

**Find Life in the Son:
Sent to Make Jesus Known
John 1:24-34**

Introduction

People were flocking to John the Baptist from Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region of the Jordan river, being baptized by him and confessing their sins (Matthew 3). Tax collectors, soldiers, and prostitutes repented and believed, asking how their lives should change. His ministry was so extraordinary that the people were wondering whether he might even be the long-expected Messiah. *No one still living in all Israel had ever seen anything like it. It had been four long centuries since God had sent a prophet to them. And now a prophet greater than any before him has come on the scene.*

But in the crowd were also those John called vipers, self-righteous in their superiority, and unrepentant of their sins. The supernatural work God was doing through John was a threat to their civil and religious power. They were there to confront this rogue prophet on behalf of powerful men back in Jerusalem and to put him to the test. We read about some of their questions last week. They were trying to figure out who he was. His answer?

Not the Messiah, not Elijah, not the prophet Moses foretold would come.

John 1:23

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."

That answer led to their asking what right he had to be baptizing at all.

²⁴ (Now they had been sent from the Pharisees.) ²⁵ They asked him, "Then why are you baptizing, if you are neither the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?" ²⁶ John answered them, "I baptize with water, but among you stands one you do not know, ²⁷ even he who comes after me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie." ²⁸ These things took place in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

²⁹ The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! ³⁰ This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was before me.'
³¹ I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel." ³² And John bore witness: "I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him.
³³ 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.'

34 And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God."

Earlier in chapter 1 we find these words about John's mission:

John 1:6-8

6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. **7** He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. **8** He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.

John had been sent to make Jesus known. If we are to understand who Jesus really is, we must listen to the testimony John the Baptist gave. Who did he proclaim Jesus to be?

1. The Sin-Removing Lamb of God (29)
2. The Exalted Baptizer with the Spirit (26-27, 30-33)
3. The Spirit-anointed Son of God (34)

1. The Sin-Removing Lamb of God (29)

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

The Lamb of God immediately calls to mind God's institution of the Passover. On the night before the Israelites left the slavery of Egypt God brought down on Egypt one final plague: the death of the firstborn. Only those households who had smeared the blood of an

unblemished lamb on their doorposts and lintels were delivered from the death of their firstborn. They were passed over. God made it a yearly festival to remind Israel how He delivered them with a mighty arm from their slavery to Egypt—and from the death angel bringing judgment on the land.

The whole sacrificial system God instituted through Moses called for killing an innocent life in place of guilty lives to atone for sin. Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

But Jesus is THE Lamb of God—the ultimate Lamb toward which all the lambs on Jewish altars slain had pointed. They were only symbolic of the sacrifice that could actually take away human sin. This is the Lamb that God Himself has provided to take away our sin, the very one Isaiah 53 foretold would come:

Isaiah 53:5, 7

⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.

⁷ He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.

Jesus came not just to take away the sin of Jewish worshipers, but the sin of the world. John Calvin made these comments on John 1:29:

"Every kind of unrighteousness which alienates men from God is taken away by Christ. And when he says the sin OF THE WORLD, he extends this favor indiscriminately to the whole human race; that the Jews might not think that he had been sent to them alone. . . . The whole world is involved in the same condemnation; . . . all men without exception are guilty of unrighteousness before God, they need to be reconciled to him. John the Baptist . . . intended to impress upon us the conviction of our own misery, and to exhort us to seek the remedy. Now our duty is to embrace the benefit which is offered to all." And to do so with faith that Jesus Christ can and will do what He as the Lamb of God came to do.

John is not teaching that all will be saved from their sin. That's universalism. Christ and His apostles clearly teach that many will be eternally condemned, but all who trust in Him as their Savior, their sacrificial Lamb, are washed from their sin and completely released from condemnation.

The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world—this is how John the Baptist first introduces Jesus. His divine mission is to take

away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. Redemption from sin and its curse of suffering and death depends on Him. There is no other Redeemer. There is no other way to clear sin from our record before God. There is no other way to wash it from our souls. *Any form of so-called Christianity that sees Jesus as merely a good example and great teacher is not the Christianity of the NT. It is mere manmade religion, as powerless to remove sin as any other form of self-improvement or human ceremony.*

We tend either to make our sin insignificant or to be overwhelmed with despair about it. The coming of Jesus is the answer to both issues. If the sin of the world required the atoning death of the Lamb of God—Jesus the God-man, the eternal Word, the light and life of humanity, then it is no small matter. It is our worst crisis, our greatest plague.

But with the coming of Jesus we find certain hope to be freed from our worst crisis and greatest plague. Just as the Israelites applied the blood to the lintel and doorposts of their homes and were thereby spared the deadly judgment of death angel passing over the land, so we are spared from the wrath of God our sin deserves. The blood of the Lamb washes us clean.

1 John 1:5-10

⁵ This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. ⁶ If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. ⁷ But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. ⁸ If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

The redemption Christ brings goes further yet. One day all the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to the curse of sin.

Romans 8:20-21

²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

2 Peter 3:13

But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

Applications

- What sins do you need to turn away from?
- What have you done about your sin guilt? Are you trying to bear it yourself or excuse it as unimportant?

Bearing it yourself will crush you with despair. Excusing it will lead you to prideful self-righteousness. Either way, sin will continue to reign over you. Look to Jesus the Lamb of God to take away your sin guilt and stain.

2. The Exalted Baptizer with the Spirit (26-27, 30-33)

²⁶ John answered them, "I baptize with water, but among you stands one you do not know, ²⁷ even he who comes after me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie."

