

John 1:29

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 29 July 2012

Preacher: Mr Ian Murdo Macleod

[0 : 01] Return with me again to John's Gospel and chapter 1, page 1069. I'd like us to consider, just bearing in mind our reading in the Old Testament, just to consider these words that we have in verse 29.

The next day, he saw Jesus coming towards him and said, Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

In this chapter in John, we read the full chapter. We have two of the most significant sayings that we have in the whole of the Bible. In verse 14 of this chapter, which is earlier than what we read, John tells us that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

And then we have these great words of our text here in verse 29, where John the Baptist proclaims as he sees Jesus coming, Behold, he sees the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. And I want to concentrate especially on the importance, the significance of that name that is given to Jesus, Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

[1 : 31] And the Old Testament and right through the New Testament, Genesis through to Revelation, we have the significance, the importance of the Lamb recorded for us by God himself.

John the Baptist here, he was chosen by God to prepare the way for Jesus, for Jesus to begin his public ministry, which lasted three years on this earth.

The first we read of John the Baptist is that he just appeared in the wilderness. He had been, we believe, been prepared by the Lord for this ministry. He appeared in the wilderness, in the desert, and he began preaching to the Jews around about him of their need to repent of their sins and to be baptized by faith, to return or to turn back to God.

So he's primarily preparing the way for the people and for the world in general for the entrance of Jesus. He's heralding the public entrance of Jesus, the beginning of Jesus' public ministry on this earth.

And the need we have for the world we have for the ministry, for the way that he has opened up this marvelous way of salvation, is because we as human beings, we're confronted by sin and by evil in so many ways, and it's in us.

[3 : 03] We are all born as sinners into this world. And I fear at times that this sin that is forever around us, that we begin to categorize this sin and perhaps think that some sins aren't as bad as other sins, that there are greater sins and smaller sins, and maybe the smaller ones are okay and it doesn't really matter too much about it.

But the word's very clear that all sin is an abomination to God. No matter what we might think about it or how we might categorize it, all sin is an abomination to God, and God cannot even look at sin. A holy God, his word tells us very clearly, he cannot look at sin, he cannot excuse sin in any way at all. And God cannot ignore the rebellious nature of humanity since the fall.

The fall itself was, of course, a great act of rebellion. And rebellion it is that is within each one of us. We're born into this world as rebels.

We're born into this world as sinners. And when Adam sinned, that's our representative, it just didn't concern himself, but it concerned the whole of the human race.

[4 : 26] When they sinned against God, they immediately, he and Eve, became sinful human beings. They lost everything. They lost their righteousness. They lost their holiness. They lost their purity.

They lost their innocence. And there was no going back on that whatsoever. God had no choice but to expel Adam and Eve out of the garden and down into the darkness of this sinful world, where we find ourselves banished from his presence.

They immediately became enemies of God. They were under his wrath and his curse. They were plunged into spiritual darkness. And the result of that action, of the action of Adam, is attributed to every single human being that is born into this world.

The Bible tells us that there are none righteous. There are not even one born into this world. There was no human initiative or resource that could open up that way back into Eden for Adam and Eve or for the whole of mankind or back into God's presence.

And something had to be done for there to be any possibility of reconciliation between God and human beings.

[5 : 47] And in his time, God sent the promised Messiah, Jesus Christ. And here we have John the Baptist heralding him here that this is the Jesus.

This is the chosen, the promised one. This, he is the one who shall fulfill every covenant promise made through Abraham and right through the whole of the Old Testament to the time we have here. He will fulfill it. This is God's mission, a rescue mission for humanity, for people just like you and me. And when John the Baptist saw Jesus on that memorable morning, the word tells us that he was gazing steadfastly upon him before he made that great statement.

And then he said to the other round about him, as he gazed at him, he said, behold, the Lamb of God. And these words, behold, they have a very special meaning.

And what it is, is that there's a definite note of a steady looking, in admiration, in awe, in wonder, at this person who is coming towards us.

