

John 1:29-34 Behold the Lamb of God

Again, in the first chapter of John, we find more of the same (which is good for us). We find RICH statements about Jesus. In this text we see both the humanity of the Son and the deity of the Son (as we've seen). And, in this text we begin to see more clearly what Jesus came to do "in his flesh." There is nothing more important in this world than to see and understand WHO Jesus is and WHY Jesus came! All the answers and provisions for life and godliness are found in understanding and believing such truths. This is my hope for today! . . . As was John's desire: who says in 20:31: "**these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.**" With this in mind, I have two parts to the sermon to answer two questions: "*Who is He?*" and "*What did He come to do?*" So let's begin: Who is He? I want to highlight 4 truths from the text: 1) He is a man; 2) He is God; 3) He is the long-awaited Messiah; and 4) He is the fulfillment of God to dwell with his people. And then, I want to answer the question: "*What did he come to do?*" I will highlight two truths: 1) He came to bear our sins; and 2) He came to give us life.

1. Who is he?

i. He is a man. In v. 29, John refers to Jesus as a lamb. We will come back to this picture a little later. But, in a general way, a lamb has flesh and blood. A lamb is a creature, born, and finding residence on the earth. Throughout the first chapter of John, we see this truth. "**The Word became flesh and dwelt among us**" (v. 14). "**He was in the world**" (v. 10). "**He came to his own**" (v. 11). And in our text John the Baptist is baptizing those Jews coming to him in the desert. And, he sees the MAN . . . Jesus . . . walking toward him. The other gospel writers record the fact that, as a man, Jesus himself was baptized by John.

There are those who say that Jesus only appeared as a man. There are others that say that Jesus was in some way different than us. But, this is not so! Concerning his physical makeup, Jesus was a Son of Adam (like all of us). His birth as the son of Mary was no different than yours or mine. Now, concerning his nature, he was conceived by the Holy Spirit; he was without sin. But, this does not take away from his humanity! This is the ONE John heard, saw, touched, and walked the land with for 3 years. This is the incarnation! An infinite God takes on flesh.

ii. He is God. We see this in v. 29 also as Jesus is called the lamb of "GOD." This means that he came FROM God in a special way. And look particularly at v. 34 as John says, "**This is the Son of God.**" Now, we can be called sons and daughters of God because we are created by him. But, Jesus is the SON, as John says, "the ONLY BEGOTTEN SON" (KJV, v. 14; 3:16). So far, this is John's big truth in vv. 1-18. "**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God**" (v. 1). And then vv. 2-3: "**He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made.**" He is called the TRUE light, the TRUE life. As we've seen, he is the "*glory*" of God. He is the "*fullness*" of God, etc. When John calls him the "SON," of "GOD," this is in reference to his essence, his deity.

And as I've said many times, his humanity veils his deity. Yet, **“for those who receive him, he gave them the right to become the children of God”** (v. 12). As Christians, by faith, we understand this to be true. And, this is also a test case for faith. We understand the true meaning of Jesus' words to Phillip: **“If you've seen me you've seen the Father”** (John 14:9).

The Apostle John makes it clear that believing Jesus is the same in essence as the Father is a test case for belief. In 1 John 4:2 he says: **“By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God . . .”** This truth distinguishes us from the world!

iii. He is the long-awaited Messiah. In our context John is preaching and baptizing those who come to him in repentance. And when he sees Jesus walking toward him, he says, **“BEHOLD.”** This is a big word in the Book of John. He wants everyone to know, **“This is the Messiah. This is the One we have been waiting for!”** I get pretty excited when I see an ace in disc golf or regular golf or when I see Shohei Ohtani hit, or throw, a baseball. Back in the early 90s I couldn't wait to watch Michael Jordan play basketball (every night was just as good as any other night). And when I see such people and events, I tell others about it. In my own way, I say “Behold!” Well, this is what I imagine the apostle John feeling when he sees Jesus. In v. 30 he says, **“This is he . . . who ranks before me, because he was before me.”** And then in v. 34 he says, **“This is the Son of God.”**

