

SERMON 6
JOHN'S TESTIMONY CONCERNING JESUS
JOHN 1:29-34

The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me. And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.

John 1:29-34

John had baptized Jesus at least 40 days before the events of our text. The account of the baptism of Jesus can be read in Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11 and Luke 3:21-22. The Gospel of John does not record the actual baptism of Jesus. The account in John begins after Jesus has been baptized and after he has been tempted in the wilderness.

In the first chapter of John we have a day-by-day report of events. And we find day one in verses 19-28. And on day one, we have the report of how the Jews sent a delegation down to investigate. And they asked John if he was the Christ. John said no. They asked John if he was Elijah. John said no. (Had they pursued the questioning with a pure heart, John might have disclosed that he was the promised messenger who was to come in the spirit and power of Elijah. See Malachi 3:1; Malachi 4:5-6 and Luke 1:17) They also asked if John was "that" prophet. John said no.

Now we come to day two.

The next day John seeth Jesus coming . . .
John 1:29

The thing that caused day two to be remarkable was that John saw Jesus coming unto him. John had recently baptized Jesus and had seen the dove descend upon Jesus and had heard the voice from heaven saying, "This is my Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." And then Jesus walked out of the water and walked off alone into the wilderness to be tempted for 40 days and 40 nights. And with this great confirmation of his ministry stirring his heart, I am sure that John continued preaching with even more passion and with renewed enthusiasm. And I am sure that he wondered when he would see the Messiah again.

And then we find in verse 29 that *John seeth Jesus coming unto him*. Can you imagine being engaged in your normal, daily routine and then looking up and seeing Jesus coming? This would be heart-stopping to say the least. But it was even more personal than that. Notice that it says, John saw Jesus coming *unto him*. Jesus had his eyes focused on John and John knew that Jesus was not just coming in general, but he was coming to him!

Oh my! How we ought to keep our house in order just in case Jesus comes to visit us. We live our lives sometimes like He will never come to visit us. But he is likely to come and he is likely to come without notice. And it would be good if we were about His business when he comes.

John was about God's business. He was preaching every day. He was announcing the coming of the kingdom of heaven. And he was baptizing in the river Jordan. He was lifting up his voice in the wilderness fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah. (Isaiah 40:3) He was busy being the messenger and preparing the way for the Messiah, fulfilling the prophesy of Malachi. (Malachi 3:1; 4:5-6) And while he was faithfully carrying out his duties, he looked up and saw Jesus coming unto him.

Now on this day, our text doesn't tell us who was with John, but we can suppose that at least some of his disciples were with him when he looked up and saw Jesus coming. On the next day he was with two of his disciples, (verse 35) so on this day he probably was with his disciples. And he said to them,

Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

This begins the testimony of John concerning Jesus. And we see first that,

Jesus is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.

Behold, the Lamb of God.

Some have questioned whether John understood the full significance of this title which He ascribes to Jesus. Did the Baptist understand that Jesus would suffer and die? You might remember that later in Christ's ministry, even Peter was not willing to accept that Jesus must suffer and die.

From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.

Matthew 16:21- 23

How much John the Baptist understood, we are not certain. But we are certain in retrospect that the words, "Lamb of God," were prophetic words, referring to the suffering and atoning work of Christ that was yet to come.

Now when John pointed at Jesus and said, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world," surely the overwhelming significance of that statement is one of sacrifice and atonement for sin.

The Jews of that day would have understood thoroughly the significance of a lamb. According to the Mosaic Law, the priests were to sacrifice a lamb on the altar every morning and every evening, seven days a week. (Exodus 29:37-39) This was the law. Lambs, lambs and more lambs were brought to the altar. There is no way that the Jew could not associate a lamb with a sacrifice.

When Moses announced the last plague on Pharaoh and led the people out of Egypt that night, each family was required to kill a lamb and to sprinkle the blood on the doorposts so that the death angel would pass over. And so, those were called Passover lambs. And every year, the Jews would celebrate Passover by sacrificing lambs and having a Passover feast. The Jew understood very well that a lamb was an animal of sacrifice. And John pointed to Jesus and said,

Behold, the Lamb of God.

Of course, the New Testament teaches that Christ is our Passover.

For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.

I Corinthians 5:7

When John said, "*Behold, the Lamb of God,*" this not only signified that Jesus would be a sacrifice, but it also signified what manner of sacrifice he would be. He would not go to the cross as a lion, but he would go as a lamb. He would not go with a fight, but he would go willingly. Of all animals in the world, it seems that a lamb is the most gentle. A lamb is meek. A lamb is helpless. And this is the way Jesus suffered. He suffered without a fight. He walked up Calvary willingly as though he were going to a feast. When they drove the spikes in his hands and feet he said, "Father forgive them." And so, when John said, "*Behold, the Lamb of God,*" he not only spoke of sacrifice, but he spoke of willing sacrifice.

