

# **BIB203 Vu 'Life of Christ**

## **Unit 5c Johannine Synoptic Example 3**

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So in the last two segments, just to recap what we've done, we're looking at John 1:19-42. And with the initial reading of that passage, we ran from verse 19 all the way to about 26, 27, and we started to correlate it with the appropriate segments in the Synoptics: Mark 1:1-12, Matthew 3:1-4:11, and Luke 3:1-22 and 4:1-14. In point of fact, we haven't even completed the correlation yet. We're almost there. And so in the first segment, it looked like the representative was sent from Jerusalem to John, and that preceded him calling them, the religious leaders, that is, a brood of vipers. We look at the contribution of all the Synoptics and what we found was, well, he didn't just call the Pharisees and the scribes and the Sadducees a brood of vipers. He actually said that to the crowd at large at various moments during his ministry at the Jordan River.

So that's what it looked like. It looked as though the representatives were sent to him and then they came out and then he castigated them for their lack of faithfulness, their practice. But then we looked in the second segment and we added a bit more of the narrative from all of the Gospels and we looked more closely at the next day paragraphs that we see in John 1, right? John 1:29, 1:35, and there's another one at 1:51 thereabouts. And when we looked at the first one and we probed it a bit more, well, then what it looked like in the first segment suddenly shifted. We had to look at the prior context and we had to correlate it with everything that had gone before. And all of a sudden, our perspective shifted. It now looked like this interaction took place the day before Jesus came out, presumably, from the Judean wilderness towards John 1:29.

Now, of course, it is possible to state that Jesus was simply walking towards John that day and that he may have come back from the Judean wilderness a few days prior. And so the first perspective in the first segment could still be possible. And you are certainly allowed to have that perspective if you want, but it seems as though the perspective that we arrived at, what it now looked like in the second segment, is actually the one that we should probably go with. And I talked about how the correlation causes texture, gives texture to the story. It also shows how complicated interpretation can be, which is why many competent scholars are quite willing to deal with each pericope in its own right and to simply treat them in terms of the theological voice, the theological message that they have.

So that's basically a summarization of the first two segments of this unit. So we're going to try to finish in this segment, and if we run overtime, in the next segment. We're going to finish our exercise here, and then I'm going to summarize what all of it means at the end. So we're looking at Luke. Luke 3:1-22 we've already looked at. But I want to direct your attention to verse 21 of Luke 3. It says, "Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened, and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, 'You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.'"

So only in Luke do we see that the descent of the Holy Spirit is no mere vision. The descent of the Holy Spirit is actually a theophany. Luke doesn't use that terminology, but it compares favorably with what we see in the Old Testament. It is actually a theophany of the Holy Spirit, which is not humanoid. The Holy Spirit, he does not take the form of a man. He takes the form of a dove. And that is bodily form. Luke's use of the adverb *somatikos* has that sense. There's no ambiguity with respect to meaning of that word. And so a dove actually flies out of the heavens, which had been torn open, split open, and lands and descends on Jesus' shoulder, and Jesus walks into the Judean wilderness with the dove on his shoulder. The Spirit leads him, or as Mark says it, drives him into the wilderness. So we see that in Luke that there was actually a theophany, a physical manifestation of the Holy Spirit. It is a singular event.

Good interpreters do not normally hang all of their eggs, put all their eggs in one basket with respect to interpreting a verse. We usually like to look elsewhere for correlation and for confirmation. But *somatikos* is not so easily turned aside. Bodily, physical form.

At any rate, look at the prior context. Verses 18 to 20. “John preached good news to the people with many other exhortations. But Herod the tetrarch, who had been reproved by him for Herodias, his brother’s wife, and for all the evil things that Herod had done, added this to them all, that he locked up John in prison.” So Luke summarizes basically the end of John’s ministry, but then it’s almost as though he toggles back to the main feature of the story, which is that the people are baptized. Jesus also was baptized and was praying. That’s an added detail. Jesus was praying. In Mark and Matthew, he simply comes up out of the water. The Holy Spirit descends from heaven because the heavens have been split open. Then the voice from heaven says, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.” In Luke, we see that Jesus was praying. That’s an added detail. So that’s Luke.