Now, I know we get this as we have the entire NT in front of us. But, let's think back to John's day, when Jesus was literally just beginning his ministry. How did John know? Well, for certain, the Holy Spirit revealed this to him. But, what else bore witness to his coming? It was the OT! John calls him the “Lamb of God” (also in v. 36). This phrase is unique to John. So, where did he get it? And how did he understand the words “lamb of God?” Let me say up front I am not sure how much John understood at this point, maybe he said more than he knew. (See the other gospels when they speak of John the Baptist.) But, I think it is clear that he gets this phrase from the pictures we find in the OT. So, let's consider them for a moment. The prophet Jeremiah, when he was being persecuted for his preaching, calls himself a “gentle lamb” being led to the slaughter (11:19). This is certainly the Lord Jesus who preached the Word of God, but with the greatest of humility as he would certainly suffer. In Lev. 19, Jesus is the scapegoat that was banished into the wilderness for the sins of his people. In Gen. 22, Jesus is the “lamb caught in the thicket” as a replacement sacrifice for Isaac. Jesus is the “lamb” given as a guilt offering in Lev. 19 and Num. 6. In Isaiah we read of God's Servant who is also the sacrificial lamb (Is. 53). In Rev. 7:17 and 17:14 Jesus is the apocalyptic, triumphant lamb (this was probably the way John the Baptist saw him). As we will see later in John's, Jesus is associated with the Passover lamb from the Exodus of Egypt. I do not know how much John the Baptist understood. But, for sure, he saw Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah for the Jewish people . . . AND, for the entire world (v. 29) because when he looked at the OT, this was his great expectation!

Today, as Christians, this is what we believe! We see and understand and know that Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah, “Behold the lamb of God!” So, what does this mean for us? It means we aren’t looking for anything further! We believe in him. We love him. We follow him. We tell the world about him. In him we have life. In him we know what is true. He is the desire of our hearts. He is the meditation of our minds. In him we know that ALL God’s promises are found. In him we find All the treasures of God!

iv. He is the fulfillment of God’s promise to dwell with his people. With this truth, I think we move to the focal point of what John is trying to communicate in our text today. Look at v. 32: **“And John bore witness: ‘I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him.’** In v. 29 he is the “LAMB of God.” In v. 34 he is the “SON of God.” And now, right in the middle we find that the Spirit “descends” and “remains” on HIM. As we’ve already seen, He is the focal point of God’s revelation in the OT. And now, He is the dwelling place of God. Brothers and sisters, this is a MASSIVE truth! In this statement by John we see God fulfilling his promise to dwell permanently with his people!

The OT is FULL of such promises. One of those promises is found in Isaiah 11, to which John is remembering. Let me read a few verses from that chapter. In vv. 1-2 we read: **“There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him . . .”** And then down in v. 10: **“In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples—of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious.”** These verses in Isaiah look forward to the Messiah, the Lamb of God. And in these verses we see something very different concerning the Spirit of God and his working in the OT. You see, in the OT, the Spirit of God was given in measure to different people, prophets, priests, kings, individuals, etc. But, in no way did any of those who possessed the Holy Spirit, possess the Spirit in the WAY Isaiah and John are describing. You see, in the OT, these people were given the Spirit in “measure.” When I cook with recipes, I follow the instructions as I measure out a half of cup of water, ¼ cup of sugar, 1 tablespoon of baking powder, etc. In a manner of speaking, such was the case with those in the OT. In fact, just this week, I read how God “took” some of the Spirit from Moses and distributed “HIM” to the 70 elders while they were in the dessert (Num. 11:17).

Moses was the greatest of the prophets for Israel (none compared). But, he was a sinful man like us. Yet, God spoke with him “face to face.” And God gave him a measure of the Holy Spirit. David was the greatest king for Israel. But, he was a sinful man like us. Yet, God gave to him the Spirit in measure. The priests of the OT were sinful men like us. And at times, God gave the Holy Spirit to his priests in measure. But, when we come to the NT and the words of John, “Behold the lamb,” and of Him we see that the Spirit DESCENDS and REMAINS on him we see the very dwelling place of God. Verse 14: “The word became flesh and dwelt among us.” As God dwelt in the tabernacle and in Solomon’s temple, today, in the Son we have the very dwelling place of God. UPON HIM and UPON HIM ALONE the Spirit dwells in FULLNESS! He is the greatest of ALL prophets! He is the greatest of all Kings! And as we will see in a

moment, He is the greatest of all prophets! For ONLY IN HIM does the Spirit dwell with him WITHOUT measure. In the “lamb of God” we find infinite value, infinite worth, infinite glory. Can you imagine opening a treasure chest from a sunken ship full of gold and silver? Let’s say you find 10 thousand pieces of gold and 10 thousand pieces of silver, enough to make you wealthy beyond your dreams in this life. Well, now imagine you find a treasure chest, and in it you find the very dwelling place of God, from which those treasures are without measure!

