

# Behold The Lamb Of God

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[ 0 : 00 ] Please open your Bibles this morning to the Gospel according to John. We finished John's prologue last week, verses 1-18, so this morning we are officially jumping into the narrative section of this book.

And so turn there to John chapter 1, we're going to read this morning from verse 19 through verse 34. John chapter 1, verses 19 through 34.

And if you're using the pew Bibles there in front of you, you can find this passage on page 833. We invite you and encourage you to have a Bible open. So we're going to be on John chapter 1, verses 19 through 34 this morning.

Please follow with me as I read. And this is the testimony of John. When the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who are you?

He confessed and did not deny, but confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then? Are you Elijah? He said, I am not.

[ 1 : 08 ] Are you the prophet? And he answered, No. So they said to him, Who are you? We need to give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?

He said, I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness. Make straight the way of the Lord, as the prophet Isaiah said.

Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. They asked him, Then why are you baptizing, if you are neither the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?

John answered them, I baptize with water, But among you stands one you do not know, even he who comes after me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie.

These things took place in Bethany, across the Jordan, where John was baptizing. The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him and said, Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.

[ 2 : 09 ] This is he of whom I said, After me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was before me. I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel.

And John bore witness. I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water, said to me, He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.

And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God. This is God's holy, perfect, true, and inspired word.

Let's bow and pray once more. Father, we simply ask again that as we open up your word, that you would do a miracle here. That we wouldn't just hear it as information, but by the power of your Spirit, would it transform us as we hear and receive your word.

We pray in Christ's name. Amen. If imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, then John the Baptist has got to be one of the least flattered figures in the Bible.

[ 3 : 31 ] We sing David's songs, and we pray his words from the Psalms. David wrote a large portion of the Old Testament. We simply don't have that same wealth of information from John the Baptist.

Just a handful of verses in comparison. Plenty of people want to live in big, fancy houses like Solomon. I don't hear many people wanting to live out in the wilderness like John.

People love to talk about Joseph and his coat of many colors. As I look around, I don't see anybody wearing camel's hair like John the Baptist did. And I've heard of plenty of people following the Daniel diet, but I don't know of a single person who has ever followed the John the Baptist diet of locusts and wild honey.

That might not be what we want to imitate from the life of John. But despite his lack of press, John the Baptist is one of the most significant figures in human history.

In fact, R.C. Sproul, he observes that secular historians from the first century, they wrote more words, they gave more attention to John the Baptist than they did to Jesus himself.

[ 4 : 45 ] He was that unbelievably significant. And no, it's not primarily because of his clothes or his lodging or his diet. It was because of his witness.

John the Apostle, he first introduced us to John the Baptist up in verse 6. And here's what we said. You may remember this from several weeks ago. We said that we cannot imitate John's unique position, but we can imitate his posture and his proclamation.

I wonder if you remember that. We cannot imitate John's unique position. He was one of a kind, one of one, utterly unique. But we can and we must imitate his posture and his proclamation.

If you are a Christian, then you are, like it or not, a witness to the glory of God in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Our passage this morning, as we look to who John the Baptist is, how he acted, what he said, our passage this morning, it gives us two keys to that witness.

[ 5 : 58 ] If you're taking notes, this is going to be our outline this morning. We're going to see two keys for our witness to Christ, our posture and our proclamation.

First, what is our posture as witnesses to Christ? Look there to verse 19 with me. It says, and this is the testimony of John.

Let's stop there because that might not sound like much, but this was an unbelievably, unbelievably significant moment in God's story of redemption. The Old Testament, it had concluded with Malachi's prophecy and then for 400 years, God was silent.

There was no vision. There were no prophecies. There was no prophets. God did not speak. It was utter silence from God for 400 years until a prophet comes out of the wilderness and begins to testify.

Apparently, John was causing a little bit of a scene. People from all over were coming to him, listening to his message and as we see in the Gospel of Matthew, he was preaching a message of repentance.

[ 7 : 15 ] Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. His message was, turn from your sin.

Repent. The king is coming. He's on his way. You had better prepare yourselves.

He is near. And as a way of demonstrating that repentance, we see that he was baptizing there in the water. Now, this is not quite the same as our baptism today.

We baptize in a hot tub. But not only that, we baptize believers in Christ. We demonstrate externally, visibly, the internal transformation that has happened by the power of the Holy Spirit when God saves someone and they come to faith in Christ.

This was not that. John's baptism, this was something called proselyte baptism. Proselyte baptism had arisen during that 400 years between the two testaments.

And it was traditionally only for Gentiles who converted to Judaism. And they were considered unclean. And so they needed to be washed. They needed to be cleansed.

