

***“Behold the Lamb”***

January 20, 2013

Text: John 1:29-34

**The lamb has always borne great significance in God’s  
redemptive plan/program.**

- \* E.g. in Gen 4, a slain lamb from the firstlings of Abel’s flock became the sacrifice which God considered acceptable.
- \* In Gen 22, Abraham told his son, Isaac, *“God will provide for Himself the **lamb**”* which was to serve as Isaac’s substitute, dying in his stead on the altar.
- \* In Ex 12, the Lord passed through Egypt and struck down all 1<sup>st</sup>-born males of both men/beasts, sparing only those households where a slain lamb’s blood was smeared over/around the doorway.
- \* Isa 53 said that our iniquity would fall on the coming Messiah, who would be *“like a **lamb** that is led to slaughter, & like a sheep that is silent before its shearers”* (Isa 53:6f).
- \* In Rev 5, this slain Messiah Lamb—Jesus X—stands between God’s throne & 24 elders, ready to take the scroll out of God’s hand, open it up, & begin the judgments of the Tribulation.
- \* In Rev 22, we see God’s Lamb forever glorified and sitting on His throne.

**In Jn 1:29-34, John the Baptist introduces Jesus to Israel as  
the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.**

In the process, he informs both them/us of four important truths about Jesus, that every man/woman in this world needs to understand about this One who will take away our sin.

John also gives powerful testimony about how he came to understand these profound truths about Jesus, His nature, and His ministry to us.

**\* Truth #1—This is the Lamb of God who takes away sin.**

**[John 1:29]**=> *“The next day [after the interview w/ the delegation from the Sanhedrin (which we saw last time)] he [John] saw Jesus coming to him, and said, ‘Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!’”*

Here He comes, the One for whom your ancestors have been waiting for 2 millennia.

Don’t miss Him!

**John looked up and saw Jesus coming toward him.**

40 days earlier he had baptized Jesus, but John hadn’t seen Him again since then, because after Jesus’ baptism, the Spirit had impelled Him into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan, toward the end of the 40 days.

Jesus had fasted during that whole time, so He was prob. thinner now, and He had never been striking in appearance to begin w/.

Isaiah had prophesied of X=> *“He has no stately form or majesty That we should look upon Him, Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him” (53:2).*

**As we see later in this text, John hadn't recognized Jesus as the Messiah before he baptized X, despite the fact that they were related, and he may have known Him beforehand.**

Lk 1:36 says Jesus' mother was a relative of John's mother. John had been reluctant to baptize Jesus, but not because he had recognized Him as Messiah before His baptism;

It was prob. just because he knew X to be such a godly, holy man that He should be the One baptizing, not the One being baptized.

One might have expected John to realize Jesus was Messiah.

Both John/his-mother were filled w/ the Spirit during Mary's visit to Elizabeth, when she was pregnant w/ John.

John wouldn't have remembered that, but Elizabeth should have.

Elizabeth had said=> *"How has it happened to me, that the mother of **my Lord** should come to me?"* (Lk 1:43).

So she seems to have known that Mary's Baby was the Lord.

We wonder if she'd never mentioned this to her son?

Zacharias (John's father) had actually prophesied of John right after his birth (Lk 1:75)=> *"You, child, will be called the prophet of the **Most High**; For you will go on **BEFORE THE LORD TO PREPARE HIS WAYS.**"*

The “*Most High*” and “*the Lord*” are title for God.

Didn’t Zacharias mention any of this to his son when  
he got older?

Zacharias/Elizabeth were both elderly, so maybe they had both  
died soon afterward, and John had gone to live w/ relatives.

Lk 1:80 says of John=> “*The child continued to grow, and  
to become strong in spirit, and he lived in the deserts  
until the day of his public appearance to Israel.*”

We aren’t told how young John was when he first  
went to live in the desert.

If we knew that, it might help explain why Zacharias  
and Elizabeth seem to have said nothing to  
John about Jesus.

John may not have had much contact with Jesus during  
those early years, or maybe he simply knew Him to  
be a solemn young Man, who never ever sinned.

Whatever the reasons might have been, John didn’t realize Jesus  
was Messiah until God made it clear to him, at His baptism.  
Jesus’ baptism isn’t described in this Gospel, but we know  
from the other 3 Gospels that it had occurred about  
40 days earlier.

