

## **The Gospel of John - #7 - 11/15/2020 - "This Is HE!" John 1: 29-34**

**Introduction: IL-** The story of Charles Spurgeon's conversion is remarkable. He was 15 years old and both his father and grandfather were pastors. Young Spurgeon had read many solid Christian books that presented the gospel, but it didn't get through to him. He agonized over his sins often.

Then one snowy day, Spurgeon could not get to his normal church, so he turned down a side street and came to a small Primitive Methodist Chapel. There were about 12-15 people there that day. The minister didn't make it because of the snow, so a man from the church went into the pulpit and began to preach on Isaiah 45:22, which in the King James Version reads, "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." He began by saying:

"My dear friends, this is a very simple text indeed. It says, 'Look.' Now lookin' don't take a great deal of pain. It ain't liftin' your foot or your finger; it is just, 'Look.' Well, a man needn't go to College to learn to look. You may be the biggest fool, and yet you can look. A man needn't be worth a thousand a year to be able to look. Anyone can look; even a child can look."

Then he pointed out that the text says, "Look unto Me," not to yourself. He went on about ten minutes or so telling everyone who Christ was that they were to look to. He seemed to be at the end of his sermon when he looked directly at young Spurgeon and said, "Young man, you look very miserable. And you always will be miserable—miserable in life, and miserable in death—if you don't obey my text; but if you obey now, this moment, you will be saved." Then he shouted, "Young man, look to Jesus Christ. Look! Look! Look! You have nothin' to do but to look and live." Spurgeon said that he had been thinking he needed to do fifty things, but that word "look" cleared away the clouds. He looked to Christ and the boy who would go on to become the greatest preacher of the 19th century was saved! And anyone today can be saved too, if you look in faith to Jesus, the Lamb that God provided to take away your sins.

Today we want to look at the very text where John the Baptist identifies Jesus as that wonderful Lamb of God who takes away our sins! Turn with me to John 1: 29-34.

**Beholding the Lamb and the Spirit-** verses 29, 32 and 33- John the Apostle writes this account under the inspiration and direction of the Holy Spirit. He writes this book some forty years after the actual events but the leading of the Holy Spirit keeps him right on track with news every generation needs to hear. In addition to the ministry of the Holy Spirit, John the Apostle was originally a disciple of John the Baptist before following the Lamb, the Lord Jesus, and could recall the happenings at that time out in the wilderness on the east side of the Jordan River near Jericho. And Jesus was in that crowd that day. Six weeks before the events we look at today, John had baptized Jesus as an identification of Jesus and a clear initiation into Jesus' public ministry for the next three years. According to the record in Matthew 3 of John baptizing Jesus, it happened just before the Spirit of God drove Jesus into the wilderness to be tested by Satan for forty days and nights. With all that behind Him, Jesus is now in the crowd listening to

John the Baptist put his perspective on the start of Jesus' earthly ministry as crowds began to follow Jesus and not John anymore, which is exactly what John knew would happen and wanted to happen. When John sees Jesus in the crowd that day and moving in John's direction, John exclaims- "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" There are several key words in that powerful statement that we will do well to examine. The first word is important- "behold" means to "see, perceive, look carefully at or strongly consider". The best thing anyone in that crowd that day could do was to strongly consider and look to Jesus as the Son of God and the Lamb of God! The next word is that word 'lamb'. There is so much in the Bible, in the Old Testament especially, about lambs and their being offered as sacrifices for the people of God in that time period. A careful study of just lambs being offered- not including rams and bulls and goats- reveals that the Jewish priests who administered those special rights, one every morning and one every night, would handle more than 730 lambs a year for a 'continual burnt offering'. Those sacrificial lambs were offered to "cover" sin until THE Lamb, the Lord Jesus would offer Himself as the only sacrifice that takes away sin, from a nation or for a person. Notice that the statement John makes is very specific- "Behold, the LAMB", not 'Behold the lambs'. This meeting in the wilderness had to have occurred near the time of the Jewish Passover that year when God's people from many different places in the Middle East would make their way to Jerusalem for that annual seder. Because many came from long distances, they would buy a lamb to offer rather than bring their own from home. Many lambs were tended in the village of Bethlehem and could be purchased in the holy city for use at the Temple. Looking to one of those lambs would only 'cover' sin for a year. Jesus, the Lamb of God could and does, take away sin! That is the next key word in this announcement by John about Jesus- that He, and He alone, "takes away" sin- He removes it forever, never again to be an issue between a sinful man or woman and a holy God! Psalm 103: 12 tells us that God, in His grace and mercy, removes our sin, takes it away, "as far as the east is from the west" through His steadfast love! And notice once more in John's invitation that he states that Jesus, the Lamb of God, takes away our SIN, not our sins. While individual sins are forgiven by God, He wonderfully deals with the whole matter of sin, sin because we are sinners from birth. We sin because we are sinners, and we need for that sin problem to be forgiven and wiped away by the blood of the Lamb! This Lamb of God is Jesus Christ, the Son of God who, as God, has always existed...

