

# Could Jesus Have Sinned by Disobeying the Father?

By Rev. Kyle Paisley

**Bible Text:** John 1:29

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The gospel of John at the chapter 1 and our text for this morning is found in verse 29. John's gospel at the chapter 1 and verse 29.

29 The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

You know the ministry of John the Baptist was in stark contrast to the ministry of the religious orders of Judaism. Here were the scribes and Pharisees contending with him, people who lay religious burdens on the people which were impossible for them to bear, people whom the Lord criticized as not lifting even their tiniest finger to help those that were in need. These religious leaders, their practice had really nothing to do with God, although they took the Lord's name upon their lips, but they rather than making religion a matter of the heart, made holiness a matter of mere externals and those externals, indeed, would then encourage people to follow were not commanded by the word of God but were based on the tradition of the elders. And respect of the place of worship, they tried to balance these and seemed more interested in that that core of the place than with its purpose and occasions they would say that it was nothing to swear by the temple but it was a most serious offense to swear by the gold of the place. People that were motivated by self-love, people whom Jesus exposed in Matthew 23 with words like this, saying note all their works they do to be seen of men. They love the uppermost room at feasts and they love greetings in the marketplaces and to be called rabbi. They made much of their tithing but they had little time for the things that matter most in spirituality. They cared little of anything for justice and mercy and faith. People that were keen, yes, but people who when they evangelized brought home converts to the religion who were even more keen than they were for their showy religion, and you know, worst of all, because the Judaism of John's day had no proper conception of sin, the people had no understanding of their personal need of salvation.

But here stands the Baptist, here stands a man which seems to be the voice of one crying in the wilderness, crying out against the prevailing religious errors of the established religion, and his message is different, yes, much much different than the scribes and Pharisees. He speaks to them in bold terms. He leaves no stone unturned. He tells them

that their descent from Abraham is no refuge from impending judgment. He informs them that for all their religion they are headed for a lost eternity. He tells them that the form of godliness is not good enough. What they really needed was a new heart, a purged conscience, faith towards God, repentance towards Christ, and he tells them where those blessings could be found. Hence, we have this most outstanding declaration in our text, "Behold the Lamb of God," says John, "who taketh away the sin of the world." And you know, that's a fact of the message of the Old Testament scriptures too, the Old Testament scriptures which these scribes and Pharisees should have known well and believed, and it was a message which pointed towards the coming, the advent of the Messiah and revealed the true nature of his work.

The people in John's day had by and large forgotten all those things, of course, but John stands as one to hail those truths uncompromisingly. A prophet, yes, and in a sense more than a prophet, the forerunner in his ministry of the Lord Jesus, a man above all things faithful to God and faithful to his hearers. And you know, just like John was faithful in his preaching, so we must be faithful too and it is our binding duty before God, as the prophets of old, to cry aloud and spare not. It is our binding duty and especially in light of the coming of the Lord again and in light of the day of judgment when we must stand before him and return our ministry to Jesus. It is therefore our business to point men away from religion and to point them to the living Savior.

This is a living Savior in verse 29 of John 1, the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world, and the first thing, I think, that strikes us in this text is the beauty of the Lamb. Notice how the Savior is described here, not just as a lamb but as the Lamb of God, and that, of course, speaks of Christ's innocence. When we think of a lamb, we think about meekness, we think about gentleness, we think about innocence. When we think about the Lamb of God, we're thinking about Christ's innocence, Christ's meekness, Christ's gentleness which, of course, and then is the innocence and gentleness and meekness of God.

Let me say something which I think can often be overlooked and it's very very important. It's when we speak about Christ's innocence, we do not mean that Christ somehow was neutral with regard to purity or that he was ignorant of true holiness. Our blessed Savior was positively holy and perfectly holy. And something more which is also very important is this, that the holiness of Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God was by no means an achievement. The holiness of Christ, the innocence of the Lamb of God was not an achievement.

