

The Story of the Life of Christ – Lesson 10

26 AD

In Lesson 9 we studied the Genealogy of Christ in the Gospel of Luke. That genealogy ran through Jesus' mother by way of Mary's father Heli, all the way back to Adam. We also studied Christ's temptation in the wilderness by Satan which fulfilled the foreshadowing of the offering of the second goat on the Day of Atonement to Azazel. Now we will proceed to study where the story of the Life of Christ was taken up in the Gospel of John.

We had a short description of the characteristics of the four Gospels and their authors in Lesson 1, but I think we can profit by adding a little more information about the Gospel of John.

The Gospel of John is traditionally considered to have been written from Ephesus. This was a little before the time John was given the visions which he reported in the Book of Revelation. At the time of Revelation, he was in exile on the Aegean island of Patmos. John seems to have written his Gospel during the closing years of the reign of the Roman Emperor Domitian or about 95 AD. Several things help to establish the time of writing. First, internal Biblical evidence indicates that it was definitely written after the death of Peter in 67 AD¹ and after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD.² Also, the testimony of John 21 indicates that when John wrote his Gospel he was of a very great age, probably at least in his nineties.³ He was old enough that John felt he had to deny the rumors that he was going to live until Christ's return. Probably fueling the rumors was the fact that, according to tradition, John had just escaped unhurt after being thrown into a cauldron of boiling oil by order of the Roman Governor of the province of Asia. This was the relevant testimony of John in his Gospel where he dealt with that rumor:

John 21:22-23 “Jesus answered (*Peter*), ‘If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me.’ Because of this, the rumor spread among the brothers that this disciple (*John*) would not die. But Jesus did not say that he would not die; he only said, ‘If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you?’”

Although the author of John's Gospel is never mentioned by name in the text, it is clear that the author was one of the twelve disciples. According to non-Biblical tradition, except for John, all the other disciples were dead before the destruction of Jerusalem. There is also a very strong extra-Biblical tradition that it was written by John. Certainly, of the twelve disciples, only those not mentioned in the Gospel of John by name in the third person as “he” could be eligible. That

¹ *John 21:18-19 refers to the death of Peter as in the past.*

² *This is demonstrated by the omission of Jesus' prophecies about the destruction of Jerusalem included in the other three Gospels. There was no point in recording a prophecy that had already been fulfilled.*

³ *John was no more than five years younger than Jesus. That would have made him about 93 in 95 AD.*

list includes John, his brother James, James, son of Alpheus, Simon Zelotes and Matthew. James, the brother of John, is excluded because we know that he had been executed in about 44 AD (Acts 12:2) long before the writing of this Gospel. Matthew is also excluded because he had already written a Gospel account. That leaves John, Simon Zelotes, and James, son of Alpheus as the only possible candidates. All the accounts in John indicate that the author of that Gospel had a very close relationship with Peter. Every account in Acts and the other gospels indicate that John was the closest to Peter of all the disciples. Therefore, it makes sense that it was John to whom Peter referred to in the verse quoted above. The next verse says:

John 21:24 “This (*the one to whom Peter was referring*) is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down.”

Furthermore, in one of the fragments of Papias ⁴ which was later quoted by Eusebius, there is the testimony that John had written a Gospel. With typical humility, John himself called it the Gospel according to the Hebrews.

Thus, the Gospel of John was probably written almost thirty years after the latest of the Gospels. Matthew, Mark, and Luke were written in that order, with Luke probably being written about 60 AD.

In his Gospel, John takes a very different tack than the others. As we will see, he fills in gaps in the story of the life of Christ which were not covered in the other Gospels. He was uniquely qualified to do this. Among other things, he was one of the first two disciples. The other one was Andrew, Peter’s brother. He was also one of the three disciples closest to Jesus. The other two were his brother James and Peter.⁵ He was the only one of the disciples that witnessed all of Jesus’ trials before Annas, the Sanhedrin, Herod Antipas, and Pilate. He also stood at the foot of the cross during the crucifixion while the rest of the disciples stood at a distance. He, along with Peter, was one of the only two disciples that went to the tomb on Resurrection Sunday.

In his Gospel, the Apostle John didn’t record the beginning of the story of the life of Jesus Christ like the others. The Gospel of Luke started with the appearance of Gabriel to Zechariah prophesying the birth of John the Baptist. The Gospel of Matthew started almost a year later with the discovery by Joseph that Mary was pregnant. The Gospel of Mark began with the ministry of John the Baptist and his baptism of Jesus Christ. John didn’t record the Baptism of Jesus or His Temptation in the desert. John began the human history of the incarnated Jesus after His return from the desert. However, John went much farther back for the beginning of his account of the story of Jesus Christ. He went back to eternity past.

