

# JESUS IS THE LAMB OF GOD

John 1:19-34

Key Verse: 1:29

*The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”*

In the last lesson, we learned that Jesus is God, and that Jesus is the true light. We also learned that Jesus is full of grace and truth, because he came to this world to serve and save sinners like us through his death on the cross and resurrection. In today’s passage, we will learn more about Jesus through the testimony of John the Baptist: First, Jesus is the Lamb of God. Second, Jesus baptizes us with the Holy Spirit. May God help us to know personally who Jesus is, as we study the Book of John together!

## I. JOHN THE BAPTIST SAID, “I AM NOT THE CHRIST” (19-28)

Look at verse 19. *Now this was John’s testimony when the Jews of Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was.* John the Baptist was the forerunner of the Christ, which means that he was sent by God to prepare the way for the Lord (Lk 3:1-14). John preached a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. Many people came to hear him, repented their sins, and were baptized in the Jordan River. John’s popularity was rising rapidly. Then the Jewish authorities in Jerusalem were alarmed. They decided to check up on John and his work by sending a team of investigators.



When the priests and Levites from Jerusalem went to John the Baptist, what did they do? They asked John to identify himself. They pressed him by asking questions such as, “Who are you? Do you have a license to baptize these people?” John was not intimidated by this line of questioning. Knowing their motive, John did not fail to confess, but confessed freely. First, he declared, “I am not the Christ.” Then they asked him, “Who are you? Are you Elijah?” John replied, “I am not.” They asked him again, “Are you the Prophet?” John answered, “No.” Notice that John’s answers became shorter each time: “I am not the Christ”; “I am not”; “No” (20-21).

John’s handling of the interrogation teaches us a lesson about how to be a good witness to Jesus. As I said earlier, John was becoming very popular at that time. Indeed, people were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Christ (Lk 3:15). It was a good opportunity for John to claim his fame and fortune. Most people would have tried to cash in on his popularity. In our generation, people take advantage of any fame they get. They write books about themselves and appear on talk show circles. Some even do crazy things to claim their 15-minutes of fame. But John was different. He talked about himself as little as possible, and directed their attention to Jesus. He left no room for any

speculation about his mission and his relationship with Jesus. He was not the light. He was not the Christ. He was only a voice -- a spokesman for the Messiah.

Look at verse 22. Finally the investigators asked him, “Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?” This verse shows that the motive of the priests and Levites. They had no interest in the work of God which John was doing. They were only interested in information about John’s credential so that they could file a report on him for their bosses in Jerusalem. It is pity that these religious leaders did not know what the ordinary people heard and accepted through John’s preaching. John was preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. Thousands of people came to him from all over the country. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River (Mk 1:5).

What did John say to the religious leaders? Look at verse 23. John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, *“I am the voice of one calling in the desert, ‘Make straight the way for the Lord.’”* This scripture verse is from Isaiah 40:3 and was apparently John’s life key verse. Perhaps this verse had jumped out of the page when John studied the Book of Isaiah. He took it to his heart. He meditated on it and accepted it as his key verse. So when the investigators asked him who he was, he did not hesitate to tell them. He said: *“I am the voice of one calling in the desert, ‘Make straight the way for the Lord.’”* He told them that his mission was to make the way for the Lord. It was to help people to repent their sins and accept Jesus as their Savior.



John the Baptist was an interesting prophet. His parents, Zechariah and Elizabeth, had him in their very old age. Elizabeth was so old that no one expected her to have a baby. But God worked a miracle for the couple. He heard their life-long prayer for a son and sent a great prophet to the family. When John was growing up, no doubt he heard about the story surrounding his birth—how God sent him to this world for a purpose. He heard from his dad what the angel Gabriel had said: *“Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to give him the name John. He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth. Many of the people of Israel will he bring back to the Lord their God. And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord”* (Lk 1:13-17).