[ 8 : 24 ] And actually, the convert would baptize himself. He would wash himself, clean himself up, have to wash away his uncleanness before joining the Jewish community.

But here comes John, out of the wilderness, preaching a message of repentance, not just for the Gentiles, but for the Jews as well.

Not just for the Gentiles who didn't know the Lord, but for Israel. He came saying that the kingdom of God is near and they are not ready. They need to repent.

And on top of that, people are coming to him and he is the one doing the baptism. He's administering baptism to all of these people. So naturally, the religious leaders were curious.

What in the world is this guy doing? Who does he think he is? And that's exactly what they asked him there in verse 19. It says, The Jews sent priests and Levites, some of their religious experts from Jerusalem, to ask him, Who are you?

[ 9 : 31 ] And here's where we begin to see the posture of John. In the strongest terms possible, he confessed and did not deny, but confessed, I am not the Christ.

See, he didn't even begin to tell them who he was. He told them who he was not. Don't look at me. Don't worry about me. I'm not him. Look to him. I'm just here to pave the way for him.

So they moved on to the next option. Well, what then? Are you Elijah? Elijah the prophet famously did not die. He was taken up to be with the Lord, and so it was believed that Elijah himself physically, literally, would return in the future.

And in fact, Malachi, the last prophet of the Old Testament, it concludes with this prophecy that I will send Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes.

So John here, he says, no, I'm not Elijah, and technically he's correct. No, he's John. He's not Elijah. But Jesus, in Matthew 11, he tells us that John is in fact the fulfillment of this prophecy.

[10:45] He is Elijah who is to come. So they're down to one more option. Are you the prophet? If they had said, are you a prophet?

Maybe John would have said, yes, I am, but they didn't say that. They said, are you the prophet? They're referring to the prophecy of Deuteronomy 18.

God had told Moses in Deuteronomy 18, I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers, and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.

They were looking for this particular prophet to come. And of course, that is a prophecy fulfilled in Christ. So again, John says, no, that's not me.

I am not him. So they're finally out of options, and they give John a turn to speak and say, well, then who are you? We need to give an answer to those who sent us.

[11:44] What do you say about yourself? And John tells them, referencing Isaiah 40, verse 3, which we read this morning, I am the voice.

Not the word, the voice. Not the word, but a witness. I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, make straight the way of the Lord, as the prophet Isaiah had said.

See, John knew his role. It was not to attract glory, or fame, or attention to himself. It was to prepare the way of the Lord.

His role was to clear the way, to make the path straight. The King is coming. When I was in college, I lived in a house with three other college guys, and if you came to our house, you would notice that it was inhabited by four college guys living there.

It was an absolute mess. And every now and then, we would get a message, a warning. The landlord is coming. He's on his way.

[12:57] He will be there soon. How do you think we responded? It was a whirlwind. We hopped up into a whirlwind of cleaning. The dishes were done. Clothes were thrown into the closet.

Floors were cleaned. We prepped ourselves for his arrival. Well, John says, in that same way, the King is coming. Don't look at me.

I'm just the messenger. Listen to the message. The message is urgent. You need to repent and prepare yourself for the coming of the King. Get your affairs in order.

The King is on his way. Now, I'd like to have thought that that would have satisfied me, but they had another question. It was probably the one that bothered them the most.

Look what they said. Then why are you baptizing? If you're neither the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the prophet, what are you doing?

[13:52] And John's little addition there in verse 24, I think, says it all. My Bible has it there in parentheses. If you look there, maybe yours does as well. He gives a little aside and says, now they had been sent from the Pharisees.

This is the first appearance of the Pharisees in the Gospel of John, but as you know, it will not be the last. This is the beginning of some tension that will build throughout this book and of course will culminate in the death of Christ.

The Pharisees were not all bad. I want to give them some credit. I want to be clear about that. Some Pharisees wound up following Jesus. They believed in Him, but many did not.

The Pharisees were the religious elite of the day. They held the law of God in high esteem on one hand, but we see that they also tended to hold their own tradition in high esteem as well.

And they had a hard time reconciling or understanding or accepting anyone who would go and teach contrary to what they said, to what their tradition was.

[15:01] And again, we should note here that there is no Old Testament command or instruction about baptizing a convert to Judaism. That had developed as tradition, Jewish tradition, in that intertestamental period.

Traditions are great, but scripture is better. And sometimes, I think we tend to get that priority lopsided. Traditions are wonderful, but scripture is better.

And again, I love how John responds here. Look what he says. He doesn't respond how I might have responded to that. He doesn't even give them a straight answer.

