

# “Witness to the Lamb”

*John 1:19-42*

We’ve spent the last five Sundays building a biblical foundation to help us understand what John the Baptist meant when he said about Jesus, “Behold, the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.” The reason why we had to trace the understanding of sin, sacrifice, and God-initiated substitutionary atonement was because John was not quoting a verse of Scripture. He was communicating a biblical concept that God had been teaching His people since Adam and Eve and only those with ears to hear would understand it.

It’s a reminder that the Bible is not a list of proof texts that we pull out the verse that we need for the moment to show people we’re right or they’re wrong. It’s not a topical ethical catalogue that we are to compartmentalize into neat folders when we want to study a specific topic – not that we can’t do those things at times. The Bible is the progressive, book-by-book teaching method of God to reveal life-giving truths we need to learn along the way of life. This is why studying the Word of God and applying it takes our entire lifetime. And ‘Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world’ illustrates this so well.

So when John announces, ‘Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world’, those who were open to learning what God said were drawn to what John was saying while those who already had pre-determined how to use the Bible to affirm their own teaching did not. As we’ll see here in John 1:19-42. [Pray]

John the disciple writes his gospel at least 40+ years after Jesus has ascended to heaven and after all the other 3 gospels had been written. John’s gospel is more selective in that he chooses accounts from Jesus’ life and teachings that focus on theological themes John wants to emphasize. John wants to emphasize Jesus’ deity, so we have this great introduction in the first 18 verses about His oneness with the Father and the 7 ‘I am’ statements in the gospel, affirming Jesus’ deity. There are only 7 miracles shared, most of them unique to John. Seven witnesses testify Jesus is the Messiah and there are others. So John’s gospel is theologically focused. The Lamb of God is a theological thread in the Old Testament that we have been tracing and so are ready to understand the implications of it further.

In Ch. 1:19, John the disciple begins the account of Jesus with John the Baptist. While all the other three gospel writers also talk about John, we have different things shared here. The first thing we need to understand about the baptizer – as great a God-follower that he was – he was not the Saviour or a saviour of any kind. If we really listen to John’s words here, we need to remind ourselves

## **No One is a Saviour Other Than Jesus** **(1:19-28)**

Including ourselves. The focus in these verses is ‘Who are you John?’ “*The Jews in Jerusalem sent priests and Levites*”. This was the Sanhedrin, the authorities of Israel made up of the High priest, priests, Levites and some Pharisees. The Pharisees themselves sent a contingency to check out John also, as we see a separate question from them in v.24 specifically about baptism because the Pharisees were the religious rule keepers – John you are doing something we did not prescribe.

But here's the thing: both of these groups are checking on John because they think they have the authority to make judgments on others. They think they are the ones who have the answers, and whether they realized it or they essentially had

### ***Self-appointed themselves as a Saviour (vv.19-25)***

Asking John, "Who are you?", implies we are in charge here, who are you to come along and say things we haven't authorized you to say or do. People in positions of power and influence often act like they are the one who are the right people to decide what everyone's best interests are. Governments certainly do and so do religious authorities and now every individual is invited to 'find who they are' and redefine who they are. Which, if you think about, it is a Saviour mentality. I can save myself. I can reinvent myself. I can be whatever I want to be because I know myself better than anyone else.

Which is totally not true. Each one of us has a sinful nature. We constantly bend things in our favour, and view things from the way we want to see them – we as Christians struggle with this too. But we're not our own Saviours, we don't have all the answers and we certainly don't know what's best for us. John had a very clear understanding of his identity – I am not the Saviour. John knew what they were thinking even before they said the word, messiah or Saviour;

*"He did not fail to confess but confessed freely, I am not the Christ/Messiah"*

Twice John used the word confess to emphasize who he was not. They asked him if he was Elijah because Malachi 4 tells us Elijah will precede the Messiah's coming before the Day of the Lord/tribulation judgment. John says no he wasn't even though Zechariah, his father, was told by the angel Gabriel in Luke 1 that he would come in the *"spirit and power of Elijah"* to turn people's hearts towards each other because they are turning to God. Jesus would later say, if you believe it John is the Elijah to come, only if you believe Jesus is the Messiah who has come. And when Jesus returns in the future Day of the Lord, Elijah literally will come Himself.

