



Behold the Lamb of God

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John 1:19-34

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¹⁹ And this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" ²⁰ He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ." ²¹ And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No." ²² So they said to him, "Who are you? We need to give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" ²³ He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as the prophet Isaiah said."

²⁴ (Now they had been sent from the Pharisees.) ²⁵ They asked him, "Then why are you baptizing, if you are neither the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?" ²⁶ John answered them, "I baptize with water, but among you stands one you do not know, ²⁷ even he who comes after me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie." ²⁸ These things took place in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

²⁹ The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! ³⁰ This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was before me.' ³¹ I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel." ³² And John bore witness: "I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. ³³ I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend

and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’³⁴ And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.”

(Pastor Prays)

When I read about John the Baptist, I want to know the same thing the priest and Levites wanted to know in verse 19. Who are you? How do you describe yourself? The truth is, they didn't know what to do with John the Baptist. They had seen desert preachers and Messiah claimers before, but none like this one. His eyes closed tight by the sun, burned with Old Testament fire. In fact, it was as if the Old Testament prophet had just materialized out in the desert. They even asked him in verse 21, are you Elijah? Or are you the prophet that Moses talked about? You see, Israel had been waiting for centuries for God to send them a prophet, and the way the gospel of John presents him is, he's here, he speaks, and then he's just gone. John the Baptist wasn't garnering followers for himself. He wasn't starting a new cult. He was a voice. I am here to proclaim the Messiah. The text tells us he was sent from God to bear witness. Jesus will come on the scene and declare, “I am”. John stands back and says, “I am not.” John the Baptist didn't consider himself worthy to do the most menial, serventile task. In verse 27, he says the strap of his sandal, I am not worthy to untie. This is the man of which Jesus said in Matthew 11:11, ¹¹*Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.* John told the people, I am a voice, a workman, making a road for the Messiah. He is always turning the conversation away from himself and onto Jesus. And in one sentence, as John looks at Jesus, he sums up the essence of the Christian message in verse 29 when John says, *behold, the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world.* There it is. Now, you don't have to believe that, but you must do something with it. You can decide today that you don't believe these things about Jesus. But before you do, I want you to hear what the ancient prophet says about Jesus and how he came to deal with our sin. John tells us.

Jesus is the light that shines in the darkness

Let's go back to verses 6 – 8. ⁶*There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.* ⁷*He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him.* ⁸*He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.* The world was dark then, but it is even

darker now. Verse 5 says, *the light shines in the darkness but the darkness does not overcome it*. But you can't help but feel like sometimes the darkness wins. Just this week, Louis Giglio, the founder of the Passion Movement, where this year over 60,000 college students gathered to worship and learn and commit, Louis Giglio was asked to say a prayer at the inauguration of the president. Many in the evangelical world rejoiced. A man that believes the Bible will be praying publicly for our president. When a liberal watchdog group heard that Giglio was praying, they went to work. They found a sermon from 15 to 20 years ago where Louis Giglio talked about homosexuality as a sin but also pointed out other sins and then went on to say how the grace of God, in Christ, forgives sin. Honestly, with no offense to Louis Giglio, I think a lot of him, but it was not a strong message against homosexuality. I didn't think he said enough, but because he read what the Bible said and believes that, he was uninvited. This is what Addie Whisnant of the Presidential Inauguration Committee said, "We were not aware of Pastor Giglio's past comments at the time of the selection, and they do not reflect our desire to celebrate the strength and diversity of our country at this inaugural." The Presidential Inaugural Committee and the White House have now declared historical biblical Christianity to be out of bounds. And any Christian that holds to the faith of the church for the last 2000 years is not welcome. One preacher said that if that inaugural committee knew what was written inside of that Bible, they would find something else for the president to swear on. I honestly don't even know why they pray at the inauguration anymore. It's blasphemous.

