

**International Sunday School Lesson**  
**Study Notes**  
**March 1, 2015**

**Lesson Text: John 1:29-34**  
**Lesson Title: The Lamb of God**

**Introduction**

The opening chapter of John's Gospel reveals the activity of the Holy Trinity, God the Father (John 1:1, 6, 13-14), God the Son (John 1:1, 7, 4, 10, 14, 17-18, 29, 34, 36, 41), and God the Holy Spirit (John 1:32-33). God the Father is active in the opening verses of John's Gospel in sending His Son, Jesus Christ, into the world in order that sinners might be saved (John 1:12). God the Father also sent a prophet, John the Baptist, as the prophesied forerunner to Jesus Christ to prepare the way for the Lamb of God (Malachi 3:1; John 1:6-9). God the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Trinity, is also active in John 1 (John 1:32-33). He appears in the form of a "dove" to officially inaugurate Christ's earthly ministry.

It is generally agreed that the Apostle John is the author of the Gospel of John. Anytime you see the name "John" in the Gospel of John, it refers to John the Baptist and not the Apostle John. The Apostle John never names himself as the author or refers to himself by name in the book. It was the desire of the Apostle John to give witness to the fact that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. John writes about the witness of God the Father to the deity of Jesus Christ in John 1:1-5. Beginning in John 1:6, the Apostle John uses John the Baptist as another witness to the deity of Jesus Christ.

In John 1:15, the Apostle John again refers to John the Baptist as the one who first identified with the Lord Jesus for who he was. Jesus Christ was "*before*" John the Baptist, meaning Christ was pre-existent and pre-eminent. The witness of John the Baptist is recorded in John 1:19-37 and covers a period of three different days to three different groups of people. On day one, John testified privately to Jews from Jerusalem where he denies that he is the Christ (John 1:19-28). John tells them that he is not the Christ, he is "*the voice*" (John 1:23).

The second day of the witness of John the Baptist is recorded in our lesson text in John 1:29-34. John had seen Jesus on the day he testified to the first group. The timing is right for John to declare Jesus as "the Lamb of God" and to tell his readers of the witness of the Holy Spirit to Jesus Christ.

**The Lamb of God: Human Declaration (John 1:29-31)**

Verse 29

“The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”

The “next day” is the day following the meeting between John and the Jerusalem delegation (John 1:19). John had seen Jesus on the day he testified to the first group. This is our Lord’s first appearance in John’s gospel. The timing is right for John to declare the arrival of the sacrifice for sin. John says, “Behold the Lamb of God.”

“Behold” means “look.” The force of this call from John to those listening is significant. The Pharisee’s were looking for a prophet, and they desired a king who would deliver them from Roman oppression. What they were not looking for was a Savior or a sacrifice because they had no sense of sin.

The Jews wanted a prophet and God gave them a “lamb.” The Jews wanted a king and God gave them a “lamb” because you can't reign with God until you're related to God. And you can't be related to God if sin is in the way. So God had to send a sacrifice to get rid of sin before there could be a relationship. John declared that God is sending the One needed to take care of sin.

“Lamb” and “sin” were two words that must have triggered thoughts of the sacrificial system to the Jews. The use of a lamb for sacrifice was familiar to the Jews. Every Jewish family at some time or another had to choose a lamb for sacrifice. But this is not just any lamb. The “Lamb” John is announcing was “the Lamb” God had chosen for them! John is saying that Christ is the ultimate sacrifice to atone for sin.

Exactly which “lamb” John was referring too has been debated by scholars for centuries. Was it the Passover lamb, whose blood spared the Israelites from the death angel (Exodus 12)? Was it the one of the lambs that was offered as a morning or evening sacrifice at the temple (Exodus 29:36-42)? Was John saying that Jesus was Isaiah’s lamb that would die to bear the sins of many (Isaiah 53:3-12)? Author Leon Morris seems to have the answer to those questions when he writes, “John used an expression which cannot be confined to any one view. He is making a general allusion to sacrifice.” (The Gospel According to John [Eerdmans], p.147).

The implications of John’s calling Jesus “the Lamb of God” in verse 29 is staggering. God, sin, necessity of blood, atonement, and the substitutionary death of Christ all in one verse! There before John stood the One whom all the sacrifices of the Old Testament foreshadowed. Christ is the “Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”

“Taketh away” means “to lift, loose, remove, to sail away.” “Sin” is the Greek word *hamartia* {ham-ar-tee'-ah} which speaks of the guilt and condemnation of

sin. Jesus Christ is the “Lamb of God” who can “lift” and “remove” the “sin and condemnation” of the “world.” What that means is that for the entire “world” there is only one who can take away sin, and that’s the One who will die as the sacrificial “Lamb of God.”

### Verse 30

“This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me.”

This verse repeats the thought of John 1:15, “...*This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me.*” This is also the third time John has said that Jesus was “preferred before me” (John 1:15, 27, 30). The word “preferred” affirms Jesus’ pre-existence: it was witness to His eternality.

“After me” is a reference to time. “Preferred before me” is a reference to importance. Although Jesus was born in time “after” John, the life and ministry of Jesus was more important than John’s. Although we have no record in the Gospel’s that John had said these words prior to this occasion, John says, “This is he of whom I said...” He tells his audience he had said this more than once.