**Before us He existed in eternity-** verse 30 You will see in verse 30 that John points, not to an angel or a hologram but to a real man. Jesus, Son of God, became a man while never ceasing to be God. Theologians call that doctrine the Hypostatic Union, which simply means that both God and man resides in Jesus and, now in that bodily form, He will forever be that One God-Man being. Since His birth in Bethlehem He has embodied that two-natured role and will remain that God-Man for all of eternity! As we learned in the opening verses of the prologue to this Gospel, Jesus has always been and always will be. No other mere man can make that claim. John reminds the crowd that the previous day he had said that Jesus was worthy of praise and obedient service because He is greater than John or any other man since He is God in human form! In Philippians 2: 5-7 we read that "though He was in the form of God He did not count

equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men." By the way, that reminds us that those in the crowd the day before returned to hear more, and they got a sweet message from this bold voice promoting Jesus as the Lamb of God! Since Jesus is a divine and human being in One, John was right to state that he is not worthy, in himself, to even untie His sandals, and in today's text he says that Jesus "ranks before" him since He has always existed and always will! No one is like Him in perfection as God and no one can offer to sinners like you and me what Jesus can offer- sins "buried in the depths of the deepest sea!" John wanted very much to serve this Savior and found a significant way to do so- through water baptism. We'll look at that subject next in our text, but we need to focus on the parallel to the baptism with the Holy Spirit...

**Baptizing in water and in the Spirit-** verses 31 and 33 The first thing that captures our attention is the statement by John- "I myself did not know Him". John means by that that he didn't recognize him earlier in his life as the Messiah and promised Redeemer of men. John was distantly related to Jesus since John's mother Elizabeth was a cousin to Jesus' mother, Mary. But John and Jesus grew up quite differently- John's parents must have died in his youth and he took off to the wilderness to live before coming on the scene as God's voice of truth. Jesus grew up working in his father's carpenter shop in Nazareth. So, these two men did not see each other in those intervening years. But now John is delighted to tell the crowds and you and me that Jesus is the Lamb of God and the Son of God. He knows Him now, doesn't he?! As John told the Jewish leaders who came to question him about his true identity, he was just a voice for God and a baptizer in water for men and women and boys and girls to prepare their hearts through repentance to receive the very One who forgives sin for those ready to believe and receive! John states that the very purpose he began baptizing people was not to gain a following but to reveal Jesus to the people of Israel especially. John wanted to be very clear how he came to recognize Jesus as the Lamb of God. It was when he baptized Jesus in the Jordan River six weeks before. The exact details of identification are revealed- when Jesus came up out of the baptismal water, two important things happened. First, the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus and remained on Him, and, according to the other Gospels, God the Father spoke from Heaven saying- "This is My beloved Son- hear Him!" That is when John made the important connection about Jesus who came to earth for one primary reason- He came to die and offer His blood to pay for the sins of all those who come to Him by faith. When such a person recognizes who Jesus truly is and what He came 2,000 years ago to do for mankind, for believing mankind, that is when that divine exchange takes place- a sinner by birth becomes a child of God by faith! Just a brief thought here about that word picture of the Spirit of God descending "like a dove". The phrase does not indicate that a literal dove flew down on Jesus as He came up out of the baptismal water. I believe it means that such is the way John saw it- that is what stuck in his mind is that picture of a dove. I thought, when I studied this text, that the dove metaphor was perfect for this situation of the Lamb of God being baptized to officially start His earthly three-year ministry! First, it represents the Trinity all there- the voice of the Father, the Son being baptized and the Spirit appearing and descending on Jesus. Second, the Lamb of God who

would shortly be sacrificed for sinners connected on that day with another creation of God- a dove- which was a creature that poor people could substitute in place of a lamb or ram or goat. Jesus' earthly parents, Joseph and Mary, offered a pair of doves, turtledoves, when they presented the forty-day old baby to Simeon the priest in the Temple. John took all of this as a clear sign that he was to bear witness of the Deity of Jesus Christ- not a mere man but the Son of God...all of us who know Jesus as Savior can and should be witnesses of Him to others, rejoicing that we "looked and lived" and they can "look and live" too! When we become God's children by faith we also, every believer, is baptized by the Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation. That is a topic we can pursue further in our study of John's Gospel, but let me give you one key text about the baptism of the Spirit. 1 Corinthians 12: 13 states- "For by one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free, and all were made to drink of one Spirit!"

**Bear witness of the Son of God-** verses 32 and 34 Take note with me of the little word "is". This "to be" verb is in the present tense- Jesus IS the Son of God. He did not "used to be" and He is not destined someday to "become" the Son of God- He is, always has been and always will be God's Son. That means too that He always will be the Lamb of God and will always, until eternity begins and time on earth is no more, be the Lamb of God who is taking away the sin of the world! He was promised to come to earth, pictured as the Lamb of God, He provided removal of and no more remembrance of sin for any individual who accepts His forgiveness and chooses to walk in fellowship with Him day by day. And finally, He deserves praise throughout eternity for being that precious Lamb of Calvary! Revelation 5: 12 and 13- Angels around God's throne in glory "sing a new song, saying- 'Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!" And someday all the angels and all God's children will say- "To Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!" That will be our united witness then, but what about our witness of Jesus, like John the Baptist, now in 2020?

**Conclusion: IL** - In 1887 William Ogden wrote a terrific hymn based on that Scriptural command "Look and live!" It is now in more than 130 hymnbooks and the words to the final verse go like this:

"I will tell you how I came, hallelujah, to Jesus when He made me whole!

'Twas believing on His name, hallelujah- I trusted and He made me whole!

CHO: Look and live, my brother live! Look to Jesus now and live!

'Tis recorded in His Word, hallelujah- it is only that you look and live!"

If you don't know Jesus as Savior, then you desperately need to "look and live!" Put your faith in the blood of the Lamb of God to wash away all your sins and make you ready for Heaven!

If you know Him as your Savior from sin, you too can and should tell others how you came and help someone else "look and live!" And someday we altogether can sing- "All glory to Jesus!"