

GOSPEL OF JOHN: THAT YOU MAY BELIEVE

“The Lamb of God”

John 1:29-34

Open your Bibles to the Gospel of John Chapter 1. We are going to look at verses 29 through 34. Let's read our text and then we'll take a look at it line upon line. Beginning in verse 29 John writes:

²⁹The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!

³⁰This is He of whom I said, ‘After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me.’ ³¹I did not know Him; but that He should be revealed to Israel, therefore I came baptizing with water.”

³²And John bore witness, saying, “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. ³³I 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.’ ³⁴And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God.”

Behold, the Lamb of God!

In our first few studies, the Apostle John introduced us to another John. We know him as John the Baptist. John was the last of the Old Testament prophets. And he had a very important ministry. He was called by God to not only be a witness of the Messiah who was to come. He was called to prepare the way for Him. In Isaiah 40:3 we are told of a prophet who would be this:

The voice of one crying in the wilderness:

“Prepare the way of the LORD;

Make straight in the desert

A highway for our God.

This voice in the wilderness was John, and the One he was preparing the way for was the Messiah, Jesus Christ. And he just happened to be the cousin of Jesus. In fact, the first time they met was before either of them was born.

When Mary, the mother of Jesus, went to see his (John the Baptist's) mother Elizabeth, John nearly jumped out of the womb he was so excited to get his ministry started. We

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should be so revved up about sharing Jesus as John was! He had been looking for his Blessed Hope of Messiah coming on the scene his whole life.

He went out into the wilderness and began baptizing people in a spirit of repentance in preparation for this event. And his ministry grew so large that the religionists in Jerusalem sent spies to question him. They wanted to know who he was and what his ministry was about. They may have even thought that he was claiming to be the Messiah.

But John put that to rest quickly. He told them he was not the Christ. He also said he was not Elijah, whom the Jews believed would appear at the time Messiah would come. And last of all, he told them that he was not the prophet that Moses said would be just like him in Deuteronomy 18. He was just a voice crying in the wilderness, because the world was out of control and needed a Savior. But John did let them in on a little secret.

The One they were looking for was in their midst. And He was coming soon to offer up a new kind of baptism. That is where we begin our study. Look what happens the next day (verse 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!”**

If you were there in the wilderness with John the day before, this most certainly would have been a perplexing moment. Maybe you came back hoping you would see this One who John said he was not worthy to untie the sandals of. So when John said, “**Behold! The Lamb of God,**” this might have been a tad confusing. You weren’t looking for a Lamb. You were looking for a Lion — maybe even the Lion of the tribe of Judah. And then John says this Lamb “**takes away the sins of the world.**”

Huh?

Of course, if you were a good Jew, which most of the people there would have been, a lot of Scriptures would have come to mind. The first would have been Genesis Chapter 22.

As Abraham climbed Mount Moriah to offer his son as a sacrifice in obedience to God, what did he take with him?

Fire and wood.

What didn’t he have?

An animal to sacrifice.

That caused his son Isaac to ask this question (Genesis 22:6):

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And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?

Listen to Abraham's answer (I am reading this from the King James Version; I'll explain why in a moment):

⁸And Abraham said, My son, God will provide *Himself* a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together.

Where is the Lamb?

That is the question we hear throughout the Old Testament.

The answer is in what Abraham said. God will “**provide Himself**” a Lamb (KJV only). But that was not going to happen until the future when Jesus heads to the cross. Here the Lamb saves a family, a very important family, because Messiah would come through Isaac's line.

The Jews that came out to hear John preach grew up sacrificing lambs. The shedding of blood was necessary for a sinful man to approach the Holy God. In fact, at Passover the Jews celebrated their Exodus from Egypt by each family sacrificing a lamb (the Book of Exodus). They would even raise this lamb in their homes. So this was a very personal sacrifice. Then, once they had one, the priests in the Temple slaughtered two sacrificial lambs every day, morning and evening (Leviticus). And whenever necessary, a Jew could bring an animal for a sin offering, a burnt offering, a peace offering or a trespass offering. Then once a year, the High Priest would make an animal sacrifice and take blood into the Holy of Holies. He would then take the blood and sprinkle it on the Ark of the Covenant seven times for the sins of the nation.

So to say that this Lamb would take away the sins of the world would have been stunning. It meant two things:

First, it meant that all the lambs previously sacrificed anticipated His coming. He would be the last Lamb.

