

J. C. RYLE'S NOTES ON THE GOSPEL OF JOHN  
1:35-42

35. Again, the next day, John stood with two of his disciples. 36. And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he said, Behold the Lamb of God! 37. And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. 38. Then Jesus turned, and seeing them following, said to them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master) where dwellest thou? 39. He said to them, Come and see. They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day (for it was about the tenth hour). 40. One of the two who heard John *speak*, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, We have found the Messiah (which is, being interpreted, the Christ). 42. And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas (which is by interpretation, A stone).

35.--[*The next day.*] Let St. John's particularity in noting days at this period of our Lord's history be observed again in this verse. If, as many suppose, St. John was one of the two who this day followed Jesus and became His disciples, we can well understand that it was a memorable day to him.

[*John stood.*] This expression seems to imply that there was some particular spot near Bethabara where John the Baptist was in the habit of standing, to preach and to receive those who came to be baptized. While he "stood" here, the event which follows took place.

36.--[*Looking...Jesus, as He walked.*] This probably means that he saw Jesus walking among the crowd of persons who were attracted to Bethabara, alone, without followers, and as yet not recognized by any one as the Messiah.

Stier remarks, "John saw Jesus walking in silent meditation, waiting for His hour and His Father's commands; in full preparation for the world and its sin: equipped, for the testimony to the truth, with that armor which has been tested and approved in His first great spiritual conflict, and for the utterance of the new words of God which the Father has given Him."

[*He said, Behold, etc.*] This seems to have been a second public proclamation of our Lord's office and character, a partial repetition of what had been said the day before; and yet, as the event shows, a more effective proclamation. The same truth may do good the second time that it is preached, which does nothing the first time.

37.--[*Heard...speak...followed.*] The three steps described in this verse are very noteworthy. John the Baptist "speaks," the disciples "hear." After hearing they "follow Jesus." This is a succinct summary of God's way

of saving myriads of souls.

Rollock, on this verse, remarks: "We learn by this example how powerful is the preaching of Christ. Yea, one or two words about Christ and the cross, how powerful are they in changing the hearts of men! Preach, if you like, about the great deeds of kings and generals and their courage and glory. These things will please men for a little time, but they will not convert them. But preach concerning Him that was crucified, a subject apparently ignominious and foolish, and then the story of the cross, which is foolishness to them that perish, will be the power and wisdom of God to them that believe."

38.--[*What seek ye?*] We cannot doubt that our Lord knew perfectly well the hearts and motives of these two disciples. In asking this question, therefore, He spoke partly for their encouragement and partly to stir them up to self-inquiry. "What seek ye? Is there anything that I can do for you, any truth that I can teach you, any burden that I can take away? If so, speak and be not afraid." "What seek ye? Are you sure that you are following Me with right motives? Are you sure that you are not regarding Me as a temporal ruler? Are you sure that you are not, like other Jews, seeking riches, honor, greatness, in this world? Prove your own selves and be sure that you are seeking the right object."

[*Which is to say, being interpreted.*] This is one of a class of expressions which shows that John wrote for Gentile readers rather than Jews. A Jew would not have needed this parenthetical comment. This same remark applies to verse 41.

[*Where dwellest Thou?*] This question seems to imply a desire for conversation and private communion. "We would fain know more of Thee. We are drawn to Thee by John the Baptist's proclamation. We would like to go aside with Thee from the crowd and inquire of Thee more privately and quietly, at Thy dwelling, about the things which are upon our hearts."

To apply the text, as many do, to our Lord's spiritual dwelling in "contrite hearts," etc. (Isaiah lviii.15), may produce good doctrinal and practical theology. But it is not the point of the text.

39.--[*Come and see.*] The great affability and condescension of these first words of our Lord's after His public appearance as Messiah, ought not to be overlooked. The very first thing that we hear Him saying, after He has been publicly proclaimed as the "Lamb of God," is "come and see." It is a pleasant type of what He has been ever saying to the sons of men from that day down to this. "Come and see who I am, and what I am. Come and be acquainted with Me."

Schottgen and Lightfoot both remark that the expression, "Come and see," is a very common one in Rabbinical writings and would be very familiar to the Jews.

[*Where He dwelt.*] We can only suppose that the place where our Lord was

dwelling at this time was some temporary residence in or near Bethabara. At the best, it was probably some humble lodging. It is not impossible that it was nothing more than a cave. He often "had not where to lay His head." If the two disciples had the least relic of Jewish expectation that Messiah would appear in royal dignity and glory, our Lord's dwelling would go far to disabuse their minds of the idea.

[*Abode with Him that day...tenth hour.*] The Jewish day began at six o'clock in the evening. The tenth hour therefore means four o'clock in the afternoon. At this late hour of the day, His disciples found it impossible to conclude their conversation with Jesus, and therefore remained in the same lodging with Him all night.

Many commentators, from Augustine downwards, make the natural remark that this evening must have been a blessed evening for these two disciples, and that it would have been pleasant if the conversation had been given to us! Yet if it had been good for us to know the conversation, it would doubtless have been recorded. There are no deficiencies in Scripture.

