

WHO IS JESUS?

JOHN 1:19-28, 31-34

JESUS IS THE MESSIAH



FIRST BYRON CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

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INTRODUCTION

Preparation perfects painting. Ask any painter and they'll tell you that the secret to a beautiful paint job is a painful sandpaper job. Amateurs like me want to get straight to the painting with minimal preparation, and the poor results are obvious to anyone. I've learned the hard way that preparation perfects painting.

The same goes when God starts a makeover in our lives. He doesn't just come and slap some beautiful paint on us. He starts by scraping our old flaking paint off. He sands with some sandpaper. Sometimes it's a fine and light sandpaper, other times it's rough and coarse. Although we may not understand or appreciate it at the time, he knows what he's doing. He knows that just as preparation perfects painting, so scraping smooths salvation.

How does our heavenly painter prepare for our perfection? John 1:19-28 takes us inside our heavenly painter's workshop.

BACKGROUND

- Jesus is the Word of God (John 1:1-2)
- Jesus is our Creator (1:3)
- Jesus is our Light and Life (1:4-9)
- Jesus is our Big Brother (1:10-13)
- Jesus is our Tabernacle (1:14-17).
- Jesus is our Preacher (1:18)
- Jesus is the Messiah (1:19-28)



1. GOD PREPARES US FOR JESUS (19-23)

God prepared with the Old Testament

As we've studied John's introduction to his Gospel, we've seen him refer back to the Old Testament again and again: Jesus was before the world (1:1); Jesus created the world (1:3); Jesus lightened the world (1:4-5); Jesus came to his Old Testament people (1:11); Jesus is the Old Testament Tabernacle (1:14-16); Jesus is the better Moses (1:17-18); Jesus exegetes God in the Old and New Testaments (1:18).

John is reminding us that Jesus is not an unexpected innovation but in the line of a trusted tradition. He's not God's plan B, but God's plan A, and that plan is being perfectly implemented. The Old Testament background (connection, preparation) is underlined further in verses 19-23.

The Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask [John], **"Who are you?"** (19). From John's answer it's clear that their question really was "Are you the Christ?" **He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ"** (20).

'Christ' is one of the most used and least understood words in the Bible. It's not Jesus's second name like mine is 'Murray.' It's a title like 'President,' or 'King' or 'Doctor.' 'Like its Hebrew equivalent 'Messiah,' 'Christ' means 'Anointed.'

In the Old Testament, oil was poured on the heads of prophets, priests, kings, and some judges when they were inaugurated into God's service. It was a visible symbol of God's election, equipping, and enabling of them for their office and work. But it also pointed to a deeper spiritual reality of God's Holy Spirit electing, equipping, and enabling them. The outward anointing with holy oil was a picture of inward anointing with God's Holy Spirit (Isa. 61:1).

John's anointing with an unusual degree of the Holy Spirit caused the Jews to question whether he was God's ultimate Anointed One to whom all the other anointings pointed. But John rejected that title as also the idea that was the true and better Moses or Elijah (21-22).

God prepared with John the Baptist

The fourth Old Testament reference is found in John's next words: "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as the prophet Isaiah said" (23). Isaiah 40:3 predicted someone would come before the Savior to clear the road of obstacles and straighten out the bends, a common sight in those days when a national leader was traveling from one place to another. The preparers task was to ensure that their leader could travel as smoothly, safely, and speedily as possible. John said, "That's me. That's my job. That's what I'm doing. I stand in a long line of preparers getting everyone ready for the Lord to come and trying to make his entrance into the world and into lives as smooth, safe, and speedy as possible.



CHANGE YOUR STORY WITH GOD'S STORY

Know Jesus through the Old Testament. Without a knowledge of the Old Testament, a lot of the New Testament will not make sense to us. We'll miss or misunderstand Old Testament references like these. When we see the connections and understand them, it strengthens our faith and confidence in God's Word and God's Messiah.

Prepare for Jesus with repentance. The road into our hearts has been twisted and obstructed by our sin. Repentance straightens these roads and removes these rocks so that Jesus can come into our hearts by faith. Don't try to find rock-removing, road-straightening repentance in your own heart. Ask Jesus for it, that's why he was raised up (Acts 5:31). I'm not saying it will be easy. No, when God starts moving rocks, straightening roads, and sanding down our rough parts, it's going to cause some pain, friction and resistance.

GOD SCRAPES HARD,
BECAUSE SIN IS HARD.



If God has prepared me for Jesus, what else is needed?



2. GOD PREPARES JESUS FOR US (24-28, 31-34)

Jesus was baptized with water (24-28)

Jesus did not need to be baptized because he did not need to repent and be cleansed. But he chose to be baptized to identify with those who did need to repent and be cleansed. He did not come to be stand-offish but to associate with us. He was not reserved and remote but involved and close. What better way to show that than to join with sinners in the waters of baptism? Just as at the end of his ministry he was numbered with sinners (Mark 15:28), so he was at the beginning of his ministry. God prepared Jesus for us by bringing him close to us through baptism. John identified Jesus as the Christ by baptizing him with water. **“For this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel”** (26, 31).

Jesus was baptized with the Spirit (31-34)

As Jesus was baptized with water, John **“saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him”** (32). As John identified Jesus to the Jews through his baptism with water, God identified Jesus as the Christ through baptizing him with the Holy Spirit. **“He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God”** (33-34).

CHANGE YOUR STORY WITH GOD'S STORY

Look at the water. Jesus is qualified and equipped to save us by an immeasurable anointing of the Holy Spirit (Isa 45:7; Heb 1:9). Turn the faucet on and let it keep running if you doubt the capacity or capability of Jesus to save you.

Look at the sandals. **“The strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie”** (27). This is one of my favorite verses in the Bible. It sums up how Christians feel about Jesus. He is so high, so holy, so huge, so awesome, that we don't even feel we can perform the most menial task for him. We can be Christians for decades, learn, get theology degrees, serve Christ for years, and yet we still feel, “I'm not worthy to take out his garbage; yet he turns my garbage into gold. I'm not worthy to wash his floors; yet he washes my heart.”

I'M NOT WORTHY TO CLEAN JESUS' TRASH CAN,
BUT HE CLEANS MY TRASH HEART.



Hear God's Story > Change your story > Tell the story



SUMMARY



PRAYER: Heavenly painter, you have prepared Jesus for me. Prepare me for Jesus by sanding me and removing any obstacle to him. Amen.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What other areas of life need preparation to be successful?
2. Look up some Old Testament anointings and note what you learn from them.
3. How did God prepare you for Jesus? What areas did he sand in your life?
4. What parts of the Old Testament have helped you understand Jesus better?
5. Which parts of Jesus' story show his anointing with the Holy Spirit?
6. What do Jesus's sandals teach you?

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