

## Behold the Lamb of God: John 1:19-34

### Scriptures for Today:

*John 1:19-34 And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou? 20 And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ. 21 And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No. 22 Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself? 23 He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias. 24 And they which were sent were of the Pharisees. 25 And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet? 26 John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not; 27 He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose. 28 These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing. 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. 30 This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me. 31 And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. 32 And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. 33 And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. 34 And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.*

### Introduction

We are back in the book of John, this is the 43<sup>rd</sup> book of the Bible. It has 21 chapters. This book was written by the Apostle John, one of the twelve disciples of Jesus Christ. He also wrote 4 other books: 1, 2, 3 John, and Revelation. This book is one of the 4 gospel accounts. The gospels are Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Each one tells the story of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection from different perspectives. It's important to study all of these books very closely so you can understand the events of Jesus' life. Is there anything more important in life than to know and understand God's Word?

The book of John is an absolutely amazing book of the Bible (every Word of God is amazing) but this book is special because it gives us a very clear reason for why this book was written...

**John 20:31** But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

This book was written specifically so that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ. He is The anointed Savior above all. He is the Son of God. And that believing you might have life through His name. Eternal life comes only through Jesus. John wanted all of us to know that. Because of John's faithfulness we are all here this morning and we are able to hear the same Words that have brought salvation to millions upon millions of people. God gets all the Glory!

Another thing about the book of John is that it is full of testimony and witness. The idea of bearing record, being a witness or testifying is a major theme that we see.

In a courtroom, evidence is brought forward, witnesses are called to the stand, and testimonies are given to determine the truth. In this book of John, we are presented with undeniable evidence and testimony that Jesus is who He says He is.

We see John the Baptist bearing witness.

The works of Christ himself bear witness.

The Father bears witness.

The Scriptures bear witness.

The disciples bear witness.

## Recap of John 1:1-18

- John does not begin with Jesus' birth on earth, but with Jesus in eternity.

**John 1:1** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

- Jesus is the Word — eternal, with God, and fully God.
- Jesus is the Creator — all things were made by Him.
- Jesus is life and the Light of men.

Think about how evil, wicked, and hopeless this world would be without Jesus Christ.

- The darkness could not overcome, extinguish, or comprehend that Light.
- John the Baptist was not the Light; he was sent to bear witness of the Light.
- The Creator came into His own world, yet the world knew Him not.
- He came unto His own people, and His own received Him not.

Imagine a very successful CEO of a company who builds a business from the ground up. He takes very good care of his employees. He pays them very well. Gives them awesome benefits and vacation time. Treats them exceptionally. He goes above and beyond. And then imagine one day if that CEO walked into his own company and the employees physically assaulted him and threw him out of his own building. After everything He did for them, his own workers did not recognize him for who he was and they treated him like garbage.

God is not a CEO. He is THE CREATOR. His own creation, Jesus' own people, according to the flesh, despised Him and received Him not. They rejected Him.

- But all who receive Him by believing on His name are given power to become the sons of God.
- Salvation is not by blood, flesh, works, or man's will, but by being born of God.

- The great miracle of the passage is that the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.
- In Jesus, we behold glory, grace, and truth. He is the only begotten of the Father.

If you want grace and truth in your life, you don't turn to other men and women in this world. You won't find grace and truth from other human beings. You turn to Jesus for grace and truth.

- The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.
- Jesus is the One who declares the Father — if you want to know what God is like, look at Jesus.

In the opening 18 verses of John, we saw who Jesus is: the eternal Word, God in the flesh, the true Light, the giver of life, and the full revelation of the Father. Now beginning in verse 19, John moves from that great introduction to the public witness of John the Baptist, who is sent to identify and point people to Jesus.

## Verses 19 – 20

**John 1:19-20** And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou? **20** And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ.

Now we are hearing about the record of John the Baptist. This is his testimony and his witness of the Savior, Jesus Christ. This verse shows us how important and how powerful John's ministry had become.

Everyone knew something major was happening. In Matthew 3 it says Jerusalem and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan went out to see John in the wilderness. Everyone wanted to hear what he had to say. His preaching was drawing crowds from all walks of life.

We see in this passage that the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him who he was. They are coming to question him. These are not random men. These were the religious authorities. These were the men who should have known the scriptures and were responsible for teaching the law, preserving truth, and helping people understand the things of God.

And yet when John appears, they do come prepared with discernment. They are confused. They were not comprehending what was taking place. If they had known and believed the Scriptures, they should not have been spiritually blindsided by what was happening.

The Old Testament had already said:

There would be a **messenger** that would prepare the way of the Lord  
There would be a **voice crying in the wilderness**  
The Lord Himself would come

So when John the Baptist shows up in the wilderness preaching repentance, saying unto the people that they should believe on Jesus Christ, this should have caused the religious leaders to say: “This is exactly what we were told in the Scriptures”

**Isaiah 40:3** The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

**Malachi 3:1** Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me...

But instead, they come asking questions as if they are spiritually blinded. Many people realized what was happening. But the priests didn't have a clue. They were asking John if he was the Christ. But John confessed that he is not the Christ.