⁴ Papias had been a student of both John and Polycarp (a friend of John).

⁵ Among other things these three were the ones Jesus took with Him to the Mount of Transfiguration and later to go aside and pray with Him in the Garden of Gethsemane.

John 1:1-2 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He *The same* was with God in the beginning.

Here, John spoke of Jesus as “the Word.” He existed in eternity past by that name, one of His many names, He was called “the Word” because He was the revelation of the wisdom and character of God to mankind and all creation in the only way mankind and even the angels could begin to comprehend. His life and work had been the centerpiece of God’s plan from the “beginning.” That “beginning” had preceded the creation of time itself. Jesus, “the Word,” was Eternal. He had co-existed with God and He was God from Eternity Past. The name God gave Himself in the Old Testament was “LORD” {יהוה (yeh·hō·vā)}. It means “I am that I am” or just “I am.” The name “LORD” speaks of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit together. I can read or speak the words I just wrote and assent to the truth of those words. However, I can never fully comprehend those words. The LORD exists in dimensions that I cannot experience and He created those dimensions. The LORD’s words in Isaiah only partly describe the problem:

Isaiah 55:8-9 “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the LORD. ‘As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.’”

Our inability to fully understand the LORD in all His dimensions is also expressed in a passage in Judges:

Judges 13:17-18 “Then Manoah (*the father of Sampson*) inquired of the angel of the LORD, ‘What is your name, so that we may honor you when your word comes true?’ He replied, ‘Why do you ask my name? It is beyond understanding.’”

In the beginning of the epistle of 1st John, John referred to the same important theme about how the incarnate Jesus at least enabled us to comprehend the nature of “the Word” in the dimensions we understand:

1 John 1:1-2 “That which was from the beginning,⁶ which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched ⁷ concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us.”

⁶ *Jesus not only is eternal, but He was the foundation of God’s plan.*

⁷ *The words “this we proclaim” appears in the NIV and NET translations. It does not appear in the Greek Textus Receptus or the Codex Sinaiticus. It does not appear in nineteen of the twenty other translation I looked at. The concept is stated in verse three of 1 John 1, but I don’t believe there is any justification for adding words to Scripture that aren’t there.*

The important theme about the “names” or nature of Christ are also dealt with in John’s book of Revelation:

Revelation 19:11-12a “I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True.⁸ With justice he judges and makes war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns.”

Revelation 19:12b “He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself.”

Revelation 19:13 “He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God.”⁹

Revelation 19:14-16 “The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword¹⁰ with which to strike down the nations. ‘He will rule them with an iron scepter.’¹¹ He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.”¹²

John 1:3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

This same truth is taught repeatedly in both the Old and New Testament:

Proverbs 3:19-20 “By wisdom (the Word) the LORD laid the earth’s foundations, by understanding he set the heavens in place; by his knowledge the deeps were divided, and the clouds let drop the dew.”

Colossians 1:16 “For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.”¹³

Colossians 1:17 “He is before all things, and ~~in him all things hold together~~ all things commend him.”¹⁴

⁸ See Revelation 3:14. “Faithful and True” is Christ.

⁹ To me verses 12 and 13 refer back to the original name of God given in Exodus 3:14: “I am who I am.”

¹⁰ Revelation 1:16, Isaiah 49:2.

¹¹ This is referred to in Psalm 2:9, Revelation 2:27, and Revelation 12:5.

¹² This exact title only occurs elsewhere in scripture in 1 Timothy 6:15.

¹³ When the passage says all things were created “for” him, I believe it is saying that all creation was made as a platform to demonstrate the character and plan of God to His creatures. God always knew that His creatures could only understand Him if He presented Himself as a creature, a man, who made the supreme sacrifice for them.

Hebrews 1:2 “But in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.”

Revelation 10:6 “And he swore by him (*Jesus Christ*) who lives for ever and ever, who created the heavens and all that is in them, the earth and all that is in it, and the sea and all that is in it.”

John 1:4 In him was life, and that life was the light of men.

In Christ was the life that could save. When we are “in Christ” we have that life. All men have to do is to follow the light of Christ’s life to faith in the LORD.

This is somewhat the same concept which was taught in Proverbs and Deuteronomy:

Proverbs 3:18 “She (*wisdom or the Word*) is a tree of life to those who embrace her; those who lay hold of her will be blessed.”

Deuteronomy 30:14 “No, the word (*of wisdom or the Word*) is very near you (*Israel*); it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it.”¹⁵

John 1:5 The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.

