

JESUS THE LAMB OF GOD

John 1:19-34
Key Verse: 1:29

Lesson 3

"The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, 'Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.'"

John the Baptist was the man sent by God to testify to Jesus the light of the world, so that all people might believe and have life. He did not preach in a fancy church building or in a stadium or amphitheater, but in the wilderness. In spite of this, all the people of Jerusalem and Judea went out to hear him, and many of them repented of their sins and were baptized by him. His popularity grew, and the religious authorities began to raise questions. They sent some men to question him.

1. The first inquirers (19-28)

The Jewish authorities (called "the Jews" in John's Gospel) sent some intern priests and Levites to John to check up on him. These men were not sincere truth seekers; they were like students who study in order to get a good grade. As soon as the exam is over, they promptly forget everything they learned. They were not open to learn from John. They just wanted answers to take back to those who sent them. (22)

They asked him two questions: First, "Who are you?" and, Second, "Why are you baptizing?" His answers seemed to be evasive. In answer to the first question, he told them clearly that he was not the Christ. His answers about his identity became shorter and shorter. Finally, he just said, "No." Then he taught them the Bible. He gave them the words of Isaiah, "I am the voice of one calling in the desert, 'Make straight the way for the Lord.'" He identified himself in terms of his mission, and his mission was from God. God had spoken through Isaiah the prophet many years before to announce the coming of the forerunner of the Messiah. John had come to fulfill that prophecy. His ministry was rooted in God's word and in God's redemptive history. He had come to prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah.

So they asked him the second question, "What right do you have to baptize?" John's answer is again seemingly evasive. He said, "I baptize with water." Then he told them about Jesus. If they had come back the next day, they could have found out why he was baptizing.

2. Jesus the Lamb of God (29-34)

John the Baptist had come for one purpose: To reveal Jesus the Messiah. He baptized in order to reveal to the people of Israel that Jesus is the Messiah. (1:31) John preached that all people should repent of their sins. Perhaps many Jews expected a Messiah like King David who would restore the nation of Israel and drive out the Roman conquerors. But John the Baptist announced that Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Israel's greatest enemy was not Rome. It was not poverty. Our greatest enemy is not Russia or the Columbian drug lords. It is not street gangs or those who aggressively attack Christianity. Our great enemy is sin. Sin enslaves us. Sin makes us despair. Sin makes us hate ourselves. It clouds and ruins our relations with other people-- even with the people we love.

John the Baptist announced that Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. How does Jesus do this? First, Jesus is the Lamb of God. This term comes from the Old Testament sacrificial system. This is a part of the Law which God gave Moses on Mount Sinai. The first part of the Law, which is summed up in the Ten Commandments, exposes and point out our sins. The Law lets us know that God is holy and that he expects us to be holy and righteous. But we aren't holy and righteous. We break his laws. Some, we break in ignorance; others, deliberately; some we break because we are weak. But because we obey our sinful desires instead of the holy God, we are sinners. The second part of the Law is about the way God opened for sinful people to come to him and be forgiven. In the Old Testament, it involved the tabernacle in the wilderness and the altar on which animals were sacrificed. This sacrificial system points to Jesus, the Lamb of God, who died on the cross to take away the sins of the world. I don't know how this can be, but God promised it, and when I come to Jesus and confess my sins and accept him as my Savior, I am forgiven and cleansed and set free from the power and guilt of sin. "My faith has found a resting place, not in device or creed. I trust the ever living one--for me his wounds shall plead. I have no other righteousness; I have no other plea. It is enough that Jesus died and that he died for me."

Second, Jesus baptizes with the Holy Spirit. John testified that when he baptized Jesus, the Holy Spirit came down on him like a dove and he was clearly identified as the Son of God. John said that while he, John, baptized with water, Jesus baptized with the Holy Spirit. Jesus died on the cross for our sins. He was raised from death on the third day, and he ascended into heaven. From heaven he poured out on us his Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit comes into the heart that has been cleansed by repentance and by faith in Jesus' blood. He is the one who changes us from worldly people into the children of God. He give us new, spiritual birth. He is our friend and counselor. He keeps us from ever being lonely again. He gives us power to live as God's children in a corrupt and dying world. He leads us throughout our earthly pilgrimage and leads us to the heavenly kingdom. As we make this pilgrimage, he works in us to mold us little by little into

the image of Jesus. He is working to restore the broken image of God in us. He enables us to testify with John, "Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world."