Why did John not say 'Yes' concerning whether he was Elijah? Perhaps out of humility or perhaps, like Jesus would not come out and say who he was, John was letting his words and ministry speak for themselves so that those who have ears to hear would understand.

When pressed John uses Scripture to speak regarding himself quoting Is. 40 in v.23,

*, "I am the voice of one calling in the desert, 'Make straight the way for the Lord.' "*

John said I am not the Saviour; I'm just here to point you to the Saviour. That's a good reminder for all of us; we're not the saviour. And you're thinking, well of course I'm not. But then why do we sometimes think we're the Saviours of our families. If I don't do this or that, they won't be saved, they won't become all that I [I mean God] wants them to be. Or the Saviours of our workplaces, or even the Saviours of our country. 'You know if we as believers don't rise up and act our country will be destroyed.' That's 'we're the saviour speech'. Or the Saviors of the world, 'You know if believers don't get people saved then how can Jesus set up His rule?'

There are elements of truth to all those ideas but my family's salvation is not up to you and me. My country and the world's salvation are not up to you and me. God is still on His throne and Jesus is still the Saviour of the world and He has a plan and is working it in His time and His way. Using you and me to accomplish His purposes, but not pulling His hair out because we're not doing our part.

While many self-appointed saviours were trying to tell John he wasn't doing God's work right, John was quite confident in his role as a preparer for the Saviour because

### ***He was self-abased (vv.26-28)***

John did not place the weight of the world on his own shoulders. 'I'm here to help you get ready to meet the Saviour'. In a few verses, he's going to point people to Jesus for the purpose that they follow Jesus and not him. In Ch. 3 well-meaning followers of John will say 'Hey, Jesus' followers are baptizing more than we are.' John's response is, "*He must increase, I must decrease*". Life is not about you or me. The sooner we learn that the better we'll enjoy life. We'll let go of trying to be our own Saviour and trust God and Jesus to run the world and our lives. Not that we don't have a part to play in all this, of course we do. But it's not up to us to change people. That's God's job.

The Pharisees were annoyed at John because he was practising a different baptism than what they taught. While there were ritual cleansings that the Jews would practice themselves if they were ceremonially unclean, baptism was usually reserved for Gentiles who wanted to convert to Judaism. Immersion symbolises you repented of your old way of life and identified with this new life. John took that imagery and now encouraged people to be immersed by him by repenting of their sinfulness believing that the Messiah was here. Ironically, the Pharisees were upset that John was baptizing Jews who the Pharisees believed they are already the people of God. This isn't much different than Christians who refuse to obey the Bible to be baptized after salvation, believing that their sprinkling as a child was sufficient.

John sees their unwillingness to believe the truth of his message and says he was not worthy to untie the sandal of the one he spoke about. A shocking statement because a rabbi could ask his teacher to do anything except untie his sandals. That's too lowly to do.

*<sup>29</sup> The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! <sup>30</sup> This is the one I meant when I said, 'A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.' <sup>31</sup> I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel."*

John now gets to reveal Jesus to Israel to tell them

## **If You Want to Be Saved You Need to Follow Jesus** **(1:29-35)**

Not you or someone else's religion or ideas but Jesus. John does not quote any verse in the Old Testament but his statement summarizes the shadow of what the Old Testament taught now pointing to the reality in Jesus. We saw how God initiated the sacrificial system of shedding blood to cover sins. That God provided a lamb to sacrifice in Isaac's place, which believing that applying the shed blood of the Passover lamb protected you from God's wrath and that one day God's servant would be pierced, crushed and slain for the sins of Israel.

On Wednesday night we also looked at Num. 28-29. There the priests were instructed that each day must start and end with the sacrifice of a lamb. Every day you were reminded that access to meet with God was only through the shed blood of a lamb. And on holy days you always offered more sacrifices, especially lambs. Lambs were slain every day to communicate you could have access to God.

But these were your lambs; people's lambs and it never stopped. Now John says, God's sinless, unblemished lamb will be sacrificed for the sins of the world. Are you tired of sacrifices? Are you ready for a new and living way into the presence of God? Then you must believe that you can't save yourself,

### ***Jesus alone solves the sin problem (vv.29-31)***

Not just Israel's sins for that day but for the whole world's sins for all time. Which includes your sins. This is the whole reason John came, to reveal to Israel (the people he was sent to) that Jesus was the Messiah who would die for their sins. And we have the same purpose as John. Reveal to the people we're sent to today to tell them Jesus alone solves their sin problem. But people don't know they have a sin problem. Well they do, they just don't call it that. It's called death. We all die because we all sin. How can we be spared from God's wrath after we die? Believe that Jesus is the One who paid for your sins. Believe repent and, change through thanksgiving how Jesus has saved you. Live a new Spirit-led life that reveals Jesus to others.

