

# Rev Donald Macdonald: John 1:41

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Preacher: Guest Preacher

[ 0 : 00 ] Let us now turn to the passage that we read. The Gospel according to John chapter 1 and we may again read at verse 40.

One of the two to whom John spoke and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, we have found the Messiah, which means Christ. He brought him to Jesus.

And I'd like to look at the words in verse 41, we have found the Messiah.

John the Gospel writer tells us how John the Baptist and his ministry witnessed for Christ.

And in the narrative that we read together today, John tells us how John the Baptist, how he addressed a group of people who had been sent out from Jerusalem to seek clarification of the identity of John the Baptist. Who is this man?

[ 1 : 32 ] Was the question that to which they sought an answer? And John the Baptist's reputation had spread widely as a consequence of the ministry that he exercised.

Mark in his Gospel tells us John appeared baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And then he goes on to tell us all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. So you can see from that snippet of information how this man had gained a reputation amongst the population in general. And so this group of priests and Levites were sent by the Jewish authorities to find out exactly who this man was.

And from the series of questions that they asked it appears that they were very impressed by the lifestyle and the character of this new preacher.

Although the best of men are but men not best, they were obviously questioning whether this might possibly be a promised figure spoken of in the Old Testament Scriptures.

His lifestyle and character obviously raised these kinds of questions in their mind. Because of his evident godliness they were prepared to concede that this indeed might be even the awaited and promised Messiah. Who are you they ask? And he confessed and did not deny but confessed I am not the Christ. And they asked him what then are you Elijah?

[ 3 : 47 ] He said I am not. And perhaps you might be wondering why have they gone from the figure of Messiah to the figure of Elijah. And the answer we get is that this question is based probably on what we find in the prophecy of Malachi. Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. And so you can see how the wheels of their mind were turning.

If he is not the promised Messiah could he possibly be Elijah because they believed that Elijah would arise and be another Elijah would arise and be a forerunner of the Messiah.

The appearance, the dress, the lifestyle, the mannerisms of this man John the Baptist in their minds was similar to that of Elijah. His denunciation of sin, his living in the wilderness all seemed to point in the direction of another Elijah having arisen.

And so the question and again there is a negative response. It dashes any hopes that may have been raised.

And so they ask a further question. Are you the prophet? And he answered again, no. And this question appears to be based on words spoken by the Lord through Moses.

[ 5 : 23 ] I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. I will put my words in his mouth and he shall speak to them all that I command him. And he answered, no.

And it seems very obvious from the line of questioning that was being pursued that at the very least they were looking for a deliberate figure. The ministry of John the Baptist appears to have encouraged and fed this hope.

It is also, I think, very revealing the way in which John the Baptist continued to answer their questioning. Who are you? They were desperate to bring a report back to those who had sent them out.

We need to give an answer. They said to those who sent us, what do you say about yourself? And you can sense the feeling of frustration behind their questioning because they're not getting the answer they were looking for.

And the response that John gives to this further question tells us much about the humility of this man, John the Baptist.

[ 6 : 41 ] He did not want them in any way to consider him to be a deliberate figure or savior. He was a witness to the savior. He did not wish them to focus their admiration on him or even on the gifts that he evidently possessed.

That's a very real danger and it's to be avoided at all costs. He wanted them to focus entirely on Christ. And so he responds, I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness. I am just a voice.

Now it's quite interesting the way that he speaks of himself because at the beginning of John's Gospel and the prologue to the Gospel, John takes us back into the eternal realm.

He's so different in his approach and introduction to his Gospel to the three other Gospel writers, to the synoptic Gospel writers. Regarding the origin of Christ. In the beginning says John, in the very first opening words of this Gospel was the word and the word was with God and the word was God.

The word is Christ and you cannot fail but notice the contrast. Christ is the word. And John the Baptist is saying, I'm just the voice.

[ 8 : 16 ] And the voice is the vehicle by which the word is made known. By which the message is declared. It is through our voices and our lives that we present the word Jesus Christ.

And the further, his further humility or his evident humility is further emphasized in chapter three of this Gospel when he says, Christ must increase but I must decrease. There is something very attractive about the grace of humility.