He could have said, don't you realize that I am a prophet? Which means that I carry the same weight of authority as all the prophets of the Old Testament.

And so, if I come saying that we need to repent and be baptized, that's the word of God telling you, lay aside your tradition and accept this new word from the Lord.

[16:08] You need to be baptized. Come wash yourself. You are unclean. When God says the Messiah is coming and you are not ready, it's time to toss your traditions aside and listen to the voice of God.

But he doesn't say that. What does he say? Look there to verse 26. He says, I baptize with water, but among you stands one you do not know.

Even he who comes after me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie. He again lowers himself and he elevates Christ.

That was John's posture. When someone became a disciple of a rabbi, they came under the teaching of a rabbi, they would do all sorts of things for him, almost to the level of being a bondservant.

It was much more than just listening and taking notes and following along with their teaching. When someone became a disciple, this was an all-of-life commitment to service, to the mission and the teaching of the rabbi.

[17:23] So they would take care of all sorts of arrangements. They took care of everything from food to lodging to carrying their belongings, all sorts of things. But one thing they did not do was handle the rabbi's shoes.

They didn't do that. That one task was reserved for the bondservants, for the lowest of the low. But John says, for this man, go even lower than that.

I'm not even worthy to untie the strap of his sandal. Church, I think we could learn something from the posture of John the Baptist.

Don't you? If you want to be great, make yourself less than a servant.

Go lower. Matthew and Mark, we talked about this in Sunday school. I love when Treg preaches my sermon before I come in here. I really do.

[18:34] It primes the pump. Matthew and Mark, they both tell the story of how James and his brother John, the John, the John who wrote this book, John the Apostle, who were reading this gospel, how they pursued greatness.

They came up to Jesus and they asked that it be granted to them to sit one at his right hand, one at his left hand in glory. That's a bold request. They wanted to be great.

You know, John just happens to leave that story out of his gospel. You notice that? And it says, when the other ten disciples heard of it, they were angry at them. Not because that was such a foolish request, but because they wanted to be great.

They didn't want to be beaten to the punch. And Jesus hears all of this and he says, listen, y'all need to come over here, sit down, I need to tell you something. Listen to me. He says, you know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them and their great ones exercise authority over them, but it shall not be so among you.

But whoever would be great among you must be your servant. And whoever would be first among you must be slave of all.

[19:54] For even the son of man came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

See, that's how Jesus viewed greatness. No wonder he says in Matthew chapter 11 that among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist.

Not David, not Joseph, not Abraham, not Isaac, not Jacob. No one is greater than John the Baptist. Do you want to be great in the kingdom of God? John, lower yourself. Humble yourself. Stop making it about you become a servant.

Imitate the posture of John. Take this posture of a humble servant, unworthy even to be a bondservant of Jesus Christ.

[20:58] Could you imagine? what would your life look like if it wasn't all about you, but it was about the glory of Jesus Christ?

What would that do for the dynamic of your relationships? If the goal of your relationships was to humble yourself and serve that those other people might know the glory of Christ Jesus, what would that do for your marriage?

if you put yourself aside to serve that they might know Christ more, what would it do for this church? What would this church look like?

If you can imagine this, if there was no task that was beneath us, if we would jump to serve whether people saw us or not, whether people gave us credit or not, whether the only person who saw what you did was the master himself.

And I do want to commend you, Siwe Bay, because there are many humble servants in this church. I think this is one of our strengths.

[ 22 : 06 ] But I want to challenge you. Go lower. We can go lower. The world knows all about climbing the ladder to greatness.

What would it look like to bring someone into this place and have them see a family of servants who say, don't look at us. We're nothing. Look to Christ.

Church, this humble posture of our lives will give weight to the proclamation of our lips. We need both.

I'm going to say that again. The humble posture of our lives will give weight to the proclamation of our lips. That's the second key to our witness to Christ.

Our second point this morning. Second, we see our proclamation as witnesses of Christ. Our proclamation. Now, we talk a lot about evangelism.

[ 23 : 09 ] That's one of our three key aspects of our philosophy of ministry. We want to enjoy God. We want to equip the saints and we want to evangelize the lost.

That means sharing the gospel. That requires us to proclaim something. But talking with many of you, I know that sometimes you get to that point and you aren't even really sure exactly what to say. I want to let John help us out here this morning. You can remember this with three S's. Three parts to John's proclamation and his testimony here.

Three S's. Substitute, Spirit, Spirit, Son. If you want to know who Jesus is, John tells us here that he is the sacrificial substitute, he is the Spirit-filled Spirit-giver, and he is the Son of God.