Now many years ago in the Baptist magazine, the year 1965, the well-known Principel still living today and has preached in Norfolk in recent years, Principel Kingdom published an article in which he stated that the Lord's sinlessness was from one point of view the result of his perfect obedience to the will of the Father, and when you think about that, of course, there are two striking inferences that come from it. First of all, that perfect sinlessness was not Christ's all his life; and secondly, that there was the possibility that he may not have obeyed the Father's will or he had, at least, the capability to disobey. Folks, those are the most serious implications affecting our view of Christ, his ability to

save sinners and his qualifications for the work, and the tragic thing is this, that the view that that particular professor expressed is held widely even today not just by liberal theologians in the state church but amongst so-called nonconformists, and it's something that betrays the most awful ignorance of scripture and reveals a very very low view indeed of our wonderful Savior. So I want to say today when we think about the beauty of the Lamb of God and his holiness, that Christ Jesus is personally and perfectly and intrinsically holy and impeccable. Christ lived a perfectly sinless life from the very beginning and surely he could not have done anything else seeing he was God manifest in flesh.

Again we should say with regard to this that our blessed Lord, with him there was absolutely no possibility that he could have disobeyed in thought, word or deed, in the letter or in the spirit of the law. This was absolutely impossible for Jesus. Do you know what's said of Jesus in Hebrews 10? There the statement writer reveals the fulfillment of Psalm 40 when Jesus is speaking and he says, "Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God." What does Psalm 40:7 and 8 say with regard to the coming Messiah? He speaks in prophetic language, "I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart."

So our blessed Savior Jesus Christ could have done nothing else but obey the Father. His behavior was always perfect because he, himself, is always perfect and, you know, that fact is not negated by his temptation. The temptation of Christ did not prove that he could have sinned, it proved what he already was, it proved that he is Jesus Christ not able to sin. You know that gold is proved by passing through a fire test; the fire itself does not make the gold gold but it demonstrates that it was gold. It is gold before it's tested and it's gold after it's tested.

The fire proves the gold to be what it already was and, you know, it's the same with Christ. He wasn't made sinless by resisting temptation, he resisted temptation because he was sinless and this great proof of Christ's sinlessness is, of course, pictured throughout the Old Testament scriptures and especially, as we know, in the ceremonies and the sacrifices of the Old Testament law. In fact, when the Lord ordained the Passover and the lamb was to be killed and the blood was to be shed and struck into the doorposts of the house of the Israelites and over the door head, or the lintel of the door. There was one amongst the specific requirements, it was this one, that the lamb that they were to take which his blood was to shelter them from the angel of death, was to be a lamb, it says, without blemish. A lamb without blemish and did you know that that is a perfect picture of the Lord Jesus Christ with regard to his character and his holiness? And 1 Peter when Peter is describing by inspiration the holiness of Jesus, he says, "We redeem not with corruptible things of silver and gold but with the precious blood of Christ," listen to it, "as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."

The Bible describes holiness as a beautiful thing and how beautiful was the Lamb of God who had perfect, spotless, unsullied holiness. But then Christ's beauty as the Lamb of God is not only the beauty of sinlessness, it's also the beauty which is singular. He says, "Behold, the Lamb of God." In other words, Jesus Christ is the only one that the Father

provided for us and the beauty of his holiness is like no other. And then again, of course, the Lamb of God is also the Lamb who is God which makes him beautiful too. We have that perfectly pictured again in the Old Testament, the lovely, touching, tender story of Abraham and Isaac as they journeyed towards Mount Moriah and Abraham has everything ready, they draw towards the mountain, it comes within view, and Isaac has one overriding question. He says, "Father, look at the fire. We've got the fire and the wood, where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" And you'll all remember the reply of Abraham, he says, "My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering." Or if you're to look in the Welsh Bible it would read like this, "God will look into himself for a lamb." And you know, that's exactly true in the gospel. God Almighty, the great God of this universe, did not need to go out of himself to find a solution for our sin. God Almighty found a solution for our sin in himself and when he gave his Son, he was providing himself as the lamb for in our blessed Christ, the babe of Bethlehem, the man of Calvary, in our blessed Christ dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. I don't mean that Christ merely manifested the Godhead but in Christ bodily there's the fullness of the Godhead, his fullness is the Godhead itself and the totality of its powers and attributes. He has the complete fullness and the exhaustless perfection of the divine essence, that means that he is beautiful in his holiness. "Behold the Lamb of God," beautiful for his sinlessness, a beauty that is singular, a beauty that is sacred. The Lamb of God.