And, second, this Man would, in fact, be slaughtered as a sacrificial Lamb. John, quoting John, is telling us that Jesus is the Lamb of whom Abraham spoke. This is important to understand.

For 1,500 years the sacrificial system of the Jews had produced an ocean of blood. But this blood only covered their sins. When Jesus spilled His sinless blood, all sins were forgiven. Let me say that again — *all sins were forgiven*. His sacrifice did for us what all the other sacrifices foreshadowed but fell short of accomplishing. It obtained for us a

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permanent pardon. And this pardon is not just for the Jews. It is for the sins of all humanity, for all time.

But the story of the Lamb does not stop there. In Revelation Chapter 5, this same Man John the Apostle sees that no man in heaven is found worthy to take the scroll, the title deed to earth, out of the Father's hand. But then this happens (verses 6-12):

⁶And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.

⁷And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne.

⁸And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints.

⁹And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;

¹⁰And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

¹¹And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands;

¹²Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.

The Lamb that was slain was the only Man in heaven who was worthy to open the scroll.

“Where is the Lamb” is the cry of the Old Testament.

“Behold the Lamb” is the hope of the New Testament.

“Worthy is the Lamb” is the proclamation of eternity.

The story of the Lamb grows wider and becomes more encompassing as you travel through the Scriptures. But don't miss this:

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That cry, that hope, that proclamation only becomes real for you when you trust in what the Lamb did for you on the cross.

Not everyone will be saved.

Only those who believe and receive the Lord's sacrifice on their behalf and in their place are saved.

Did you ever wonder why John did not write about the baptism of Jesus?

I believe this is because all three of the other Gospels speak of it. But John, who was a disciple of the Baptist, witnessed a second event; and this he tells us about.

Most commentators believe that what we are reading happened after both Jesus' baptism and His temptation in the wilderness. So what we are reading takes place sometime later. Maybe even weeks later. And that explains the language that John the Apostle uses as he recounts the story. So now, as Jesus walks toward him, John the Baptist draws the crowd's attention to Him. Look what he says in verse 30:

This is He of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me.'

Pointing back to what he said to the Levites and priests the day before, John prefers Jesus as the One of whom he spoke. He is the One who is full of grace and truth. He is the One who John had been crying out for his whole life — the One of whom he was not worthy to untie the sandal. Jesus is the One they were all looking for. And I think this blew both Johns away. Look what our text says next (verse 31):

I did not know Him; but that He should be revealed to Israel, therefore I came baptizing with water."

John did not know until Jesus' baptism that his Cousin was the Chosen One. But on that day he realized that it was him, and not Jesus, who needed to be immersed in the water. It was Him that John was supposed to reveal to Israel. Turn with me to Matthew Chapter 3.

I want to show you something I think is important. In this chapter, John is out in the wilderness baptizing people. A bunch of Pharisees and Sadducees come out to see what was going on. As we talked about last time, John called them a "**brood of vipers**" and challenged them to repent of their sins. He then warns them to stop trusting in their Jewish heritage, because a new thing is coming. Listen to what he says to them in verses 11-12:

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¹¹I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹²His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

John warns them to prepare for the Messiah’s coming by repenting.

Many in John’s day believed that all Jews would be saved. They did believe that Messiah would come in judgment. But it was a judgment of Israel’s enemies. Listen to how F. F. Bruce explains this:

The Jewish leaders thought that the Messiah would come with judgment, but only against Israel’s enemies. They were blind in their self-righteous confidence that only others needed to get right with God. Many today have the same idea. “John the Baptist is sadly needed to-day. Much of what we call Christianity is but christianized heathenism...we need that John the Baptist should come with his stern words about the axe, the winnowing-fan, and the fire. Nothing less will avail to prepare the way for a new coming of Christ.”

Jesus is going to come a second time to baptize the world in judgment, as John says. But the first time He came to baptize people in the Holy Spirit. That is what we read about next (verses 13-15):

¹³Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. ¹⁴And John *tried* to prevent Him, saying, “I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?”

¹⁵But 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.

Now do you see where the “**preferring**” Jesus came from?

When John saw the Lord headed toward him, he did not see his cousin. He saw his Savior. And like Isaiah and his unclean lips, John knew that he needed a baptism of fire. He was the one who needed to repent, and not Jesus. But the Lord tells him to permit it for now.

Jesus, the Sinless One, needed to experience this baptism in water to identify with those whom He came to save. It is a picture of what He would do on the Cross. He died, was

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buried, and then resurrected on the third day. And that is what we identify with when we get baptized.