Based on the word of God, the young John made a decision to live a life of mission in obedience to God’s will for him. He accepted God’s word in his heart. He even adopted the lifestyle of Elijah, because the angel Gabriel had said that he would go on

before the Lord “in the spirit and power of Elijah.” Just like Elijah, he refused to follow the trend of the world. He went against the grain. He did not take wine or other fermented drink. He avoided parties. Instead, he studied the word of God and was filled with the Holy Spirit. When time came, he went to the desert area beside the Jordan River and began to preach a baptism of repentance. It did not make sense to go to a desert to begin a ministry. There was no one in the desert. His friends might have advised him, “Hey, if you want to have a successful ministry, you should go to a big city like Jerusalem.” But John based his ministry on the word of God and became “a voice of one calling in the desert.” Like Elijah did, John lived a simple life, wearing only a single suit made of camel’s hair and eating only what was available to him in the desert—locusts and honey. He spoke with passion, but he didn’t just preach; he lived what he preached. Amazingly, many people came to hear him and responded to his message. Now his growing popularity caught the attention of the religious authorities in Jerusalem. He became a target of their jealousy. They sent a team of investigators to him.

Was John’s answer satisfactory to the investigators? Look at verses 24-25. *Now some Pharisees who had been sent questioned him, “Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?”* They were saying, “Then who gave you the authority to baptize?” They accused him of baptizing without a license. However, John was not intimidated by them. Rather, he turned the subject of conversation to Jesus. He took the opportunity to introduce Jesus to them. Look at verses 26-27. *“I baptize with water,” John replied, “but among you stands one you do not know. He is the one who comes after me, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.”* John pointed to Jesus. He was saying, “Don’t look at me. I am only helping people to repent their sins. It’s not about me. It’s about Jesus. He is the one who can really help you. He is my Master. I am not even worthy to untie his shoe strings.” Humanly speaking, John the Baptist and Jesus were relatives and John was six-months older than Jesus. But John humbled himself and declared that he was not even worthy to be a servant of Jesus. Have you ever thought of yourself this way—that you are not worthy to be a servant of Jesus and how privileged you are to be his disciple? St. Paul did. He said, “... I don’t even deserve to be called an apostle ... But by the grace of God I am what I am...” (1Co 15:9-10). John the Baptist minimized himself in order to magnify Jesus. We learn from John that we should humble ourselves and always point to Jesus as we carry out our mission.

## II. “LOOK, THE LAMB OF GOD!” (29-31)

Look at verse 29. *The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”* When John the Baptist saw Jesus coming toward him, he was deeply touched by the grace of the Savior and exclaimed, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” What does it mean that Jesus is the Lamb of God? We need a little bit of background from the Book of Exodus. By the time of Moses, the people of Israel had become slaves in Egypt. They cried out day and night under the cruel bondage of slavery. Their sufferings were unbearable.

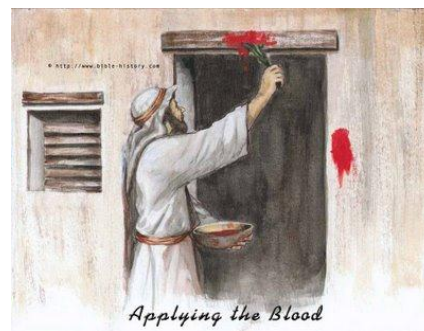
They groaned and cried out to God. God heard their cries and sent his servant Moses to lead them out of Egypt, out of their slavery.

The problem was that the king of Egypt would not let the Israelites go, because he wanted the free labor to build many pyramids and monuments. God sent 10 terrible plagues on the Egyptians to press the king to let his people go. But after each of the nine plagues, he changed his mind. Finally, God gave him an ultimatum. He said he would send an angel of death to kill all the first-born males. God told the Hebrews what to do in order to avoid the angel of death. They were to smear the blood of the lamb on their doorposts so that the angel would “pass over” their houses when God destroyed all the firstborn sons of Egypt. The blood of the Passover lamb thus symbolized God’s grace of salvation.

After the Exodus, according to God’s command, the Israelites commemorated the Passover by slaughtering a year-old lamb without defect. They sprinkled the blood on the altar. The blood of the lamb symbolized the sacrifice of atonement for their sins. They also ate the meat of the lamb (Ex 12:7). But this Old Testament sacrificial system was a mere foreshadow of God’s redemptive plan to be realized through Jesus. God sent his one and only Son to save us from our own bondage to sin and death. Jesus came to this world to die on the cross. Jesus became the sacrificial Lamb of God for us. He shed his innocent blood on the cross to wash away our sin-stained blood.

