

## GOD'S LAMB IS THE SON OF GOD

John 1: 29-34 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson

Some years ago, on a long train ride across the West, most of the travelers were sleeping, bored, and tired as the monotonous miles went by. One traveler quietly was exclaiming all along the way, “Marvelous, amazing, wonderful.” One traveler was accessing the landscape and not fully aware of why his fellow traveler was so excited, so he asked him, “How is it that while the rest of us are worn out or sleeping, you keep saying, “Wonderful!?” The man answered, “A few days ago, I was totally blind, but after a successful operation, I now can see. I guess what is ordinary to all of you is out of this world wonderful to me.” How many of us have lost the wonder of it all in knowing Jesus? Do we think, “What’s so wonderful about worshipping together, sharing my testimony, teaching Sunday School, praying daily, or coming to prayer meeting? Do we dread going to church, even deciding whether to go to church or not, and being bored with the message? Did our Sunday School lesson put us to sleep? Are we no longer amazed in the presence of Jesus, the Nazarene? Are we hoping to be amused in church? Once we yearned to be edified in church, and now, do we hope to be entertained? Has serving the Lord become a dreaded chore? Have we lost the wonder of our Savior?

Charles H. Gabriel wrote a song in 1926 that I grew up singing often, “O it is Wonderful! (1) “I stand all amazed at the love Jesus offers me, confused at the grace that so fully He proffers me; I tremble to know that for me He was crucified—That for me, a sinner, He suffered, He bled, and died. (2) I marvel that He would descend from His throne divine, to rescue a soul so rebellious and proud as mine; That He should extend His great love unto such as I; Sufficient to own, to redeem, and to justify. (3) I think of His hands pierced and bleeding to pay the debt! Such mercy, such love, and devotion, can I forget? No, no; I will praise and adore at the Mercy Seat, until at the Glorified Throne I kneel at His feet. Chorus: Oh, it is wonderful that He should care for me, enough to die for me! O it is wonderful, wonderful to me.”

Today, we need to decide whether we are going to listen to John the Baptist’s testimony in this message of John, the evangelist. What is at stake? In John 1:31-33, John the Baptist said, “I myself did not know Him, but for this purpose, I came baptizing with water, that He might be revealed to Israel...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.” John the Baptist was testifying that his testimony about Jesus didn’t come from what he knew about Jesus naturally or from his past acquaintance with Jesus. His testimony was that what he knew came from God. God gave John the Baptist these words to say about Jesus. Do you believe John’s testimony? For those who do not, they will miss the Way, the Truth, and the Life entirely. God brought each of us here today for a reason. To know if John the Baptist was telling the truth, we must listen to this unique man who lived partly under the Old Testament, and who partly lived in the New Testament. He was the connector, the forerunner, the link, the bridge between

the Old and New Testament. John the Baptist was prominent in the beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, because he was part of the roots of the Gospel extending back into the Old Testament. We learned in John 1:1 that Jesus' roots go back to eternity and also back to the Old Testament. Jesus never appeared on the scene in history without John the Baptist's historical preparation. God had been working for over 2,000 years, and that is the backdrop for the Gospel of John. John the Baptist with his feet in both Testaments, was a prophet like Elijah, who came in the spirit of Elijah, but he was not Elijah who appeared with Jesus on the Mt. of Transfiguration. Rather, John the Baptist was the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Isaiah 40:3, preparing the way of the Lord, making His way straight.

Between the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist and John announcing who Jesus was to those who came to be baptized, was Jesus' 40 days in the wilderness, fasting and being tempted of Satan. Jesus won the victory in that opening task of His public ministry, and Satan was defeated. John hadn't left Bethany across the Jordan, where he was still baptizing when he saw Jesus coming in the distance toward him. No doubt other Jews saw Jesus before John did. Jesus was a Jew in the flesh, and He must have had the very common face of a common Jew. The Jews must have seen many fellow Jews that looked like Jesus every day. But when John saw Him, he exclaimed, "Behold, the Lamb of God." It appears that John the evangelist who wrote the Gospel of John, witnessed this event of John announcing Jesus at the Jordan. This testimony of John the Baptist revealed 4 separate, inspired testimonies as to Jesus' true identity. Today, may we recapture the wonder John had as we by faith view our Lord approaching the people and John the Baptist at the Jordan River. What were John's 4 inspired testimonies regarding Jesus?