We can never have too much of it. We can have too much of many things but we can never have too much of the grace of humility.

And so this man is not Christ or Elijah the prophet but he is the voice spoken of by the prophet Isaiah.

I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, make straight the way of the Lord. So when they did not receive the desired response then they ask him, why are you baptizing?

[ 9 : 34 ] In other words, what's your authority for carrying out baptism if you are neither the Christ nor Elijah nor the prophet?

And what I read into that is that they had formed the impression based on their knowledge of the Old Testament that the coming figure spoken of in the Old Testament involved cleansing.

The prophecy of Zechariah, on that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness.

And yet despite such apparent knowledge of Scripture, and you can see that they did possess a knowledge of Scripture from the questioning that they made, yet they were blind to the identity of the Lord Jesus Christ when he moved among them. And is it not kind of alarming that we can have such tremendous knowledge and insight of the Scriptures through the teaching that we might receive in our home Sunday school and to the ministry of the Gospel through our own devotional reading and still be strangers to the Lord Jesus Christ in our lives as these people evidently were.

So John's authority to baptize has been questioned and he assures them that he has divine authorization for what he is doing and he again directs them away from himself towards Christ.

[11:17] Among you stands he says one you do not know, even he who comes after me. The strap of whose sandal he says I'm not worthy to untie. What a strange reply.

You see what he's saying? Not only does he say that it was not beneath him to perform such a menial task but it was above him. So great is the glory of Christ in the eyes and estimation of John the Baptist. He saw it as a tremendous privilege to serve Jesus of giving a seesaw to the lowliest witness to so great a Lord God's true Son and Messiah and it was at that time that he made the proclamation behold the Lamb of God. Now just in passing do we see it as a tremendous privilege to serve Christ. Behold the Lamb of God. It was, remember when Dr Livingstone and Stanley met one another. Stanley said Dr Livingstone I went down in the annals of history but here is a great historical moment too when the last of the prophets stood face to face with the one who is the fulfillment of all prophecy even the Lord Jesus Christ. Behold the Lamb of God and two disciples who had been standing with John the Baptist heard him say this and they followed Jesus and we are told that Andrew makes the profession. We have found the

Messiah which means Christ and it is evident that he speaks for his unnamed companion. Most commentators are of the mind that the other person who was with him was John the author of this Gospel. Well let us look a little more closely where did they find the Messiah? Secondly what evidence do we find in the context to support the profession that they make? Thirdly the profession we have found the Messiah and finally their enthusiasm to share what they had found. Where did they find the Messiah? And you might respond in the locality where John the Baptist was preaching Bethany across the Jordan. That was the location but I beg to disagree that was not where they found the Messiah. It is not the location that is important. Where then did they find the Messiah?

In my view in the proclamation of truth. We read in verses 35 and 36 the next day John was standing with two of his disciples. He looked at Jesus as he walked by and he said behold the Lamb of God.

We are not told in the context of John the Baptist expanded on the proclamation that he made. We know that on the previous day he had added to the proclamation behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. And you might say and say with good reason that in itself is an exegesis and interpretation of the proclamation behold the Lamb of God. But what could these two disciples of whom Andrew is one understand from the proclamation behold the Lamb of God? Well they could cast their minds back to the incident that took place on Mount Moriah when Abraham and his son Isaac were together ascending the mount. Remember how Isaac spoke to his father Abraham behold the fire on the wood but where is the lamb for the burnt offering? And you remember the response the staggering reply of faith on the part of Abraham God will provide for himself a lamb for a burnt offering my son. God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering. It's the reply that has echoed down through the pages of ecclesiastical history and certainly in the pages of scripture.

[ 16 : 12 ] God's provision seen in symbolic form in the shape of the ram on Mount Moriah. But now this is the real deal. You're no longer looking at the lamb in symbolic form. John the Baptist at that moment when he cried behold the Lamb of God he has no doubt in his mind as to the identity of this figure this says John the Baptist is indeed God's provision that the faith of Abraham spoke of and saw these hundreds of years before. Where did God find this lamb? He didn't find the lamb in some kind of thicket but he found the lamb in the mysterious depths of his own being. This is none other than the only begotten Son of God in true human nature God's provision. Again it may be that these disciples were reminded of the paschal lamb without blemish that was slaughtered on the night prior to bringing Israel out of Egypt where there was deliverance experience through the shedding of the blood of the paschal lamb protection and shelter afforded under the shed blood of the paschal lamb and again there is a time aid in the New Testament between Christ and the paschal lamb.

