

John 1:23-34

The Lamb of God

Image Church // Behold: Week 1

Introduction

Well good morning Image Family! So good to see so many of you again this week in person!!

I know that we're still getting used to this new normal and things are a little bit different... **Embrace it!** We are all working out the kinks after the past 10 months and that's ok, the important thing is that we're able to keep moving forward together!

You got kids great, bring them and let them come worship with us if they yell they yell, if they run around they run around it's not going to bother me- ***we all have to come with the understanding that doing the best we can during this time and under the current circumstances...***

What's important is that we're gathering and engaging together. I know that for some of you, you're joining us online - I want to welcome you and thank you for engaging in spite of the conditions you may be facing related to COVID!

At the end of the day we are in this together, and we will make it through this together!

Alright, well can you believe that Thanksgiving is next week and we're only a little over 5 weeks away from Christmas! The holiday season is here!!

Make sure that you're staying looped in on what we have going on, we have some exciting things coming up- ways we are serving and giving during this season.

If you're new make sure that you are signed up for our weekly update and pay attention to it...

Ok, well I am excited about this morning, we're starting a new series called **Behold...** Where we're going to be spending the next 4 weeks in **John chapter 1** looking at who Jesus is, and the implications an application surrounding him as we build toward Christmas...

One thing to be aware of as we look at **John 1** together is understanding the reason why John (*one of Jesus' 12 disciples*) wrote this Gospel so that we can have the broader context... John says in **John 20:31** **But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.**

My hope is that this series is both encouraging and refreshing for you and that it will help you have a better grasp of who Jesus is and the implications surrounding who he is as you talk with other people about Jesus...

- You may be here or listening and you're not a Christian, this is going to be a very helpful series for you to be part of so I want to encourage you to stay engaged!

Alright, so here's how we're going to kick this off... We're going to start toward the middle of **chapter 1** to help set the stage and then in the weeks ahead, look at the surrounding content of **chapter 1** to drive home the reality behind what we're going to see today...

So, if you have your Bibles go ahead and turn to **John 1**, and jump in with me...

- Going to be message that will help you share the gospel...

Look first at **verse 6** There was a man sent from God whose name was John. **7** He came as a witness to testify about the light, so that all might believe through him.

So, we're introduced to a guy named **John**, not the author, but another guy named **John** (or *John the Baptist* or *John the Witness*) who was sent by God and assigned with a specific task, to bear witness and to testify about Jesus so that people would believe...

John Baptist played a massive role in history; he was responsible for publicly pointing out who Jesus was to a watching world- and marking the start of Jesus public ministry as we know it today!

And 'ol John the Baptist was a unique bird... think, like a *Mideastern Tom Hanks* toward the end of the movie **Castaway** but with no Wilson, *with a little more Bear Grills swag from the get-go...*

- *My guy's harvesting honey from legit beehives...*

Showers were probably not a thing for him, and he probably had remnants of **honey in his beard** and his **breath** would have smelled like locus... Not sure what that smells like so I will leave that to your imagination...

Most likely he would have been poor given what we know about his diet and the fact that he was kind of like a nomad, which means that he probably didn't graduate at the top of his class, he wasn't a scholar, he didn't have political power...

I say that because what you need to understand is that John wasn't a real impressive guy... Especially by the world's standards...

And the reason why that's important is because in understanding that we get a glimpse into the power of God... See, God loves using unimpressive, normal, even below average people for His glory...

Some of the most significant people in the Bible were least and most insignificant people, people that would have been picked last for a lot of things in society, and yet they are the very people that God choose to use...

One of the things that you need to see from this story is that **God loves using unimpressive people**, unaccomplished, normal, and below average people because in doing that he gets the most glory, because it is not about the ability of the person, it is about the ability of God...

- When God uses unexpected people, it puts His power on display...

So, if you're here this morning and you have doubted God's ability to use you, if you feel like you don't have a lot to offer, or that you don't have the skill set...

- ***You're exactly who God wants to use!***

Ok, so, you have this interesting guy who is apparently saying interesting things... So, in **verse 19-22** we see that that religious leaders send out some guys to find out what's going on.

So, they come up to **John the Baptist** and are like *Hey man who the heck are you? We got to get to the bottom of this cuz a lot of people are asking about what's going on here...*

I want you to look at **verse 23** and see how John responds to them, he says: **"I am a voice of one crying out in the wilderness: Make straight the way of the Lord, —just as Isaiah the prophet said."**

Now, you have to understand that this is a huge moment... what he just said was a huge statement... **Here's why-** let me unpack this...

