



Meeting Jesus (PART 1):

Lamb of God

JOHN 1:35-37

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Most of us in this room carry some form of ID; in fact, most of us carry several documents that might prove at least something concerning who we are. In my wallet, you might find a Wisconsin driver's license, a concealed carry license, a Wisconsin trail pass, a Costco card, a Staples card, and so on. You might also find some pictures of my family, some business cards, various insurance cards, and (of course) a variety of Culver's coupons. And if someone were to find my wallet, they might be able to make some assumptions concerning who I am. A picture would start to develop - because of the titles that I wear, the activities I engage in, and the places where I shop and do business.

This morning, I want us to start a series of lessons based on the last half of John 1, as a number of people meet Jesus for the very first time, and as they start to unpack and discover who he really is - almost like looking through the Lord's wallet and discovering a number of titles or descriptions. In our pew Bibles, the passage begins on page 1655, starting in John 1:35. You might have a heading on this section. In the pew Bibles, the heading says, "Jesus' Public Ministry, First Converts." So we have the beginning of the Lord's public ministry, and we have a description of those very first disciples and how they came to know Jesus. And I would like to structure this series around the various descriptions of Jesus in this paragraph. And over the next several weeks, I believe we will come to a much deeper appreciation of who Jesus really is.

Many books have been written on the various titles or descriptions given to the Lord. One book gives more than 700 names or titles given to Jesus scattered throughout the Bible. Lord willing, we plan on looking at just a few of these over the next few weeks - all of them from the last half of John 1. Up to this point, John has already identified Jesus as the **"Word"** of God (in verse 1). He identifies Jesus as the **"Light"** (in verses 4-5). We then have a brief description of John the Baptist and his ministry, and that brings us to verse 35 as we pick up with John and two of his disciples.

Down in verse 43, we discover that one of the two was Andrew, but the second disciple is never identified. Now, obviously, all of the commentaries want to know, "Who is the second disciple?" And the fact that he is not identified is actually one of the biggest clues! In the fourth gospel account, the author never identifies himself. Instead, several times scattered throughout this book, the author seems to refer to himself anonymously as **"the disciple whom Jesus loved."** Whoever it is, then, seems to be rather humble. He hesitates to write his own name into scripture. The leading theory is that John wrote this book. Therefore,

when we have this reference in John 1:35 to **“two disciples,”** and when one of those disciples is named later in the chapter, and the other is not, some have assumed that the two disciples are Andrew and John. Now, I wouldn't swear my eternal soul on this, but I would lean in that direction. And we will get to this next week, but the author will go on to give us the exact time that they meet the Lord for the very first time! And to me, that is interesting! To me, that sounds like a detail that the author of this book would remember. And so he puts it in scripture, “I met Jesus for the first time at 10 o'clock in the morning” (or whatever) [paraphrased] - it was such a momentous event that he actually notes the exact time in scripture!

This brings us to the first two disciples - Andrew and probably John - as they are with John the Baptist and as they meet Jesus for the very first time. Notice, please, John 1:35-37,

³⁵ Again the next day John was standing with two of his disciples, ³⁶ and he looked at Jesus as He walked, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God!” ³⁷ The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.

So, as they meet the Lord for the very first time, the description they hear from John the Baptist is that Jesus is the **“Lamb of God.”** And again, this is something John has been preaching for some time. We have a similar statement a few verses earlier (in John 1:29) as John says, **“Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”** So, as we study these disciples as they meet Jesus, the first description they are given is that Jesus is the **“Lamb of God.”**

I. And I want us to look at what John actually says here, starting with the word **“BEHOLD!”**

Some translations say, **“Look!”** And the idea is: John is pointing these people to Jesus. In fact, in the verses right before this, the Jewish leaders send messengers out into the wilderness, asking John, **“Who are you?”** And John confesses - I am not the Christ, I am not Elijah, I am not the Prophet - and then he quotes Isaiah and explains that he is **“...a voice crying in the wilderness, ‘make straight the way of the Lord.’”** John then goes on to explain that he is simply preparing the way for someone much greater than he is. He also explains that he didn't really recognize Jesus as the Lamb of God until his baptism, until the Spirit descended like a dove out of heaven. Before that, Jesus was only John's cousin - they had known each other, but only as cousins. Before that, Jesus was just a carpenter. But now, John understands who Jesus really is, so at this point, John's mission is to point people to Jesus, and that is what he does here, **“Behold, the Lamb of God!”**

John, then, is pointing people to the Lord. But I want us to realize what this means for John. John has an audience. John has these large crowds. If John had wanted to be a celebrity, he could have done it. But John knows that that is not his mission. His mission is to point people to Jesus. And assuming we have Andrew and John (the future apostle) here, John is sending some of his best people to somebody else. As a preacher, I'm trying to imagine coming up to some of our hardest-working families and saying, “You know, you guys should really worship over there!” That would be hard to do, wouldn't it! And yet isn't that what John does here? “Behold (or LOOK), there is this other person that you really need to be following!” We think of what John would say a little bit later (in John 3:30), **“He must increase, but I must decrease.”** John, then, is directing these people to Jesus. In a missions class at Freed-Hardeman, I remember a professor telling us that as missionaries we need to be “working ourselves out of a job.” We need to be training people to take our place. And that seems to be what John is doing here. He is working himself out of a job. He is directing people to Jesus.

Before we move on to the next part of this, I would ask: Are we looking at Jesus, as we should? Are we paying attention? Is Jesus awesome to us? Are we interested in learning everything we can about him? Are we amazed? John would encourage us to look at the Lord, to behold Jesus, to refocus our attention on him.