**THIS IS THE LAMB OF GOD WHO TAKES AWAY THE SIN OF THE WORLD.** (I.) v.29. "The next day he (John the Baptist) saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." Perhaps it could well be said that we have failed to understand who Jesus is until we see and hear the wonder and excitement in the eyes and in the words of John the Baptist and he cried out to the crowds at the Jordan. This Old Testament/New Testament prophet in his announcement, announced two mighty wonders:

**The wonder (1) of who the Lamb is!** John the Baptist called Him the Lamb of God. Much was on his mind. He could see and he declared that Jesus was the Passover Lamb. Passover was approaching. As the blood of the slain lambs protected the houses of the Israelites from the angel of death who struck down the first born of the Egyptians, John now saw Jesus and His coming to die for our sins as the only deliverance for us from sin and death. John the Baptist was the son of the priest, Zechariah. He had seen the slaughter of lambs daily, one in the morning and one in the evening for the sins of the people. Even when the Jews were starving in war and siege, these lambs were sacrificed daily until the temple was destroyed in AD 70. John the Baptist saw Jesus as the once for all offering for all sinner's sin. This voice in the wilderness had to now see Jesus as the suffering Lamb pictured in Isaiah 53. John had identified himself as the voice crying in the wilderness, as Jesus' forerunner, to prepare the way of the Lord. Now he had to see

Jesus as the Lamb of God meekly being led as a lamb to the slaughter, to be pierced through for our transgressions and who was rendered up to God as a guilt offering for every repentant believing sinner to the Father.

This wonder of who the Lamb of God is—this sheer wonder of who Jesus is and was and will ever be, makes this title of Jesus one the most precious titles of our Lord. Jesus fulfilled every Old Testament type. His vicarious suffering in our place, His patient submission to the Father's will, His atoning sacrifice, His redemption, and deliverance through His blood, all of these were in John's mind, as these figures should be in our mind as our eyes are fixed on Jesus. No hymnwriter said it better than Mary D. James. She was prominent in the Wesleyan Holiness movement in the early 1800nds. She wrote in verses 4-5 of her hymn, "All for Jesus," – "Since my eyes were fixed on Jesus, I've lost sight of all beside; So enchained my spirit's vision, Looking at the Crucified. O what wonder! How amazing! Jesus, glorious King of kings, deigns to call me His beloved, let's me rest beneath His wings. All for Jesus (2x) All my being's ransomed powers; All for Jesus (2) All my days and all my hours." The 1st wonder--who the Lamb is. 2ndly,

**The wonder (2) of what the Lamb does.** "Who takes away the sin of the world!" The literal meaning is to take away by bearing away. All the sin of the whole world was spoken of collectively as sin. The whole universe of man from Adam onward to the last baby conceived and born before Judgment Day—think of it. This is not a declaration of universal salvation, but a pronouncement and declaration of universal availability of salvation—of all who repent, believe, and receive Jesus, for "whosoever will, may come." (Rev. 22: 17) As in the days of Noah, God could have taken away the sinners to remove the sin, but God the Father had the way to defeat sin and its penalty by making Jesus become sin for us. Paul proclaimed in II Corinthians 5: 21, "For our sake, He (God the Father) made Him (Jesus) to be sin (for us) who knew no sin, so that in Him (Jesus) we might become the righteousness of God." Secondly,

**THIS IS HE WHOM I TESTIFIED RANKS BEFORE ME BECAUSE HE WAS BEFORE ME.** (II.) v.30-31. "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." This was John the Baptist's moment to pull back the curtain and testify, "Here's Jesus! He must have center stage. He must increase; I must decrease." (John 3: 30) These words of John the Baptist no knowing Jesus may sound confusing, so let's examine them. John the Baptist grew up in the hill country and the wilderness of Judaea, while Jesus grew up with his stepfather, Joseph the carpenter in Nazareth in Galilee. Had Jesus' forerunner and He never met? Did they not have sight recognition of each other? Had Elizabeth and Zechariah failed to properly train their son, telling him of Mary's visit to Elizabeth before the birth of John, when John leaped in Elizabeth's womb? No, there was recognition, for in Matthew 3: 14 John tried to prevent Jesus' desire to have him baptize Him. John said, "I need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?" But John's testimony here is more than sight recognition or personal opinion. A true prophet's

testimony must come from God and thus be beyond question. All John could do as He prophesied of Jesus' coming as Messiah, was to be busy doing God's business of baptizing repentant sinners, preparing them to get right with God, ready for the coming of Messiah. John the Baptist's job was then, in essence, to point to Jesus and say, "Look, and live, as he baptized and prophesied of Messiah coming to manifest Himself and be revealed to Israel. John the Baptist was saying, in essence, "I didn't always know who Jesus, Messiah is, like I now know today."