That light had always shone from the time of Adam’s fall and all during the age of Israel. However, even with the testimony of the Prophets and the Law, even most of the people of Israel had hardened their hearts against understanding the LORD’s love and mercy.

Finally, in John’s generation had come the “fullness of the times” when all the revelation of the Word of God had a full flowering:

Ephesians 1:9b-10 “In all wisdom and insight He (*God the Father*) made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him (*Christ*) with a view to an administration suitable (*the Church*) to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. NASB

¹⁴ *The Greek word here is συνίστημι {sün-ē'-stā-mē}. It is translated here as “hold together.” In other translations this is translated “consist,” or “subsist.” In other places it is usually translated “commend.” In its other uses in the New Testament, it refers to something or someone who stands up to testify as to the truth of a matter. I believe that the phrase here would be better understood if translated “all things commend him.” In other words the very universe testifies of Him. This is the same concept that Paul taught in Romans 1:20 “For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.”*

¹⁵ *Paraphrased in Romans 10:6-9.*

John 1:6 There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John.

Here John the Apostle came to the beginning of his human history of Christ with the introduction of John the Baptist. John the Baptist was the same one who had introduced the Apostle John to Jesus.

John 1:7 He (John the Baptist) came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through (by means of) him (John the Baptist) all men might believe.

John the Baptist came to prepare the way for Jesus so that men would be readier to believe when Jesus came. As I have explained in a previous lesson, I believe John the Baptist had been ministering for ten years when he baptized Jesus and saw Him depart into the desert to be tempted.

John 1:8 He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

As important as John the Baptist was, he only came as a witness to prepare for the coming of someone infinitely more important. That someone was the Light and Word of God personified.

John 1:9a The true light that gives light to every man

This phrase teaches the important principal that the Word of truth is available to “every man.” No one has ever been born, no matter during what distant era of time, or in what far-flung end of the globe, who has been beyond the reach of that light if they were willing to accept it. Just because we aren’t aware of all the means by which the omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent God can pursue mankind with the truth doesn’t mean that isn’t true.

John 1:9a also accords with the name Jesus later gave Himself:

John 8:12 “When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, ‘I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.’”

John 1:9b was coming into the world.

This was not speaking of Jesus’ birth, but the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry when His light began to be revealed to the world of men. It had begun with His baptism by John and the Father’s accompanying testimony:

Matthew 3:17b “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”

John 1:10 He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him.

This seems to be referring to the first thirty years of Jesus' life. During those years He lived in the small town of Nazareth in Galilee working in anonymity as a carpenter ¹⁶ in the shop of his legal, but not biological, father, Joseph.

John 1:11 He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive *welcome* him.

The perspective in this verse seems to be that from the time that John was writing (about 95 AD) long after Jesus' death. John was looking back on the fact that what had been "His own" was His world and His people. They had not welcomed Him. Instead, they had rejected and killed Him.

The Greek word translated "receive" here is not the same as in the next verse. Here it is παραλαμβάνω {pä-rä-läm-bä'-nō}. There it is simply λαμβάνω {läm-bä'-nō}. The first refers to a more thorough and enthusiastic reception and might better be translated "welcome" or even "embrace." A "welcome" was the reception that might have been expected to be given by the Jews to their long-awaited Messiah.

John 1:12 But as many as received (λαμβάνω) him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: KJV

However, to those Jews who merely "received" the living Word, God gave the power to become the "sons of God." There was just one condition. They had to believe in the promise of who He was (His name), even if it was only with a tiny mustard seed of faith.

~~**John 1:13 children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. NIV**~~

John 1:13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. KJV

Although I have crossed it out, I have left the NIV translation of John 1:13 for you as a cautionary tale about what you will sometimes find in most translations. What I discovered here was that the NIV has not given us a translation at all. Instead, they have evidently given us an interpretation based on their theological prejudices.

The first phrase in the NIV ("not of natural descent") is probably a correct interpretation of the literal translation which is "not of blood." It referred to the widespread erroneous belief of the Jews that only Jews could be saved. This was wrong. The Bible makes it clear that Jesus did not come to save just the Jews, but the whole world.

¹⁶ Mark 6:3

The second phrase in the NIV's translation of John 1:13 was ("nor of human decision"). That is their interpretation of the literal translation which is "nor of the will of the flesh." The NIV altered the translation in way which makes it closely coincide with a Calvinistic view of predestination. That view takes free will out of faith as the Calvinists do. They do this by eliminating any "human decision." The correct literal "translation" of the Greek text is "nor of the will of the flesh." I think the correct "interpretation" of this it was that it contradicted the popular Pharisaical idea that that a person could be saved by keeping the law. The Pharisees thought this could be done by producing a self-righteousness acceptable to God by the "will of the flesh." John's Gospel was simply saying that "the will of the flesh" had no power to redeem the sinner.

