

Lectionary Gospel Commentaries

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Based on the Lectionary Pericope Covering:

SOLA-LSB (Lutheran Service Book):
RCL (Revised Common Lectionary):

John 1:6-8, 19-28

Year B - Advent 3, Text: John 1:6-8, 19-28
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John's opening chapter contains a list of titles stating who Jesus is and defining His mission. These are as follows:

- Word of God (1:1, 14)
- Lamb of God (1:29, 36)
- Rabbi or Teacher (1:38)
- Messiah (1:41)
- Son of God (1:49)
- King of Israel (1:49)
- Son of Man (1:51; see Daniel 7:13)

The series of titles ascribed to Jesus in John's first chapter reaches its grand finale in John 20 when Thomas falls down before the Risen Jesus and proclaims, "My Lord and my God!"

John 1:14 states, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). The word translated as *dwelt* (*eskenosen*) literally means "tenting" or "tabernacled." That is to say, John declares that God is now "encamped" among His people, not invisibly in the Holy of Holies that only the High Priest could enter one day each year, but in the person of Jesus the Messiah. The invisible God becomes visible in the divine-human Word. The written Word bears witness to the Incarnate Word: God's Final, Living Word.

Regarding Jesus' identity, it is interesting to compare, for example, that in the opening chapters of Mark's Gospel (ch 1–8), Jesus does not state in words who He is, and He discourages any reference to His being the Messiah until His actions have demonstrated what kind of Messiah He has come to be. It is not until about halfway through the Gospel, He asks the disciples who the crowds think He is and then asks who they themselves think He is (Mark 8:27–30).

John approaches the question of Jesus' identity quite differently. From the very outset, he declares who Jesus is, and why He has come. In doing so, John

draws heavily on Old Testament and intertestamental concepts.

A New Beginning?

The expression "In the beginning" in John 1:1 clearly reflects Genesis 1:1. John's desire is to declare that Jesus' life and mission brought about a new beginning to creation, history, and humanity. Some interpreters detect hints of a seven-day scheme in 1:29, 35, 43; and 2:1. If there is a "next day" (1:29), there must have been a previous day; hence, the reference in 1:29 is to Day Two. (Day One is hinted at in 1:1, which reflects Genesis 1:1.) The reference in 1:35 is to Day Three, that in 1:43 is to Day Four, and that in 2:1 is to Day Seven (three days after Day Four). If this seven-day structure is intentional, it would seem that Jesus' goal is to free God's people from bondage to a rather legal religious system and to introduce them to God's final, eternal Sabbath rest.

Jesus, the Eternal Word, did not arrive unannounced. John the Baptist heralded His coming (1:6–8, 15, 19–28). John insisted that his own role was merely to prepare the way for the great final Exodus (rescue) that was soon to take place (1:23).

The evangelist locates John's ministry on the East Bank of the River Jordan (1:28), indicating that he called his Jewish hearers out of the land and made it necessary for them to enter it again through a water-crossing — at about the same spot where, long before under Joshua's leadership, their ancestors entered the land to undertake the conquest.

In John 1:19–28, John the Baptist states that he is not the expected Messiah, not the expected Elijah (Malachi 4:4, 6), and not the "new Moses" (Deuteronomy 18:15). Rather, he is the one called to prepare the way for the Messiah Who will carry out a new "exodus event," or bring to their grand finale the hopes and dreams of those who began returning from Babylon to Judea and Jerusalem in 538 BC; see Isaiah 40:3–5.

