The Gospel of John

**7—A LAMB AND A SON – JOHN 1:29–36**

Life, in general, is subjective. You can take virtually any situation and look at it from different perspectives. Hearing the perspective of others can open your eyes to seeing things you’ve never seen before (or seeing the same thing, but in a fresh way). My wife has often “improved my view” by expressing what she sees through her lens. This started happening before we got married, but it especially kicked in afterward. For example, we would, on occasion, encounter a person who was very belligerent. His interactions with other people were grossly disrespectful, offensive and threatening. As a result of life’s circumstances and his own decisions, he became repulsive to society, sometimes being visibly dirty, and living in filth. My first mental response would go something like this: “Look at that person. Why does he act like that? Why doesn’t he take care of himself? Why is he so angry? Or lazy? Well, he’s probably getting what he deserves. You reap what you sow.” And then I’d glance over at my wife and she would have tears in her eyes. And then with a sad face and a tilt of her head, she’d look at me and say something like, “That’s somebody’s son.” Instantly my mental assault against him was disarmed. I felt as if I was carried to a home in a nearby city where I saw, through the living room window, a mother with a broken heart, sitting in a chair and starring aimlessly at the floor. In the other room was a father working to fix something relatively unimportant just to keep his mind busy to avoid remembering the times when he and his son had fun together. Both had such high hopes for their friendly, imaginative, intelligent little boy. But now their pride and joy had become the source of deep sorrow and relentless grief.

In today’s passage, the apostle John shares additional memories of things John the Baptist did and said. And this time they include him speaking of Jesus from two opposing perspectives. Both were true, and yet posed a contradiction. Jesus was worthy to be honored. And Jesus was worthy of death. Interestingly, it was the latter that caused two of John’s disciples, including the author of this Gospel, to follow Jesus.

Let’s read John 1:29–36.

**John 1:29–36 (ESV)** 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.” **35** The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, **36** and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God!”

V29.1 – (Day 2) “The next day”

The apostle John records a sequence of three days in which John the Baptist spoke about Jesus. Here they are:

**Day #1 was explained in Vv 19–28**

On the first day he assured the religious leaders who came out to the Jordan River that he was not the Messiah but simply a prophet sent by God to prepare the hearts of the people to receive the Messiah. Without identifying Jesus by name, he told them that the Messiah had already arrived; in fact he had seen Him among the crowds who had come to be baptized (v26).

**Day #2 (Jn 1:29–4)**

Verse 29 starts with the second day, and likely the day Jesus returned from His 40-day fast. He came back to speak with John the Baptist again. And when He did, John said, “This is the Person I’ve been talking about” (paraphrase).

**Day #3 (Jn 1:35–37)**

Finally, on the third day John saw and pointed out Jesus again, and two of his disciples, John and Andrew, decided they would try to meet Jesus and talk with Him. As He walked away, they followed after Him, and they never stopped following Him.

V29.2 – (Day 2) “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”

Though it sounds abstract and unfitting to a Westerner, every person standing there knew exactly what John meant … and especially the Jews.

To understand this, you have to understand the oldest of all Jewish holidays, and most importantly, how God describes it in Exodus chapter 12. Let me read some of the key phrases from Exodus 12:3–13

**Exodus 12:3–13 (ESV)** “Tell all the congregation of Israel that on the tenth day of this month every man shall take a lamb according to their fathers’ houses, a lamb for a household. **…** Your lamb shall be without blemish, … and you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month, when the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill their lambs at twilight. “Then they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses … It is the Lord’s Passover. For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land … And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you…”

By the time Jesus came to the Jordan, the Jews had been celebrating Passover about 1500 years. Every year, on the 10th day of the Jewish month “Nisan,” each family would choose a spotless lamb, one lamb for each household. They would keep that lamb with them for three full days. The children would hold the lamb, play with the lamb, cuddle with the lamb; it was just enough time for them to bond with it. Then, on the 14th day of Nisan they were commanded to kill that spotless and meek little lamb, cut it up and roast it in fire. They were also commanded to take some of its blood and put it on the two doorposts outside their front doors, and on the lintel above the door.

Can you imagine the conversation between the children and their father?