Now that John sees Jesus coming, having just triumphed  
over Satan’s great temptation, John declares aloud=>

“***Behold*** [Look, everyone], *the Lamb of God who  
takes away the sin of the world!*”

He fulfills his calling to draw Israel's attention to her  
Messiah.

**John's understanding of Jesus/His-mission had progressed.**

Somehow, during that 40 day interim, he had come to view Jesus  
as the ultimate fulfillment of all those lambs God's people  
had sacrificed for their sins throughout all those centuries.  
He perceived Jesus to be the Lamb of God not the lamb of  
man, who alone could/would atone for sin once/for-  
all—the perfect Lamb.

While other Scriptures refer to Jesus as the Lamb, only  
John uses this particular expression, "*the Lamb of  
God.*"

How deep the Baptist's theology was at this point we can't be  
certain, but he did understand that Jesus' sacrificial death  
would take away the sin of the world.

Lit., that it would lift it up and take it away, making it  
no longer the curse on man's life it had always been.  
Even if John the Baptist didn't yet fully comprehend what  
taking away the sin of the world meant, the Apostle  
John did, as he recorded John's words 60 years later,  
in writing this text.

So did Peter=> "*You were not redeemed [out of our slavery  
to sin] with perishable things like silver or gold from  
your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers,  
/ but with **precious blood**, as of a **lamb** unblemished  
and spotless, the **blood of Christ***" (I Pet 1:18f).

**Since Jesus takes away the sin of the world, will every person in the world, throughout all of history, be saved?**

No, Jesus Himself would later deny that saying=>

*“Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to **destruction**, and **many** are those who enter by it” (Mt 7:13).*

I.e., many people will not be saved.

“*World*” has a variety of meanings throughout the NT.

Here John uses it to mean mankind=> Jesus, the Lamb of God, would take away the sins of people throughout the world of mankind—men/women from every race/nation.

But not that every individual w/o exception w/i all those races/nations, would be saved from sin.

John is not teaching universal salvation.

**Our message as Xns (whether clergy/laymen) is the same as John’s=> “*Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.*”**

Come to Him, and let Him take away your sin!

God has sent His Son—the perfect/spotless Lamb—into the world, that He might save His people from their sins.

Jn 10:4 says “His people” are those who “*know His voice.*”

He is our Savior, because He is our Sacrifice for sins.

He bore our sin, in His body on the cross, lifting it from us (whom it would have crushed) & taking it on Himself.

If He hadn't taken it off of us, it would have destroyed us.  
But He took it on Himself & then He took it away, never to  
be heard-of/mentioned again, by God.  
He washed us in His blood, and now we are white as snow,  
clothed in God's own righteousness.

**What did we do to receive such a tremendous blessing?**

We just beheld/looked-to Jesus as our Savior, the same way the  
Israelites in the wilderness looked in faith to the bronze  
serpent Moses had set on a poll (Num 21:9).  
Their doing so healed those who had been bitten by  
venomous snakes.

So we say to those who are snake-bitten by sin=> "Look to X!"  
Look through your tears/confusion if need be—but look!

**\* Truth #2—This is He who is eternal God.**

[Verse 30]=> *"This is He on behalf of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.'"*

**We first read that statement by John back in verse 15 of this chapter, & we learned that it meant Jesus is eternal/timeless—therefore He is God.**

John had prob. preached this to his listeners a number of times.  
He repeatedly emphasized that the Man who would come  
as Messiah, was superior to him, though He had been  
born & had begun His ministry after John.  
He was superior because He was the eternal/timeless  
Word of God, who had existed before time began.

**[Verse 31] (John)=>** *“And I did not recognize Him, but in order that He might be manifested to Israel, I came baptizing in water.”*

**John says he did not “recognize” (lit. “know”—thoroughly understand) who that Messiah was.**

John was a prophet and God had revealed a number of truths to him about the Messiah, and about his own ministry as the forerunner of Messiah;

This included the fact that he was to baptize people in water as a means of bringing Messiah to Israel’s attention.

His was to be a baptism of repentance that would heighten people’s awareness of their need to deal with their sin through a Savior.

Because only God can deal effectively with sin, they would realize their need for Him to do so, thru the Messiah/Savior.

John also knew that when Messiah came, He would baptize people w/ the H.S.

In Jn 3:31-36, John himself made a number of statements later that revealed he had become surprisingly knowledgeable about Messiah, & his own role as Messiah’s forerunner=>

\* E.g. he knew Messiah would come from heaven.