The third phrase in the NIV "or of a husband's will" is their interpretation of the literal translation which is "nor of the will of man." This just means that the plan of salvation was purely the LORD's plan from the beginning. I think this phrase it is meant to warn against all the other ways men and their religions have devised to please the "gods" they have invented. I have no clue why the NIV translators chose in this instance to translate the word for "man" as "husband." The Greek word here is ἀνὴρ {ä-nā'r}. It is translated "man" 75% of the time. It can be translated "husband" when the word is contrasted with a wife as in: "Joseph was the man (*husband*) of Mary." However, there is no reference to a wife in this passage to lead to that interpretation.

I have made the comments on the deficiencies of the NIV translation as a warning to the readers of English translations of the Bible to have at least have several translations available.

I should comment here that as modern English Bible translations go, the NIV is about as good as any of the others I have found. All of them are pretty good, but they all seem to have a few flaws like these, where their prejudices get the better of them and they interpret rather than translate.

John 1:14 **The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.**

This verse was actually the testimony of John the Apostle about his personal experience. He had seen the Word of God in the flesh. He had seen the revelation of the glory, grace, and truth of God in the person of Jesus Christ.

Christ's Return from the Desert after His Temptation

It is important in reading the following passage to remember that it was written by the Apostle John who was an eyewitness to the proceedings. John had been a disciple of John the Baptist, but the events described here made such an impact on John that he left John the Baptist to follow Jesus.

John 1:15a **John testifies concerning him. He ~~cries out~~ cried out,**

The verb “testifies” is in the present tense, while the verb “cried out” is in the perfect tense which signifies a completed action. The interpretation of the present tense and the perfect tense here seems to be that John the Baptist’s “cry” in the past was still “testifying” in the present.

John 1:15b **saying, “This was he of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.’”**

It is quite possible these were the very last words that John the Apostle heard John the Baptist say, just before he and Andrew left John to follow Jesus. It was probably just after he said, “Behold the Lamb of God” in John 1:36 which we will see in the next lesson.

This testimony of John the Baptist that Jesus was “before me” also agreed with the testimony of John the Apostle (John 1:2) that Jesus Christ was “from the Beginning.” Remember, in his humanity, Jesus was six months younger than John the Baptist.¹⁷

John 1:16-18 is a testimony by the 95-year-old Apostle John given long after Jesus had finished His work from which our blessing flows. This testimony adds a little more about the nature of Jesus Christ.

John 1:16 **From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another.**

The grace of Jesus has flowed out in some sense to “all.” Among other things, we believers have been given the indwelling of the Holy Spirit which is not only the seal of our salvation but the transforming power of the life Jesus has given us:

2 Peter 1:3 “His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.”

John 1:17 **For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.**

Although the Law of Moses pointed to God’s grace and the truth of God’s salvation, that grace and truth was only accomplished by Jesus Christ.

John 1:18 **No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father’s side, has made him known.**

¹⁷ *Luke 1:26.*

The greatest purpose of the mission of Jesus Christ was to make known the nature of God to His creatures.

In the verses below we switch back to John's historical account of the ministry of John the Baptist after he had baptized Jesus and seen Him leave to be tempted in the desert. During the succeeding forty days John the Baptist had been visited by a committee of inquiry into his ministry from the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem.

John 1:19 **Now this was John's testimony when the Jews of Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was.**

We know that this was not really a friendly mission. The religious leaders of the Jews generally hated John. They knew that his teaching ran contrary to theirs. What they really wanted was to find a charge by which to have him imprisoned or killed. If he had resided in Jerusalem they could have found a way to dispose of him quietly without a charge. Unfortunately for them, half of the time John stayed out in the desert near the Jordan in Samaria. Samaria was under the jurisdiction of the Roman Governor. The Sanhedrin had no power there. The other half of the time, John was in the desert just across the Jordan in the jurisdiction of Herod Antipas.¹⁸ That was where they found John here.

John 1:20 **He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, "I am not the Christ."**

They had hoped to get him to claim to be the Christ. The Christ was supposed to bring in a new Kingdom. He would not claim he was the Christ.

John 1:21a **They asked him, "Then who are you? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not."**

They tried to get him to say he was Elijah, another revolutionary figure who was to precede the new Kingdom.¹⁹ He would not claim he was Elijah.