So John allowed it to happen so that “**righteousness**” would be fulfilled. But it didn’t stop there.

Another very important thing happened as Jesus came up out of the water. Look at verses 16-17:

¹⁶When 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. ¹⁷And suddenly a voice *came* from heaven, saying,

The heavens opened, and the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus. Then the voice, not of one crying in the wilderness, but of our Father in Heaven, said:

“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

This is when John knew for sure who Jesus was. But something else happened that was important as well.

At this moment in time, Jesus was baptized in the Holy Spirit. Now if you are a Pentecostal, you jump up and shout, “*Hallelujah.*” If you are a fundamentalist you say, “*Not so — or at least not how the Pentecostals believe.*” Both are wrong. And both are right. Let’s finish the chapter and I’ll show you what I mean by saying that. Back to John. Look at verse 32:

And John bore witness, saying, “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him.”

So here, sometime after the baptism of Jesus, John writes this as he sees Jesus walk up to him. Then God the Father who spoke out of the heavens about Jesus, who called John to baptize in the wilderness, who gave him his ministry to prepare the way for the Lord, revealed to John that Jesus is the One He sent for John to witness about. And He does so in a way that is very important, I believe.

He has the Holy Spirit “**come upon**” Jesus in a very visible manifestation — a dove from Heaven lights upon Him. Now Jesus was not without the Holy Spirit before His baptism.

So what is going on here?

I believe that the Father sent a special empowering for the earthly ministry Jesus was embarking upon. Remember, Jesus is fully God and fully man. And for His time on

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Earth, He chose to rely on the Father and the power of the Holy Spirit to do ministry (Philippians 2:5-8). Listen to how apologist Don Stewart explains this:

As a human being, Jesus chose to be guided by the Holy Spirit.

Scripture speaks of Jesus being filled with the Spirit after His baptism.

And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led about by the Spirit in the wilderness (Luke 4:1).

Consequently, Jesus performed His miracles by the power of the Holy Spirit, He said.

But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you (Matthew 12:28).

He placed His faith in the Father.

He was able to live a sinless life by trusting the Father at all times. Consequently, believers are told to “walk as He walked.”

The one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked (1 John 2:6).

This could only be possible if Jesus walked in faith as a human being.

That is what happened here. The Holy Spirit came upon the man Jesus and gave Him the power to walk in the Spirit. Then John says this (verses 33-34):

³³I 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.’ ³⁴And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God.”

Did you know that John the Apostle never calls the other John “**the Baptist**” as all the other Gospel writers do?

To him, Jesus is the True Baptizer. You see, God the Holy Spirit was not resident in the Old Testament believers like He is in the church age-believers. That is why King David said this to the Lord, “**Do not take your Holy Spirit from me**” (Psalm 51:11). Samson is an example of this. For a time, after he let his hair be cut, the Spirit was taken away from him.

When Jesus came He brought with Him a new relationship with the Holy Spirit. He would now abide in us. John’s water baptism was a wonderful picture of this.

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Jesus received the Holy Spirit, and He would baptize His believers with the Holy Spirit. Like Him, as a man, they become reliant on the Holy Spirit to do the things God has called them to do.

So why is there such an argument about what the Baptism of the Holy Spirit is all about?

If you haven't discovered the Blue Letter Bible, you are missing out on a terrific online resource. It is available as an app and at www.blueletterbible.org. The site identifies several positions on what the Bible labels the Baptism with the Holy Spirit.

- 1) The Baptism of the Holy Spirit is received once at the moment of your salvation.
- 2) The Baptism of the Holy Spirit may be received when a person is saved, or there may be a delay.
- 3) The Baptism of the Holy Spirit is always received after a person is saved, and there will be an outward manifestation of Him.

I think we can dismiss number three because it is contrary to the teaching of the Bible.

Not every believer experiences some kind of outward manifestation after receiving the Holy Spirit. I never did. So our answer has to be one of the other two positions. And I think Scripture is pretty clear on which one it is. In 1 Corinthians 12:12-13 the Apostle Paul tells us this:

¹²For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. ¹³For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.

The moment you are saved, God the Holy Spirit places you in the Body of Christ. He “baptizes” you and spiritually connects you to every other believer. So the first position we read seems to be the correct one. But please stay with me. Listen to what theologian Gordon Fee says about this:

What we must understand is that the Spirit (is) the chief element, the primary ingredient, of (our) new existence. (It) is not merely a matter of getting saved, forgiven, and prepared for heaven. It is above all else to receive the Spirit to walk in power.

