

# THE LAMB WHO BECAME A SON

## JOHN 1:29-34

The ministry of John was that of a forerunner. He came on the scene, prophesying that One would come who would baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire. This would be the One who would be so great that John would not be worthy even to loosen His sandal. This is the One who would judge, not only the Gentiles, but the Jews as well. This is the One who had placed the axe at the root of the tree and who was ready to take the first swing and who would gather up the wheat into the barn, while burning up the chaff.

For days and weeks and perhaps even months, John continued to proclaim this message. Then one day, he points to a man who is walking along the way and says, “That man over there, He is the One!”

### JOHN’S WITNESS OF JESUS’ POSITION

*29 The next day he saw Jesus coming to him, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! 30 This is He on behalf of whom I said, ‘After me comes a Man who has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.’ 31 And I did not recognize Him, but in order that He might be manifested to Israel, I came baptizing in water.” (John 1:29-31).*

As our passage opens, John sees Jesus coming. From where is He coming? Although He had been the subject of the previous day’s discussion, it was nowhere stated that Jesus was actually present. On the contrary, it was implied that Jesus had not been on the scene. Where had He been?

I want to suggest that He had been in the wilderness. It had been 40 days since John had baptized Jesus. Since that time, Jesus had been in the wilderness, being tempted by the devil. The chronology I suggest is as follows:

Day	Events of that Day
1st Day	John baptizes Jesus in the Jordan River. Immediately after, Jesus goes into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.
40th Day	Satan appears before Jesus with three specific temptations. When Jesus resists these temptations, Satan leaves Him for a time.

	Meanwhile, back at the Jordan, John speaks to the delegation from Jerusalem about his ministry (John 1:19-28).
41st Day	John publicly introduces Jesus and describes the events that took place 41 days earlier at His baptism (John 1:29-.34).
42nd Day	John points out Jesus to two of his disciples and they follow Him, spending the day with Him. Later that day, one of them brings his brother, Simon, to Jesus (John 1:35-42).
43rd Day	Philip and Nathaniel meet Jesus (John 1:43-51).

The other three Synoptic Gospels give an account of that temptation with varying degrees of detail. John does not mention it. Instead he begins with the testimony of John the Baptist, seeing the events of the baptism of Jesus as a flashback as told by John the Baptist.

This brings us to a question. Why does John's Gospel tell us nothing of the temptation of Jesus? It is because that event is not central to John's theme. He is presenting Jesus as the Son of God. God cannot be tempted.

1. Jesus as the Lamb: *"Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! (1:29).*

As John the Baptist sees Jesus arriving on the scene, he points Him out and publicly announces His arrival. Notice the title that is used. He calls Him "the lamb of God."

Why was Jesus called a "Lamb?" There are a lot of other things that He might have been called.

- The Lion who reigns over sin
- The Elephant who crushes sin
- The Bear who destroys sin
- The Eagle who sees sin
- The.... Lamb?

Why a Lamb? I think that there are several reasons.

- Represents purity: *"Though your sins are as scarlet, they will be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they will be like WOOL" (Isaiah 1:18).*  
*"Knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things... but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the*

*blood of Christ” (1 Peter 1:18-19).*

- Gentleness: *“He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth; like a LAMB that is led to the slaughter, and like a SHEEP that is silent before its shearers, so He did not open His mouth” (Isaiah 53:7).*
- Represents a Sacrifice: *“...For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed” (1 Corinthians 5:7b).*

When a Hebrew living in Biblical times heard the word “lamb,” he thought immediately of a sacrifice. An innocent substitute. He knew that the only way he could ever approach God was upon the basis of a sacrifice. And that sacrifice was usually a lamb.

- One lamb for a man.
- One lamb for a family.
- One lamb for the nation.
- One Lamb for the world.

From the earliest times, the Jew had built an altar for sacrifice. To the altar would be brought a lamb, white and without blemish. The lamb would be laid across the altar and then, as it was held down, the Jewish man would quickly and deftly cut its throat.

As the blood spurted out upon the altar, the man would place his hand upon the head of the dying lamb, signifying that this lamb was being identified with his sins and that it was dying in his place.

Later it was the Tabernacle and then the Temple that became the center for sacrifices. It was here that the priests began to minister these sacrifices for the people of Israel. Even in the days of Jesus, lambs were still being brought each day to the temple to be sacrificed for sins.

However, there is something unique about the lamb that John now describes. The death of this lamb is to take away the sins of the entire world.

None of the other animal sacrifices had ever done this. A lamb could be slain for the sins of a man. A lamb might occasionally be slain for the sins of a family. There were even times when a lamb was sacrificed for the sins of the entire nation. But there had never been a sacrifice for the sins of the world.

The Jews understood this concept. They understood the principle of a

substitutionary sacrifice. Isaiah had spoken of One who would come to take sins upon Himself. Isaiah had used this same comparison of a lamb.

