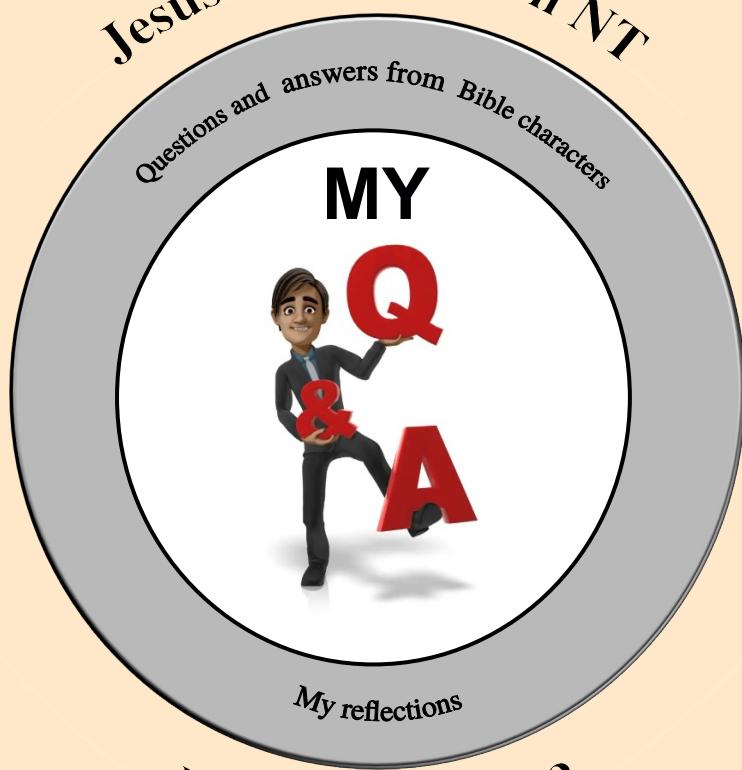


5



Jesus' first question NT



What do you seek?

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Introduction

The first question that Jesus asked in His public ministry was directed to two men following him. It was, “**What are you seeking?**”

Being the first question, it must be the most important, for the course of the lives of these two men, and countless others, was determined by the answer that they gave.



Like these men, everyone is seeking something. But what drove them, and drives us? [Madeleine Crane](#) says that drives can be intrinsic or extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation describes things we like doing for an inherent satisfaction, the need for purpose and meaning, our values, and being naturally motivated is important for both our cognitive, social and physical development.

However, if we are extrinsically motivated we do things for external, reasons, like relationships, or wanting to achieve prestige, fame, or money. Extrinsic motivation, if autonomously decided, leads to greater engagement, better performance, less drop-outs, and mental well-being. However, if we do something for fear of punishment, it can negatively impact on our well-being and performance.

So, in the case of the two men seeking Jesus, was it intrinsic or extrinsic motivation that motivated them to seek Jesus? Let’s take a look first at the background to the question (John 1:29-42). The whole event hinges on two days, two demands, two men, two hours, and two outcomes.

Two days

The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him... (John 1:29).

The next day John looked at Jesus as He walked around... (John 1:36-37).

In these two days, Jesus comes towards John the Baptist and the crowds, and takes centre stage. He superseded John who was the entrée, or appetiser before the main course, if you like. That is, the Lord superseded John who was the entrée, or appetiser before the main course, if you like. So, Jesus comes into the lives of men, and gives them the opportunity to see Him and know Him. Will they, however, take advantage of the opportunity?

Two demands

Here’s the above texts in full.

*The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him and declared, “Look (*eido*), the **Lamb of God** who takes away the **sin** of the **world** (*kosmos*) God” (John 1:29).*

*The next day John was standing with two of his disciples, and he looked at Jesus as He walked by and said, “Look (*eido*), the **Lamb of God!**” The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed (*akoloutheo*) Jesus (John 1:36-37).*

In both of these texts there are two demands, or imperatives. The word ‘look’ is *eido*, meaning the act of seeing, but with a subsequent recognising and understanding ([Abarim Publications](#)). So, John was not interested in the externals of the man in front of them, but was demanding that his audience understand what he was communicating to them about the man. That is, he wanted them to recognise that Jesus is the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.



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Two demands continued

Would the disciples have understood this way of speaking and know what “**Lamb of God**” meant? Being Jews, and the temple still standing and animal sacrifices a regular practice, they would have understood that a lamb could be offered for a sin offering to forgive sin.



For example, the Hebrew Bible with which his audience would know records a lamb-sin offering for an individual (Abel, Genesis 4:4), Leviticus 4:32, 35, for a house (Exodus 12:3), for the sanctuary, for a tribe, and for the kingdom, the nation (2 Chronicles 29:21, Isaiah 53:7). But John adds, **who takes away the sin of the world (kosmos)**.