And then, of course, verses 23 to 38 of Luke 3 is genealogical material. So that takes us to chapter 4 of Luke, verse 1 all the way through to verse 14. And we see the temptation play out in this particular section of Luke’s Gospel. And when we get to verse 14, it says, “And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and a report about him went out through all the surrounding country. And he taught in their synagogues (verse 15), being glorified by all.” It’s basically a summary statement. The significance. What is its placement in all four Gospels chronologically? A rough chronology. That’s what we’re doing is a rough chronology of sorts to sort of understand, or try to, how things played out. What were the sequence of events without being slavish or explicit?

So “Jesus returns in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and a report about him goes out through all the surrounding country.” (Verse 14) When we correlate that with the other Synoptics, so let’s run back to the Gospel of Mark, and that would be chapter 1 and verse 14. Mark 1:14 says, “Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the Gospel of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the Gospel.” So John is arrested. Jesus goes into Galilee, proclaims the Gospel of God. Notice that there is no correlation with the Gospel of John as such, right? It’s as though what we read in John, “the next day, the next day, the next day,” which basically totals three days, are not accounted for in the Synoptics. We go to Matthew 4:12. We read, “Now when he heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee.”

So there seems to be a consensus with all the Synoptics. In Luke, we read a little blurb about Herod the tetrarch, his dalliance with Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife that John had spoken out against, as well as the other evil things that this tetrarch had done. And this, of course, would be Herod Antipas historically, adds to his evil deeds by shutting John in prison. Mark and Matthew clearly tell us that John is arrested and placed in prison and then Jesus withdraws into Galilee. So we can infer that Jesus withdraws into Galilee soon after the three days that are highlighted, earmarked in the Gospel of John, which means that soon after Jesus comes out of the Judean wilderness, give or take a couple of days after the three days or maybe a little bit of time after that, John is arrested. Not too long after Jesus comes out of the Judean wilderness. That’s what it looks like. And so let’s hold on to that tentatively and see where it takes us. So again, Mark and Matthew point out John’s arrest prior to Jesus’ withdrawal into Galilee. So he goes back up north. And so we see it in all three Gospels. We see it in Luke. We see it in Mark. We see it in Matthew.

So let's go back to John and let's probe John a bit more and see what we come up with. So back to John 1. We've already looked at 1:29-34. So after the events of verses 19 to 28 where representatives were sent after he utters, "You brood of vipers," and they have a conversation, the very next day, Jesus is coming towards him. And that's an assumption on my part, but it seems like a reasonable one that Jesus is coming out of the Judean wilderness. The temptation is over. And of course, we correlate all of the Gospel narratives, the Synoptics, that is. After Jesus meets the challenge of the evil one, angels came and were ministering to him. He would not turn stones to bread by himself, even though he had the power to do so. He would not jump off the pinnacle of the temple and make himself float to the ground. And he certainly would not fall down and worship Satan. And as we know, the order is somewhat reversed in the Lucan Gospel. There's a bit of a difference between Matthew's version and Luke's version with respect to the temptation.

But afterwards, Matthew tells us angels come and minister to him, presumably bringing him food and drink so that he can recover strength because he hasn't eaten anything, He hasn't drunk anything for 40 days. So he comes out of the Judean wilderness in the strength of the ministry, in John's ministry, having been fed. He has enough to keep going. He comes out of the Judean wilderness and John immediately announced, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" He goes further. Verse 30. "This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was before me.'" And we've read it already, so I won't rehash all of it. The very next day, after this interaction with the religious leadership, Jesus returns. John announces and he testifies to what the word of the Lord had said to him, what the Lord, what the Father had said to him about the one who he was to baptize and who would indeed baptize with fire and with the Holy Spirit.

So that takes us to verse 35 of John 1. "The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, 'Behold, the Lamb of God!' The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, 'What are you seeking?' And they said to him, 'Rabbi' (which means Teacher), 'where are you staying?' He said to them, 'Come and you will see.' So they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. One of the two who heard John speak 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. Jesus looked at him and said, 'So you are Simon the son of John. You shall be called Cephas' (which means Peter)."