[7 : 11] Just as we sang there in Psalm 27, that we would behold the beauty of the Lord. And that we would do it in the face of Jesus Christ, even this day itself.

And John the Baptist is saying to us, behold, he says, this is the Lamb of God. Look at him and fix your gaze upon him. He is the chosen one, the promised one, who is to come into this world.

And John does something else there as well. What he's doing is he had his own disciples, his own people, his own close fellowship who would follow him.

And as he gazes at the Lord here and as he speaks these marvelous words, he's also telling his own disciples, don't follow me any longer. Follow Jesus. Because it's all about Jesus.

And he is the chosen Messiah. And this looking, this gazing, and the way it's put before us here, to behold.

[8 : 13] This is a term used in scripture that really emphasizes faith. Faith, and that faith, is in Jesus Christ. Believing that he is a Christ.

And having a real solid and abiding confidence in him. And in him alone, that he will take you through your life. He will lead you and guide you through every single aspect of your life.

If you will believe that he is able and willing to save you. And trusting that he will do exactly that if you come to him by faith.

That's his promise. Take your eyes off everything and everyone else. And behold the beauty of the Lord in the Lamb of God.

In the Lamb of God. How did John the Baptist know that this was the Lamb of God? This was the chosen one.

[9 : 18] Why did he call Jesus by that name? Well, the word tells us here, and it's important we understand this. That it was revealed to him. When he saw the Spirit of God descending upon Jesus.

And remaining upon Jesus. That's what's important. That it remained upon him. The fact that the Spirit of God remained upon Jesus. And that's a contrast in many ways to what we have in the Old Testament.

And we find in these periods that there were times in the Old Testament when the Spirit of God came and descended upon particular individuals.

And if you know the Bible through the book of Judges. Then you'll know that the Spirit of God would come down upon these judges. Judges who were chosen by God to lead the people back to him. Because the children of Israel would quite essentially have gone away from the Lord and rebelled against the Lord. And God chose particular individuals. Men and women judges. And the Spirit of God would come down upon them.

[10 : 25] That they would lead the people back to God. And then when they had done so. It was a temporary coming down of the Spirit. Then the Spirit would arise from them as well. And Saul, we're told, that the Spirit came down upon him in a temporary measure as well.

As with Samson and people like that. But here the significance is that the Spirit of God came down upon Jesus and remained upon him. That was revealed to John the Baptist by the Lord himself. He on whom the Spirit descends and remains upon him. He is the chosen one. And here we have it. And it is recorded for us in the Word. Recorded by John the Baptist.

Recorded by John. Eyewitnesses of all that occurred there on that day. Jesus. He's the sacrificial lamb on the cross. And that is the very heart of the Gospel.

And that was revealed to John the Baptist. And John the Baptist's understanding of his scriptures he would have had available. Of quite a lot of the Old Testament scriptures at that time.

[11 : 33] This would have helped him to understand some of these occurrences in the Old Testament. Not least, I believe, that portion that we read from Genesis chapter 22 where Abraham's faith was tested.

There's a very clear link there with that. That Genesis 22. That that foreshadows Jesus, the Lamb of God, opening up the way of salvation.

There we have a father, Abraham, who was asked to put his own son, his only son's life at stake. Abraham was asked to sacrifice the son that he loved. The son through whom many of the promises made by God to him would be fulfilled.

And as I know our thoughts straight back into the New Testament as well. And to John chapter 3, 16. God so loves this world. So loves you and I that he gave his only begotten son.

[12 : 36] That whoever will believe in him should not perish but have eternal life. Abraham, he was told to take his only son with him.

Along with the wood and the center of fire and the knife. Father and son, we see there in Genesis chapter 2. Father and son, they move together.

They move together to the appointed place of that sacrifice on Mount Moriah. Just as Isaac had to carry the wood for his sacrifice up the mountain.

The New Testament tells us that Jesus went forth bearing his cross. God was in Christ there reconciling the world to himself.

And there we see father and son move together at Calvary for your salvation and for mine. And God was bringing Abraham at that time to a new place of obedience.