This is an important reminder that truth will be forgotten if it is not faithfully passed down from one generation to the next.

We see an example of this in the book of Judges...

**Judges 2:8-10** And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, *being* an hundred and ten years old. **9** And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnath-heres, in the mount of Ephraim, on the north side of the hill Gaash. **10** And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel.

That verse is one of the saddest in the Bible. It does not mean they had never heard the name of God. It means they did not truly know Him. The knowledge of God had not been faithfully impressed upon the next generation. That same kind of failure shows up here in John 1.

These priests and Levites should have been men saturated with the promises of God. They should have been telling the people:

- Watch for the messenger
- Watch for the coming King
- Watch for the fulfillment of prophecy

Instead, when it begins to happen, they are scrambling to figure out who John is. That is a sign that truth was not being diligently passed down from generation to generation. It was being passed down diligently among some (a remnant of those who had faith in God). But the very ones who were given the responsibility to keep the knowledge of God and have the law of truth in their mouths (the Levite priests) had failed.

For all of us here today...When truth is not clearly taught, clearly believed, and clearly passed down, the next generation will not be ready when error comes or when God's truth stands right in front of them.

If parents, pastors, and leaders do not pass truth down faithfully, the next generation may keep the religion but lose the understanding.

So John the Baptist confessed that he is not the Christ. Look at the next verse...

## Verses 21 – 23

**John 1:21-23** And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No. **22** Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself? **23** He said, I *am* the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias.

So the priests and levites are continuing to interrogate John. They ask three more identity related questions:

Are you Elias? Are you that prophet? If not, who are you?

These men had pieces of prophecy in their minds, but they were not putting them together rightly. They did not understand what God was doing right in front of them.

That is a danger even today. A person can know prophetic terms, Bible names, and religious language, and still completely miss the plain meaning of Scripture.

Elias is the Greek form of Elijah. So they were asking John, "Are you Elijah?" Why would they think that John might be Elijah? Elijah was a prophet who did mighty works for the Lord in the old testament. But Elijah was long gone. He was taken up by a whirlwind into heaven hundreds of years ago. These priests knew the scriptures, however they did not understand the scriptures.

**Malachi 4:5** Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD:

At the very end of the Old Testament, God says He will send Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD:

The priests had an expectation that Elijah would literally come back from heaven. That's why they are asking John if He is Elijah. John answered No, he is not Elijah. Which was the truth.

Even though John was not Elijah himself, he came in the spirit of Elijah. That prophecy in Malachi was referring to John the Baptist.

**Matthew 17:10-13** And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come? **11** And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things. **12** But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them. **13** Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist.

John was not literally Elijah, but he did come in an Elijah-like ministry, in the spirit and power of Elijah, fulfilling the role of the promised messenger before Jesus.

The priests also asked John if he was that prophet? Which prophet? The prophet that God promised would come in Deuteronomy 18...

**Deuteronomy 18:15** The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken;

This is a direct prophecy of Jesus Christ. The priests were asking John was he this prophet that Moses spoke of? The answer was no. John could of said yes, like many people today. They say I'M THE MAN OF GOD. But John was humble. He said no, I am NOT the Christ. I am NOT Elijah in the flesh. I am NOT that prophet. He's stripping away every false idea that people may have about him.

So the question is Who. Art. thou?

John's identity is very simple, but they cannot see it because they are looking for titles and personalities more than prophecy and truth. They want John to define himself in some exalted way. People love following after and being associated with men of power and influence instead of elevating the Creator.

But John will not exalt himself. He has one job to do. He does not say:  
I am a great revival preacher, I am a mighty prophet, I am the reformer that Israel needs.  
Instead he gives one humble answer:

**23** He said, I *am* the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias.

John describes himself as the voice of one crying in the wilderness. He is quoting Isaiah 40:3  
The voice is not focused on itself. It has one job. To make straight the way of the Lord.

## Verses 24 – 27

**John 1:24-27** And they which were sent were of the Pharisees. **25** And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet? **26** John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not; **27** He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose.

John told them very plainly who he was. If they believed the scriptures, they would have understood what was happening. Their focus wasn't on whether the message was true, or whether prophecy was being fulfilled. They weren't concerned about hearts being prepared to receive the Savior.

They are more concerned about by what authority he is baptizing? You're not the Christ. You're not that prophet. So why are YOU baptizing?

**26** John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not; **27** He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose.

John's baptism was preparatory. He was only dealing with water. Getting people ready. Notice how he's constantly taking the focus off himself and onto Jesus. He says I'm not even worthy of taking off his shoes. (That's a dirty and lowly job to take people's shoes off) That's how you want to be in your life. The world doesn't revolve around us and what we want. It revolves around Him.

## Verse 28

**John 1:28** These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing.

You might look at this verse and think it's not that important. "It's just giving us a location." But remember every word of God is important. This area of the Jordan River is very significant.

This is the area where Israel crossed the Jordan and entered into the promised land, near Jericho. So this is not just some random place on a map. This is an area connected with a great turning point in Israel's history, when God brought His people across Jordan and into the land He had promised them.