Listen, we live in a dark United States. But the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness cannot overcome it. But we must point to the darkness and call it dark, and we must declare sin as sin. To do otherwise denies the authority of the scripture, undermines the gospel, and tramples under foot the blood of Christ. The light of the gospel makes no sense if we don't point out the darkness of this world. We will be gentle, humble, kind, and grace-filled because we are aware of our own sin. We have stood in the darkness. We will trust the light of Christ, and like John the Baptist, we will continue to tell people that Jesus Christ is the light that shines in the darkness. Not only that.

Jesus is the personal God that pursues

Let me explain what I mean. In verse 23, John is answering the priest and the Levites as they are asking him to tell them who he is, and to answer, he quotes Isaiah 40:3, which says, *A voice*

cries: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. The word Lord here is all in capital letters. It's the name Yahweh. It's the personal name of God. It's the name that God used to reveal himself to Moses at the burning bush as he was planning to save his people. And here in the text, John is telling them that same God that you remember from the Old Testament is coming to save in the person of Jesus Christ. John is telling us today that Jesus is the personal God that comes to where you are to save us from our sins. He is the light that shines in the darkness. He's the personal God that pursues.

Jesus is greater than all our hang ups

And all of us have some sort of hang-up. There is something we tend to struggle with. Maybe it's something annoying, like being negative or cynical or having a short fuse. Maybe you are a know-it-all. Maybe it's something really damaging, like an addiction. Your hang-up might be in the past. Whatever it is, Jesus is greater than your hang-up. I'm not sure if John the Baptist had one or not. We're not told, but if he did, I imagine he would struggle with pride. He was filled with the Holy Spirit in the womb, he had extraordinary parents. His mom was a Nazarete, and his dad was a priest. He never touched a dead body. He never drank wine. He lived an uncontaminated life. He had a remarkable following. People were thronging to hear him preach. Even Jesus will say he is greater than Moses and Abraham. John had a lot of really good reasons to talk about himself, but instead, John tells them in verse 27, *he who comes after me, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie*. In fact, at one point in the synopsis, when the crowds were leaving him and going to follow Jesus, he says to those who are asking him, are you upset about this? John answers, he must become greater, and I must become less. In fact, if I were you, I would write that down somewhere. That little phrase from John the Baptist may be the key to get rid of some of your hang-ups, when Christ becomes greater, and you become less. Then, you're getting an idea of what it means for Jesus Christ to be Lord. Jesus is greater than all our hang-ups.

Jesus came to deal with sin

Verse 29 is where I got the title of my message. Let's read it. ²⁹ *The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!* He just declares, Jesus came to take it away. There is a lot packed into this verse. Lamb of God

is a title used only by John the Apostle in the New Testament. He uses it here and then in verse 36 and 9 times in the Book of Revelation. It is the concept of a sacrificial lamb. That would be familiar to the Jewish people. All through Israel's history, God revealed clearly that sin and separation from him could only be removed by blood sacrifices. In Genesis 22, you have the story of Abraham and Isaac when Abraham says, God will provide the lamb. In Exodus, you have the Passover lamb and the blood on the doorpost. In Exodus 29, there is a lamb of daily sacrifices. In Leviticus, the high priest would take a scapegoat and put his hand on the scapegoat's head to transfer the guilt to take away the sin. Isaiah 53 speaks of Christ as the lamb led to slaughter. And then, nine times in Revelation, Jesus is the triumphant lamb that was slain. From Genesis to Revelation, he is the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. When I say the world, I mean his sacrifice is sufficient for all people without distinction. 1 John 4:14 says, ¹⁴*And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.* The cross of Jesus is sufficient to save everybody, but everybody will not be saved. Jesus said in John 3:18, *whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already because he has not believed in the name of the only son of God.* Jesus also said in John 3:36, *Whoever believes in the son has eternal life, whoever does not obey the son, shall not see life but the wrath of God remains on him.* The dividing factor and operative word has always been faith. As John the Baptist said, he is the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world. And he will take away yours. But he only does it in faith. If you will confess with your mouth, Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. The Lamb of God takes away the sin of the world, even yours.

(Pastor prays)