But then John not only describes the Lamb of God and the beauty of the Lamb, he also speaks about the burden of the Lamb. Look what this text tells us. It tells us that he is bearing or carrying the sin of the world. The sin of the world. You know, the word "world," of course, is one of John's favorite words, he uses it repeatedly and he's here using it, of course, not on a geographical sense because that would make no sense really, but he's using it in an ethical sense. He speaks here of the word as the sum total of human life in the ordered world considered apart from and [unintelligible] from God. And you know, the world to which Jesus came in the world, whose sin Jesus bore, is just the same today. There is an inborn antipathy in man's heart to spiritual things. Jesus said in John 7:7, "the world hateth me." Paul says in 1 Corinthians about the ignorance of the world. He says, "Hath not God made the wisdom of this world foolishness? [unintelligible] you not called?" And this old world in which we live for all its advancements and technology and the rest, for all its growth in wisdom and scientific knowledge, for all that it has learned and for all its education is as ignorant of God as it was in the first century. The world is a world that is in antipathy to God, it is ignorant of God. The world in which we live has its counterfeit for what God calls holy and that's why Paul speaking to the Corinthians had to speak of a counterfeit repentance which works death instead of life. He says, "The sorrow of this world worketh death." Did you know that there are people like that who think that they have repentance but it's worked death instead of life? It's a counterfeit thing, a cosmetic thing, but exacerbates their own self-righteousness and pride and it makes them deader than they ever were before. That's the world which we live in. We think about the desires of worldly men, they're all contrary to the Father the Bible says. "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life is not of the Father but is of the world. The friendship of the world," again, another

scripture says, "is enmity with God." This is the world in which Christ lived. This is the world in which we live.

But notice again John uses the word "sin" in the singular. He speaks not merely about the sins of this world, he speaks about the sin of this world and he means by that sin in the mass. He regards wickedness in its unity. He's referring here in this text of scripture to the common guilt of the world and, you know, there are two great evils in this world but they go into one which we're all equally guilty of. Jeremiah put his hand upon it perfectly when he said, "We have forsaken Jehovah, the fountain of living waters, and have hewn out to ourselves broken cisterns that can hold no water." That means when men forsake God, they're capable of anything or as Dostoevsky, the Russian literist said, "Where there is no God, then anything is permissible."

That's the world in which we live. That's the mentality of the world in which we live and we are told that upon himself Christ bore the sins or the sin of the world, "Behold, the Lamb of God who taketh away, who beareth the weight of the sin of the world." And you know, John's not just talking about the sin of one man, it's the sin of the world. The sin of one man is great enough, isn't it? If I could stop this morning and go back to the very beginning of my life, or if you could do the same thing, or people go back to the beginning of this week or this year and count up the bad thoughts that you've had, the bad things that you've said, the bad things that you've done, if we could do that, we would be overwhelmed with the enormity of the burden of it all but we're not just talking about the sin of one man, that's bad enough, what about the sin of the family? What about the sin of a street? What about the sin of a community? The sin of a village? The sin of this town? The sin of the great cities in this nation? What about the sin of nation itself? Yea, what about the sin of a [unintelligible]? What about the sin of the world? And yet we are told here that this was the burden of the wonderful Lamb of God. He carries that burden, the burden of the sin of the world. Jesus bore the sin of the world, the most enormous, the heaviest burden that ever could be. It was borne by the Lamb of God. It was borne by God manifest in flesh.

And you know, when we speak about Christ bearing the sin of the world, we need to make it clear that there's the guilt of sin or the punishment for sin that is meant. Jesus Christ did not bear the pollution of our sin. Just say that again because it's important: Jesus Christ bore the punishment of our sin but he did not bear the pollution of our sin. In other words, his holiness was not affected by his being our substitute. Christ was not an actual sinner at any time in his life or in his death but he stood in our place and he was condemned in our place, and Isaiah again tells us that the Lord laid upon him the iniquity of us all. Can you imagine a burden so enormous as that? The iniquity of one man but the iniquity of us all? "O Christ, what burdens bowed thy head! Our load was laid on thee." And what a load it was.