*C - Why do we have to kill our lamb, Daddy? F - If we don’t kill him, the judgment for sin will come on us. Everyone has sinned, and sin is rebellion against God and must be punished. God told us that we could offer a spotless lamb to be punished in our place. C - But this lamb didn’t sin. F - You’re right, and it doesn’t even have a spot or blemish on its skin or wool. But this shows us how valuable we are to God. He created us in His image and likeness to God, and He doesn’t want any of us to die. This is God’s idea. If the lamb dies for our sins, then we don’t have to die, at least for another year.*

Every Jewish person out there with John celebrated Passover every year of their life.

So when John said, “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world,” everyone looked at Jesus and thought:

* He’s the Passover lamb?
* He’s meek and gentle?
* He’s spotless, and doesn’t deserve to die?
* And because we’re so valuable to God, God is going to sacrifice this man in our place?
* And not only our sins but the sins of the entire world?

Passover began the night before the Exodus and it was celebrated homes until the Jews settled in Jerusalem and constructed the Temple. Then Passover lambs were sacrificed there.

After the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE, Passover celebrations returned to the home.

Today, Passover celebrations continue to be observed by Jewish people in homes. Passover is the most popular Jewish holiday. Families from great distances travel to be together at Passover.

At the time Jesus came to John at the river Jordan, they were only about 20 miles from the Temple in Jerusalem, the place where the whole nation came to present lambs for sacrifice on Passover.

So when John said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world,” he was saying:

*“Every man comes to the Temple in Jerusalem every year at Passover to present a spotless lamb to deliver his family from judgment. But now, God has provided a Lamb … a sinless Man … there He is … and unlike the ones we present, this Lamb will take away the sin of the entire world… once and for all.”*

I wonder if anyone thought of Genesis 22, when Abraham took Isaac to sacrifice him on the top of Mount Moriah—a thousand years before it became Jerusalem … and how God answered Isaac when he asked his father, “I see the wood and the fire, but where is the sacrifice?” And in Genesis 22:8 Abraham answered and said:

*“God Himself will provide the lamb.” (NIV)*

And verse 14 says:

*So Abraham called the name of that place, “The Lord will provide”; as it is said to this day, “On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided.” (ESV)*

As I mentioned last week, it doesn’t appear that John knew that the Messiah would die for the sins of the world until he and Jesus had a conversation 40 days prior at his baptism. John would preach about the coming Messiah as one bringing judgment, but now he’s boldly proclaiming his death for the sins of the world.

V30 – (Day 2) “This is He of whom I said…” (which we covered in V15)

V31.1 – (Day 2) “I myself did not know Him”

Though it’s likely John’s parents told him about the miraculous circumstances surrounding Jesus’ birth, 30 years had passed since those events had taken place. During those years Jesus had been an outstanding young man (Lk 2:52) with exceptional insight into Scripture (Lk 2:46–47), but He had done no miracles or signs to prove that He was the Messiah.

Isaiah 53:2says, *“… Nothing about the way he looked made him attractive to us.”* (CEV)

V31.2 – (Day 2) “but for this purpose I came … that he might be revealed to Israel.”

All John knew was that the Messiah was coming soon, and his assignment was to prepare the hearts of the people so that He could be revealed to them.

V32 – (Day 2) “I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him.”

V33 – (Day 2) “I myself did not know him (repeated V31), 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.’”

V34 – (Day 2) “And I have seen and have borne witness that **this is the Son of God**.”

V35-37 – (Day 3) “The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples,”

Notice again, “The next day” so this is Day #3.

Next week we’ll see that the apostle John clearly told us who one of the disciples was, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. And though he himself was the other disciple, as was his custom, he didn’t identify himself.

V36 – (Day 3) “and he (John the Baptist) looked at Jesus as he walked by and said (again), “Behold, the Lamb of God!”

**Hebrews 10:11–12 (NKJV)** And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. **12** But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God,

**1 John 1:6–7 (NKJV)** If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and 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 Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

**WHAT GOD DID**

Friend, you are so valuable to God that He decided to send His own sinless and spotless Son to become the sacrificial Lamb in your place, and in the place of your whole family.

**WHAT YOU MUST DO**

But His blood must be applied to each and every member. And though He doesn’t have to die again and again when you sin, the sin does need to be confessed, and His blood does need to be applied to cleanse you from sin.