John 1:21b **"Are you the Prophet?"²⁰ He answered, "No."**

The term "the Prophet" referred to the passage in Deuteronomy which promised the coming of a Prophet whose authority was to be final:

Deuteronomy 18:15-19 "The LORD your God will raise up for you **a prophet** like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him. For this is what you asked of the LORD your

¹⁸ *Eventually, they enticed John into saying something that offended Herod Antipas and his wife Herodias.*

¹⁹ *Malachi 4:5 "See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes."*

²⁰ *Refers to the prophecy of Deuteronomy 18:17-19*

God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said, ‘Let us not hear the voice of the LORD our God nor see this great fire anymore, or we will die.’ The LORD said to me: “What they say is good. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him. If anyone does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name, I myself will call him to account.”

John the Baptist would not claim to be “the Prophet.” Of course, although the Jews didn’t understand it, “the Prophet” the LORD had promised was actually the same as “the Messiah.” “The Prophet” was Jesus Christ.

John 1:22-23 Finally they said, “Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?” John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, “I am the voice of one calling in the desert, ‘Make straight the way for the Lord.’”²¹

In the other Gospels the Holy Spirit speaking in the mouth of the Gospel writers acknowledged that this was the mission of John. Matthew 3:3, Mark 1:3, and Luke 3:4 all make clear that Isaiah 40:3 was talking about John the Baptist. The Jewish spiritual leaders could hardly make a legal issue about John making “straight the way for the Lord.”

John 1:24-25 Now some Pharisees who had been sent questioned him, “Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?”

Since they couldn’t get John on who he claimed to be, some of them questioned his practice of baptizing.

John 1:26 “I baptize with water,” John replied, “but among you stands one you do not know.

The phrase “among you stands one” can be interpreted two ways. Either John was using the word “you” as speaking of the Jews as a people, or he was using the word “you” as speaking of the crowd standing in earshot of his voice. I think that having had the experience of baptizing the Messiah shortly before, John was speaking of the fact that he knew that the Messiah was already among the Jews as a people, even though most of them did not know it. When we read the story of Jesus’ baptism in Matthew and Luke we read of John the Baptist’s prophecy of the coming of the Christ. In those passages, the day before John baptized Jesus he said:

Matthew 3:11 “after me will come one.”

Luke 3:16 “one more powerful than I will come.”

At that time, before his encounter with Jesus Christ at the Jordan he used the future tense “will come.”

²¹ *Isaiah 40:3*

Here, in John 1:26 he used the present tense “among you stands” which was a public declaration that he knew the Christ had already come.

John 1:27 He is the one who comes ²² after me, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.”

The Christ who had come was the one about whom he had made these previous assertions:

Matthew 3:11 “I (*John*) baptize you with water for repentance. But after me **will come** one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.”

Mark 1:7-8 “And this was his message: ‘After me **will come** one more powerful than I, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.’”

Luke 3:16 “John answered them all, ‘I baptize you with water. But one more powerful than I **will come**, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.’”

John 1:28 These things were done in Bethabara (see map location #1) beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing. KJV

The name Bethabara appears in the Textus Receptus, but the flawed manuscript of the Codex Sinaiticus has “Bethany” ²³ instead. Bethabara means “House of the Ford” and John would have usually camped at a ford ²⁴ so that he could baptize. Just for this reason I have to prefer that name. Bethabara would have been on the east side of the Jordan and was almost certainly at one of the streams flowing into the Jordan. It is probable that Bethabara was at least as far north as the junction of the Jordan with the Jabbok. That was only thirty miles south of the Sea of Galilee and twenty miles north of the Fords of the Jordan. One reason to hold to that location is that John the Apostle and Andrew walked from Bethabara to the south shore of the Sea of Galilee in two days and then had most of one day left to visit with Jesus. That seems quite plausible with thirty miles to walk, but not with fifty.

It is my belief that Jesus’ forty days of testing occurred on the way and at the true Mt. Sinai in northern Arabia. If so, it is quite possible that His return could have been delayed to being as much as 60 to 90 days after His baptism. In that interval the heavy winter rains would have started. In such a case the Jordan could have been running too high for baptism in the Jordan

²² *The tense of the Greek word for “comes” is in the present tense, not in the future tense.*

²³ *Of course, there was already another Bethany close to Jerusalem.*

²⁴ *This would have been a ford across one of the streams flowing into the Jordan from the east.*

River. This possibility is confirmed by the English author Anthony Trollope in A Ride through Palestine, written in the latter half of the 19th century. He described the Jordan at Passover as running so high and fast that it was impossible to enter it at greater than knee depth without being swept away. This may be why John had moved to Bethabara. It was on the main highway, and yet still had access to a smaller less violent water source. Of course, when Jesus was baptized by John in the Jordan, it was the Day of Atonement the end of the dry season when the Jordan was low, slow and fordable.