2. What did he come to do? We see two truths from this text: 1) He came to bear our sins, and 2) He came to give us life.

i. He came to bear our sins. I get this from our picture as John the Baptist calls him the “lamb” of God. Now, I am not sure how much the Baptist understood this. Nonetheless, this is true. I think most of us, when we see this picture, we remember that the Angel of Death passed over those Israelite households who spread the blood from a lamb over their doorposts. In Exod. 12: 13 God says to Moses, “**And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt.**” Later, when God gives instructions to Israel about what kinds of animals they are to sacrifice, lambs are prominent. In Is. 53:7 Isaiah says, “**He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.**”

Brothers and sisters, no matter how much we understand John the Baptist to know about the cross, I think we must see the picture of Jesus’ sacrifice. In fact, from the very beginning of Jesus’ ministry he makes it clear that he came to lay down his life as a sacrifice. In Mark 10:45 Jesus says, “**For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.**” In the Book of John, He is the “bread” of life who gives his flesh (6:5; 6:32-33, 53-58). He is the Good shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep (10:15; 10:17-18). And as we’ve seen, his sacrifice fulfills the Passover from Exodus (19:14, 31.)

Today, Jesus came to bear our sins on the cross. We are here today to worship and to pray in Jesus’ name because of the cross of Christ. He laid down his life as a sacrifice. If you are a Christian, you can say, “*Jesus died for my sins.*” We Behold the Lamb of God. The Bible makes it clear that the blood of bulls and goats could never take away our sins; ONLY the blood of the heavenly lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ, can do this. Why? Because of WHO HE IS! (as we’ve seen) When Jesus died on the cross, he fulfilled the old sacrificial system of Israel as the Lamb of God. As Paul says to the Corinthians: “**For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God**” (2 Cor. 5:21). This is why we are here. And this is what we preach when we leave this place. And, to whom do we preach this message? We preach to the world! John makes it clear that Jesus died, not just for the Jews, but for the world. Today, we are the recipients of this Gospel!

ii. He came to give us life. I get this from v. 33. John the Baptist says, “**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.” We have already seen that the Spirit “remains” on him in fullness. And then the text says that He came to “baptize,” not with water, but with the Holy Spirit. In essence, He came to give us LIFE, even eternal life. And this “life” does not come unless we are baptized by the Holy Spirit. Look back at 1:4: **“In him was life and the life was the light of men.”** And then in vv. 12-13: **“But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right (power) to become children of God, 13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.”** John baptized with water, but Jesus baptizes with the Holy Spirit.

Today, Jesus is the ONE who gives the Holy Spirit to the church. In the OT, Moses had the Holy Spirit. But, he could not give life to Israel. Elijah had the Holy Spirit. He did great miracles, but he could not give life. King David was filled with the Spirit. But, he could not give life. ONLY the Son, the “WORD” that became flesh as the dwelling place of God can give life! How is this? Well, He IS life in and of himself as the eternal Word. But, what did he do after he died on the cross? He rose again. He conquered death. And now through the power of the Holy Spirit, He gives life to his people. In John 5:24, Jesus says, **“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.”** In John 10:10 Jesus says, **“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.”**

Brothers and sisters, if you are a Christian, you have been given the Holy Spirit, which means you have life; and this is life eternal. Today, as Christians, we are the recipients of God’s promise from the OT. In Ezekiel, as he looks forward to the giving of the Spirit, says, **“And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules”** (Ezek. 36:26-27). There is so much more I could say here. But, today, Jesus came to give you life! Today, we believe, we have received God’s lamb, the Son of God who came to bear our sins and give us life. And the ONLY reason He can do this is because of WHO He is, the only begotten Son from the Father.

Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!