

## SESSION TWO

### The Lamb: *Finding Certainty in a World of Doubt (John 1:19-51)*

“We overcome the accuser of our brothers and sisters, we overcome our consciences, we overcome our bad tempers, we overcome our defeats, we overcome our lusts, we overcome our fears, we overcome our pettiness on the basis of the blood of the Lamb.” ~ D. A. Carson

#### I. The Witness of John The Baptist (1:19-34)

##### A. John Clarifies His Identity (vv. 19-22)

###### 1. Who He is Not (1:19-22)

*Observe John's tri-fold denial:*

- The Messiah
- Elijah - Based upon Malachi 4, some first-century Jews believed that a literal Elijah would return.
- The Prophet - Some Jews believed that a prophetic-type messiah would come—one similar to Moses (see Deut 18:15-18).

###### 2. Who He is (1:23-24)

The wilderness was central in Israel's history—a location of purification in preparation for an exodus (see Hosea 2:14).

##### B. John Clarifies His Role (1:25-28)

1:26 . . . *I baptize with water* . . . John's baptism summoned the Israelites to turn to God and make ready a remnant for Israel's king (see 1:31; 12:13).

1:27 . . . *I am not worthy to untie* . . . In the Old Testament and early Jewish tradition, the prophets were described as the “slaves of God” (see 2 Kgs 9:7, 36; 10:10; 14:25; Ezra 9:11; Isa 20:3; Jer 7:25; 25:4; Dan 6:20; Amos 3:7; Zech 1:6). Thus, this phrase suggests that John the Baptist is equating Jesus with God.

##### C. John Testifies to Jesus (1:29-34)

###### 1. Jesus is the Lamb of God

1:29 . . . *Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world* . . . There are two major explanations for this symbolism:

- a. The Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53. This Old Testament text is applied to Jesus in Acts 8:32 (also, see Mk 10:45).

- b. The Passover (Sacrificial) Lamb. It would seem that the evangelist is highlighting Jesus as the Passover Lamb (see 18:28; 19:36). Whether there is a propitiatory sacrifice notion, one could easily argue for a dying “on behalf of” symbolism associated with this motif (note 10:11, 15; 11:50; 18:14).

In *Scripture and Tradition in Judaism*, Geza Vermes states: “For the Palestinian Jew, all lamb sacrifice, and especially the Passover lamb and the Tamid offering [the continual male lamb burnt offering of Exod 29:38-42] was a memorial of the Akedah [Gen 22] with its effects of deliverance, forgiveness of sin and messianic salvation.” (225).

2. Jesus takes priority over John.

3. Jesus is associated with the Spirit.

1:32-33 . . . *Spirit descends and who baptizes with the Spirit* . . . The role of the Holy Spirit is prominent in the Gospel, often drawing attention to and attesting to Jesus (see 14:26; 15:26; 16:13). Key to this revelation is the term “to remain”—a term which signifies mutual indwelling and continuous inhabitation (e.g., between the Father and Son, the Holy Spirit and the Son, the Son and the believer).

4. Jesus is the Son of God

The culmination of John’s testimony is the exaltation of Jesus—“He is the Son of God.” (see 20:31).

## II. The Witness of the Early Followers of Jesus (1:35-51)

- A. Andrew and Simon Follow Jesus (1:35-42)

The Baptizer’s general testimony concerning Jesus now turns to a specific testimony to his disciples. They, in turn, become witnesses concerning Jesus.

1:35-39 . . . *and they followed him* . . . The term “follow” can be several times in these next several verses (vv. 37, 38, 40, and 43). Typical of Johannine theology, the term conveys more than a mere literal notion. This term speaks to the mark of true discipleship.

1:40-42 . . . *Jesus is the Messiah* . . . In Andrew’s short stay, he has concluded that Jesus is the Messiah. Changing Peter’s name expresses theological significance as it testifies to God’s authority to rename (e.g., Abram, Sarai, and Jacob).

## B. Philip and Nathanael Follow Jesus (1:43-51)

The flippant remark concerning Nazareth may stem from its size, its insignificance economically, or the lack of theological importance associated with this village.

1:47 . . . *genuine Israelite* . . . This title distinguishes Nathanael from the “Jews” who question Jesus’ claims (e.g., 8:54-55). Jesus also contrasts Nathanael with the representative of Israel, Jacob, who was known for his guile (Gen 27:35). As for the location of Nathanael, one can only speculate concerning the mention of a “fig tree.” The fig tree was used as a place to study because of the shade the tree provided; or the fig tree often symbolized messianic peace and plenty (see Mic 4:4; Zech 3:10).

1:50 . . . *you will see greater things than these* . . . This phrase foreshadows the next section of John’s Gospel.

1:51 . . . *heavens opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man*. The “heavens opened” is revelatory language (e.g., Ezek 1:1; Acts 7:56; 10:11; Rev 4:1; 11:19; 15:5; 19:1); and here, Jesus is the mediator of that revelation (see Dan 7:13-14). Ultimately, the phrase is a direct quote from Gen 28:12. Similar to Jacob’s ladder (which was called the “Gate of Heaven”) that enlightened the Patriarch, this “ladder” will reveal truth to Nathanael. Jesus is not only the revealer of heavenly things to humanity (see 3:12, 13), He is the *only* access to the Father (see 14:6).

## III. Intersect

*Questions to consider:*

- A. Have you “come and seen” the Chosen One of God?
  
- B. Which name of Jesus has the most significance to you personally? How does that particular name offer you hope and encouragement for this week?

“If Jesus performs such functions and if monotheism is to be retained, as it was in early Christianity, then he must belong to the identity of the one God. Jesus cannot function as God without being God. The point becomes even clearer once we recognize that a clearly ontological condition attaches to the divine functions of creation and sovereign rule. Only the one who alone is eternal in the full sense can be the Creator of all things and sovereign Ruler of all things. When the uniquely divine eternity is attributed also to Jesus, it is clear that the early Christians knew precisely what they were doing in Jewish theological terms, when they understood Jesus to participate in the creative work and the eschatological rule of the one God.”

~ Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 235