40.--[*One of the two...was Andrew.*] The priority of Andrew to Peter ought not to be overlooked. Peter, to whom the Church of Rome boastfully attributes a primacy among the apostles, was neither converted nor made acquainted with Christ so soon as his brother.

Who the other of these two disciples was, we are not told. It is highly probable, as Chrysostom and Theophylact conjecture, that it was St. John himself. On seven other occasions in this Gospel, he humbly withholds his name. (John xiii.23; xix.26,35; xx.2; xxi.7,20,24.) It is therefore very likely that he withheld it here. The supposition of Musculus and others, that the other disciple was a person of less zeal and sincerity than Andrew and is therefore not named, appears to me improbable.

41.--[*He first.*] This expression must either mean that Andrew was the first of the two disciples who brought a brother to Jesus, or that he was the first disciple, speaking generally, who spoke to others of the Messiah when he had found Him, or that he was the first to tell his brother Peter, and Peter was not the first to tell him about Christ.

[*We have found.*] This expression implies an unexpected and joyful discovery. The evening's conversation which Andrew had held with Jesus had convinced him that He was indeed the Christ.

[*The Messiah...interpreted...Christ.*] It is almost needless to remark that these names mean the "anointed one." The first is Hebrew and the second is Greek. Kings, prophets, and priests, in the Old Testament, were anointed; and our Lord as the Prophet, Priest, and King of the Church, was called the Anointed One, not because He was really anointed with oil, but because He was "anointed with the Holy Ghost." (Acts x.38.)

The extent of Andrew's religious knowledge ought not to be overlooked. Poor and humble in station as he was, he seems, like all the Jews, to have

known what the Old Testament prophets had foretold about Messiah, and to have been prepared to hear of a person appearing in the character of Messiah. It is one of many expressions in the Gospels which show that the lower orders among the Jews were far better acquainted with the letter of the Old Testament Scriptures, than the poor in our own day generally are with the letter of the New Testament, or indeed of any part of the Bible.

Calvin remarks on Andrew's conduct, "Woe to our indolence if we do not, after having been fully enlightened, endeavor to make others partakers of the same grace."

42.--[*When Jesus beheld...said...you are Simon.*] Our Lord here displayed His perfect knowledge of all persons, names, and things. He needed not that any should tell Him who and what a person was. This knowledge was supposed by the Jews to be a peculiar attribute of Messiah, whenever He came. He was to be one of "quick understanding." (Isaiah xi.3.) Enough for us to know that it is a peculiar attribute of God. He alone knows the hearts of men. Our Lord's perfect knowledge of all hearts was one among many proofs of His divinity. The same knowledge appears again in His address to Nathanael, in this chapter, ver. 47, and in His conversation with the Samaritan woman. (John iv.18, etc.) The effect produced in both cases is very worthy of notice.

[*Cephas.*] This is a Syriac word and is equivalent to the Greek word Petros, which we render Peter. Both mean a stone, a portion of a rock. "Petra" means a rock, "Petros" a piece of a rock. Peter was the latter, but not the former.

[*A stone.*] The marginal reading here, as Lightfoot remarks, would have been much better than that which the translators have put in our version. If the words were "Cephas, which is by interpretation Peter," it would have conveyed our Lord's meaning far more clearly.

The custom of having two names appears to have been common in New Testament times. The apostle Peter seems to have been only known as "Cephas" in the Corinthian Church. Out of the five other places in the New Testament where the name Cephas is found, four are in the Epistle to the Corinthians, while the name Peter is not used in that Epistle at all.

Nifanius give the names of three Popes who have so grossly mistaken the origin of the word Cephas as to suppose that it is derived from the Greek word which signifies "a head," and that it indicated Peter's headship in the Church! Such a palpable blunder is one of a thousand proofs that Popes are no more infallible than other men. Calovius makes the same charge against no less a person than Cardinal Bellarmine.

If it be asked why our Lord gave Simon this new name, the best answer appears to be that it was given with a special reference to the change which grace was to work in Simon's heart. Naturally impulsive, unstable, and unsteady, he was finally to become a firm, solid stone in the Church of Christ, and to testify his unshaken adherence to Christ by suffering

martyrdom.

Chrysostom thinks that our Lord altered Simon's name "to show that it was He who gave the old covenant, that it was He who called Abram Abraham, and Sarai Sarah, and Jacob Israel."

Lightfoot, on these verses, after noticing the error which Roman Catholic writers attempt to found upon it, about Peter being the rock on which the Church is built, makes the following curious observation: "If they will so pertinaciously adhere to it, let us apprehend our Lord speaking *prophetically*, and foretelling the grand error that would spring up in the Church, namely, that Peter is a rock than which the Christian Church has known nothing more sad and destructive."

Let it be noted, in leaving this passage, that the selection of such humble unlearned men, as those here described to be the first apostles and preachers of the Gospel, is a strong evidence of the truth of Christianity. A religion which was propagated by such weak instruments, in the face of persecution and opposition from the great and learned, must be a religion from God. Such results from such instrumentality cannot possibly be accounted for on natural principles.