The third thing that this text tells us about is the benevolence of the Lamb. You see, it's not just that Christ bears our sin or carries our sin, not just that he's burdened with our sin, but that he actually does something effective with it. He, in respect of it, he takes it away. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." And he took it

away by burying it, didn't he? 1 Peter says who his own self bear our sins in his own body on the tree. And my friend, the work of bearing away sin is undoubtedly a great work. Of all works this is the most difficult and I say this with reverence, of all works it was the most difficult work for God to do. Creation, majestic, wonderful as it is, create as a work is nothing compared to this, the bearing away of the sin of the world. He simply spoke and it was done. He commanded and it stood fast.

But the bearing away of sin by Jesus was not easy. It was a great work. In fact, in respect of you and I, in some respects, in fact, in all respects in regard to us, this work is impossible. Here is a work which is absolutely beyond human power. We may pool all our resources of wisdom, we may pool all our planning resources and abilities and skills together, we can get the whole world together and drawn on all the talents of every person that has ever lived, but together we could not shift the burden of sin. Great men have tried to do it. Wise men have tried to do it. Religious men have tried and failed miserably. And you and I can try with all the resolutions and self-effort that we can muster, but we will fail even before we've started. Christ alone could do this great work and that is his benevolence. He did the work that you and I could not do.

It's not only a great work, of course, it's a gracious work because taking it away is not just carrying it but it's bearing the punishment or the consequences for sin. He expiates sin. He suffers for sin in order to forgive sin. In fact, the word here in the original in Peter's reference, 1 Peter 2:24, it means he lifted it up, he raised it up, he removed it. Behold the Lamb of God, who lifts up our sin, who raises up our sin, who takes it upon himself and by so bearing removes it. You know, Jesus by dying in our stead actually deals with our sin. He takes away the condemnation of our sin and there is such a thing as condemnation. Oh yes, the world doesn't like to hear about it, that palatable form, if we could call it Christianity, that modern-day evangelical Christianity or to put it better, liberal Christianity would preach a gospel which has no law and therefore we don't see our need of a Savior and Jesus is no longer a Savior, he's more an example in the gospel of the modernist. But let me tell you this morning, we have to remember this that the law of God is important. In fact, the broken law actually condemns us and when I was born into this world with a sinful nature, I was born a condemned sinner.

I was born a condemned sinner and that shows us that the law can't be trifled with. Men do trifle with it, don't they? Yes, and they treat it so lightly as to say, "Well, after the cross, after Jesus dying, well, the law is no longer existent, or in other words, we're not obliged to obey it any longer." How any professing Christian could hold that view in light of the cross is beyond me how they can do that for, folks, it's at the cross more than anywhere else that the law of God is magnified, and as the prophet says, seen to be honorable. It is at the cross that divine justice for a broken law is exacted on Christ as he died in our place, and to say that the law is no longer binding, to tell men that we're no longer obliged to it, is to make little of the cross. By the blood of Jesus we are saved from the condemnation of sin. That does not mean that we're free to abandon the law and live as we please. The cross is no excuse for sin and if a man makes the cross of Christ an excuse for rejecting the law of God, then he's still under the condemnation of sin, he's sown the death of Jesus back and he's said, "No, I don't want the Lamb of God to bear

away my sin." That's what he's really saying. But Jesus for those that have trusted him, they can be assured that the condemnation is gone.

A good work, great work, it's a glorious work. The value of Christ's sacrifice is for every believer to know and prove. Somebody asked the great American missionary to the American Indians, David Brainerd, a very important question one day. They said, "How can one person atone for the sins of thousands?" And the missionary showed or [unintelligible] showing that one sovereign a long time ago, one sovereign is worth 240 pence, one gold coin being equal in value to many copper coins, the difference in them making the difference in the value, and similarly the sufferings of the God-man are a sufficient propitiation for the sins of millions of mere men. The truth is this: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

Now as well as the beauty of the Lamb, and as well as these other things that we've seen about him, we want to think about the beholding of the Lamb. "Behold the Lamb," says John. "Forget about me," John says. "Forget about the waters of baptism," John says, "for it's the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Behold him. Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." What does that mean? What does "Behold" mean? It simply means to believe him. Behold him and believe him.

You know, it's an absolute imperative that we tell people that they look away from themselves and from others and that they take their place as sinners before God and ask Christ to be their Savior because of who he is and on the basis of what he did when he died on the cross. And men can ask him and he will hear them because he's alive. It's our business, therefore, to tell men, "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world. Behold him and believe him." Believe in him means we're calling upon his name. Call upon his name and you can be sure that your sins are forgiven. Behold the Lamb of God. Behold him and believe him.

