

Message 40 -- JOHN 1:29-34

Passage:

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.

Exposition:

When you try to understand any book, one of the most important things you need to determine is why the book was written. In the case of John's Gospel in the Bible, the reason is clear and obvious. In verse 31 of the 20th Chapter, John openly states his purpose, "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."

So, John wrote his Gospel to convince you that Jesus Christ is the Son of God! And he begins by calling you to be a jury in a courtroom, where he intends to call a series of witnesses who will testify to the truth about Jesus.

The first witness he calls is John the Baptist. Now, John the Baptist is a scary figure. Just when you thought everything was going to go on just like it always had before, just when you figured God is an irrelevant myth, here comes the first prophet that has been sent to Israel in over 600 years! And John is NOT pleasant! He calls you a sinner and says you need to repent! Who IS this bum who wanders around in the desert in a camel-hair coat, living off the land and shouting epithets and slogans like some demented scarecrow?

But this mad prophet's words strangely tug at your heartstrings and you can't turn away even if you want to. It's all just too

fascinating and compelling! And then, here he is in your courtroom, and his testimony begins:

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.

What does that mean? Well, first of all, we need to note that John the Baptist is testifying that the entire world is trapped in sin; that all mankind has become guilty before God. Isaiah tells us that there is "none righteous, no not one; there is none that seeketh after God. All we have gone astray." And, "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" before God.

And if you do not like to be told the truth about sin, it is a sure sign that your heart is not right with God. It is still true that "every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd."

But, before you get too angry about this truth that every one in the world is trapped by sin, take a look at the greater truth: Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. We may be trapped in sin; there may be nothing we can do to get out of that trap; but the Lamb of God can take that sin away and free us from the trap!

John the Baptist's testimony doesn't just suggest that we take a look at Jesus, though. It commands us to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, trust in Him as our Savior, accept what God revealed in the Bible, and rely upon Him to save us! This IS the way of salvation.

30 This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me.

In the courtroom of John's Gospel there is a continual contrast between truthful witnesses and false witnesses. The false witnesses often tried to make themselves look more important than they actually were. But John the Baptist readily subjected himself to the truth.

Consider what John the Baptist said about himself. He saw himself as the best man in the wedding. Jesus is the bridegroom. The one who hears and believes is the bride. John the Baptist's job was to see to it that the marriage occurred successfully, without attracting attention to himself in the process. The bride doesn't take on the best man's name. She belongs to the bridegroom.

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

God had told John the Baptist that his job was to prepare the way for the coming Messiah. That was the primary purpose of his ministry. His calls for repentance were secondary: his primary purpose was to introduce Jesus to Israel as the Son of God.

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.

John the Baptist probably knew Jesus, at least somewhat: they were relatives after all. But he indicates here that he did not know Jesus was the Christ until God revealed that fact to him at Jesus' baptism.

Then the Baptist caps his testimony with the greatest truth of all:

34 And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.

Is all this a little overwhelming? Do you feel that you are too far gone for Christ to save you? Do you feel you'll never understand it well enough to be saved?

Well, I have good news for you. You are NOT too far gone! You do NOT have to understand it all! All you have to do is Behold the Lamb of God, the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who taketh away the sin of the world!

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On Sunday evening, February 20th, 1870... at the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London... Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the Pastor of that Church, told a simple little story of what it means to "Behold the Lamb of God". This is his story:

"Behold the Lamb of God," says the text; then that command is opposed to the question that troubles so many, -- whether they are elect or not. That is like wanting to read Hebrew before one has learned to speak English. Such people are not content to learn the ABC, the elements, the rudiments of the gospel first, they want to

know the gospel's classics, or mathematics, or metaphysics first, but that cannot be.

During the recent hard frosts, I have struck an acquaintance with a little friend who, I am afraid, may desert me by-and-by, but our friendship has been exceedingly pleasant to each of us thus far. On the little balcony outside my study windows, I observed a robin frequently coming, so I took an opportunity, one morning, to put some crumbs there, and I have done the same thing every morning since; and my little feathered friend comes close up to the window frame, and picks up the crumbs, and I do not perceive that he has any difficulty about whether those crumbs were laid there for him, or whether I had an electing love towards him in my heart.

There were the crumbs, he wanted them, and he picked them up, and ate them; and I can tell you that, in doing so, he exactly fulfilled my purpose in putting the crumbs there. I thought that he acted very wisely; and I think that, if a poor sinner wants mercy, and he sees that there is mercy to be had, he had better not pause to ask, "Did God decree me to have it?" but go and take it, and he will then find that, in doing so, he is fulfilling God's decrees.

My little robin friend is very wise in his way, for he has called a friend of his to join him at the feast on the balcony. How he did it I do not know; but he managed to tell a blackbird all about the crumbs, and he brought him last Friday morning to see them for himself. The blackbird was rather shy at first, and stood for a while on the iron bar of the balcony; but after looking in at the study window, he hopped down, and neither he nor the robin asked whether it was my purpose that the blackbird should have any of the crumbs; but there were the crumbs, and they were both hungry, so they came and fed together.

So, if any of you find Jesus Christ for yourselves, and you know some poor soul who wants him, do not you begin asking whether it is God's purpose or decree that he also should find the Savior; you go and invite him to come to Jesus, and then both of you come to the Savior together; and then, just as the robin and the blackbird exactly fulfilled my purpose in throwing out the crumbs, so, when you and your friend too come to Christ, you will rejoice to find that you have both of you fulfilled the eternal purpose of the divine decree of the great heart of God.

It is not your business to look into the book of God's secret purposes, but to look to Christ, or, as our text puts it, to "behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

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John 1:29 says simply: Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

John 3:16 says: For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Acts 16:31 says: Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.

Romans 10:9 says: That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved...

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Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

Hallelujah! Amen!