The idea of a lambish, sacrificial Savior was not foreign to the Old Testament.

He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

Isaiah 53:7

So, John pointed at Jesus and referred to Him as the Lamb. But He was a special Lamb because he takes away the sin of the world.

The Jews had an earthly atonement. And they avoided earthly curses and obtained earthly blessings by offering lambs daily in the temple and by offering other animals for sacrifice. They had a Day of Atonement in which they killed a goat and the High Priest took the blood into the Holy of Holies as an atonement for the sins of the people. But it was a typical atonement only. It was very ineffective. Let me show you what God thinks about the sacrifice of animals.

For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? Because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.

Hebrews 10:1-4

Ah, but look what John says,

Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

John 1:29

These words of John testify to the death of a Lamb which would take away sins. The blood of this Lamb would be effective. The blood of this Lamb would be efficacious as to sins. The Blood of this Lamb would atone for sin.

But now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

Hebrews 9:26

Now I want you to notice what it is that takes away sins. It is not our repentance that takes away sins. It is not our faith that takes away sins. It is a Person that takes away sins.

Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

Oh how I wish we could fully grasp the nature of salvation. It is grace from beginning to end. Our repentance and our faith are not grounds of salvation. They are gifts of salvation. The ground of salvation, the cause of our salvation, the atoning work which bought our salvation, is the work of the Lamb. And by His work, He takes away our sins.

I know that a man will always think he must do something. But the truth is that a man is saved only because the Lamb did something.

Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.
Romans 3:24

Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

Romans 5:9

We sing a hymn often. We sing, There is Power in the Blood.

*Would you be free from the burden of sin?
There is pow'r in the blood, pow'r in the blood.
Would you o'er evil a victory win?
There's wonderful pow'r in the blood.*

Wouldn't it be crazy if we sang,

*Would you be free from the burden of sin?
There is pow'r in my faith, pow'r in my faith.
Would you o'er evil a victory win?
There's wonderful pow'r in my faith.*

Yes, there is a sense in which you could say we are saved through faith and repentance. But this is the mere application of that which truly saved us. If we are justified by the blood of Christ, (as it says in Romans 5:9) then everything after that is merely the application of that salvation which Jesus secured by His sacrifice.

Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.

Now it says that Jesus takes away sin. And this is what he did when he died for your sins. He took them away. And of course, the death of Christ was a one-time act. Jesus will never die again. His sacrifice was once for all.

Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high prest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment; So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

Hebrews 9:25-28

But there is an interesting thing about what John said. He said, "*Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.*"

This word "taketh" is in the present indicative tense in the Greek which indicates progressive or linear action rather than punctiliar action. Christ continues to take away the sin of the world. By his death and by his mediatorial work, he continues to take away

the sin of the world. Obviously, sin is offensive to a holy God. And in his work as mediator, Christ continually removes sin.

Once for all, Christ has taken away the guilt of sin. But day by day he sanctifies the believer so that the power of sin is taken away gradually. There is a punctiliar effect to the death of Christ. But there is also a progressive effect. And so John says,

Behold the Lamb of God who (continually) takes away the sin of the world.

But notice, it says He takes away the sin of the world.

I suppose there are some who would claim that we are all saved. “You see, he taketh away the sin of the world.” But it is so obvious from experience and also from the Scriptures that he does not save all men without exception. John has already taught us that, *He came unto his own and his own received him not.*

Jesus did not take away the sin of all men without exception. Rather, he took away the sin of all men without distinction. He didn’t take away sins of Jews only, but of Gentiles also. The atoning work of Jesus extends to all nations. It is not limited at all. The animal sacrifices under the Mosaic Law had reference only to Israel. But the sacrifice of the true Lamb of God had reference to the world of men.

And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

I John 2:2

And wouldn’t you expect that the power and efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ would blow across all national distinctions? After all, he created us all. He created the world. And he provided a sacrifice for the world.

And if he shed his blood for men in the whole world, then why not my sins? I am in the world. I have sins to be washed away; Therefore, why not me? How encouraging this is for sinners. Jesus died for the sins of the world.

Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.
Isaiah 55:1

And look at our text. John says, “Behold the Lamb of God.”