There's always doubters and John was ready for them in his day. John explained that

### ***God Himself affirmed who Jesus was (vv.32-35)***

When John baptized Jesus all four gospel writers affirmed God's witness to the event through His audible voice of saying 'This Is My Son' and through the visible witness of the Spirit's empowering Jesus by coming on Him like a dove.

The evidence of Jesus' deity, His sinlessness, His death, burial and resurrection are all over Scripture and history. Is it not ironic that we are being forced to rewrite history today or erase the parts we don't like? We reveal Jesus to others through our personal testimony of how Jesus changed us and through the evidence laid out in Scripture. This is what John was doing then and our task remains the same.

## **If We're Saved We are to Point People to Jesus** **(1:35-42)**

<sup>35</sup> The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. <sup>36</sup> When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God!" <sup>37</sup> When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. <sup>38</sup> Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, "What do you want?" They said, "Rabbi" (which means "Teacher"), "where are you staying?" <sup>39</sup> "Come," he replied, "and you will see." So they went and saw where he was staying, and they spent that day with him. It was about four in the afternoon.

Jesus invites His followers to come and see Him;

### ***To study His life (vv.36-39)***

The two men who had been listening to the words of John the Baptist were Andrew and most likely John himself. John the Baptist points Jesus out to them as the Lamb of God. Jesus invites them to come and see where He lived. Which was another way of saying 'spend some time with Me and see what I do and listen to what I teach.' They spent the day with Jesus.

You and I have an open invitation every day to go to God's Word and spend time with Jesus getting to know Him more. If you want to get to know someone you have to spend time with them or read about their life.

The disciples of Rabbis lived with the Rabbi or would at least travel with him from sunup to sundown. By doing so they would not only hear their teaching but also see how they lived according to that teaching. Andrew and John spend the day with Jesus. John the Baptist indicated Jesus was God's lamb; the sacrifice that would soon pay for everyone's sins. After spending only one day with Jesus Andrew concludes He is the Messiah.

Jesus invites us to come and see Him every day in His Word. Sometimes we use substitutes for the Word for our spiritual growth. We may read the Daily Bread every day but maybe not God's Word. If you truly read the Daily Bread every day you know that it points you to the Word of God.

Others substitute Christian books for the Word of God. Really good Christian books help us live out the word of God and redirect us back to the Word itself. Not every Christian book is in line with the Word of God.

Others substitute Christian music and hymns for the Word of God. Good Christian music teaches us God's Word and how to respond to God and His Word but it's not a substitute for the Word. These are all tools for the Word of God.

<sup>40</sup> Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. <sup>41</sup> The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). <sup>42</sup> And he brought him to Jesus.

Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas" (which, when translated, is Peter).

The "first thing" Andrew does is tell his brother that Jesus is the Messiah. And then he brought Simon to Jesus. Why would Simon go? Because he knew his brother and saw something had happened to him to convince him that he had found the Messiah. This is what evangelism is:

### ***Witnessing to others how Jesus changed your life (vv.40-42)***

Can people tell Jesus has is changing your life? Not just by the things we don't do or by the fact that we go to church (which most people don't do) but like Andrew they hear you talk about who Jesus is, how He's saved your sins and given you eternal life and how thankful you are that you want to live for His purposes and make your life about Him and not yourself.

And essentially say to our unsaved friends and family, 'Behold Jesus, the lamb of God who takes away your sins and the world's'.

We must decrease, He must increase. We are not Saviours of the world or our own lives. We are not worthy to wash Jesus' feet yet He humbled Himself to die for our sins and my neighbour, friends', brother, and sister's sins. We need to read about and study His life more so we can remain in Him and bear more fruit. We need to keep meeting together so we can encourage one another all the more as we see the day approaching. And we need to clear the road and remove the obstacles so people can see Jesus and be saved.

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If you have any questions or comments about this message please  
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