It was the day of the preparation of the Passover it was about the 6th hour that's when Christ was hanging on the cross that's when the paschal lamb was slaughtered in Jerusalem and then they might remember the daily sacrifice of lamb when the lamb was offered at the daily sacrifice this is what you shall offer on the altar two lambs a year all day by day regularly one lamb in the morning and the other lamb you shall offer in twilight so it was set before them on a on a daily basis the need of forgiveness and how that cannot be granted without the without the shedding of blood without there been death without the shedding of blood says the Reuter to the Hebrews there is there is there can be no remission of sins again in the fourth sermon some in the prophecy of Isaiah the prophet speaks of the level of suffering in the life of the servant of Jehovah all we like sheep have gone astray we have turned everyone to his own where the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of his all he was oppressed and afflicted yet he opened not his mouth like a lamb he is led to the slaughter and like a sheep before her shears the silent so he opened not his mouth so this figure who is identified by John the Baptist is indeed the great sacrifice for sin and in my view it is this proclamation this gospel message because that's what the gospel means good news this message of good news that is what made such a deep and lasting impression in the minds and hearts of these two men where did they find the Messiah they found him in the word and that's where you and I have to find the Messiah to in the word of God not an hour in our imagination not out in in creation but in the sure word of God no what evidence do we have in support of this because the proclamation had a very profound defect how do we know because we read the two disciples heard him say this and they followed Jesus the proclamation compelled them to follow Jesus and the language that is used here I believe is interesting they followed Jesus notice they didn't follow the preacher but Jesus they had been disciples of John the Baptist but the moment they understood the identity of the figure who was presented to them in the message of the gospel they followed Jesus the gift of oratory can sway the minds of many people so that they will follow the auditor even to the point of idolizing such a person but that's not how it was here they heard the eloquent proclamation but they followed Jesus Jesus became the focus of their of their their affections are not the proclamer of the message and if I understood the scriptures are white to be led involves it involves to to if I put it this way to follow involves being led

the mysterious chords as it were of the call of the truth had gone around their hearts and their lives and they were been irresistibly drawn by the word of truth we have to ask ourselves how's that happened to us you can be sure of it has that it will be tested that's what happened here you might have thought that Jesus would encourage them to follow him but you notice what he does first he makes them pause for reflection to question their motives what are you seeking no that might have sounded very off-putting to these two men you see some people think that by following christ it can save them from tribulation and trial and difficulties in life they are seeking protection from from from tribulation in life anyone who is thinking along these lines is going to be bitterly disappointed very often it is then that tribulation and trial and difficulty arise in your life many says the psalmist are the afflictions of the righteous it's not always easy to see the end of the statement that is proclaimed by the psalmist but out of them all at length he sets them free not always easy to see that end yes you might agree with the fact that there are many tribulations but it's not always easy to see the end of the road here is one who took his disciples into a storm on the sea of Galilee he doesn't prevent them from entering into the storm he doesn't as well put some kind of wall around them so that they are not suffering in the in the effects of the storm but what he does do he is with them in the storm and he is with them in the storm to to uphold and to support them until the waves are still and the wind is silenced and it may be that it is in the eternal realm that the christian truly experiences that in their life where the waves are still and the winds drop and you experience the harmony and the calm of the heavenly home nor that is summarized in the heavenly home well others perhaps think that it may be of benefit for them to follow Christ in a material way but what the bible tells us is any if anyone would come after me let them deny himself take up his cross daily and follow me some perhaps are looking for peace in their life and it is true that Christians find peace and joy but it is not peace and joy of itself that they are seeking but they are seeking Christ and that is the offspin and the benefit of being in Christ great peace of those who love you long nothing can make