### Verse 31

“And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water.”

“And I knew him not” indicates that up to a certain point in time John the Baptist had not known Jesus to be the one to come. John had been looking for the Messiah, but up until now he did not know Jesus was the one. John baptized people in view of the coming of the Messiah. He baptized in order that the Messiah “should be made manifest to Israel.” The word “manifest” means “to render apparent,” or “to bring into clear light.” John’s baptizing of people “with water” is connected with his ministry of preparing people for the coming Messiah. When John says that he “baptized with water,” it may be another indicator of how humble John really was. In verse 33, John will tell us of One “which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.”

John did not recognize Jesus as the Messiah and the Lamb of God until he was “baptizing with water.” While John was baptizing people “with water” there came special revelation from God concerning Jesus, and now John knows Him. It’s interesting that John does not tell us about the actual baptism of Jesus, but rather focuses on the purpose the baptism, which was to reveal Jesus to Israel as her Messiah.

## **The Lamb of God: Divine Confirmation (John 1:32-34)**

### Verse 32

“And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him.”

“And John bare record” is John is telling us how he came to know Jesus for who He was. “Bare record” means John is giving testimony because he knows what happened. The other gospels report that this happened when John was baptizing Jesus (Matthew 3:16; Mark 1:10; Luke 3:22). John is not thinking of something he saw once and it never happened again. “Saw” means “to behold, perceive, to look closely.” John is not talking about a vision. He actually “saw” the “Spirit descending from heaven like a dove” and resting upon Jesus. There was a visible manifestation of the Holy Spirit that looked like a dove.

This is the only time in Scripture where the Holy Spirit is described “like a dove.” Why like a “dove.” There are several possible explanations. The “dove” is a beautiful symbol of the Spirit of God in its purity and in its ministry of peace. The “dove” was also a common sacrificial animal in the sacrificial system. A “dove” was the sin offering that the common folks generally offered. In this beautiful picture, the Spirit of God, descends upon Jesus in a way that speaks of sacrifice for every man. Yes, the “Lamb of God” that takes away the sin of the world is confirmed by the presence of a “dove.”

The appearance of “a dove” is also for Jesus and John. The coming of the Holy Spirit like a dove confirmed to John that this was the Messiah. It also assured Jesus as He began His earthly ministry that the Spirit’s ministry would always be His (John 3:34).

Not only did the “Spirit descend,” but the Spirit, “abode upon him.” “Abode” is the Greek word *meno* {men-o}. It means “to stay or dwell.” The only way to interpret this word and John’s meaning is that the Holy Spirit remained with Jesus permanently.

### Verse 33

“And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.”

John repeats his statement that until the time of the descent of the Holy Spirit he did not know Jesus was Messiah. John’s recognition of Jesus did not come from prior knowledge, but from supernatural revelation. Christ’s coming to be

baptized, His baptism, the descent of the Holy Spirit like a dove, was all included in the revelation that John now has.

John also says that when Christ comes He's going to baptize you not with water but with the "Holy Ghost." John's baptism with "water," which was symbolic of genuine repentance, is now contrasted with Jesus' baptism "with the Holy Ghost," which is the real thing. Baptism with "water" speaks of cleansing from sin. Baptism with "the Holy Ghost" speaks of new life in Christ.

Every believer is baptized with the Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation. It is a once for all baptism. It never is repeated. The Bible says, *"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body..."* (1 Corinthians 12:13). The moment you put faith in Christ you are baptized by the Spirit of God who purifies and cleanses you and makes you acceptable to God. It's not a re-occurring event that happens over and over again. Scripture does not teach that the baptism of the Holy Spirit happens repeatedly and is evidenced by speaking in tongues. Those who believe that and teach that have misinterpreted the terms. Baptism of the Holy Spirit takes place at salvation. John said I'm baptizing you with "water" at the point of repentance but one is coming who will "baptize you with the Spirit of God." And that's what salvation is all about as God sends His Spirit within us to cleanse us and purify us.

#### Verse 34

"And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God."

Once again, John says he "saw" and that he "bares record" that Jesus Christ is "the Son of God." This is the first of many references in the Gospel of John that clearly identify Jesus Christ as "the Son of God" (John 1:49; 3:16-18, 35-36; 5:19, 20-23, 26; 6:40; 10:36; 11:4, 27; 14:13; 17:1; 19:7; 20:31). John is not saying what he has spoken because of something he thought he witnessed or imagined in his mind.

#### **Conclusion**

When John the Baptist was about 6 months old in his mother's womb, *"he leaped"* in his mother's womb when Mary told Elisabeth she was carrying the Christ child (Luke 1:41-44). And for the next thirty years, John grew up with Jesus, and never really knew who he was. Why? Because God had not yet revealed Jesus to John. Oh, John probably knew about Jesus and may have even seen Jesus. But until God reveals His Son to us, we never really know Him!

So John the Baptist tells us in the opening chapter of the Gospel of John that he now knows that Jesus Christ is "the Lamb of God" that takes away the sin of the world. And he tells us that he the Holy Spirit confirmed that by

descending upon Jesus like a dove. The question now is, "Do you know the Lamb of God that taketh away your sin? Can you bare witness? Have you seen by the eye of faith and have you trusted Christ to take away your sin?"

"Behold the Lamb of God!"

Amen.