Remember John said in John 1: 15, "This is He of whom I said, "He who comes after me ranks before me, because He was before me." The honor of being Jesus' forerunner put John at a level above all the other Old Testament prophets who announced Jesus' coming. John not only proclaimed Messiah's coming as Isaiah did. He personally was allowed by God the Father to introduce Jesus to the world, both Jews and Gentiles that came down, across the Jordan River to Bethany. By calling Jesus the Lamb of God, John the Baptist was revealing his full understanding of both Jesus' full humanity and His full divinity. That day as John the Baptist announced Jesus as the Lamb of God, the One who ranked before him, because He was before him—that day was epic in the baptizer's ministry, as he pointed away from himself to this earthly Son of Man walking toward him, and he said, "Behold the Lamb of God." For every minister of the Gospel, what John did that day was what we must do—saying, "Look past me, behold the Lamb of God."

I love the story of Charles Haddon Spurgeon's conversion. Charles Spurgeon's conversion. He was 15 years old. Both his father and grandfather were pastors. Charles had read many solid Puritan books presenting the Gospel, but he wasn't saved. Charles agonized over his sins daily. One snowy day, Spurgeon couldn't make it in time to his normal church. So, he turned down a side street to a small Primitive Methodist Chapel. There were 12-15 people there that day. The minister couldn't make it because of deep snow, so one man who made it, walked into the pulpit and opened the Bible to Isaiah 45: 22, and read, "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." The man said, "This isn't painful to do; you don't have to life your foot or your finger. You may be the biggest fool, but you can look. You don't need college to look. You don't need to be rich to look. Even a child can look. The Bible says, "Look unto Me, not to yourself." Then the preacher looked at Charles Spurgeon and said, "Young man, you look very miserable. And you always will be miserable—miserable in life, and miserable in death—if you don't obey my text; but if you obey now, this moment, you will be saved." Then he shouted, "Young man, look to Jesus Christ. Look! Look! Look! You have nothing to do but to look and live." Spurgeon said that he had been waiting to do fifty things, but that word "look" cleared away the clouds. He looked to Christ and this teenager went on to become the greatest preacher of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He was saved that day! And you'll be saved if you look in faith to Jesus, the Lamb of God. 3rdly,

**THIS IS HE UPON WHOM THE HOLY SPIRIT DESCENDED FROM HEAVEN LIKE A DOVE.** (III. )v. 32-33. "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.” God the Father knew full well about John’s lack of full recognition of His Son as Messiah and Savior. God had to show him clearly and give him a sign. Just as surely as God the Father sent John to baptize in water, He assured John he should expect a sign from heaven to prove to him for sure who Messiah was, that “He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit,” John needed to know precisely whose inner baptism with fire was the fulfillment of his outer baptism with water. This testimony of John was an eyewitness testimony. He said, “I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on Him.” This was a sight to behold, and it is likely John, the evangelist was there when John the Baptist baptized Jesus. God the Father sent the third person of the Trinity manifested in a bodily form as a dove. This confirmation of Jesus’ anointing for public ministry never left any doubts in John’s mind.

As I’ve pondered Jesus’ baptism, the Father’s word from heaven, Mt. 3:17, saying, “This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,” and the Holy Spirit descending and remaining on Jesus, it moves me to tears. Jesus never had anything to repent of, but Jesus said to John, Mt. 3:15, “Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Why did Jesus have John baptize Him? First, Jesus’ baptism by John, gave approval to John’s forerunner ministry. Second, Jesus identified with sinners like me and like you, the very people He came to save. By identifying with publicans and sinners, Jesus began at the outset of His ministry to shoulder our sins upon Himself. Mainly then, Jesus’ baptism pictured Jesus’ future baptism in blood upon the cross. Turn to Luke 12: 50, and listen to Jesus’ own words as He said, “I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how great my distress until it is accomplished.” Great as these first three testimonies, they were not enough to suffice. John the Baptist had one final testimony he couldn’t hold back.

**THIS IS THE SON OF GOD.** (IV.) v.34. “And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God. This is a climactic testimony. As Jesus walked toward John, He had to hear John say, “This is the Son of God.” Once we have heard from God Almighty, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,” our voice is only the echo of His voice. The echo of the Father’s voice never fades. Yes, beloved, the Lamb of God is truly the Son of God. When Jesus’ authority was challenged, that He was the Son of God, what did He say? Turn to Matthew 21:23-27. Jesus authorized John’s ministry. John mentioned two other baptisms beyond his own baptism of repentance. The first other baptism was of the Holy Spirit and it came at Pentecost. (Acts 1: 5) Yes, there were tongues of fire then, but the coming baptism Jesus brings of fire, awaits the soon coming judgment as Matthew explained in Matthew 3:12. Speaking of Jesus, John said, “His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will clear His threshing floor and gather His wheat into the barn, but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire.” How can believers be tired of church, prayer meeting, witnessing and miss the wonder John saw? The Son of God was slain, slaughtered as the Lamb of God. With John in Rev. 5:9, I can hear heaven’s new song that we as believers will soon sing. “Worthy are You to take the scroll and to open its seals, for You were slain, and by Your blood You ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nations.”