Do you know what a sad thing at every Christmas time people only behold the Lamb of God as a babe in the manger and that's as far as they get in their understanding of the gospel. They never even go so far as to look on Christ as a child in the temple, or in the garden of Gethsemane as a man sweating great drops of blood, or in the judgment hall of Pilate, or upon the cross. They never behold the Lamb of God as having ascended. They never think about the Lamb of God as having nigh taken his place at the right hand of God. They never think about that. You behold the Lamb of God and tell others to behold him and the cross, but also to look higher and to behold him on the throne because he's there to apply the redemption that he purchased when he died for us.

Behold the Lamb of God. Great D. L. Moody tells a great touching story of while he was in Belfast and years ago and he knew a doctor who had a friend who was a leading surgeon in the city, and he told him a certain surgeon's custom what it was before performing an operation, a particular operation to any patient. He would say to the patient simply this, he said, "I want you to take a good look at the wound. I want, then, for you to turn from looking at the wound and fix your eyes on me and don't take them off me until I get through." Do you know something? That's really the summation of the gospel. Fix

your eyes upon your wound, know that you're a sinner, but then look to Jesus and keep your eyes upon Jesus. Yes, turn your eyes upon Jesus. Look full in his wonderful face and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace.

Behold him and believe him. Behold him, friend, and bless him. What words would fail us, miserably fail us to bless him as he ought to be blessed and praise him as he ought to be praised. I like the words of the great saint of Augustine who said, "How weighty must the blood of the Lamb be by whom the world was made to turn the scale when weighed against the world. How weighty must be the blood of the Lamb be by whom the world was made to turn the scale when weighed against the world." We should never fail to thank God or to bless the Lamb for his precious blood. Precious, precious blood of Jesus shed on Calvary, shed for rebels, shed for sinners, and therefore shed for me. Behold him and bless him.

There was a certain gentleman traveling in Norway to see a church at a certain time, and looking up at the time surprised to see the caricature of a lamb near the top, and he began to ask questions, he began to inquire why it was placed in that position, and he was told that when a certain church, the church was being built, a certain workman fell from the high scaffold. His fellows saw him fall and they ran to his side horror-stricken. They expected to find him dashed to pieces but to their surprise he was almost unhurt. How had he escaped? Well, it happened the day that there was a flock of sheep passing the church at the moment that he fell and he fell amongst the sheep and landed right on top of a lamb. The lamb was crushed to death but the man was saved and in order to celebrate the goodness of God, the lamb was carved in the tower at the height, the top of the tower from which that man had fallen, traced there to commemorate his escape as a token of his thankfulness.

Shall you and I, therefore, not give in our hearts and in our church and in our lives the highest place of honor to the Lamb of God who by dying for us has carried away our sin? Should we not behold him and bless him and lift him high so that others can behold him and believe and bless him too? Behold him and believe him. Behold him, bless him. Behold him and bear witness of him. John was doing that and so were the disciples of Jesus. If you go further to verse 40, it says there was one who heard John speaks, Andrew, and followed him, it was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. And what did he do when he beheld the Lamb? He beheld him and bore witness of him. "He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ." And that's our business as faithful Christians to behold Jesus and to bear witness of Jesus. Behold him and bear witness of him.

A story is told of the preacher C. H. Spurgeon, that when he was about to preach in the Crystal Palace [unintelligible], that he went down a short time before the service to arrange where the platform should be placed and while he was trying various positions, he cried aloud the words of the text, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," just testing the acoustics in the building from the position where the pulpit had been placed. And there was a man at that time who was at work at the Crystal Palace and little known to Spurgeon he actually heard the words the preacher spoke and he heard



it under the most unusual circumstances and went home, there was no sermon just the text, but it went home to his heart with such power that he was cut down with conviction of sin and he was led that day to put his trust in the Lamb of God. You just do not know what you can do for Jesus when you behold him and believe him, behold him and bless him, and behold him and bear witness of him. May this incoming year 2010 see great things done in the name of God's holy child Jesus and through our witness as a church and may many look on the Lamb of God and believe in him for salvation's sake.