*6 All of us like sheep have gone astray,  
Each of us has turned to his own way;  
But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all  
To fall on Him.  
7 He was oppressed and He was afflicted,  
Yet He did not open His mouth;  
Like a lamb that is led to slaughter,  
And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers,  
So He did not open His mouth. (Isaiah 53:6-7).*

This was the prophecy of the Messiah. It was a prophecy that was fulfilled in the person of Jesus. He was the fulfillment of all of the sacrifices of the Old Testament. He was the true Lamb of God. His death was able to put an end to sin in a way that no animal sacrifice ever could.

Every morning and evening sacrifice in the Temple pointed to Him. The Passover lamb foreshadowed Him. The bulls and calves slain on Yom Kippur were pictures of Him. The suffering lamb of Isaiah 53 prophesies concerning Him. Now John proclaims Him to be the lamb of God.

2. Jesus as the Higher Position: *"This is He on behalf of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.'"* (John 1:30).

We know that John was born before Jesus was born. He was a full six months older than Jesus. Luke's account makes this very clear. Yet John says that Jesus existed before Him.

John realized a great truth. He realized that the existence of Jesus preceded the birth of Jesus. This is the same truth described at the beginning of John's gospel account.

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God,  
and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. (John  
1:1).*

John had come to understand that the life of Jesus did not begin with His birth. The life of Jesus transcended any mortal birth.

3. Jesus as the Unrecognized: *And I did not recognize Him (1:31).*

Although they were related and their mothers appear to have been cousins, John the Baptist did not at first recognize Jesus as the Messiah. This is why he did not, from the beginning of his ministry, say, “I am here to proclaim the Messiah and you can find Him living over at 101 North Main Street in Nazareth, Galilee.

John did not know who the Messiah would be. He only knew that He was to prepare the way for the One who was coming.

## JOHN’S WITNESS TO JESUS’ BAPTISM

*32 And John bore witness saying, “I have beheld the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him. 33 And I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, ‘He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the one who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.’ 34 And I have seen, and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.” (John 1:32-34).*

John now proceeds to describe how he had baptized Jesus some 40 days earlier and the resulting events that took place at that time.

1. The Unexpectedness of the Witness: *And I did not recognize Him (1:33).*

Once again, John indicates that he did not have prior knowledge as to who the Messiah was supposed to be. He was surprised as anyone else when it turned out to be his cousin, Jesus. How, then, was he supposed to be able to identify the Messiah? It was through a sign that had been predicted.

2. The Sign Given to the Witness: *He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, ‘He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the one who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.’ (1:33).*

This is the sign that was to authenticate the Messiah to John. It was by this sign that John was able to confirm that Jesus was indeed the One who had been promised.

John the Baptist baptized a lot of people. That is how he got his name. But only in one case did the Holy Spirit descend and remain upon someone. That was Jesus.

3. The Testimony of the Witness: *And I have seen, and have borne witness that this is the Son of God (1:34).*

This is the first time John the Baptist has made this statement. He has called Jesus

the One who is coming. He has called Him the lamb of God. But this is the first time that John the Baptist has called Jesus the Son of God.

This brings us to a question. What do we mean when we say that Jesus is the Son of God? A son is one who is born from two parents. Although Jesus was born, His existence was and is eternal.

I believe the title of the Son of God emphasizes two truths about the person of Jesus.

- First, it emphasizes that the birth of Jesus came about through the intervention of God. The mother of Jesus was Mary, but He had no natural father except God. For this reason, He can truly be called the Son of God.
- Secondly, Jesus is the Son of God because He shares the very character and attributes and nature of God. Jesus was more than just a man made in the image of God. He was God become flesh.

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

*And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14).*

This brings us to another question. In what sense are believers called “sons of God?” In much the same way. On the one hand, Jesus is the unique Son of God in that He has always existed in the form of God while we have not had such a pre-existence. On the other hand, if you have believed in Jesus as your Lord and Savior, then something remarkable has taken place in your life. You have been given a position in Christ. You have been identified with Christ. The attributes of Jesus have been legally and judicially credited to you. Because of this, you have a share in the attributes of Jesus.

- Because He is righteous, you have been declared to be righteous (2 Corinthians 5:21).
- Because He has eternal life, you also share in that same eternal life (1 John 5:11-12).
- Because He has an inheritance, you also are an heir to the kingdom (1 Peter 1:3-5).

Because Jesus is the unique Son of God and because you have been identified with Jesus, you are also said to be the sons of God.

*26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.  
27 For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed  
yourselves with Christ. (Galatians 3:26-27).*

You have been baptized into Christ. That speaks of a new identity. You have ceased being the old person you were and now you have a new identity in Jesus Christ so that you are considered to be a son of the King.

There is a danger to being a son. It is that you might not always realize that you are a son. It is possible to hold the title of sonship and yet to not enjoy all of the benefits of being a son.

Have you ever read Alexander Dumas's book *The Man in the Iron Mask*? The book tells the fictional story of twins that are born to the royal house of France. In the process of events, one of these twins is taken and raised in the home of a common landowner. He is an heir to the throne, yet he is not aware of his position. He is not living in the palace. He receives no honor from the citizens of the country. He enjoys none of the luxuries of his position. We are like that man whenever we forget our position.

Are you living like a son of the kingdom? Your Father is the King of kings and Lord of lords. You can go to Him in confidence. Stand tall!