

The Lamb of God

John 1:29-34

29 The next day John 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 is preferred before me, for He was before me.' 31 I did not know Him; but that He should be revealed to Israel, therefore I came baptizing with water."

32 And John bore witness, saying, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. 33 I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' 34 And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God." NKJV

We do not know how well Jesus and John were acquainted as their mothers were related to one another and Mary had spent the first three months of her pregnancy with Elizabeth. Some liberal scholars have assumed that Jesus and John collaborated to stage this whole thing.

But the difficult part for me is how John could understand Jesus to be the Messiah and still think of Him in terms of a sacrifice. We know that John considered Jesus to be greater than himself and this passage indicates he saw Jesus as preceding himself although John was six months older than Jesus. We also know that John tells us that before he had baptized Jesus he did not know of certainty that Jesus was the One he came to proclaim.

John, like the prophets of old had come to understand these things more by direct revelation than by being taught by another. His theology was sound although it may not make perfect sense to you and me. But later on in life, as John sat in prison, he sent some of his disciples to find out what Jesus said of Himself. "Are you the Messiah, or should we look for another," they asked. Somehow in prison over a period of several months his faith had begun to spring some doubts. But we never find him turning away from the testimony he gives in this passage this morning.

John uses the term Lamb of God to refer to Jesus more than all the rest of the New Testament. To him it is one of the great symbols of who Jesus was. John refers to Jesus as light, life, the way, the bread of life, and a number of other illustrations. But this idea of Jesus being the Lamb of God is more clearly laid out in the Bible than all the others. For since the fall of Adam and Eve lambs had been a victim of choice for the sacrifice of atonement for sins.

The Jewish law and history are filled with references to sacrificial lambs. Innocent, spotless lambs separated from the flock for the altar. So this morning once again we see Jesus as the Lamb of God.

I. How did John know?

A. His knowledge was based upon a revelation from God

1. 33 I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.'

2. So God lets John know that as he is baptizing people, that one will come to him to be baptized and that God will make known to John that this is the promised Messiah.
- B. From his testimony here and from the other gospels this happened at Jesus baptism, which is not directly recorded in John's Gospel.
1. 32 And John bore witness, saying, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him.
 2. Matt 3:13-17 13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. 14 And John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?" 15 But Jesus answered and said to him, "Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he allowed Him. 16 When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. 17 And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." NKJV
 3. So our passage today is after the baptism of Jesus.
 4. As one suggested it is after the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness when Jesus returns that John sees Him and points Him out to his disciples.

II. Jesus, Lamb of God

- A. Some commentators try to connect this passage with a particular sacrifice of the Old Testament.
1. Passover is the favorite.
 2. But also Yon Kippur, the day of atonement.
- B. But really Jesus was the final, the sum and summation of all the sacrifices of the Old Testament.
1. From the first animal sacrificed to clothe the shame of Adam and Eve, and the lambs from the flock that Abel brought to God as an acceptable sacrifice to the thousands of animals sacrificed at the dedication of the temple and the annual sacrifices of the Jews, Jesus fulfilled them all.
 2. Matt 5:17 "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. NKJV

III. That takes away the sin

- A. What is sin?
1. The work here means to "fall short of the mark."
 2. The idea is to miss the mark set by God in His law.
 3. It is to not measure up, to fall short of what is required.

4. Sin is the behavior, action, thought, that does not comply with God's holy will for your life.
- B. Why do we need it to be taken away?
1. We have no way to deal with it.
 2. We have no way to atone for it or cover it up.
 3. Be sure your sin will find you out. Num 32:23 "take note, you have sinned against the Lord; and be sure your sin will find you out." NKJV
- IV. Of the world
- A. His death was sufficient to take away all sin.
 - B. It was efficient to take away any sin.
 - C. But it is only for those who will repent and trust in Him.
 - D. Who will carry your sin.
 1. You can, but it will result in eternal death.
 2. Jesus can and it results in eternal life.