Jesus is the lamb of God for the world! All previous lambs were brought by man, but see John sees a lamb provided by God. Moreover, it is not just for an individual, or a house, or a sanctuary, or a tribe, or a kingdom or a nation, but for the whole world. So, what ‘world’?

World

The earliest meaning of *kosmos* was by Homer (12th to 8th centuries BC), which is not the universe, nor planet Earth with its political and social structures, but simply ‘order’. This older sense is not found at all in the New Testament. Only once is it used in the sense of “adornment” in 1 Peter 3:3 in reference to the hairstyle, jewellery, and dress of women. In the rest of the New Testament, *kosmos* means “world” in a wider sense ([Harris](#)).

Agreeing on the old meaning, [Abarim Publications](#), says that it means order, and that mostly of the civilised, governed and cultured human world. That is, the elements of human order that define modern humanity, and which separates humans from wild animals, including the functional diversity and societal layers, the institutions of government, the rules and norms and fashions, even the languages, markets and monetary systems.

However, is this what did John meant by ‘world’?

In his gospel, John alludes to the created world (‘before the world was,’ John 17:5), the world of humanity (1:10, 29; 6:33, 51; 12:19; 14:17, 19; 16:20; 17:21), the world of humanity condemned to judgment (3:16, 17, 19), the world ‘above’ from which He came, which is distinguished from the world below in which we live (8:23, 18:36). Additionally, our fallen world has a ruler (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11) and it “hates” Jesus and His disciples, alienated and separated from its Creator and in opposition to Him, under the control of the Enemy and to be overcome by the Christian just as it was overcome by Jesus himself (16:33). But what does it mean in our text? As John refers to ‘the sin of the world’ I think that he means the world of humanity under the ruler of this world condemned to judgment (John 12:31; 16:11).



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Sin

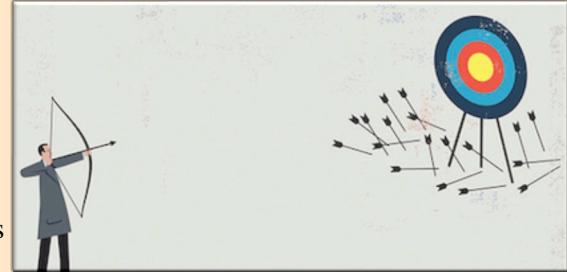
"Sin" (singular) is the root, while "sins" (plural) are the fruit. "Sin" (singular) means the quality of "sin", while "sins" (plural) means the quantity of sin. Romans 5:12 concurs; *just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.*

Perhaps, then, 'the sin of the world' that John spoke of should be understood as the sin of Adam's disobedience, which led, in turn, to sin in all mankind. That is, 'sin' is singular in John 1:29 because Jesus dealt with the original sin of Adam first before dealing with the sins of every human being.

To put it another way, the one sin that infected the whole world is Adam's sin, much like DNA is passed along from human Father to child. When Jesus who knew no sin became sin for us, He took on himself Adam's sin and then ours.

As Paul put it, *For our sake God made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.*

'Sin' for John is (*hamartia*), a failure to hit the bull's-eye, a condition of being restricted. As John also wrote about such restriction; 'the world (*kosmos*) is in the grips of the evil one' (1 John 5:19). Other translations say: ... the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. 'Lies' is *keimai*,



meaning displayed conspicuously as one who is hindered and impeded, a loss of freedom, which results in missing God's target or intention. Its Hebrew counterpart is the familiar word satan or adversary ([Abarim Publications](#)). In God is freedom, and it's in His Lamb Who has removed sin that restricts us from doing what God wants us to do.

Two men

From John's cohort of disciples, two are highlighted for special attention. On hearing John's command to understand the Lamb of God and what He has done, followed Him. They, perhaps more than the rest, listened to John's imperative message about Jesus. Here we are given the nature of their motivation to follow Christ. It was extrinsic, for they were moved by the words of their mentor and teacher, John the Voice. He didn't exhort them to follow Jesus, but to 'look' at Him.

Jesus twigged that two men were following him, so He turned and asked them, "**What are you seeking?**" (John 1:38). And, they answered with the question, *Rabbi, where are you dwelling?* Their respect for Him is in their manner of address, which meant, "My greatness" ([Nicoll](#)). So, did they wished to go to His lodging place that they might have a more uninterrupted talk with Him about His being the Lamb of God? What else could it be? Contrarily, Nicoll argues that this would scarcely fit with Oriental habits. For him, they were shy of prolonging intercourse and wished to know where they might find Him for a visit at another time. I'm not sure that this is a satisfactory explanation.

Interesting, however, is the word that they used for the act of dwelling (*meno*), which is the same word John uses in his gospel and his letters in the sense of remaining or within a teaching, or a teacher (John 6:56, 8:31, 1 John 2:6, 2 John 1:9). Could it be that these men wanted to remain with Jesus as His disciple? The Lord did not put them off but answered, "Come and you will see (*eido*)."
The Lord used the same *eido* that John used for 'look', also imperative, so He commanded them to observe, and understand Him.