Therefore He would be above all earthly men.



- \* He knew Messiah would speak the words of God because of the Spirit's unlimited/measureless revelations to Him (34).
- \* He knew that Messiah was the Son of God, that He was loved by the Father, & that the Father had given all things into His hand.
- \* He knew that anyone who believes on Him has eternal life, but disobedience to Him reflects lack of saving faith & results in God's wrath abiding on such a person.

But prior to Jesus baptism, John hadn't even been able to figure out who, specifically, the Messiah was.

He didn't "*recognize*" Him—didn't see through the facts he had at the time & put them all together in such a way as to identify of one particular individual as the Messiah.

**\* Truth #3—This is He who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.**

**[Verses 32-33]=>** *"And John bore witness saying, 'I have beheld the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him. / And I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, "He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the one who baptizes in the Holy Spirit."'"*

**John couldn't get past the fact that he hadn't recognized X.**

In spite of all that had been revealed to him about the Messiah, he hadn't been able, by his own wits, to identify who He was. The fault wasn't John's.

Jesus simply wasn't recognizable as the Messiah.

Even to a great/godly man like John the Baptist.

This may have been a bit frustrating for John.

His responsibility was to serve as Messiah's herald,  
introducing Him to Israel.

But he didn't know who exactly he was to introduce.

As a prophet, he had a lot of information about the Messiah  
that had been revealed to him, and he undoubtedly  
shared that information w/ his listeners;

Along with his confrontation of their sins & his  
demanding that they repent & become baptized.

But when his listeners then asked, "Who is the Messiah you  
keep telling us about, and when will we see him?"

John had no answers to give.

**God, who had ordained John to baptize in water, had given  
him a prearranged signal by which to identify Messiah.**

John must have constantly looked for any hint of that signal.

Suddenly, 40 days earlier, he'd seen it while baptizing Jesus.

John gazed w/ transfixed/excited/pensive attentiveness as  
Jesus went up from the water, stood on the riverbank  
praying (dripping wet), the heavens opened up, and  
the H.S. descended in bodily form as a dove.

Have you ever watched a dove fly?

They fly like jets—fast/straight.

The dove not only settled on Jesus, but remained on Him,  
to indicate that the anointing of the H.S. would  
always remain w/ Him.

This was the miraculous signal John had been looking for.  
The tense of the verbs means that this sight had stayed w/  
John, & he could still see it clearly in his mind's eye.  
The Apostle John may have been there and seen it.  
But it may have been a vision that only Jesus and John the  
Baptist saw.

But another phenomenon had occurred also—God the Father  
spoke out of heaven.

Those who lacked eyes/ears of faith, may have heard only a  
loud noise like thunder—as happens also in Jn 12:29.

But John the Baptist heard God's voice out of heaven  
distinctly saying=>

*“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-  
pleased”* (Mt 3:17).

By contrast, what Jesus Himself heard the Father say  
was=> *“**You** are My beloved Son, in **You** I am  
well-pleased”* (Lk 3:22).

It must have been thrilling for Jesus to be so closely  
reunited with both the Father/Spirit in that moment.

**Did Jesus not have the H.S. w/ Him before now?**

Yes, He did—this simply marked Jesus' anointing w/ the HS,  
who would empower Him for ministry, from then on.

In Acts 10, Peter told some Gentiles=> “*You know [it’s common knowledge] of Jesus of Nazareth, how God **anointed** Him with the **Holy Spirit** and with **power**, and how He went about doing good, and **healing** all who were oppressed by the devil; for **God was with Him** (Acts 10:38).*

Jesus healed people by the power of His anointing w/ the H.S.

When Jesus preached, He did that too in the power of the Spirit.

E.g. in Lk 4, Jesus read Isa 61:1 in Nazareth’s synagogue=>

***“THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE DOWNTRODDEN” (4:18)***

Then Jesus added=> “*Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing*” (Lk 4:21).

Someone: Why did Jesus need the power of the H.S. if He was God, and had God’s own power w/i Himself?

Because in coming to earth, He’d become a man like us, & “emptied” Himself of the free exercise of that divine power.

He took on Himself our weakness, in order to truly share our human condition.

So like us, He relied on the H.S. to empower Him, just as we do.

Jesus baptizes us too in the H.S., who washes/regenerates us.

The Spirit indwells, anoints, and empowers us for  
obedience/service, as He did X.