them stumble what are you seeking well that question is asked of you and me today too are we just looking for the benefits that accrue from following or being in the company of Christ because those who follow the Lord and truth they acknowledge their sin they trust in Christ alone for salvation and nothing else and so if you are looking for forgiveness today you can find that in Christ alone if you are looking for peace today you can find that too in Christ alone if you are looking for cleansing from sin you can find that in Christ alone because he will give you a clean heart and a right spirit what are you seeking well look at the response that these two gave and that is part i think of the effect of the proclamation of the message that they heard you know this what they say what are you seeking and they said to him rabbi which means teacher where are you staying why does john write in that way is he not writing in that way because they are deciders of being taught by one who has insight and penetration into the word of

God one who is able to disclose to them his own identity as God's Messiah to is able to open their minds and hearts to the glorious depths of the teaching of the word of God you know you cannot substitute doesn't matter how attractive it might be you cannot put anything else in place of vigorous and rigorous teaching of God's word that's what God has promised to bless and where God blesses his truth he awakens a hunger and a thirst in the hearts of men and women and boys and girls to know more of Christ and more of themselves when i was a young Christian there were a group of men from this community they were probably about the age i am now and if these men were at communion services i used to love being in that company because i regarded them as choice Christians they were men who had been in the revival pre-second world war that's going back sometime and these men in their discussions and fellowship with one another it was a spiritual treat to be with them and for me it was often the highlight of the period of communion services just to be on the fringe and listening to these men discussing their own spiritual experiences and believe me they had a rich depth of spiritual experience to relate and the garlic language they were known as bobbled hardware there weren't boys in the sense of being boys you know in aged terms but that's how they were known and sadly they have all gone to their eternal home well when the Lord blesses his truth he awakens a desire for fellowship in and through Christ but it is through the word and it's not just that the word enters into you that your intellect is expanded and your knowledge is expanded but it goes down into your affections so that it affects your whole being stimulates obedience in the walk of faith and where better could these two men be than being the fellowship of Christ himself you see we are not just to be listeners of the word we have to be doers of the word it's very tempting to be just a hearer of the word and to be satisfied merely with just hearing the word but do you remember how Jesus emphasizes the need to put into practice what we hear the close of the sermon on the mount Matthew chapter seven he speaks of everyone who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the walk

[ 31 : 38 ] and you remember James and his letter speaks of be not only hearers but doers of the word in other words those who hear and do are those who are likened to building on a stable and a shoe and an unshakable foundation and John here tells us that they stayed with him that day for it was about the tenth hour it'll be about four in the afternoon they abode with him and that word is used again and again by John in this gospel abide in me as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine neither can you less you abide in me see there is continuous stress on the need for abiding in Christ and you remember how the hymn writer put it not a brief glance I beg a passing word but as though dwellers with thy disciples lord familiar condescending patient free come not to sojourn but abide with me well is that our desire today before Christ now how do we spend how can we abide with him but one way I think we can do it is practical way is by spending time with Christ and prayer you see it would the conversation wouldn't all be one way I don't think wouldn't just be Christ speaking to them all the time they would be speaking to him they would be opening their hearts and minds to him they would be telling him of their own fears and apprehensions of their joys and so on and is that not what we do when we come in prayer before the Lord so that's one way of spending time with the Lord another way is of your own personal devotion with the Bible allowing yourself time to spend it with the Lord you know we make time for many things in our lives sometimes we say we're so busy no time for this no time for that or we have time for the things that we want and what we want most ought to be time with Christ and therefore we ought to make time to be with him not just in prayer but in reading the scriptures and asking the Lord to open our minds to the scriptures so that we might benefit from the scriptures well the evidence then of finding him they followed him they were decided as a fellowship to learn and spend more time with him now my time is going so very briefly that profession we have found the Messiah what do we understand by the word Messiah what does this speak well the word itself literally means an anointed one someone who has been set apart for a particular office by anointing the Old Testament they used oil to anoint those who were set apart for a particular office and oil represented prosperity plenty and abundance and you remember how when Samuel was sent to choose our future king for