So notice what just happened. This exercise, this Unit 5 is about John and his contribution to the synoptic Gospels, and we're still dealing with part one. So what just happened in this passage? Well, the very next day, the day after Jesus returned from the Judean wilderness, John is standing with two of his disciples. Jesus walks by and he looks at him and he says, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" He may have said some other things, but John doesn't tell us that. "The two disciples heard him say this, and so they followed Jesus." Jesus turned, saw them following, and asked them, "What are you looking for? What do you seek?" And they respond to him, "Rabbi, where are you staying?" There's a lot of presupposition there on that part, which is acceptable. Their response is textured. They called him rabbi because John has pointed him out. He's the Lamb of God. He is mightier than John. If John is a rabbi, how much more the one who is mightier than he is? So they call him rabbi. "Where are you staying?" which is basically a way of them inviting themselves over to hang out with him wherever he is staying. So he says, "Come and see." Now they're asking if they can go with him and he is being hospitable and he says, "Come and see." He's welcoming to them.

So they come and they saw where he was staying and they stayed with him that day. It was about the tenth hour, 4:00 in the afternoon? “One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother.” (Verse 40) So what that tells us at verse 40 is significant because it tells us that Andrew was a disciple of John the Baptist. Go back to the beginning of the passage that we’re looking at. Verse 35. It says the next day; he’s standing with two of his disciples. So John is standing there. Andrew is one of them. We are never told who the other disciple is. Some opinion, there are some who think that the other disciple who was not mentioned is actually John the apostle, John the son of Zebedee. If that’s true, that would explain why they are in the Synoptics close together. In Mark and in Matthew, they are next to one another, practically speaking, on the Sea of Galilee, mending their nets, coming back in after a night of fishing. In the Gospel of Luke, they’re boats nearby one another.

That’s a completely different setting that we read about in Luke, even though you can correlate it with the passages in Mark and in Matthew, right? But here, we have to go back even further than what we read about in the Synoptics because this is two days after Jesus comes out of the Judean wilderness and already we’re finding out that Andrew was a follower of John the Baptist and he clearly heard John the Baptist point to Jesus and say, “This is the Lamb of God. This is the one I’ve been speaking about.” He hears him say it the first day, the day Jesus returned. And he hears him say it the second day and it clicks, so he follows Jesus along with, presumably, John ben Zebedee, John the apostle. And Jesus turns around and asks them, “What are you seeking?” “Rabbi, where are you staying?” “Come and see.” “Let’s hang out.”

And what he does, verse 41, is he first finds his own brother Simon and says to him, “We have found the Messiah (which means Christ).” He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, “So you are Simon the son of John. You shall be called Cephas (which means Peter).” He found his own brother Simon. That does not mean that he went from Judea in the south to Galilee in the north to find his brother Simon. It means that Simon was proximate. He was nearby. And Andrew went and found him. And for whatever reason, was Peter a disciple of John? We’re not told. It’s not explicit in the text. We probably do not need to assume that Simon Peter was a disciple of John. But his brother Andrew certainly is, and Andrew goes and finds him. And he is somewhere in Judea, somewhere in that vicinity, and he says to him, “We found the one that John is speaking about. We found the Messiah.” He brings him to Jesus. Jesus looks at him and says, “You’re Simon the son of John. You’re going to be called Cephas (Peter).”

So they’re all there. They’re all there in Judea around the Jordan River in the south, right? And then, of course, so that takes us to verse 43. “The next day.” The third day after Jesus returns from the Judean wilderness. So events are moving very quickly. So he has made connection with three of the apostles already: John the son of Zebedee, Andrew the son of John, Simon the son of John (Simon Peter). He’s made connection with at least three of them that we know of, at least at the stage that we are. So “The next day (verse 43) Jesus decided to go to Galilee.” See how that connects with the synoptic Gospels? So now that we got into this juncture, as we are reading this together and probing the material, examining it step by step by step, Jesus decides to go to Galilee the next day. And you have to correlate that with 2:1. “On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples.” I’m reading John 2:1-2. But see, the next day in verse 43 is the third day of John 2:1. See how that interacts?