II. **As we continue looking at what John says here, we find that he goes on to explain that Jesus is the LAMB.**

Several months ago, some of you might remember that we looked at how to study the Bible, and one of the steps in that process is to determine the meaning of a passage to the original readers or to the original hearers. So, we have Jesus introduced as being a **"LAMB."** What would most Jewish people 2000 years ago think about when they thought of a lamb? Maybe as food, possibly as a source of clothing, but most would think of a sacrifice. As far as I can tell, the first reference goes back to Abraham. As he was called to sacrifice Isaac, he obeyed by heading out with Isaac, and the wood, and the fire, but when Isaac asks his dad, **"Where is the lamb for the burnt offering?"** Abraham responds by saying, **"The Lord will provide"** [paraphrased]. He nearly follows through with the sacrifice of Isaac, though, when an angel interrupts, and Abraham looks to the side and finds a ram (a male sheep) caught in the bushes. That ram then serves as a substitute. The ram takes Isaac's place on the altar. Of course, later in his 3-½ year ministry, Jesus would explain that, **"...the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many"** (Mark 10:45). Jesus, then, was a ransom, a substitute - for us. Just as the Lamb was for Isaac, Jesus died in our place.

The next significant mention of a lamb in the Old Testament comes on the last night of slavery in Egypt. The tenth plague was to be the death of the firstborn in every house, but the people could avoid that tragedy if they would sacrifice a one-year-old male lamb and spread the blood of that lamb around the doorway into the home. Later that night, the angel of the Lord rained down death on Egypt, but the angel **"passed over"** those homes with the blood on the doorposts. And, of course, the Israelites celebrated the Passover every year after that with the sacrifice of a lamb to remember that event. And Jesus, of course, would offer his life for us on the Passover. So it's not just the idea of a ransom or a substitute, but we have in the Passover the idea of freedom - freedom from sin. Our freedom was purchased. As Peter will go on to explain in 1 Peter 1:18-19, we are to conduct ourselves with fear during the time of our stay on this earth, **"...knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ."**

So, when these two disciples hear Jesus described as a Lamb, they would have thought of Abraham, they would have thought of the Passover, they would have thought of the many daily sacrifices of lambs that happened on an ongoing basis, but they might have also thought back to Isaiah's prophecy in Isaiah 53, where Isaiah predicted that a Messiah would come at some point to save his people, that the Messiah would be **"...crushed for our iniquities,"** that this Messiah is someone who would be **"oppressed and...afflicted,"** and yet would not open his mouth, **"like a lamb that is led to slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent before its shearers."** Of course, Jesus fulfilled this prophecy (and all others) in every way, in every detail - in his death on the cross - for us, in our place, for our sins. Later in this book, John will point out that Jesus' legs were not broken on the cross as a specific fulfillment of prophecy, since the Passover lambs were not to have any broken bones. In every detail, Jesus is our Passover Lamb. He is referred to by Paul as **"our Passover"** (in 1 Corinthians 5). He died for us. He shed his blood for us.

The author of Hebrews makes this point in the passage Silas read for us earlier (from Hebrews 9). He goes back to the Law and makes the point that **"all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness."** Therefore (because of this), we needed a **"better sacrifice,"** and Jesus is that sacrifice. As

Hebrews 9:26 says, Jesus ***“...put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.”*** He offered himself for us. Jesus is the Lamb.

III. Before we close our thoughts on this passage, we need to notice that John goes on to point out that Jesus is the Lamb OF GOD.

This may or may not be too significant, but it is interesting that John doesn't just introduce Jesus as a ***“lamb.”*** And this struck me a few days ago when somebody posted a meme online about certain people being sheep. And it wasn't a compliment! Jesus, then, isn't just a lamb, but he is the ***“Lamb of God.”*** This is a title that has been given to him by God the Father. He isn't just any lamb, but he is the ***“Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”*** As the Lamb of God, he is worthy of all worship. In verse 30 of this chapter, John says, ***“After me comes a Man who has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.”*** Think about that! As I remember it, John was actually OLDER than Jesus by about six months. But here, John says that Jesus has a ***“higher rank”*** than he does, because ***“He existed before me.”*** Jesus is the Eternal One - not just any lamb, but the ***“Lamb of God.”***

Conclusion:

As we come to the end of this first lesson, the main idea is that Jesus saves us from our sins. And this is what makes Jesus so different from the leaders of all other world religions. Unlike Mohammed or Buddha or the others, Jesus died in our place, the only one who allowed himself to be sacrificed for us. And that makes Jesus alone worthy of our worship. We think about what John would go on to see later in his life, recorded for us in Revelation 5, where John describes seeing a Lamb standing in heaven. All of heaven falls down to worship the Lamb. They sing a new song, saying, ***“Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth.”*** The text continues in Revelation 5:11,

¹¹ Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands, ¹² saying with a loud voice, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.” ¹³ And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, “To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever.” ¹⁴ And the four living creatures kept saying, “Amen.” And the elders fell down and worshiped.

As the Lamb, then, Jesus is worthy of all worship. He did for us what we were unable to do for ourselves. He lived a perfect life and he died in our place. In response, the Lord invites us into a relationship. He invites us to be born again. We are born into God's family when we accept his message in faith, when we turn from sin, and when we allow ourselves to be briefly immersed in water for the forgiveness of our sins. He alone has the power to ask us to do something like this. Only Jesus has those credentials. All of us might have some credentials with us this morning, but in this first lesson, we've found that Jesus is introduced with the most impressive of all credentials. As he is introduced to these two disciples, John explains that Jesus is the Lamb of God. Hopefully next week we can continue on with the next description.

This morning, we want to invite everybody to obey the good news. If you have any questions, let us know, but if you are ready right now to be buried with Jesus in baptism, you can let us know as we sing this next song. Let's stand and sing...

To comment on this lesson: fourlakeschurch@gmail.com