John as chapter 10.

We have some very interesting messianic titles in John chapter 1. We could take this whole video series and just develop what these titles say, but it's amazing how many different ones are occurring here just in these early portions of the chapter. Jesus is called the Messiah. That would be the anointed one.

We have some hints about that in the Old Testament, particularly in Isaiah 61 and Daniel chapter 9. John is asked if he is the prophet. That term the prophet probably refers to the text in Deuteronomy 18 where Moses is told that God will send another prophet like him whose words need to be attended to by the people of Israel and if they're not there will be consequences. This expression of the prophet comes up again in John chapter 6 after Jesus has fed the multitudes there.

This was a common way of thinking about a messianic figure, the prophet who would come like Moses from Deuteronomy 18. Also, he is called the Lamb of God a couple of times in this chapter, probably alluding to at least calling up the imagery in the reader's mind of Isaiah 53 of the Lamb which is taken to slaughter and is silent. The Son of God, the agent of God, the one who is representing God on the earth.

The term rabbi simply means my teacher or my great one. The Messiah again in verse 41. The King of Israel verse 49.

The Son of Man in verse 51, again alluding back to Daniel chapter 7 probably. All these titles are quite important and many of them are going to come up later in John and we'll have an opportunity to look at them again. When it was said that we have found the one of whom Moses and the prophets wrote, you can think of so many

different Old Testament passages which may have had a bearing upon that comment.

If we look back to the Old Testament and read it the way John would have read it, we would understand then that the voice of God in Genesis chapter 1, let there be light, was the voice of Jesus. We would understand that when Moses wished to get a better glimpse of God in Exodus 33, what he really wanted to see was Jesus who fully revealed the glory of God. When we look at how they were asking John if he was the prophet and if he said he wasn't, he was the voice in the wilderness.

Alluding there to Isaiah 40 as well as Deuteronomy 8. Isaiah 53 in John 1:29. John 1:32 and 33 speak of the spirit descending and remaining upon him. Isaiah 42 talks about how God will send his spirit to his chosen one. The reference to the Messiah in 1:41 may be referring to Daniel 9.25 and other texts.

The angels ascending and descending upon the son of man, call to mind Genesis chapter 28 verse 12, and Jacob's experience there. Finally, in chapter 2 verse 3, at the wedding feast and they don't have any wine, perhaps could be an allusion to Psalm 104 and verse 15. It makes us think about how water and wine may be symbolic of something in here in John chapter 2. It is at least plausible in John 2 that we are told this miracle not simply to show Jesus' power over nature, his ability to turn water into wine but to speak in a symbolic yet prophetic way about how God's future for Israel had already arrived.

So, we have a lot to say about water in the gospel of John. It's used in many chapters and once we get past here in chapter 2, water becomes a very good thing, a very positive thing. Perhaps Old Testament imagery such as that of Ezekiel 36 is behind it because in Ezekiel 36 we're told that God will pour clean water out on Israel and will give them a new spirit, a new heart.

So, the water and spiritual purity are linked here in Ezekiel 36, so we're not surprised to find it in John 7, in John 4, as well as when Jesus speaks to Nicodemus in chapter 3 and verse 5. Why is it, do you think, that John was baptizing to get people to think about the need for the Messiah? Because Israel needed to be purified. So, the washing with water was symbolic, to say the least, if not sacramental, of the spiritual cleansing, and spiritual revival that God was creating in Israel. What about wine? Well, if we read all these Old Testament texts and think about them and try to put aside our modern cultural views of alcohol for just a moment, we'll learn that wine was a choice gift of God to the people of Israel. To have a bumper crop of grapes and to be able to have grapes to eat and wine to make was a sign of God's blessing, not simply in that day, but it was a way in which you spoke of the prophetic future.

So, if you begin to read some of these passages in Isaiah and Jeremiah and Joel, you'll learn that wine was a way to describe a great blessing of God when Israel would

receive God's fullest blessing in the future when God would restore Israel to prosperity. Part of that prosperity would be an abundance of wine. All this to say that there is no doubt the Old Testament condemns drunkenness and the overuse of alcohol, and we read many texts about it in Proverbs as well as in the Prophets about how drunkenness is a sin, one to be avoided.