This is our duty since Jesus has died to take away the sins of the world. It is our duty to behold him with the eyes of faith. We are to see him dying for us. We are to see him carrying away our sins. We are to see Him mediating for us at the right hand of God in heaven. And all of this must be done with the eye of faith. Now John and his disciples could look with their physical eyes and see Jesus. But they could only see the Lamb of God with the eye of faith.

Jesus is the One I told you about

What a privilege John had as the last prophet of the Old Testament period. Every other prophet could only say, "He is coming." They all saw through a glass darkly. But John is the only one who could point and say, "This is he."

This is he of whom I said . . .

Now notice what John had told them about the coming Messiah. First,

- I. He is a man.

This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man . . .

Jesus was a man through and through – not a sinful man, but a righteous man. He was a real human being. He was made flesh and dwelt among us. (John 1:14)

- II. He is God.

After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me.

This is an interesting statement since John was six months older than Jesus. John was six months older than the humanity of Jesus, but Jesus existed before John in his divinity. This also takes us back to the first verse of the Gospel.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Now it is interesting to note what John knew about Jesus before his baptism. John says,

And I knew him not.

This seems a little odd that John did not know Jesus at all. After all, John's mother Elizabeth was a cousin to the virgin Mary. However, it appears that there was no acquaintance between John and Jesus. They didn't have easy transportation back in those days, nor easy communication. So, perhaps it is not odd after all that John did not know Jesus. It seems that Jesus grew up in Nazareth and John grew up in the wilderness. And so, John says, "I knew him not." Certainly, if John had any previous awareness of Jesus, it would seem that he did not know him as the Messiah.

John only knew that he was to manifest the Messiah.

. . . but that he might be made manifest to Israel.

When God sent John to baptize with water, God did not reveal all the particulars to John. Rather, he revealed the ministry of John in generalities. He told him that his mission was to manifest the Messiah. But he did not tell him who the Messiah was. And John walked by faith.

This has always been the way of God. God doesn't usually tell us everything, does He? Sometimes he tells us just what we need to know, but not everything we would like to know. But this is because we are a people of faith. We don't demand to know the whole story before we commit to Him. We don't demand that God make full disclosure. We simply receive what he tells us and then obey.

"Abel, bring a blood sacrifice."
"Okay Lord."

"Noah, build an ark."
"Okay, Lord, where is the hammer?"

"Abraham, get up and get out of your country."
"Okay, Lord."

"Abraham, sacrifice your son Isaac on the altar."
"Okay, Lord."

"Moses, leave the comforts of Egypt and go to your people."
"Okay, Lord."

"Joshua, march around Jericho seven times."
"Okay, Lord."

"Rahab, hang a scarlet thread in your window."
"Okay, Lord."

"Gideon, thin your army down to 300 men."
"Okay, Lord."

"Samson, take this jawbone and go to war with the Philistines."
"Okay, Lord."

"David, take your slingshot and go fight Goliath."
"Okay, Lord."

And Hebrews says that these men and women through faith subdued kingdoms, shut the mouths of lions and did many other marvelous works. (Hebrews 12:33-35)

"John the Baptist, go out there and preach repentance and baptize them. And manifest the Messiah." And John said, "Okay, Lord."

Now look what God told John.

And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.

God told John to go about his business of baptizing. And He said, when you see the Spirit descending and remaining on Him, this will be the one who baptizes with the Holy Ghost.

This was the sign that would prove that this man was the One.

And then see the testimony of John. We have seen that John has testified that Jesus is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. And now John says,

Jesus is the Promised One.

And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him.

John bare record. That is, he gave his testimony. What did you see John?

“I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him.”

Jesus is the real baptizer.

The same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Spirit.

John baptized with water, but Jesus baptized with the Holy Spirit. When the Jewish delegation asked John about his baptism he minimized himself and pointed them to Christ. (John 1:26, 27) He did this because his baptism was nothing compared to the baptism of Christ. John's baptism was a picture, Christ's baptism was the real thing. John's baptism did not save anyone. Christ's baptism saved.

Now we are not talking about Christ's disciples baptizing people in water. We are talking about Christ baptizing with the Holy Spirit. This is the baptism that saves.

Except a man be born of the water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

John 3:5

Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

Romans 8:9

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.
Romans 8:14

For by one Spirit, are we all baptized into one body . . . and have been made to drink into one Spirit.

I Corinthians 12:13

Now we have seen the testimony of John. Jesus is the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world. He is the promised One. He is the real baptizer. And now we see the conclusion of John.

Jesus is the Son of God.

And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.
John 1:34

Remember the theme of John. Jesus is the Son of God. All the evidence leads to this conclusion. So says the first witness – John the Baptist.