[13 : 42] He was teaching Abraham as well as testing him. He was bringing Abraham to a point, we believe, where he would see the day of Christ very clearly.

That God would reveal that to him. But he had to go through this trial, this very real trial, to have the understanding of that. God was bringing Abraham to that place where he had to trust God implicitly with everything.

Even his own only beloved son. And then the question you recall from that passage that we read. Remember that question that came to Isaac's lips? He said, I see the fire and the wood. But where is the lamb for a burnt offering?

Where is the lamb for a burnt offering? And we need to note the source of the lamb there as well. God himself provided it. Ultimately.

[14 : 57] And the reason for that is because you and I, it doesn't matter what we think. It doesn't matter how we think we might be able to work our way into God's favor. It doesn't matter what good things we think we might be able to do.

It doesn't matter how we think of ourselves, where we think we're a good person. It doesn't matter what we think of how God thinks of us. We're sinners. And God himself had to provide the way because we are totally unable to effect our own salvation in any way, shape or form.

We can't do anything to save ourselves. It is all of God. And it requires us to cry out to God for mercy. And I believe that in Jesus, on that day when he made that proclamation, Behold the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

I believe at that time that John the Baptist saw the answer to Isaac's question that day, Where is the lamb? Where is the lamb?

The lamb on Mount Moriah was a very clear symbol of the lamb that would be slain for sin.

[16 : 20] And that's why Christ came. And that's why he endured it all on the cross. John the Baptist's words, Behold the lamb of God. They contain the very essence of the gospel.

And this is how sinners like you and I are sealed. Because God has provided a sacrificial substitute in his son. His own son.

His only begotten son. We're told through the Old Testament of different accounts of the hour of the lamb being significant.

In Exodus chapter 12, the Passover in Egypt is with the blood of an unblemished lamb that the people are asked there to put the blood over the lintels and the doorposts of the places they were staying so that the angel of death would pass over, would pass by them and would not affect them. And therefore their lives were secured. In Leviticus, we're told, and it carries on through the Old Testament, of this sacrificial system that God put in place in the Old Testament and how important it was for this to repair the relationship between human beings and God himself that albeit on a temporary basis and had to be ongoing through all of that time that God put the sacrificial system in place, Old Testament, animal sacrifices, each one, the lambs, whatever they were, they had to be free from any blemish.

[18 : 03] And they were symbolic. Each one of them of that great New Testament sacrifice, Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, sinless, without any blemish. Our sin was imputed to him, attributed to him.

He took upon himself our sin, which effectively constituted the sin of the world, that whoever will believe in him shall indeed be saved. When Christ was before his accusers, he didn't speak a word, but didn't the silence of the Lamb of God at that time speak volumes?

And it still does today. He took our sin, he took our guilt to the cross, and he was judged on that account.

And it was that and only that that satisfied the divine justice God required for sin. And I don't think any human words can put it better than Isaiah did in his prophecy over 800 years before the time of the Lord.

Let me just read from chapter 53, some words. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. And yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted.

[19 : 28] But he was wounded for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. And upon him was a chastisement that brought us peace. And with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray.

We have turned every one to his own way. And the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and he was afflicted. Yet he opened not his mouth like a lamb that is led to the slaughter and like a sheep that before its cherisher is silent.

So he opened not his mouth. Therein lies the awesome love of God working on your behalf and on my behalf.

That old dispensation, that old covenant, it carried on right through to the Passover day when Christ was crucified. And it's interesting how this is recorded for us as well in the scriptures.

In fact, it's meticulously recorded for us by John in this gospel. John was obviously conscious of the momentous nature of the events that were taking place in Jesus' trial and through on to his crucifixion.

[20 : 45] And we're told, he tells us, it was the sixth hour. It was noon. And it was preparation day. And it was the exact moment that the Passover lambs would have been slaughtered.

And that's how John the Baptist would have understood this teaching as well, how John the gospel writer understood this teaching. Tying in the lamb of the Old Testament, all these lambs from the sacrificial system with the lamb of God.