Again, to make the point without being redundant about it, reading the Gospels slowly and carefully with an appreciation for its layered nature is important. The third day, Jesus decides to go to Galilee. Happens to be the same day in which the wedding in Cana of Galilee begins, which tells us that he doesn't get there that day probably, unless he really hoofed it from the south to the north because it's in Galilee. Probably not the case. He may have gotten there the very next day if they traveled without stopping to rest, or he may have gotten there on the third day of the wedding. It's entirely possible. All that we need to do to nail this down somewhat with a little bit more certainty would be to estimate as best as we could how long it would have taken to travel from Judea, in the vicinity of the Jordan, on foot to Cana in Galilee. How many miles was that? How long did it take for people who travel on foot? We know that Jesus was peripatetic. He traveled on foot. We don't read of him traveling in caravans or any such thing. The only exception to that being when he was 12 years old and he and his parents obviously traveled as part of a group from Nazareth to Jerusalem for the feast.

But here in John, we read in verse 43, "The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, 'Follow me.'" So Jesus is in Judea and he earmarks an individual by the name of Philip and says, "Follow me." Philip is from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. That's important information, verse 44. It means that Philip is known to Andrew and Peter, and they may have mentioned Philip to Jesus, and they may have asked Jesus to take him along, and so Jesus does. In other words, this is early. This is the early stage of Jesus' ministry. The implications of this (please don't miss this), when you think about the Gospel narratives, the section of the Gospel narratives in the Synoptics where Jesus is walking by the Sea of Galilee (Mark), he's walking by the Sea of Galilee (Matthew), and he sees Simon Peter and they're mending their nets and he says, "Follow me," and they left everything and followed Jesus. He goes a little further. He sees John and James, the sons of Zebedee, with their father, mending their nets. And he says, "Follow me. I'll make you fishers of men" to both groups. And they follow him.

What we're reading about here in John precedes all of that. And that's important to note. That speaks to the layered nature of the Gospels, especially where John includes these chronological markers where he does. So Philip is included in the group. Philip finds Nathanael and says to him, "We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote (this is verse 45), Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!" Nathanael said to him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." Nathanael answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!"

Now, probably the way to read this section to the extent that we've read it would be to suggest, and we can suggest this, that possibly Andrew and John and Peter are all disciples of John the Baptist. It is possible to suggest that. There is nothing wrong with suggesting that. It's a reasonable assumption to make based on what we're reading. But we can also possibly and reasonably add Philip and Nathanael. They are followers of John the Baptist, or they had been subjected to the baptism of John. And there are grounds for this. If you will hold your place here and come with me to the Book of Acts 1, we'll look there briefly. Peter, when he gets up in the middle of the community of 120 prior to Pentecost, he says in verse 21, "So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection."

And so if we bring that particular text, 1:21 to 1:22 of Acts 1, and we bring it side by side with the passages in John that we are examining, what we find then is that these guys, these individuals that we read about in John 1:43 to 1:51 are arguably there at the baptism of John. That would include Peter. That fact is not mentioned in the Synoptics, and so that's something to consider. In all likelihood, these events that we see in John 1 precede the call that we read about in Mark and Matthew and Luke. Of course, there is something to be said about Luke. I'm not done with Luke yet. I want to point that out because it gets drawn into this entire discussion necessarily. We will be doing that in the next segment, but I'm not done with this one yet. Anyway, so we've got Andrew, John son of Zebedee probably. We've got Peter. We've got Philip. We've got Nathanael.

So when Nathanael says in verse 49, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" he hasn't had time to absorb the implications of John's ministry, if indeed he has been baptized unto repentance by John the Baptist. He is saying those things, but he is still saying them with a political and nationalistic lens at worst and with a lack of real understanding at best. The latter being correlated with his willingness to go to John and to be baptized by him unto the repentance and remission of his sins. So when he says that, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" we shouldn't take that in verse 49 as a clear declaration indicative of his salvation or anything like that. That is not the point of the Johannine Gospel. Jesus responds in verse 50, "Because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree,' do you believe? You will see greater things than these." And he said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man." And of course, that particular part of the passage gives scholars fits. What does that mean? If we correlate it with Jacob's ladder in Genesis, that's a whole other story. It doesn't concern us here.

I'm not saying that Philip is not redeemed. As it turns out, he will end up being one of the apostles and he's going to go out and he's going to minister the Gospel after the ascension of Christ. What I am saying, though, is that he doesn't fully understand. None of them do. They won't understand fully until after his resurrection. So in the next segment, I'm going to briefly deal with the correlation of Luke with respect to the call of the disciples in Mark and Matthew and how it fits here with John. It will be brief, but it will also be sort of a summary of everything that we've done.