I Jn 2:27=> *“The anointing which you received from Him [H.S.] abides [remains] in you [just as He did w/ X], and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things.”*

And when we are filled w/ the Spirit, we unleash that  
power within, to live lives that truly glorify our  
Savior.

John 3 says God gives X the Spirit *“without limit”* (3:34),  
so He is fully equipped to baptize us with/in the H.S.,  
fulfilling Ezek 36:26 (God)=> *“I will put My **Spirit** within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.”*

**John the Baptist compared the fact that he baptized w/ water,  
to Jesus’ baptizing people in the H.S.**

John may have had something rather destructive in mind by  
*“baptism in the H.S.”*—viewing the Spirit’s role as burning  
up sinfulness w/ fire/judgment.

E.g. in Mt 3 John the Baptist said of X=> *“He will **baptize** you with the **Holy Spirit** and **fire**. / And His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will **burn up** the chaff with **unquenchable fire**”* (3:11-12).

John, like many 1<sup>st</sup> cent. Jews, may not have understood the difference between X's 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> Comings.

At His 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming, Jesus will indeed come as a judge and put an end to sin, with the Spirit-given power of fiery judgment.

But He came the 1<sup>st</sup> time in the mildness of a Lamb, which may be why John had such trouble recognizing Him.

In Jn 12, Jesus said=> *"If anyone hears My sayings, and does not keep them, I do **not judge** him; for I did **not** come to judge the world, but to **save the world**"*  
(12:47).

This was the time for a Lamb, & a Dove, not that of a warrior on a white horse, w/ a blood-stained robe.

That time will come, but later, when the Lamb shows the world that He can also be an untamed Lyon.

**\* Truth #4—This is He who is the Son of God.**

[Verse 34] (John)=> *"And I have seen, and have borne witness that **this is the Son of God.**"*

**This was John's final understanding to which all his previous understandings ultimately led=>**

That this humble/quiet/holy Man who was easily overlooked, could actually be Messiah, and therefore the Son of God.

That He is a Member of the Trinity, and that He uniquely shares God's own nature/essence.

This quiet/unobtrusive Man about whom Isaiah had

prophesied=> “*He will not cry out or raise His voice, Nor make His voice heard in the street. / A bruised reed He will not break, And a dimly burning wick He will not extinguish*” (Isa 42:2-3).

The spectacular sights/sounds which took place at Jesus’ baptism had a transforming effect on John’s ministry, developing in him the conviction/confidence that his own godly relative, raised in the obscurity of Nazareth was actually God’s Son. This “*tender shoot,*” as Isaiah had called Him.

This unlikely root out of parched ground, who had no stately form, or attractive appearance.

It seems absolutely incredible, but it is true.

He is Messiah, God’s only begotten Son.

The Spirit’s descending, and the Father’s voice, had proven that this unimpressive-looking/prayerful Man was (w/i Himself) the very Son of God, w/ whom God was well-pleased.

He is God’s Son, identical in His essence with His Heavenly Father.

**There’s a sense of finality about John’s words, “*I have seen and have borne witness.*”**

They’re in a tense that means, “I’ve done what God commissioned me to do, and the effects of my doing it, still remain.”

John had now officially introduced Jesus to Israel.

He may have regretted not doing so right after X’s baptism, w/ all those spectacular events of heaven opening,

the Dove descending, & God's voice booming out, of heaven, as his introduction.

But X had left so quickly, & secluded Himself in the desert. Actually, it didn't matter, now that Jesus had returned, & John had publicly declared, "*Behold, the Lamb of God.*"

But now it would be time for John's own notoriety to decrease, as X's increased.

And from this point in John's Gospel, it ceases to be the story of John, & becomes instead the story of Jesus. John's work was done, & now X's work would begin.

**When John the Baptist witnessed Jesus' baptism, he suddenly realized a profound truth=> The Son of God had come to earth as a humble Lamb to take away man's sin.**

Not As the conquering warrior everyone had been expecting Messiah to be.

That is a realization that any man/woman can experience, who will heed John's words=> "*Behold, the Lamb of God!*"

That means, Look at Him by faith, accept what God has revealed about Him, trust Him as Your own Savior.

This is the very opposite of trying to find salvation in a critical understanding of the theological details/doctrines of the gospel.

Some folks get nervous about what they view as inconsistencies between this text & that.



Or the doctrine of God's sovereignty & that of man's responsibility.

