

JESUS IS THE LAMB OF GOD

John 1:19-51

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 prologue, we learned that Jesus is God, and that Jesus is the true light. We learned most of all that Jesus is full of grace and truth, because he is God incarnate. Today we learn more about Jesus through John the Baptist. In John 1:19-51 we hear John's testimonies about Jesus: First, Jesus is the Lamb of God. Second, Jesus has authority to baptize men with the Holy Spirit. Third, Jesus is the Messiah. Fourth, Jesus is the disciple maker. Today, through many events, we learn that Jesus is the Messiah.

I. John the Baptist witnesses to Jesus (19-34)

First, "I am the voice of God's King" (19-28). John the Baptist was the last prophet of the Old Testament, as was prophesied in Isaiah 40:3. It says, "A voice of one calling: 'In the desert prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God.'" In short, he came to this world as the forerunner of the Christ. He preached a baptism of repentance in order to prepare the way for the Lord Jesus (Lk 3:1-14). John's ministry grew and grew until it shook the country. When John preached the message of the baptism of repentance, many people from rank and file came to him and repented, beating their breasts, and they were baptized by John. John's

popularity was sky high. Then the politicians of the times were alarmed. They decided to investigate John the Baptist through the priests and Levites.

So the Jewish religious leaders sent investigators to check up on John and his work. They came and asked John who he was in order to find out if he were the Christ--because people were wondering if he were the Christ. John was not taunted. Knowing their motive, John did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, "I am not the Christ." They asked him again, "Who are you? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" He answered, "No." In answering them, John talked about himself less and less. "I am not the Christ." "I am not." "No" (19-21). What a surprise! Most people want to advertise themselves to the maximum degree. Modern times seem to be the times of self-propaganda. But John decreased himself, despite his fame, so that he might magnify the name of Jesus and reveal Jesus to Israel (31b).

When the investigators scrutinized him to say something about his identity so that they could report to their superiors, John said in verse 23, "I am the voice of one calling in the desert, 'Make straight the way for the Lord.'" Verse 23 is a quotation from Isaiah's prophecy concerning the forerunner of the Messiah (Isa 40:3). When John said this, he meant, "I am the forerunner of the King, and I came to prepare the work of the Messiah." In short, Jesus is God's King. And he is also the Savior King. In the past, the king's coming was announced by forerun-

ners so that people might bow down to the ground to pay homage to the king. Ac-

ording to God's time schedule, John the Baptist came first, and then Jesus the Messiah.

This time, some of the Pharisees asked him, "Why then do you baptize?" Their question was an intimidation, accusing him of baptizing without a license. John was not at all taunted by them. Rather, he turned the topic of conversation away to Jesus. He said, "I baptize with water, 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" (26,27). In this verse, John, though he was a man of great spiritual authority, compares himself to a royal subject and Jesus, God's King. When John was cross-examined by the investigators he declared that he was not the Christ, but that Jesus is God's King. God's King meant the Messiah.

Second, Jesus is the Lamb of God (29-31). The next day when John saw Jesus coming toward him, he did not say, "Look, God's King," but he said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (29) When John the Baptist said, "Look, the Lamb of God!" he associated Jesus with the Paschal Lamb (Ex 12:1-13). The people of Israel groaned in their slavery and cried out day and night under the bondage of Pharaoh, king of Egypt. They were like Russians under the communist system or people in the bone-crushing capitalistic system. What's more, they were in great torment because of their sins. Their sufferings were

beyond hu-

man comprehension. After the Exodus, according to God's command through Moses, they slaughtered a year-old lamb without defect, and took some of its blood and sprinkled it on the altar as the symbol of the forgiveness of their sins. We call this the paschal lamb. People shed the blood of the lamb as a sacrifice for their sins. People also ate the meat of the lamb (Ex 12:7). Jesus is God's King. To John's understanding, Jesus was not a political king, but a spiritual king. Jesus came to this world to die on the cross. And finally, on the cross, he shed his holy blood to cleanse our sin-sick 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." An atoning sacrifice is the same as the Lamb of God. God made his one and only Son an atoning sacrifice and crucified him so as to shed his blood to save men from their sins. So John the Baptist cried out, "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? John saw Jesus not only as God's King, but also he saw Jesus as the Lamb of God.

Jeremiah looked forward to Jesus and prophesied about him in the same terms. Jeremiah 11:19 says, "I had been like a gentle lamb led to the slaughter...." Isaiah prophesied concerning Jesus as the Lamb of God. Isaiah 53:7 says: "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." We human

beings have too many things to say or complain to those who inflict damage on us. But Jesus, though he is God, did not open his mouth. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 5:7b, "For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed."

There are many people who say, "I'm okay." But they are not okay. Most of them are sick with sins, poisoned by sin. They do many evil things to soothe their torment. Many people live in despair mainly because they do not know what to do with their sins. But Jesus, the Lamb of God, takes away the sin of those who believe in him. Only the blood of the Lamb can cleanse man's sin-sickness. Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away our sins. The Lamb of God is our Messiah.

Third, Jesus baptizes with the Holy Spirit (32-34). 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 only with water. Water baptism is the declaration to the world that the one who is baptized is a child of God. Water baptism is a ritual which symbolizes the forgiveness of sins. John did not know who Jesus was. 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. He also realized that Jesus is the one who baptizes men with the Holy Spirit. Jesus is the only one who baptizes men with the Holy Spirit. The problem of baptism has always been a problem to many Christian

churches. Some churches have claimed that if the church did not give baptism to a newborn baby he could not enter the kingdom of God. Even these days many heretic Christian churches ask, "Are you baptized?" If someone says, "no," they say, "You will go to hell. Come to our church to be baptized." But water baptism is, as I said before, a symbol of cleansing and a declaration that one is a Christian. Only Jesus gives us the baptism of the Holy Spirit so that our sinful inner desires may be replaced by the holy desires of God.