And John, the gospel writer, he realized it. And God led him to record it for us. And when we think of the death of Christ on the cross, how he has taken away the sin of the world, we think of the momentous nature of his ministry on this earth, we think of his obedience through to Calvary, we think of what he suffered in Gethsemane, even to the point of sweating, as it were, great drops of blood.

We think of his accusers who couldn't find anything wrong with him and had to resort to lies itself, that he would be eventually put to death and put to that cross.

When we think of his suffering, his physical suffering, all the torture, the beatings, everything he took, when we think of the pain he endured, being hung up on that cross, crucified.

[22 : 12] When we think of his spiritual sufferings, we believe in that three hours of darkness, where he endured hell itself, so that you and I wouldn't have to endure it. That's the significance of the lamb of God.

That's the significance of this lamb who endured it all at Calvary. That's why it's so important that we understand the nature of the lamb himself.

And we'll look at the triumphant, rising from the dead of this lamb and ascending to glory. And what we're asked is to believe in these things, to believe that Jesus has carried out this in your behalf and that it has pleased God.

And that this way of salvation is now opened up, where Jesus himself tells us in this gospel, recorded again by John, he says, I am the way and the truth and the life. There is no other way to the Father, because no one, he says, can come to the Father except through me, by believing in me and trusting in me implicitly.

This death of Christ is a New Testament sacrifice and a perfect sacrifice that covers all, a sacrifice that is covered in the love of God towards mankind.

[23 : 41] And finally and briefly, I think we should take note of the significance of the lamb and glory as the word records it for us as well. That it's not just the New Testament, not just the Old Testament and for a little bit of the New Testament.

This goes right through to Revelation. This final book of the Bible emphasizes that same theme. In chapter 5 of Revelation, we're told, John saw this enormous crowd of people, vast beyond any human comprehension, could not be numbered in any way.

And these people, they were gathered from the four corners of the earth. The people, they were all dressed in white, they were all standing around heaven's throne.

And they were waving palm branches and praising God, but who were they, we might ask. And the question was asked, who are these? Who are these people?

They're clothed in white robes. Where have they come from? The answer was given, sir, you know, these are the ones who have come through great tribulation.

[25 : 22] And they've washed their robes, and they've made them white in the blood of the lamb. In a word, what John saw there was all of God's beloved people, and the lamb in the center.

And glory, God's people will be led and fed by the lamb who is in the midst of the throne, forever to be with the Lord.

I'd like just to do one reading in conclusion. And again, it's from the book of Revelation. And I'd like to read from chapter 21. I think this is very significant for us.

And it's close enough, the book of Revelation, close enough, God's word, God's revealed will to us. What God has promised for all of his people.

Revelation 21 and verse 22. And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb.

[26 : 36] And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. But by its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it.

And its gates will never be shut by day, and there will be no night there. They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations, but nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

See, the Lamb is there from, throughout the whole of God's word. And that is why John the Baptist's great proclamation that day is so significant.

Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. You're asked to trust Jesus to take you through this journey of life and death and eternity.

And he has given himself so that we might live. That's what he's done for you and me. And may it be today that each one of us will be given to behold this Lamb of God in a new way, in a way that meets and fulfills your every need and your every expectation of your soul.

[28 : 13] May God bless our thoughts. Let's pray. Father, we bless you for the preciousness of your word.

We bless you how your people lean on it more and more as they go on in this life. We bless you for the foundation of it. We bless you for the giving of your son at Calvary.

We bless you, O Lord, for the Lamb of God who has taken away the sin of the world. May it be today that your people will be strengthened.

May it be today that your name will be glorified. That men and women and boys and girls here will be drawn towards the Lamb to grasp hold of this Lamb by faith in that sure knowledge that where they come by faith, giving themselves by faith, that he shall never, ever let them go.

Bless our thoughts together. Part us with your blessing. May each one of us be able to say here today that it was good for us to be together and to be especially around the word of God.
[29 : 24] Forgive us since then and Christ.