

Life in His Name – Part 2
The Testimony of John the Baptist – John 1:19-34
Crosspoint – Dave Spooner – Feb. 12th, 2023

Intro:

- John, in his gospel, is building the case that Jesus is Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing in Him you may have life in His name (John 20:31). He does so by pointing to the evidence of the signs that Jesus did, what He taught and said, and by the use of expert eyewitnesses.
- One of the expert witnesses that John calls on is none other than John the Baptist, who was well known and highly regarded by the people of Israel. John stands as a bridge between the Old Testament and the New Testament. John was the fulfillment of the last verses of the last book of the Old Testament (Mal. 4:5-6). The angel Gabriel proclaimed to his father Zechariah while on duty in the temple as a priest that John would “turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared” (Luke 1:16-17 ESV), and this is exactly what John did.
- “John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins” (Mark 1:4-6 ESV).
- John, the writer of our gospel, brings forward the testimony of John the Baptist as an expert eyewitness to the identity of Jesus. Not surprisingly, John the Baptist has some strong statements as to who Jesus is. In our passage for today, we will see that John identifies Jesus as the Lord incarnate, the Most High, the Lamb of God, and the Son of God, all within a few short verses.
- John the Apostle is asking his readers and also asking us to believe the testimony of John the Baptist, that we also would recognize who Jesus is and that we would put our faith in Him and have life in His name.

Jesus is the Lord incarnate

John 1:19-23 ESV

And this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, “Who are you?” 20 He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, “I am not the Christ.” 21 And they asked him, “What then? Are you Elijah?” He said, “I am not.” “Are you the Prophet?” And he answered, “No.” 22 So they said to him, “Who are you? We need to give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?” 23 He said, “I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’ as the prophet Isaiah said.”

- The religious authorities had a fixation on wanting to know who people were or who they thought they were so they could deal with them accordingly. John refused to be put into a box but gave them the information they were seeking in a veiled and powerful way by quoting a key passage from Isaiah 40. This passage is more about the identity of Jesus than it was about his own identity. Here is the passage that John was quoting:

Isa 40:3-5 ESV

A voice cries: “In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. 4 Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. 5 And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”

- John the Baptist was indeed the voice in the wilderness; John’s role was to prepare people to receive who was coming next, and the person who was coming next was God in the flesh. Yahweh. The Lord. So when John said this in response to the question about his identity, he tied who he was to who Jesus was, and by quoting this passage, John was telling them that Jesus is the Lord incarnate.
- The inquisitors missed the whole point, and they were so focused on identifying John that they missed what John was talking about. So they continued to question John as to what he was doing, and John clarified his actions by again pointing to the identity of Jesus.

Jesus is the Most High

John 1:24-28 ESV

(Now they had been sent from the Pharisees.) 25 They asked him, “Then why are you baptizing, if you are neither the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?” 26 John answered them, “I baptize with water, but among you stands one you do not know, 27 even he who comes after me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie.” 28 These things took place in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

- John the Baptist did not directly answer their question but told them that the person coming next after him was way above him. In comparison to Him (who we know is Jesus), John was nothing. He was so low in comparison that John considered himself not even worthy to reach up and untie His sandals.
- I can’t help but be struck with the humility that comes from knowing the surpassing greatness of who Christ is. John, who says that “he must become greater and I must become less” (John 3:30), understood this. People who exalt themselves do not have a true understanding of the surpassing greatness of Christ. John did, and in so doing, saw himself in the proper light of the true light that came into the world. As the religious leaders tried to sum up everyone around them, they missed beholding the only person in the room and the world that matters most.
- In responding in the way he did, John the Baptist was saying that Jesus was the most high. Those asking John questions missed the whole point of what He was saying. They were trying to figure out who was pointing instead of looking at who he was pointing to. Don’t make the same mistake by focusing on those who point to Christ and miss Christ, who is the point.
- John the Baptist removes his veiled words and makes his thoughts clear, increasing the ante and then laying all of his cards on the table.

Jesus is the Lamb of God

John 1:29-30 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.’

- This is a completely loaded statement. And for the Jews, this was a neon light statement with significant implications. This would be like a bucket of cold water thrown at the heads of those who knew the Old Testament Scriptures.
- John the Baptist was saying, “behold,” pay attention to what I am saying to you. Stop what you are doing, stop midsentence, and listen! This person is the Lamb of God. Now the language of the Lamb of God is significant from the Old Testament.
 - Abraham – God will provide a Lamb (Gen. 22:8)
 - Moses – the Passover Lamb (Exodus 12)
 - Establishment of the sacrificial system (Lev. 4:32-35)
 - The Messiah prophesied to be like a lamb led to the slaughter (Isa. 53:7)
- In the New Testament, we see Jesus saying He was that Lamb when He made a new covenant through His blood and body at the last supper, which was the Passover (Matt. 14:12-25)
- The teaching of the New Testament points to Jesus as the Passover Lamb (Acts 8:32-36; 1 Cor. 5:7-8; 1 Peter 1:19-21; Heb. 10:10-18)
- And finally, the book of Revelation calls Jesus the Lamb 29 times, including this event that is described for us:

Rev 5:11-14 ESV

the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, 12 saying with a loud voice, “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!” 13 And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!” 14 And the four living creatures said, “Amen!” and the elders fell down and worshiped.

- And what this Lamb came to do is “take away the sins of the world.” This is the primary purpose of why Jesus came in the flesh. The only way He could take away our sins is to become one of us. And to redeem us from our sin, He had to be sinless, which He was. The God who created us became one of us to redeem us to Himself by giving Himself as the spotless lamb who takes away the sins of the world (1 John 3:5-6).
- This, too, is foreshadowing that Jesus's mission was beyond the Jewish people. Redemption through the Messiah was for all who would believe that they would have life in His name.
- And then, to make sure that there would be no doubt of who John the Baptist thought Jesus was, he went on to declare that Jesus is the Son of God.

Jesus is the Son of God

John 1:31-34 ESV

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."

- John the Baptist said, let me tell you what happened and how I was convinced that Jesus was the Son of God. When I baptized Jesus, the Spirit of God came in the form of a dove, and He remained on Him. I was told beforehand by God that I was to look for the confirmation that the one who the Spirit comes on and remains on is the Son of God (See Matt. 3:13-17).
- In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit will come on a person for a determined time and for a specific task, but the person whom the Holy Spirit comes on and remains in is the Son of God. Here is what was given to the prophet Isaiah to write:
 - Isaiah 11:1-2: "There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him."
 - Isaiah 42:1: "Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations."
 - Isaiah 61:1: (This is the text Jesus quoted about himself in Luke 4:18) "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor."
- John baptized people who repented of their sins. When we are baptized in Jesus, He gives us the Holy Spirit to make us new and walk in the newness of life.
- I am going to give you another testimony of one who has believed and was baptized (**Jackson's testimony**, along with an invitation to be baptized on Easter Sunday).

Conclusion

- If you are a believer, know that your faith in Christ is built upon the testimony of Scripture, the testimony of expert eyewitnesses, and the testimony of the Holy Spirit. Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Esteem Him, honor Him, and give Him praise for who He is and what He has done for you and the world.
- If you have been convinced of the identity of Christ today and want to put your faith in Him for the forgiveness of your sins and receive Him as your Savior and Lord, do so today and make sure you see me. We will get you set up for baptism.
- If you are still not convinced, keep investigating. Read the scripture, listen to what it says to you, and make your decision.
- We are going to end our service by singing about the Lamb of God. I pray that these words will hit you anew this morning.