He literally quotes a passage from **Isaiah 40:3** that was written some **700 +** years before by a prophet named **Isaiah**... We have to see the significance of this...

One of the things that you'll find when you read the book of John is that it is always pointing back to the **OT**...

So, let me jump back to the OT for a second to give you a insight into what's happening here...

God created the world in perfect peace and perfect harmony- it was a world without sin. The word for that is ***Shalom***...

- **Say that word with me *SHALOM*...**
 - You need to understand that in *SHALOM* there was no death, there was not hurt, there was no pain...
 - Lions and alligators didn't attack, nothing stung, bit or hurt Adam and Eve...

It was a world where **Adam** and **Eve** would walk and talk with God in the beautiful garden that he had placed them in...

God gave them free-will over everything, and they could do whatever they wanted ***with the exception of one command that God gave.***

God said there's a tree over there and you're not to eat of it... **Do NOT EAT the FRUIT of that TREE or you will die.**

You would think with all that they had, and with **all** the other trees that they wouldn't even go near that tree. But they did the opposite. Not only did they go near it, but they directly disobeyed God and ate from it, and in that instant sin entered the world.

- The word ***Sin*** means: *an immoral act considered to be a transgression against divine law.*
 - Adam and Eve broke God's law...

This was detrimental for Adam and Eve and for the world. In that instant, everything changed...

Their relationship with God was **severed** and **sin and death have now entered the world** and **Shalom** was no more...

The aftermath of their sin: (explain the effects of each one)

- Broken relationship between man and God
- Broken relationship between man and man
- Broken relationship between man and creation
- Broken relationship between man and self

What was in perfect harmony is now broken and distorted. Creation began to ***unravel*** at the entrance of sin and evil through the rebellion of Adam and Eve.

Here is what you need to understand: *Everything that God made was and is good, Evil is the privation (absence of something that was supposed to be there) of good, the good that should be there is not there.*¹

What should be nothing but good, is now polluted with the rebellion of Adam and Eve... the good that should be, is substituted with the evil that now is...

We see in Scripture the quick implications of this when **Cain kills Able**... Where there should be life, there is now death as a result of sin and evil that is now present in the world... And that was only the start of many things like that to come...

What you have to understand is this: is that none of this was not God's fault! God didn't cause this, and God didn't do this... What God made good, humanity rebelled against and polluted it with evil...

In light of that, here's the question that you want to ask if you're being honest: **Why doesn't God just fix all this??**

¹ Bruce Ashford

Well, watch this!!! In the midst of Adam and Eve's rebellion against Him, when He didn't have to, in **Genesis 3:15** God promises that a **Deliverer** is going to come to defeat sin and death...

And then in **Genesis 3:21** God does something incredibly interesting... He kills an animal to provide cloths to cover Adam and Eve in the midst of their sin...

See, after they ate of the tree that God told them not to eat from their innocence was gone and they realized that they were naked... And so, they ran and grabbed some fig leaves and made cloths for themselves...

Now, I know you're wondering, **how they were they just figuring that out**... Well, there was a purity and an innocence about them before they sinned...

And this is so powerful, what you need to see is that **the fig leaves**, were Adam and Eve's attempt to fix the problem on their own...

- Which is a lot like **religion** teaches today- follow the rules, be good, be a better person... Those are all personal attempts to fix the problem, and people try over and over again to do the right thing, to be better and to follow the rules but they can't...

Like religion, the fig leaves won't work because the leaves would eventually rot and wither, bringing them right back to the same problem... The fig leaves were Adam and Eve's failed attempt to try to fix the problem, but it won't work because the fig leaves won't last...

What we see is that Only God could provide the **covering** that they needed, a covering that would last, but it came through the death of an animal. **Something had to die in order for Adam Eve to be covered**...

And what God did was a **foreshadow** of what would happen through the deliverer that God promised would come...

And from then on, throughout the rest of the OT, what you will see is **a desperate need for Gods promised deliverer to rescue mankind**...

Then watch this, years and years later after Adam and Eve...

The prophet **Isaiah** would remind the people of Gods promised deliverer, and he would paint a picture of the coming of that deliverer and he would say in **Isaiah 40:3**: **There will be A voice of one crying out: Prepare the way of the Lord in the wilderness; make a straight highway for our God in the desert.**

There is, the tie and what brings us back to the heart of **verse 23 in the gospel of John**...

So, here's what you have to see, when John the Baptist declares who he is to the religious leaders by quoting directly from the prophet Isaiah, he's saying that the time has come, that the promised deliverer is here!!! What God said would happen is happening!!!