Israel he was sent to the house of Jesse and remember all these sons of Jesse were paraded before Samuel and Samuel was kind of anxious to get this business over because he feared the repercussions if Saul were to hear that he was visiting the family of Jesse and of course when he saw the first one surely this is the one and you remember how the Lord told him don't be looking on his outward appearance don't look to his height or his stature because the Lord looks on the heart and all these sons who seemed who seemed all equally qualified to be king over Israel in the eyes of the old prophet all rejected by God and then there are no more sons Samuel is almost in a state of shock and he turns to Jesse have you no more sons and he said well I've got one but he's just a youngster he's out with the flocks sent for him when he came and the Lord spoke to Samuel this is him arise and anoint and it was with oil that they anointed because oil represented the best of every aspect of life in in a in a real sense it represented life full rich strong vibrant active useful and beneficial represented the incomparable good the clean the pure the pleasing and the enabling power of God we think of many benefits that many families derive from oil in our communities and were it not for oil in our members of families engaged in oil related activities there would be many homes that wouldn't be built in our island because of the spin-off from oil but the Bible tells us that this I God has anointed his you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions says the sons of the Messiah in other words oil in the scriptures represents the Holy Spirit and Christ does the anointed Messiah has been anointed with the Holy Spirit remember how the first time we sang today why do the nations rage and people's plot and vain the kings of the earth set themselves the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against his anointed and it is in the book of Psalms in particular that we find reference to God's anointed one and particularly pointing at the office of kingship as exercised by Messiah and you remember how in the New Testament in parable form how we are told of those who worked in the vineyard how they dealt with the various servants that were sent they killed some they stoned some and so on they rejected them and then the air is sent here's the the beloved son the only son and it is because of the the the the his greatness that the consequence of rejecting and murdering him are so momentous and when Jesus asked the question when the order of the vineyard comes what will he do to those tenants and you remember the response they gave he will put those wretches to a miserable death and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give them the fruits in their season in other words the answer assumes that nothing more radical would

follow than a change of administration that Caiaphas and his fellow rulers would be destroyed and other rulers put in their place and things go on as before and it's evident that Christ was visibly displeased with the response I tell you he says the kingdom of God taken away from you given to our people producing its fruits not just the greatness of mosaic messiah that makes it so terrible for these people in their rejection but that the office of messiah is based on the sonship of christ he's a son before he is sent and it is because he is he is the son that he is sent as the promised messiah and you remember they will respect my sons as the owner of the vineyard and they didn't we have to ask ourselves hot place does he have in your life and in mind today is he king over your life is he king over your heart are you a loyal subject of messiah do you obey in your inner life because those who found the messiah they prize them they want don't want to part with them tell others about them and that's just what what they do here there's an enthusiasm to share we have found the messiah and it's difficult to pick up the the the note of excitement the sheer joy the absolute delight that is couched in these few words here's one who was amongst not the first three of the disciples perhaps the first four he's not he's not so well known as the first three but something that is that is worth noting in the gospel and particularly in john's gospel he is presented to us as bringing people to christ remember when the five thousand were fed one of his disciples and russaimus brother there is a boy here who was five body loaves and two fish and then shortly before the crucifixion of christ he was was was philip and he brought he brought certain greeks to christ as if he had a a low profile amongst the disciples in the background but he brought people to jesus and what i read into that it's the personal witness of andrew that was the means of bringing his brother to meet jesus no i'm not saying that personal witness is superior to the word it's not but it is highly important and can be hugely influential in bringing others to the lord jesus christ and often the lord uses that kind of witness to win others for christ and it seems to me a fitting epitaph on the life of this man he brought him to jesus he had found the messiah he was overjoyed he couldn't contain his excitement and his exuberance and his joy at finding the messiah that christ had come into his heart and into his life and he wanted others to share what more natural than to go first to his own brother to begin at his own home before he would go

anywhere else we have found the messiah where did he find the messiah in the word of god the evidence in support of this they follow him the profession they make we have found gods anointed messenger enthusiasm to share he brought him to jesus we found the messiah and do we share in that enthusiasm today let us pray eternal god bless of meditation on thy truth may our hearts rejoice in the message of the word and the glory shall be thine in jesus name we ask it