

John's gospel, 40 days and the first week

Day 1 (1:19-28)	a delegation is sent to interrogate John the Baptist
Day 2 (1:29-34)	John announces Jesus as the Lamb of God
Day 3 (1:35-39)	At 4 p.m. Andrew and John go to the place Jesus was staying
Day 4 (1:40-42)	Andrew finds Peter
Day 5 (1:43-50)	They go from <u>Bethany</u> to <u>Bethsaida</u> ; Phillip calls Nathaniel under the fig tree
Day 7 (2:1)	Jesus at the wedding in <u>Cana</u>

'The third day' = Day 5, Day 6, Day 7

John's gospel has a rather tight chronology for the first week of Jesus' ministry. The reason is theological.

John has Jesus' first sign occur on the seventh day which suggests that Jesus' first sign (water into wine) is a climactic action of creation on the Sabbath.

Both the Sabbath and the prophetic image of an abundance of wine also have connotations of the kingdom of God.

When do Jesus' forty days of temptation occur in relation to John's week?

John includes *neither a record of Jesus' baptism or of his temptation*. However both these events occur before John's first week.

In 1:19-28 (Day 1) John the Baptist is being questioned about his authority to baptise (note: John continued baptising some time after he baptised Jesus c.f. John 3;23) and he informs the religious leaders that "among you stands one you do not know".

The next day (Day 2), John the Baptist identifies Jesus as "the Lamb of God". He then adds that he was able to identify Jesus because he **had seen (past tense i.e. six weeks earlier)** the Spirit descend upon Jesus (John doesn't mention this was at Jesus' baptism).

So the order of events are as follows:

- John baptised Jesus and saw the Spirit descend upon him.
- Jesus went into the wilderness for forty days
- Days 1-7

It was **after** Jesus' return from the wilderness that John the Baptist **publically** identifies him as the Lamb of God and his public ministry begins.

There is no gap in the week and the forty days of temptation occurred before the week.

Note:

It isn't that John forgot about Jesus' temptation and baptism. John chooses not to include them because he writes his gospel in certain ways to highlight certain themes. The gospel writers are not simply telling you everything that happened but rather they are attempting to present Jesus in certain ways. The baptism/temptation do not seem to be relevant to John's presentation of Jesus.

A possible speculation as to another reason why John doesn't include John the Baptist baptising Jesus is as follows. It appears in Acts 19:1-4 that in Ephesus there were a group of people who revered John the Baptist. Decades later, John is writing his gospel in Ephesus. John more than the other gospel writers emphasises John the Baptist (because of the interest in him in Ephesus?). But John leaves out the Baptist's baptising of Jesus and the comment Jesus makes in the other gospels about the Baptist was being the greatest man born of woman. Why? I think because of the tendency in Ephesus for people to have too

high a view of the Baptist . Perhaps these two things may have been mistaken to suggest that the Baptist was greater than Jesus. Instead John, even more clearly than the other gospels, has the Baptist witnessing to Jesus ' superiority c.f. John 3:23-31.

So it suits John's purpose in writing his gospel to Ephesus to give more attention to the Baptist but to carefully do so in a way that counters the false perception in Ephesus. For this reason John leaves out the Baptist's baptising of Jesus.

The above is perhaps a bit speculative but it does provide a rationale for why John did not include the account of Jesus' baptism.

Note:

The Bethany that is mentioned here is not the Bethany of Mary and Martha which was in Judea. This Bethany is on the east side of the Jordan way up north (outside the Promised Land proper – possibly Batanea = OT Bashan).

It was not far from this Bethany to Bethsaida which was easily walked in a single day (Day 5).

I think Bethsaida to Cana is under 40 kms which I am relatively easily able to walk in a day.