Ok, let's keep going... So, after this big statement, the religious leaders follow up with a question in **verse 25**, **[they say] "Why then do you baptize if you aren't the Messiah, or Elijah, or the Prophet?"**

And John the Baptist reply's in verse 26 **"I baptize with water,"** John answered them. **"Someone stands among you, but you don't know him. 27 He is the one coming after me, whose sandal strap I'm not worthy to untie." 28 All this happened in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptizing.**

Quick point of clarity relating to the baptizing that John the Baptist is doing **Acts 19:4** tells us that *John baptized with a baptism of repentance, telling the people that they should believe in the one who would come after him, that is, in Jesus.*

So, what John's Baptisms were about ***the recognition of sin and the need for the One coming who at this point they don't know yet...***

But watch this- the plot continues to develop verse 29...

29 The next day John saw **Jesus** coming toward him and said, "Here is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! **30** This is the one I told you about: 'After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me, because he existed before me.' **31** I didn't know him, but I came baptizing with water so he might be revealed to **Israel.**"

Israel was God's chosen people- the people he chose to use to reveal himself to the world

And I want to highlight the significance of what John calls Jesus, he calls Him the ***Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!***

There is an important connection... I want you to think back to **Adam** and **Eve**, remember how God killed an animal to cover them...

Well from then on, ***a sacrificial system would be put in place as a reminder***

- The people would raise a lamb up in their home and then they would take it out and put it on an altar, lay their hands on it as a symbol of their sin being put on this innocent lamb, and then they would kill it...

Death was a consequence of sin, so something had to die in order to pay for the sins that had been committed... the lamb was a substituted offering...

But what you see a picture of the **innocent** taking on the sins of the guilty... the innocent being slain for the **guilty!**

Everything in the **OT** System was designed to remind the people of their sin and separation from God, and their desperate need for God's grace and intervention...

So, in John the Baptists' declaration, he's saying that God's ultimate intervention has come, that Jesus was the promised deliverer and He was here to take away the sins of the world...

Like the Lamb Jesus would be the innocent one slain for the guilty, except He would be the final substitute offering once and for all...

- There would be no need for animal sacrifices...

See, Jesus would come and live the perfect life that we never could have—and then He would be slaughtered as the perfect sacrifice—giving His life in place of ours!

- Justices was served in Jesus death- His death was payment for our sin... Jesus took our place...
- Then He would beat death- raising from the grave proving that He was God and offering us new life in Him!

But listen, there is something that we have to see in all of this... John recognized Jesus, but you know who didn't (*and we see this all the way through the book of John*)

Almost every one of the **RELIGIOUS** leaders missed it! Which is crazy, because they were the ones that should have seen it coming but they missed it! They missed Jesus!!

You know why?!? ***Because for them it was more about religion than the rescuer...***

- *They were more concerned about the acts of religion than the one who would come and act for them!*

See, religion says follow all the rules and rituals, make sure that your doing the best you can to live right... check all the boxes every week.

- Go to church, say a prayer before your meal, and "Thank the man upstairs" when something good happens...

Here is the problem with that, religion is just something that's part of your life, it's something that you claim... but it doesn't define your life...

Religion leaves you tired and empty because you're always trying to do the best you can to live right and you're never really sure if God is happy with you or not...

But the gospel says that in Christ there is nothing that you could ever do to make God love you anymore, and there's nothing you could ever do to make God love you less...

The good news of Jesus isn't something you just claim, it's something that claims you! It redefines how you live- in light of what's been done for you! *Apply...*

- Does your life look claimed by Jesus or claimed by something else??
- Do you seek the things of Jesus??
- Has your life been redefined??
- Are you captivated by Jesus???

I want you to see this last thing, look at John 1:32 And John testified, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and he rested on him. **33** I didn't know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The one you see the Spirit descending and resting on—he is the one **who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.**' **34** I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God.

Isaiah 1:11

Listen, there are some of you that are hearing this message of hope for the very first time, and you trust in the finished work of Jesus!

- Maybe for you it has been about a religion and not a life altering relationship with a person.
- Or maybe you have been running from God, looking for hope in all of the wrong places...

There's others of you, that have forgotten the sacrifice of the Savior...

- Maybe you have been clouded with all the things of Christmas, that you've forgotten the meaning of Christmas...

There are some of you who are hurting, and you need to look to see the hope of the Savior who meets you in your pain... And that his life death and resurrection were only the begging of what's to come when He will make all things new!

Some of you need to be reminded of the confidence that Christ offers you...

- You need to meditate on the Lamb that was slain for you...
- You need to recall this story as you share the gospel with others...
- I hope this can be a tool for you...