And now, in that same general region, John the Baptist is preaching and baptizing, preparing the way for Jesus Christ. This is another great turning point. Israel once crossed the Jordan to enter the promised land, and now John is standing near that same area calling people to prepare for the coming of Jesus Christ. That makes this location very fitting. God is once again doing something major in the history of His people.

## Verse 29 - 31

**John 1:29** The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

Everything John had been doing—his preaching, his baptizing, his whole ministry, his whole life—had been leading up to this moment, when he could publicly point at Jesus Christ and say, "Behold the Lamb of God." This is one of the greatest titles given to Jesus in all the Bible.

John does not say: Behold the King of Israel, Behold the Prophet, Behold the Miracle Worker. Though all of those things would be true. He says **Behold the Lamb of God.** That title immediately brings in the whole sacrificial system of the Old Testament.

It brings to mind: the Passover lamb, the daily sacrifices, the sin offerings...

**Isaiah 53:7** ...he is brought as a **lamb** to the slaughter...

**Genesis 22:8** And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a **lamb** for a burnt offering...

Everything that was foretold in old times was finally coming to pass.

John is announcing that Jesus came to be a sacrifice for ALL sins, once and for all. The Lamb of God has finally been revealed. Nothing can take the place of our perfect Savior. John continues...

**John 1:30-31** This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me. **31** And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water.

John is connecting all of his previous preaching to the person of Jesus Christ. "Everything I have been telling you, it is all about Him."

John tells the people that Jesus is preferred before him. He's saying don't look at me anymore. He is much higher than me. John says He was before him. That's pointing to Jesus' eternal existence as God.

Then he goes on to clearly explain his entire purpose for baptizing.

**31** And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water.

So again, everything that John did, it was all done to manifest or clearly reveal Jesus Christ to Israel. There was no more uncertainty. John's mission was complete.

And we've said this before, but the reason Baptist is in the name of our church is because our mission is the same as John the Baptists' mission. Our number one goal is to point as many people as we can to the savior.

**2 Corinthians 4:5** For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.

**John 3:30** He must increase, but I *must* decrease.

## Verse 32 – 34

**John 1:32-34** And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. **33** And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. **34** And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.

Now John the Baptist is bearing record of the day that he baptized Jesus. He is acting as a witness called by God to identify Christ publicly. This is an account of what he personally saw and what God revealed.

He says, “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him.

God himself told John to look for this sign. The one that the Spirit of God descends upon and remains, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. John could prepare people externally, but Jesus alone can give the Spirit of God.

So John’s witness is not based on assumption or personal preference. It’s based on direct revelation from God and he personally saw the appointed sign that God told him to look for.

And after seeing it, John reaches the great conclusion of his testimony...  
And I saw, and bare record that this. Is. the Son of God.

What an awesome testimony. Go through and read this record in Matthew 3, Mark 1, and Luke 3 and see how they all match up. Compare them and study it. It’s so important. *Example of vain things. Thunder over Louisville. Thousands of people can show up to look at flashing lights in the sky...*

So in John 1:19–34, the witness of John the Baptist is clear. He is not the Christ, but only the voice. Jesus is the Lamb of God, the One preferred before John, the One made manifest to Israel, the One upon whom the Spirit descended and remained, and the One who baptizes with the Holy Ghost. And John’s final testimony is unmistakable: this is the Son of God.

## Application

### 1. Pass truth down faithfully to the next generation

The priests should have recognized the messenger. They should have recognized the fulfillment of prophecy. But they did not. That shows what happens when truth is not clearly taught, clearly believed, and faithfully handed down. Like in Judges, one generation can arise that knows the language of religion but does not truly know the God through faith.

If we do not teach our children the truth with love and humility, then the next generation might keep the form of religion and lose the understanding of it. We see that all over.

**2. Do not mistake religion for truly knowing Christ**

The priests, Levites, and Pharisees were surrounded by Scripture, and religious activity, and yet they did not recognize what God was doing right in front of them. He said “there standeth one among you whom ye know not” They had knowledge of the scriptures, but they did not know Jesus because they did not have faith. It is possible to grow up around church, hear the Bible, and be active in religious things, while still missing Jesus Himself.

**3. Make Jesus preferred above all things in your life.**

John the Baptist said Jesus was preferred before him. He said he was not worthy to unloose His shoe. He humbled himself and lifted everything above Jesus.

The goal of our life should not be to make ourselves known, Jesus is preferred above all things. Elevate Him to His proper place in your life.

**4. Obey God’s divine commission.**

John was given a task, a divine commission, directly from God to baptize with water. The reason he baptized was to reveal Jesus to all of Israel. Just like John the Baptist, God has given us a divine commission today.

Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

That’s our job here at this Church and in our lives. We point people to Jesus.

For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord. If you ever see that mission starting to change here, don’t be afraid to sound the alarm. Don’t be afraid to come to us and say “We’re losing focus on the mission”

Let’s encourage one another to keep preaching the gospel and keep Jesus the #1 priority in your life.

Let’s Pray