First S. And Jesus is the sacrificial substitute. Look there to verse 29. Verse 29. He says, The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

[ 24 : 27 ] This is he of whom I said, After me comes a man who ranks before me because he was before me. Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

What does he mean when he calls Jesus the Lamb of God? John is no doubt as he's done so many times already through this first chapter, time and time and time and time again, he's drawing us back again towards the Old Testament scriptures.

And he's showing us how Jesus is the fulfillment of everything the Old Testament was looking forward to. So here calling Jesus the Lamb of God, he's specifically referencing all the Old Testament language that dealt with sacrifice.

Abraham brought Isaac up to the mountain, prepared to sacrifice his son in obedience to the Lord, and what happened? The Lord himself provided a sacrifice, a ram, caught in the bush.

In Exodus, God told the Israelites in Egypt to put the blood of the Lamb on the doorpost of their home, and those who were covered by the blood of the Lamb were spared.

[ 25 : 46 ] Those who were not suffered the wrath of God. At the Passover, the Lamb without blemish was to be offered to the Lord as a sacrifice.

It was a substitute to bear the wrath of God and cover the sins of the people. And of course, we know Isaiah chapter 53, one of the clearest and most beautiful passages, of Scripture pointing us forward towards the sacrifice of Christ, written 700 years before Jesus ever stepped foot on the earth.

He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth. Like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.

all of this is language of sin and sacrifice and substitution.

If you want to understand who Jesus is and what he came to do, we need to remember these three words. In my place. In my place.

[ 27 : 02 ] That's what substitute means, isn't it? There's something happening in my place. Jesus Christ, if we want to understand who he is, what he's done, we need to know he lived perfectly in my place.

That he died in my place. That he bore the wrath of God for my sin. In my place. That he rose up from the grave, defeating sin, defeating death, defeating the enemy.

in my place. Listen, we cannot understand who Jesus is apart from understanding that it was in my place.

As a sacrifice and a substitute. You all know the hymn, What Can Wash Away My Sin? Y'all can do better than that.

What can make me whole again is nothing but the blood of Jesus. I read an article this week about the origin of that hymn.

[ 28 : 12 ] That's one of my favorite hymns. Robert Lowry, he wrote that song in 1876. He introduced it at the Ocean Grove Campsite in New Jersey. And revival broke out.

The following summer, over 710,000 train tickets were sold. Christians from all over were making the journey to Ocean Grove to gather and to worship and to sing about the blood of Jesus that covers their sin.

Nothing can for sin atone. Nothing but the blood of Jesus. Not of good that I have done. Nothing but the blood of Jesus. But then I got to the end of the article and I saw something that really bothered me.

It said, singing about the blood of Jesus may offend the sensibilities of many 21st century singers and as a result causes them to reject any hymn that mentions blood.

I'm sorry if your 21st century sensibilities are offended by talking so much about blood. But God is offended by your sin.

[ 29 : 31 ] And without the shedding of blood, there is no remission for sins. Unless Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, is slain for you, unless His blood covers you, you will bear the wrath of God for your sin.

Wouldn't you like a substitute to step in to your place? John says that is what Christ has done.

This is not a side issue of Christianity, church. This is at the very heart of the gospel. We don't need a Christ who's just a good example. We need a Lamb of God who will die in our place and cover us with His blood.

Not only that. John says He is also the Spirit filled, Spirit giver. Verse 33 tells us that God had revealed to John previously, we don't have that conversation here, but He had revealed to John previously that He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain.

This is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. This was how God planned to visibly and powerfully affirm the unique Spirit filled ministry of the Messiah.

[ 31 : 04 ] Again, throughout the Old Testament, the Spirit of God would come on to people, come upon people, empower them for a time, but it did not remain. It would come and it would go, it was in and it was out, it was temporary.

But again, because Jesus is who He is, because He is God Himself in the flesh, God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, He is one with the Spirit.

He is Spirit filled in a way that no one before Him ever was. the Spirit, it doesn't just come and go from Jesus, it descends on Him and it remains.

But John says one step further, the Spirit doesn't remain and stay there. John says this Spirit filled Messiah baptizes with the Holy Spirit.

He gives the Holy Spirit to all who come to Him in faith. See, John's baptism was temporary, it was external, it was a sign of cleansing and repentance, it washed the body.

[ 32 : 18 ] But the baptism that Jesus gives, John says, to all who know Him in faith, is permanent, internal, total, complete cleansing and renewal by the power of the Holy Spirit.

John says, I baptize with water. He baptizes with the Spirit. This is what Ezekiel promised in Ezekiel chapter 36, what we call the new covenant.

He says, I will give you a new heart and a new spirit I will put within you. Now I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh and I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes and to be careful to obey my rules.