They're like a man floating in the icy ocean water after the Titanic sank, wanting to inspect & assure himself of the seaworthiness of an approaching lifeboat before climbing onto it.

Sir, just get in the boat! Otherwise, you'll drown.

Unsaved sinners have no business doing a critical analysis of God's Word, which simply says, "*Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved*" (Acts 16:31). Don't quibble, and don't feel that not quibbling is being gullible.

Believe!

\* This is also the opposite of worrying (as some do) about the doctrine of election, saying, 'I may not really be saved, because God hasn't chosen me.'

Let the squirrel who eats the seeds out of our birdfeeder at home teach you true wisdom—we call him Charley. The seed we place in that feeder is for birds, but the cold weather has driven many of them south.

Meanwhile, we fill the feeder, so that Charley too will have plenty to eat, & he constantly amuses us, as he waves at us w/ his tail.

He never seems to worry about his election, and whether we put the seed out there for him, or the birds.

He just knows that food is scarce in the winter, there's seed to be had, and he needs it—so he eats it (as much & as fast as he can).

What he doesn't know is that, by doing so, he is exactly fulfilling our purpose for filling the feeder.

When your soul is hungry, & you face the chilling curse of death for your sin, don't worry about election.

Just=> "*Look, the Lamb of God, who [stands ready to] take away... sin.*"

That's really good news.

\* This is also the opposite of worrying that you are not sufficiently repentant for X to save you, or that your prayers aren't sufficiently sincere/earnest.

That sort of fixation on ourselves doesn't help us at all.

Fixate instead on the Lamb of God who takes away sin, putting no confidence in your own repentance, your own prayers, or the sincerity/depth of your feelings.

Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world (including your sin), and rest in Him, rather than yourself.

## ***“Behold, the Lamb of God”***

January 20, 2013

Text: John 1:29-34

1. The lamb has always borne great significance in God’s [24 redemptive] plan and program.

Gen 4; 22; 12; Isa 53:6-7; Rev 5; 22

**In Jn 1:29-34 John introduces Jesus to Israel as the Lamb of God; in the process he informs both them and us of four important truths about Jesus that every man and woman needs to understand...**

**\* Truth #1—This is the Lamb of God who takes away sin.**

**[John 1:29]**

2. John looked up and saw Jesus coming toward him; forty days earlier he had [18 baptized] Jesus.

Isa 53:2; Lk 1:36, 43, 75, 80

3. John didn’t realize Jesus was Messiah until [8 God] made it clear to him at His baptism.

I Pet 1:18-19; Mt 7:13

4. Jesus, the Lamb of God, would take away the sins of people throughout the world from every race and nation; but [8 not] those of every individual without exception.

Jn 10:4; Num 21:9

**\* Truth #2—This is He who is eternal God.**

**[Verse 30]**

5. The Man who would come as Messiah was superior to John though He had been born and had begun His ministry after John; He was superior because He was the [16 eternal] and timeless Word of God.

**[Verse 31]**

Jn 3:31-36

6. John didn’t “*recognize*” the Messiah; he didn’t see through the facts he had, and put them together in such a way as to identify one particular [24 individual] as the Messiah.

**\* Truth #3—This is He who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.**

**[Verses 32-33]**

7. God, who had ordained John to baptize in water, had given him a prearranged signal by which to identify Messiah; suddenly he had seen it while [20 baptizing] Jesus.

Jn 12:29; Mt 3:17; Lk 3:22

8. This marked Jesus' anointing with the Holy Spirit, who would [16 empower] Him for ministry from then on.

Acts 10:38; Lk 4:18 (Isa 61:1); Lk 4:21

9. Jesus baptizes us too in the Holy Spirit, who washes and regenerates us; the Spirit indwells, anoints, and empowers us for obedience and [16 service].

Jn 3:34; Ezek 36:26; Mt 3:11-12; Jn 12:47

**\* Truth #4—This is He who is the Son of God.**

**[Verse 34]**

10. This was John's final understanding: That this quiet, holy Man who was easily overlooked could actually be Messiah and therefore the [8 Son] of God.

Isa 42:2-3

11. John suddenly realized a profound truth: The Son of God had come to earth as a humble [10 Lamb] to take away man's sin.

Acts 16:31

12. Fixate on the Lamb of God who takes away sin, putting no confidence in your [8 own] repentance, your prayers, or the sincerity or depth of your feelings.