We certainly can see that in our modern culture, the results of alcoholism. At the same time, however, the abuse of a good gift from God is not the same thing as saying that something like this is a bad thing in and of itself. So, in my prophetic text, which speaks of God blessing Israel abundantly in the future with plenty of wine, and with the Moses and Jesus comparison in chapter 1, verses 14 to 18, it seems to me that Jesus changing the water to wine is perhaps a way of speaking about how that the future for Israel is not simply going to be a matter of ritual purity.

You'll recall the way in which the stone pots full of water were going to be used as a matter of ritual cleansing, and ritual purification, according to John 2, truly following God is not simply a matter of ritual purification, not that that's a bad thing in itself, but is also experiencing the wine of God's eschatological blessing. So, there's more to the blessing of God than simply purifying oneself with water. It is also waiting for the ultimate blessing of God to come to Israel, here typified by the wine that Jesus creates.

So, I think it does have prophetic significance and shows that Jesus is now showing the dawn of God's eschatological blessing to the people of Israel. And from now on, even in John, water becomes a very good thing, an important thing in the way in which it describes the way in which Jesus is saying to water in the Spirit and the way in which particularly it's used in John 7, verse 37, and following.

One other thing we need to talk about here, about chapter 2, is Jesus' reference to his hour not yet coming.

When the mother of Jesus, notices the word Mary is not used here, simply the mother of Jesus in chapter 2, verse 1. She tells him that they have no wine. He gives her almost a rebuke. Actually, it's not so much a rebuke, it's a sort of statement of distance.

A woman, why do you involve me? Or what is that to me? My hour has not yet come. This is essentially to say, this isn't necessarily my problem. I'm not called to take care of this type of business.

Nevertheless, Mary is aware that Jesus has the ability to take care of this problem. She simply says to the servants, do whatever he tells you. Excuse me, I'm going to have to get a drink of water.

So, when Jesus says to Mary, my hour has not yet come, I believe the point of that is to say, I'm not going to make a spectacular demonstration here of taking care of this problem, because my time, my hour, which in John, as we will see, speaks of the cross, of the redemption, and of the passion, and of Easter. It's not time for that yet. And if I begin to exercise miraculous powers in a very blatant way here, this will get the ball going too soon, and just things will snowball, and my hour has not yet come.

So, in a sense, this is a bit of a, not exactly a rebuke, but saying to Mary, this isn't necessarily my problem. Taking care of this problem isn't necessarily something that the Father has for me to do at this moment. So, then the story is told about how when Jesus does take care of the problem, he does so in a very inconspicuous way, so as not to cause a great response to it.

Another drink of water. Sorry for the diversion. So, if we were to take the time to look at these passages, you can do that as you have time in the days ahead.

Jesus speaks of his hour as not having come several times, leading us up to his final days in Jerusalem. We are told in chapter 12, however, that his hour has come, and that basically refers to the passion and the cross. So, the hour in John then anticipates in chapters 2, 7, and 8, the time in Jerusalem where Jesus will die and be raised.

But the term hour is also used in John in many places to describe the days ahead, God's eschatological future, an hour is coming, and now is a type of language. For instance, when he's speaking to the woman at Samaria in John 4, and then also in John 5 and chapter 16, as he's warning the disciples about the difficulties that they will face in the days ahead, he uses the expression, an hour is not yet coming. So, the hour in John needs to be looked at and carefully understood.

In John 2:11, we're told that this was the first of Jesus' miraculous signs, which he performed at Cana in Galilee. He revealed his glory and his disciples put their faith in him. These words that we have emphasized here are all crucial words in John.

So, this first miracle that Jesus did gets us to understand what is to come in terms of the signs of Jesus, the way they manifest his glory, and how this manifestation of his glory through the signs brings people to faith. So, this is a key part of John's theology that we need to look at as we continue the study in the chapters that are to come. Thank you.

This is Dr. David Turner in his teaching on the Gospel of John. This is session number four, John's testimony and Jesus' first sign in Galilee. John chapter 1 verses 19 through chapter 2 verse 12.