I have been asked before whether or not I believe in baptism of the Holy Spirit. And I say, absolutely. But then I have to clarify because that doctrine has been so confused and twisted and

turned that we have to understand exactly what that means.

So let me be clear. Baptism with the Holy Spirit is not for a select few Christians out of all of the church. It's not a second later event sometime after your conversion as if you get some spirit now and then you might level up later as you get holier and more serious in your faith.

[ 33 : 54 ] No, this is for everyone in Christ. Everyone in Christ, everyone who belongs to Christ has the Spirit of God in them in full.

Now our experience of that Spirit, our walking with Him, our dependence upon Him can ebb and flow with the trajectory of our life and our dependence upon Him, but it's not a question of whether you have the Spirit.

If you are in Christ, you have the Spirit. This is what Paul says in Romans chapter 8. If you want to know what a gift you've been given in the Holy Spirit, go home this afternoon and read Romans chapter 8.

I can't read it all right this minute, but I'll summarize it for you. This is what he says. You, however, talking to believers, are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit.

Two types of people in the world, two types of people in this room. There are flesh people, there are spirit people. He says, you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you.

[ 35 : 09 ] Listen to this. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. He says, I'm summarizing here, he says, the Spirit, he sets us free from condemnation and guilt.

The Spirit wages war against the flesh. The Spirit puts to death the deeds of the body. The Spirit renews our minds. The Spirit leads us in holiness.

The Spirit leads us to delight in the Lord. The Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are sons of God. The Spirit helps us in our weakness. The Spirit prays on our behalf when we don't know how to pray or what to pray.

The Spirit himself intercedes for us according to the will of God. The Spirit gifts us for ministry. The Spirit convicts us of sin. The Spirit bears the fruit of godliness in our lives.

The Spirit stirs up love for Christ in us. And we think we can live the Christian life according to the flesh. Church, the Christian life is impossible apart from his Spirit.

[ 36 : 17 ] And John says, come to Christ. All I can do is clean you with water, but Christ will baptize you with the Holy Spirit. This Jesus is a substitutionary sacrifice.

He is the Spirit-filled Spirit-giver. Who else can he be but the Son of God? This is how John concludes his testimony.

Here in verse 34, he says, I have seen and borne witness that this is the Son of God. We're told in Matthew 3 that when Jesus was baptized, he went down into the water and as he came up out of the water after 400 years of silence, everyone there heard the voice of God.

This is one of only three times in the New Testament that God speaks audibly for everybody to hear. It's at the baptism of Christ, this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.

It's at his transfiguration of Christ, this is my beloved Son, listen to him. And it's in the final week of Jesus' earthly life, I have glorified your name and I will do it again.

[ 37 : 43 ] What do you think God wants us to hear? All three times, he points our attention to the glory of Jesus as the Christ, the only Son of God.

He wants us, he wants you to listen to him, to believe in him, to trust him, to love him, to share him, to behold him.

That's exactly what John calls us to do. How do we respond to a man like this?

With the eyes of spiritual sight by the power of the Holy Spirit Church, we must behold him. Behold the Lamb of God.

Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. But please don't be content to just hear this and understand in your mind who Jesus is.

[ 39 : 02 ] You must behold him by faith in your heart. Apply the gospel to yourself. church. To know that everything he did, he did on your behalf.

Know that Christ Jesus came to take away the sin of the world, but trust that Christ came to take my sin. Jesus came to take away the sin of Jonathan love and have been To be forgiven in my place.

Know that Christ is the spirit-filled spirit giver. But look to him. Come to him. Behold him. Depend on him daily. Abide in him.

Walk in him. Walk in the power of the Holy Spirit at work in you. Sanctifying. Purifying. Convicting. Leading you. Christ in us.

The hope of glory. And know. Know that Christ is the beloved son of God. But behold him by faith and rejoice. To all who received him.

[ 40 : 25 ] He gave the right. To become children of God. And by his grace you. Are a son. And a daughter.

Of Christ. Son and daughter of God. God. Good news like this. Church should. Humble us. And it should compel us.

To lower ourselves. To point to Jesus. To invite others. To come and to behold the glory. Of God. Let's pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. God. We thank you for the good news of the gospel.

That Christ came to take away the sin of the world. Lord. We pray that we would trust that to be true for us. Specifically.

[ 41 : 27 ] That the blood of Christ would wash away our sin. And Lord. When we realize that. The gift that we've been given. As we walk according to the spirit.

Lord. Make us humble. And make us joyfully. Joyfully missional. As we proclaim the glory of God. To those who've never heard. We pray this in Jesus name.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.