³⁰ This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was before me.' ³¹ I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel."

³² And John bore witness: "I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. ³³ 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.'"

Who has authority to baptize? What mode are they to use? Ceremonial questions. Many people obsess over the ceremonies of religion and miss the core issue.

Baptizing people with water can only symbolize their cleansing. It can wash their bodies but not their souls. It cannot give them life. Only God can give spiritual life.

John the Baptist was a servant of God, but he was not the Life-giver. Jesus is. That's why John said he was not worthy to do even the lowliest of tasks for Jesus—that of untying his sandals. John was the greatest of the prophets according to Jesus. But he could not compare to the greatness of Jesus, the Son of God.

John was practicing what the Jews practiced when a Gentile converted to worshiping the God of Israel. It was a way of identifying with the worshipers of the true and living God. But John was baptizing Jews as well as Gentiles. That caught the Pharisees attention. It just was not done. They did not think Jews needed to be baptized.

But John wants them to understand that no ritual can make a person clean on the inside or bring life to a person dead in trespasses and sins. Only the Spirit of God can do that. And Jesus the Messiah is the one who came to give the Spirit to those who trust in Him.

John 7:37-39

³⁷ On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.

³⁸ Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" ³⁹ Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

Nothing less than being born again by the Spirit will do.

John 3:3-8

³ Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." ⁴ Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" ⁵ Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. ⁶ That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷ Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' ⁸ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."

Romans 8:9

You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.

Applications

- What are some ways people—maybe you?—try to find spiritual life apart from Jesus?
- If you are trusting in Jesus, what evidence do you see in your life of the Spirit's life in you—such as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control (fruit of the Spirit)?

Or is all you can point to ceremonial correctness? Clothing, diet (John was an outsider on both.), music style, Bible translation, service times and orders, organizational skill, website attractiveness—these have their place, but they are not what matters most. Is there spiritual life? Those who obsess over the external ceremonies are often blind to the supernatural spiritual work of God.

3. The Spirit-anointed Son of God (34)

And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.

Matthew 3:16-17

16 And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; **17** and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

Isaiah 61:1

The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound.

Jesus preached in the synagogue of His hometown of Nazareth that He was the fulfillment of this very prophecy.

The Old Testament taught that the Messiah, the Lord's Anointed One—Anointed with the Spirit, would be the Son of God whom God the Father has appointed King of the earth.

Psalms 2

1 Why do the nations rage

and the peoples plot in vain?

2 The kings of the earth set themselves,

and the rulers take counsel together,

against the LORD and against his Anointed, saying,

3 "Let us burst their bonds apart
and cast away their cords from us."
4 He who sits in the heavens laughs;
the Lord holds them in derision.
5 Then he will speak to them in his wrath,
and terrify them in his fury, saying,
6 "As for me, I have set my King
on Zion, my holy hill."
7 I will tell of the decree:
The LORD said to me, "You are my Son;
today I have begotten you.
8 Ask of me, and I will make the nations your
heritage,
and the ends of the earth your possession.
9 You shall break them with a rod of iron
and dash them in pieces like a potter's
vessel."
10 Now therefore, O kings, be wise;
be warned, O rulers of the earth.
11 Serve the LORD with fear,
and rejoice with trembling.
12 Kiss the Son,
lest he be angry, and you perish in the way,
for his wrath is quickly kindled.
Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

The enemies of Jesus knew this Scripture and used it in their illegal nighttime trial of Jesus. They condemned Him to death because of He confessed to being the Messianic King the OT foretold would come.

Matthew 26:63-68

63 And the high priest said to him, "I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God." **64** Jesus said to him, "You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven." [Daniel 7 regarding the Messiah coming with the Ancient of Days as the Judge of the world and King of an everlasting kingdom of the saints] **65** Then the high priest tore his robes and said, "He has uttered blasphemy. What further witnesses do we need? You have now heard his blasphemy. **66** What is your judgment?" They answered, "He deserves death." **67** Then they spit in his face and struck him. And some slapped him, **68** saying, "Prophecy to us, you Christ! Who is it that struck you?"

They hated Him for being the very Person that He was. Earlier Jesus had told them in John 8:23-24

23 He said to them, "You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. **24** I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins."

How different the fate of those who do believe in Him for Who He really is—the Person that John the Baptist was sent to make known.

Making much of Jesus is what mattered to John, because that is the chief concern.

1 John 5:11-12

11 And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

12 Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

Applications

- What are some common misconceptions people you know have about who Jesus is?
- What could you do to make the true Jesus known to them?

Conclusion

Do you know the true Jesus?

1. The Sin-Removing Lamb of God (29)
2. The Exalted Baptizer with the Spirit (26-27, 30-33)
3. The Spirit-anointed Son of God (34)

Then follow John's example and make Him known!

Closing Song: Beautiful Savior

Summary of Applications

- What sins do you need to turn away from?
- What have you done about your sin guilt? Are you trying to bear it yourself or excuse it as unimportant?
Bearing it yourself will crush you with despair. Excusing it will lead you to prideful self-righteousness. Either way, sin will continue to reign over you.
- What are some ways people—maybe you?—try to find spiritual life apart from Jesus?
- If you are trusting in Jesus, what evidence do you see in your life of the Spirit's life in you—such as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control (fruit of the Spirit)?
- What are some common misconceptions people you know have about who Jesus is?
- What could you do to make the true Jesus known to them?

Additional discussion question

- Who are some persons you want to introduce to Jesus (or are already in the process of doing so) for whom the group can pray?