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Two hours

They came and saw where He dwelt (meno), and stayed (meno) with him that day:

for it was about the tenth hour (1:39).



The hours of each day were reckoned from sunrise to sunset. Thus the 10th hour was 4pm, so the two men stayed until sunset at 6pm ([Nicoll](#)). The writer of the fourth gospel did not draw back the curtain on those two hours spent with Jesus, so we can only measure the spiritual quality of those hours by their outcomes.

Two outcomes

Man unnamed

One of those two men who followed Jesus is not identified, and the impact on his life and those with whom he contacted is unknown. It almost seems that his opportunity was wasted. An alternative but assumptive view is that the unidentified man accompanying Andrew was John, the writer of the gospel.

Andrew finds Peter

One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated Anointed). He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas" (which is translated Peter) (John 1:40-42).

'Messiah' (Christ 'anointed'), is an appellative, or a title. It describes an appointment; a function in the theocratic structure of Israel, either that of high priest, prophet or king; anybody who had no earthly superior and worked directly for God. Exclusively, Christ performs all of these functions. He is prophet (Matthew 13:57, 21:11, Mark 6:4, Luke 7:6, 13:33, 24:19, John 6:14,), priest (Hebrews 3:1, 4:14, 5:6, 9:11), and king (Revelation 17:124, 19:16). No other person in Jewish history held all of these positions. It was not permitted (Exodus 28:1, Numbers 1:51, 2 Chronicles 26:16-21).

It was only because Andrew *first found the Messiah* that he *first found his brother*, the first link in the chain reaction. And, what a 'find' this was! He has three names; Simon is the Hellenised version of Simeon, and means 'He Who Hears'. Peter (petros) describes a loose stone that one may pick up and throw or kick out of the way. Cephas (Stone Man, Man of Stones, Cobble Stone Layer), is the Aramaic equivalent of the Greek name Peter. The relative importance of these names is expressed by the frequency of use. If we combine Cephas and Peter, Peter is almost 4 times more frequent than Simon, and almost 15 times more frequent than his brother Andrew. When the two brothers' names are mentioned together, it is five for Peter and then Andrew, and only three for Andrew then Peter. While Andrew brought Peter to Jesus, Peter becomes his senior in the ranking of the apostles, and while Andrew disappears from the biblical record after the Acts 1, Peter remains.

In using Cephas (Stone Man, Man of Stones, Cobble Stone Layer), was the Lord alluding to the system of Roman highways that tied the Empire together? Roman roads were masterpieces of engineering, consisting of a deep gully (more than a meter deep) that was filled with rubble for easy drainage. This stack of rubble was covered with a layer of cement, and on the top came a convex layer of polygon or square stones, that were sharp and rough upon installation.

A well-used road could be recognised from the wear of the top layer. Years of use by multitudes of humans, animals and carts would wear these roughhewn stones smooth, a metaphor for the familiar command to "prepare the way of the Lord, make straight its smoothness" (Matthew 3:3), which in turn speaks of an innumerable multitude of people all going the same Way that is Christ, as Peter so often proclaimed ([Abarim Publications](#)).

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Andrew and Peter continued

Peter was the first of the twelve apostles, a fisherman and a family man too who took his wife along on his missionary journeys (1 Corinthians 9:5). Also, Jesus healed her mother as one of his first miracles (Matthew 8:14-17, Mark 1:29-31, Luke 4:38-39). His success as an evangelist on the Day of Pentecost and afterwards is described in Acts. According to tradition, Peter was martyred during the reign of emperor Nero, possibly crucified head-down, at his own request. Shortly before he died, Peter wrote the two letters in the NT that survive today.

Conclusion

What do you seek Jesus asked 2000 years ago? 800 years ago, the wisdom of Iranian scholar, theologian, mystic and poet, Jalaluddin [Rūmī](#) was expressed in this line: “*Seek the path that demands your whole being*. Some seek comfort, pleasure, ease, wealth, popularity, notoriety or celebrity, and invest their whole being into these things. But, it’s the wrong goal, *for in His (God’s) presence is fullness of joy and at His right hand there are pleasures forevermore* (Psalm 16:11).

So, there is really one thing that we should seek above all else. Here is the best wisdom.

Let the heart of those who seek the Lord be glad (Psalm 105:3-4). *Oh God, You are my God; Early will I seek You* (Psalm 63: 1-3). *The wicked in his proud countenance does not seek God; God is in none of his thought* (Psalm 10:4). *The young lions lack and suffer hunger; But those who seek the Lord shall not lack any good thing* (Psalms 34:10). *Uzziah did seek God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the visions of God; and as long as he did seek the Lord, God made him prosper* (2 Chronicles 26:5). *“Seek the Lord while He may be found; call upon Him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, that He may have compassion on him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon* (Isaiah 55:6-7).

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