Ideally, when we are saved we begin walking in the empowering of the Holy Spirit who lives inside us. I said *ideally* because there are times when we do not walk in power of the Spirit. Instead, we fulfill the lusts of the flesh. Even giants of the faith such as D. L.

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Moody and R. A. Torrey went through dry spells like this. But they speak of further experiencing the Holy Spirit in their lives. Moody wrote this:

I think it is clearly taught in Scripture that every believer has the Holy Ghost dwelling in him. He may be quenching the Spirit of God, and he may not glorify God as he should, but if he is a believer on the Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Ghost dwells in him... Though Christian men and women have the Holy Spirit dwelling in them, yet He is not dwelling within them in power; in other words, God has a great many sons and daughters without power.

I think there are a great many believers who are saved but not experiencing the Holy Spirit powerfully in their lives. But that is not how Jesus wants us to live. After all, the Holy Spirit came upon Him to afford Him what He needed to do His ministry. And the Scripture says that the next thing Jesus did was to walk into the desert to be tempted by the enemy.

Guess how He walked?

In the power of the Holy Spirit.

Consider this:

Jesus spoke to His disciples of a coming, further empowering with the Holy Spirit. In Luke 24:49 Jesus said this to His disciples:

Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high."

Listen to what He tells them in Acts 1:4:

And being assembled together with *them*, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," *He said*, "you have heard from Me;

Would you agree then that the "promise of the Father" is "power from on high?"

What then happened in Acts Chapter 2 as they were waiting and praying?

The Holy Spirit came upon them, and they went out not just speaking in other languages. (That is what the Pentecostals want to focus on.) They went out and, in the power of the Holy Spirit, were sharing Jesus with people from all over the world. And these people heard them in their own language — other tongues.

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But the fundamentalists say that you only receive the Holy Spirit when you get saved. And here in Acts 2 is when that happened to the disciples of Jesus. So this was just a one-time miracle that the Holy Spirit did. I say not so.

Turn to John 20 for just a moment. This is kind of a long passage, and we are getting short on time. So we will get into this in more depth when we study this chapter of John's Gospel. But stay with me for a moment.

This was after the resurrection, but before Jesus ascended into Heaven. The disciples are waiting (actually cowering) in the upper room. Listen to what happens, beginning at verse 21, John writes:

²¹So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." ²²And when He had said this, He breathed on *them*, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the *sins* of any, they are retained."

²⁴Now Thomas, called the Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵The other disciples therefore said to him, "We have seen the Lord."

So he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe."

²⁶And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, "Peace to you!" ²⁷Then He said to Thomas, "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand *here*, and put *it* into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing."

²⁸And Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!"

²⁹Jesus said to him, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed *are* those who have not seen and *yet* have believed."

Who did we say earlier gives the Holy Spirit?

Jesus does.

Isn't that what happened here?

Jesus says that as He was sent by the Father, so He is sending His disciples.

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Then He breathes on them and they “**receive**” the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit then dwells inside them.

Then what happens?

They tell Thomas all about it. Then, when Thomas sees Jesus, he confesses with his mouth and believes that God raised Jesus from the dead.

Isn't that what Paul says one must do to be saved?

I say that this is when the disciples were born again.

And what happened in Acts 2 is something different — something more. It was an empowering to give them the strength to overcome their fear of man and go out to the streets and do ministry. I believe they were given the same power that Jesus used to overcome the enemy in the wilderness. It was the promise of the Father. It was power from on high.

And guess what?

It is available to you and me. And all we have to do to receive it is to ask. In Luke 11:13 Jesus said this to the people:

If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will *your* heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!”

Jesus tells them to ask, seek and knock for this promise of the Father. And He is the ultimate Promise Keeper.

When you were immersed into the Body of Christ, you were enabled to walk in the power of the Holy Spirit. If you are not experiencing that power in your life, you can. D. L. Moody also said:

The Holy Spirit in us is one thing, and the Holy Spirit upon us is another.

And if I read my Bible right, all you have to do is simply ask. The Holy Spirit delights in coming upon you to help you in your time of need. And He especially likes to do this when you have the opportunity to share Jesus with someone.

Ask, seek, knock.

Next time we are going to finish Chapter 1 as we see the Lord get His disciples together. Read ahead and see what John has to say about how Jesus builds His church.

Let's pray.

SING THE REVELATION SONG