1 John 2:2 says, *“He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.”*

When Jesus and his disciples ate a Passover meal together on the eve of his death, he gave each of them a piece of bread and said, “Take it; this is my body.” He also took the cup, and offered it to them, saying, “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many” (Mk 14:22-24). Just as the blood of the lamb saved the Israelites in Egypt, the blood of the Lamb of God can save us from the power of sin and death. The blood of Jesus is smeared on those who accept him as the Savior. We can experience our own personal Passover.



So John the Baptist exclaimed, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” How can it be that the one and only Son of God should have to die? The prophet Isaiah foresaw Jesus the Lamb of God and prophesied: *“He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth”* (Isa 53:7).

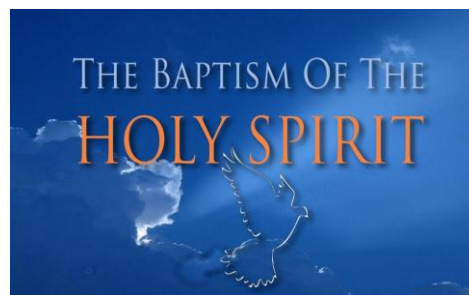
Sadly, there are many people today who have a casual attitude about sin. They commit sins and then say, “I’m okay. It’s no big deal.” But they are not okay. Sin breaks the person’s relationship with God. Sin is a deadly sickness that is worse than cancer. Cancer can kill our body. Sin kills our soul. This death is much worse than the death of our body.

And yet, people take the sin problem lightly. They tried to ignore it. This is bad. If you had cancer, would you ignore it hoping it goes away somehow? Others sweat at night because they do not know what to do with their sin problem. There is not a single doctor in the world who can help us with our sin-sickness. But God, in his mercy, sent us someone who can. John the Baptist declares that Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Only the blood of the Lamb can cleanse our sin-sickness. Only Jesus can forgive our sins. He came down all the way from heaven to do this for us. How amazing is this grace! No wonder John exclaimed, "Look, the Lamb of God!"

### III. HE WILL BAPTIZE YOU WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT (32-34)

Let's read verses 32-34. *Then John gave this testimony: "I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. I would not have known him, except that the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God."* John baptized people with water. Water baptism is a symbol of cleansing and a declaration of one's decision to commit his life to Christ. John prepared people for the forgiveness of their sins through his water baptism. Now Jesus was there to baptize them with the Holy Spirit. John says that he did not know who Jesus was, even though Jesus was his relative. He meant he did know Jesus spiritually. But when John saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him, he realized that Jesus is the Son of God. John was saying, "I am a mere man who can baptize you with water. But now someone from heaven is here for you. He is the Son of God. He can baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

How is this baptism by the Holy Spirit different from water baptism? Who is this Holy Spirit? Many books have been written about the Holy Spirit. Let me talk about only a couple of important points this time. When we are baptized by the Holy Spirit, we are born again spiritually, as "the Spirit gives birth to spirit" (Jn 3:6). We become new persons in Christ. We become children of God. This is a mysterious process. Jesus said, "The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit" (Jn 3:8). One thing that is clear is that only Jesus can baptize us with the Holy Spirit. Jesus, the Son of God, working with the Spirit of God (the third person of the Trinity), can transform us into new persons in God. We cannot change other people, let alone ourselves. But the Holy Spirit can transform us into children of God. Jesus can change us from useless sinners into useful servants of God by baptizing us with the Holy Spirit.



One of the important things that the Holy Spirit can do for us is that he leads us to Jesus the Son of God. The Bible says that "... no one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the



Holy Spirit” (1Co 12:3). The Holy Spirit is also our Counselor. Jesus says in John 14:26: “... *the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.*” We need the help of the Holy Spirit as we study the word of Christ.

So the question is, how can we be baptized by the Holy Spirit? John the Baptist gives a clear answer to this question. He said, “Look, the Lamb of God!” We have to come to Jesus and lay down all our sins under his cross. When we welcome him into our life and commit ourselves to him, he baptizes us with the Holy Spirit. Then a wonderful love relationship begins between our Lord and us.

In today’s passage, we learned that Jesus is “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” When we come to him confessing our sins, Jesus baptizes us with the Holy Spirit. We don’t have to suffer from our sin and guilt any more. We can serve God and others joyfully. May God help us experience this joy everyday! May God help us to share this good news of Jesus with young people of our generation!