Still, the work of the Holy Spirit is not easy to understand. The Holy Spirit is our mother-like Counselor. The Holy Spirit is like the wind. We can feel the wind, but we cannot see it. John 3:8 says, "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." The Holy Spirit is like our one-to-one Bible teacher. The Holy Spirit gives us the peace of God. John 14:25-27 says, "All this I have spoken while still with you. But 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. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." In these verses, we learn that the fruits of the Holy Spirit are love, joy and peace.

Once there was an old man's sixtieth birthday. His birthday party was going on joyfully. But his oldest son felt that he was not honored as he had expected at his father's party. Then he made a big fuss at the

birthday party. He yelled at many people and disappeared. Because of this, his old father was greatly humiliated before many guests. But he did not say anything to his oldest son. Later, his younger son asked him, "Why did you not say anything to him? Shall I beat him up for you?" Then the father said, "Well, we cannot change him. Someday, when he comes to Jesus, the Holy Spirit will change him." After saying this, he was sobbing quietly. We cannot change anybody, even ourselves. But the Holy Spirit can transform us into children of God. One who baptizes with the Holy Spirit is the Messiah.

II. We have found the Messiah (35-51)

After John's witness to Jesus, saying, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" John's disciples perceived that Jesus is God's King, and Jesus is the Messiah. Historically, the Messiah meant to them everything. For example, the Messiah Jesus was the Savior to the Samaritan woman. The Messiah Jesus was a father to the tax collector. They thought that the Messiah would listen to them and bring them back to his glorious kingdom of God. When John's disciples heard the message, they began to follow Jesus, completely forgetting about John's presence.

Jesus saw them following (38). He said, "What do you want?" This question sounds easy to answer. But fallen men want so many things in the world that they do not know what they should want. But John's two disciples knew what they wanted. They said, "Rabbi, where are you staying?" They wanted to go where Jesus was and see about who he really

was.

Look at verse 39. "Come,' he replied, 'and you will see.'" Luke 9:58 says, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head." Anyway, Jesus invited them to come and see so that they may acknowledge something about Jesus himself. "So they went and saw where he was staying, and spent that day with him" (39). We don't know where they went or what they saw, because Jesus had no house. Anyway they saw the Messiah in Jesus.

Look at verse 40. "Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus." After meeting Jesus personally, Andrew was convinced that Jesus was the Messiah and the Savior of the world. Something great happened in Andrew's heart. And in Andrew's heart joy overflowed. He could not keep this to himself. So he first found his brother Simon and told him, "We have found the Messiah," (that is, the Christ). It was not easy to bring his brother to Jesus. But Andrew went first to his brother Simon and wit-

nessed that he found the Messiah. Andrew was known as a vague man in the gospel narratives. But he saw in Jesus the Messiah. What a great discovery he had made. He said, "We have found the Messiah." We are not sure if Peter was Andrew's younger brother or older brother. One who has no personal faith in Jesus cannot tell he is a child of God. Like Andrew, we must come to Jesus and see him until we can confess, "We have found the Messiah!" Next, Andrew brought Simon to Jesus. When Andrew brought his brother Simon to Jesus, Jesus did not pay attention

to Andrew anymore. But he was greatly interested in Peter and said, "You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas" (which meant a rock or Peter). At this time, Peter was full of fish smell and looked like the sailor in the movie, "Uncommon Valor." But Jesus saw in him the hope of God. When Jesus paid attention only to Peter, Andrew didn't complain, because he had the Messiah in his heart.

To Hebrew people, "the Messiah" meant "the Savior of the world." The Messiah is the one who saves men from their sins and from the hand of Satan. The Messiah was regarded as "everything to everybody." Jesus is the solution to our personal life problems. One woman had a life problem after her father ran away. She was a nominal Christian. But she did not come to Jesus with her life problem. As a result, she became like her father, who got upset for nothing, all her lifetime, and died when she was 45. These days political power and money seem to be everything. But these are all false messiahs, because they cannot save men from their sins. We must come to Jesus like Andrew and find the Messiah who saves us from our sins.

When Jesus saw Philip, he was leadership material. He was an intellectual person, and was a little selfish. He needed discipleship training. So Jesus said to him, "Follow me." Philip immediately followed him.

Then Philip found Nathanael and told him about Jesus on the basis of the Old Testament. "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote--Jesus of Nazareth, the son of

Joseph" (45). This verse clearly indicates that Jesus is the Messiah on the basis of the Bible. Nathanael was a scholarly man. He knew that the Messiah would be born in the town of David, so he said, "Can anything good come from there?" (46a) Then Philip simply said, "Come and see."

When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, "Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false." Nathanael wondered how Jesus could know him before meeting him. Jesus answered, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you." Then Nathanael, amazed at Jesus' transcendental knowledge, immediately made a confession of faith: "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel." His description of Jesus was the same as that of Andrew, "You are the Messiah!" In this way, one-to-one Bible study had spread. Read verses 50,51. These verses are a story about Jacob's dream about the angel of God in Genesis 28. Jesus said to Nathanael figuratively, in light of Jacob's dream, "If you believe in God, your spiritual eyes will be opened and you will see the spiritual things and the glorious kingdom of God."

In this passage we learn that John the Baptist made the confession of faith, "Look, the Lamb of God." Andrew said, "We have found the Messiah." May God help each of us come to Jesus and find the Messiah very personally.