

**Trinity Presbyterian Church - Carp- July 18, 2021**

**TO EXALT CHRIST  
TO EQUIP, ENCOURAGE, EXHORT, EDIFY GOD'S ELECT**

**The Christ Who Is Known - John 1:29-34**

**The Lamb of God - The Spirit of God - The Son of God**

We have been working our way through the first chapter of the gospel of John for the past two weeks. Two weeks ago as we began our series we saw the Christ who is heavenly and human. In verses 1-18 John beautifully and profoundly showed us the Christ in Jesus as he described Christ in his fullness, from that of his full divinity to that of his full humanity. Verse 14 uniquely showed us how the Word, Christ pre-incarnate, became flesh, incarnate, taking on our humanity while at the same time losing none of his divinity,

Last week we examined the Christ who follows. Even though Jesus preceded John the Baptist because of his eternal existence and divinity, in his humanity Jesus followed, came after John the Baptist. He followed John because John had been ordained to prepare the way for the Christ and to give people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins. John was sent to preach repentance and to baptize with water for repentance.

Verses 19-28 from last week describe what happened at Bethany as John the Baptist was confronted by priests and Levites and Pharisees. They had come from Jerusalem to find out who John was and why he was doing what he was doing. This morning our text will show not who John was, but who Jesus was and still is.

**The Lamb of God - 1:29-31**

The Bethany where all this took place is not the Bethany that was about 2-3 miles east of Jerusalem. This Bethany was in an area called the Transjordan, a huge area north and east of Jerusalem and the Jordan River. Jesus would do much of his 3-year ministry of preaching, teaching, healing up & down the Jordan River valley.

John the gospel writer uses verses 29-31 to give us John the Baptist's eyewitness testimony concerning the incarnate Christ. In verse 29 we read, "*The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world."*" Verse 14 summed up the process of the incarnation, Verse 29 sums up the purpose of the incarnation.

John the gospel writer and John the Baptist both have a God-breathed way of capturing the essence, the substance, the essential quality of what is reality. John the gospel writer captures the reality of the incarnation in verse 14 - "*The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.*" John the Baptist similarly captures the reality of the gospel in verse 29 - "*Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.*" That is the gospel in its most basic quintessence. The gospel is the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ whose sacrificial death takes away the sin of the world.

John the Baptist is drawing upon the OT practice of the sacrificial lamb. It was there with Abraham and Isaac in Genesis 22. It was there in the Passover lamb of Exodus 19. But it is especially there in Isaiah 53:7. There God gave Isaiah a 700 year glimpse down the corridor of time to see, not only what would be the gospel, but who would be the gospel - "*He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.*" Both Johns knew their OT & applied it.

John the Baptist's words loudly echo the revealed prophetic words of Isaiah. John commands people to look; he directs the gaze of the people of his day and ours to look and to see. Don't turn away but look. Notice John says, "*the Lamb of God*". This lamb is not just one of the flock but one that was chosen. In 1 Peter 1:20 Peter stated, "*He was chosen before the creation of the world....*" Just as any born again Christian was chosen for salvation before the creation of the world, as Paul states in Ephesians 1:4,5, so too was the Christ, the Son of God, chosen by God to be the Lamb who would take away the sin of the elect in the world, including ours.

It is God in Christ who initiates our salvation through the inner witness & work of the Holy Spirit that brings us to saving faith in Christ. It is by grace we have been saved through faith in Christ, the Lamb as Paul declares in Ephesians 2:8,9. By the Lamb our sin is taken away. John, through the preaching of his gospel today does what John the Baptist did 2000 years ago which is to point people to Christ, the one & only Lamb of God. John Calvin writes - "*John leads us back to Christ alone, and informs us that there is no other way in which God is reconciled to us than through his agency for he alone takes away sin.*"

'Agency' as Calvin employs it here, means, "*intervening action.*" God intervenes in Christ to save us, to take away our sin.

In verse 30 John continues his testimony - "*This is the one I meant when I said, 'A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me'*". That sounds confusing but John the Baptist is verifying what John the gospel writer had said in the opening two verses of his gospel account - "*In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.*" There John the gospel writer states and affirms the eternal and therefore divine nature of Christ.

John the Baptist is doing the same when he says – '*he was before me*' in verse 30. He too affirms the eternal nature of Christ which also certifies his divine nature and thus his equality with God. Jesus as the Christ, was before John, because he is eternal.

The eternal character of Christ is as essential for him as it is for God and the Holy Spirit. This brings us to the doctrine of aseity, which means they are self-existent. If they were created then they would not be God either singular or triadic. In Psalm 90:2 Moses wrote - "*Before the mountains were born and you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.*" Isaiah 40:28 reads, "*Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the creator of the ends of the earth.*"

Scripture from Genesis to Revelation affirms the eternality of the Triune God of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In doing so it firmly grounds the doctrine of the resurrection to eternal life promised by Christ to those he has saved. Those saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone to the glory of God alone. That is solid reformed theology coming right out of the Scriptures.

Now with the coming of Christ to commence his salvation work, John steps back. He allows Christ to surpass him. In verse 31 John the Baptist continues - "*I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel.*" John's role in salvation history was a supporting role, to reveal Christ to Israel & ultimately to the world.

### **The Spirit of God - 1:32-33**

Having had John command us look at the Lamb of God he now directs our attention to the Spirit of God who affirms the identity of the Son of God as the Lamb. In verses 32-33 John the Baptist again testifies - "*Then John gave this testimony: "I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. I would not have known him, except that the one who*

*sent me to baptize with water told me. The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.*”

Matthew 3:13-17, Mark 1:9-11 and Luke 3:21-22 all record Jesus' baptism by John. They record that John saw heaven open & the Spirit of God descending like a dove, landing on Jesus. Then a voice from heaven said, *“This is my Son whom I love, with him I am well pleased.”* That is what John the gospel writer records here in verses 32-33. The dove, the Holy Spirit came down on Christ indicating that Jesus *“will baptize with the Holy Spirit.”*

John's baptism with water was external. Jesus' baptizing with the Holy Spirit would be internal, affecting the heart, mind and soul by taking away one's sin but also saving them eternally.

The Holy Spirit affirmed the identity of Christ as the Lamb of God but so did God the Father. In that one moment in time Scripture recorded all three persons of the Trinity together to launch the preaching, teaching and saving work of the Lamb of God.

Also note the Holy Spirit came as a dove symbolizing gentleness, peace, love & forgiveness which marked the life of Christ. However in Acts 1:8 Jesus told the disciples, *“you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you...”* Acts 2:3 records on the day of Pentecost - *“They saw what appeared to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them.”* Christ is the Lamb & the Lion. The Holy Spirit is fellowship & fire. John Calvin said - *“The Holy Spirit ratifies the gospel to us.”*

#### **The Son of God - 1:34**

Dr. Stephen Nichols in his 2021 biography of the late Dr. RC Sproul, founder of Ligonier Ministries, said, *“R.C. had great concerns for the lack of precision and the shallowness of thought about the person and work of Christ in the contemporary church.”* I believe that to be so. But in John's gospel we see precision and depth concerning the person & work of Christ. He began with the Word being God, then as the Lamb of God. Now in verse 34 he sees/testifies that Christ is the Son of God. Who else but the Lamb of God, in Christ the Son of God, can take away the sin of the world? He is the gospel ratified by the Spirit of God *Soli Deo Gloria*. Amen.