

# The Identity of the Man and Mission of Jesus

John 1:29-42

## INTRODUCTION:

This morning, we are going to be looking at and evaluating the start of Jesus' ministry. We are going to see John the Baptist do what he was called to do and known for, in that, he baptizes Jesus. A couple of weeks ago, we discussed the testimony of John the Baptist's identity regarding himself in relation to Jesus. Now we will see him in action. This is the next day after the famous statement that John the Baptist stated in our previous text, "I baptize with water, but among you stands one you do not know, even he who comes after me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie." Now the one who John the Baptist stated 'stands among you' shows himself on the scene to begin the greatest movement of "truth in love in action" ever known to human history.

### John 1:29-42

<sup>29</sup>The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! <sup>30</sup>This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks before me because he was before me.' <sup>31</sup>I myself did not know him, but for this purpose, I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel." <sup>32</sup>And John bore witness: "I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. <sup>33</sup>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.' <sup>34</sup>And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God."

### Jesus Calls the First Disciples

<sup>35</sup>The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, <sup>36</sup>and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" <sup>37</sup>The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. <sup>38</sup>Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, "What are you seeking?" And they said to him, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you staying?" <sup>39</sup>He said to them, "Come and you will see." So they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. <sup>40</sup>One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. <sup>41</sup>He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which means Christ).

<sup>42</sup> He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, “You are Simon the son of John. You shall be called Cephas” (which means Peter). <sup>1</sup>

## I. The Clear Identity of Jesus

- A. The great herald to the world that God’s Lamb, the Savior from sin, has come among us (Immanuel).
- B. Notice this herald didn’t take place in a church with a chapel bell, but out amongst the people where the message of salvation, hope, and renewal needs to be heard.
- C. The church is a place of discipleship where evangelism can take place, but evangelism and the message of the Gospel need to be taken beyond the walls of the church building and into the marketplaces of ideas within a society.
- D. This strange man whom we refer to as John the Baptist sparked an interest amongst the people of his day because of his willingness to speak truth and call people to repent as he prepared the way for the Lord’s arrival.
- E. Sometimes we say in our modern society that people aren’t interested in truth anymore. I don’t know if that is true. The bigger issue our society faces is that the vessels of truth aren’t speaking truth anymore rather they are speaking agendas. I believe there are people still interested in truth. It’s just hard for them to find a credible source. The church ought to be that credible source.
- F. Verse 29 starts with “The next day…” which is a phrase that will happen two more times in verse 35 and verse 43. So, what John the Apostle is doing is giving a series of activities for roughly the entire week at the birth of the ministry of Christ.
- G. The opening line, verse 29, says what all of us should desire, “The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him.” I want to see Jesus coming towards me. But coming towards me to fulfill a missional point in and through my life.

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<sup>1</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version\*](#) (Jn 1:29–42). (2016). Crossway Bibles.

### **James 4:7-8 ESV**

<sup>7</sup> Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

<sup>8</sup> Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.<sup>2</sup>

- H. The very message of John the Baptist's message of repentance was resistance to the Devil as he preached for society to turn around for the sake of the Messiah's arrival.
- I. The attention of the world of light and the world of darkness was captured by the arrival of the Lord's Messiah. I promise you Satan and his followers were paying attention that day. This is why the other Gospels that give attention to the baptism of Jesus say he was then led into the wilderness by Satan to be tempted.
- J. Satan doesn't wait too long when he feels threatened in which to derail. After some of the Lord's soldiers' greatest victories come their greatest defeat because they fall to the schemes of the Devil. Jesus did not fall or fail.
- K. As we have already discussed the authorities of Jerusalem didn't like his ministry because they felt threatened which is why they sent a delegation to inquire of him. Who was the power behind these dark authorities? Satan!
- L. Religion can be one of the most powerful tools of the enemy.

**C.S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*** (The Senior Devil in a speech at the "Annual Dinner of the Tempters' Training College for Young Devils.") It will be an ill day for us if what most humans mean by "religion" ever vanishes from the Earth. It can still send us the truly delicious sins. The fine flower of unholiness can grow only in the close neighborhood of the Holy. Nowhere do we tempt so successfully as on the very steps of the altar.

- M. John the Baptist clearly identifies Jesus as the "ONE" who is the Lamb of God by the revelation that came about by the Spirit descending on Him as a dove.

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<sup>2</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version\*](#) (Jas 4:7–8). (2016). Crossway Bibles.

- N. The metaphor of “Lamb of God” points to the Passover Lamb which was sacrificed at the time of the Exodus. The imagery of the Spirit of God in the form of a dove points to a new era like that after the flood in Genesis.
- O. At the Baptism of Jesus, a voice from Heaven says, “This is My Son, whom I love, with Him I am well-please. Matthew 3:17)
- P. How important is Baptism? Well, in this case, the entire Trinity shows up: Father, Son, and Spirit.
- Q. The Baptism of Jesus was not a baptism of repentance because Jesus had nothing to repent of, but His baptism was for the purpose of being identified as the Messiah and to inaugurate his Mission of redemption.
- R. I don’t believe baptism is a part of my salvation, but I do believe baptism is the desire of my salvation in the way it identified Jesus as the Messiah and His mission. It now identifies me with Jesus as a servant to Him on His mission.
- S. Verse 31 gives a confusing statement: ***“I didn’t know him.”***
- a. Some commentators say that this is when his Messianic identity was revealed to the public and even John wasn’t privy to this inside knowledge before even though he leaped in the womb of his mother when Mary, the mother of Jesus, visited in those early days.
  - b. John may have known Jesus simply as a cousin through his mother Elizabeth only until this Baptismal revelation was given.
  - c. Or they didn’t grow up together and know each other the way we might assume because John the Baptist’s father, Zechariah, was a priest at the Temple in Jerusalem and Jesus grew up in Nazareth in the region of Galilee.
  - d. These are all possibilities, but I believe the best answer is in letter c with an addendum. In Luke’s Gospel, it states:

*And the child kept growing and becoming strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness until the day he was revealed to Israel. Luke 1:80.*

This is a form of “asceticism” which means *severe self-discipline and avoidance of all forms of indulgence, typically for religious reasons.*

Some of the church fathers, such as John Chrysostom, believe that he might have grown up in an Essene community by the Red Sea.

**Craig Keener states,**

“The summary statement (Luke 1:80) is especially reminiscent of 1 Samuel 2:26 and 3:19 for the maturation of the prophet Samuel. The desert was the expected place for a new exodus and thus for the Messiah; some groups, seeking greater purity, withdrew from common Judaism into the desert. Whether John may have studied among such groups for a time is debated, although it is plausible if his aged parents died before he reached maturity (the Essenes reportedly adopted children and trained them from age ten on). John’s later public ministry differed from their private withdrawal, however.”

\*\*\*What we do know is that John the Baptist didn’t grow up with his family in Jerusalem, therefore, John the Baptist and Jesus would not have known each other by family relation (in other words they would not have recognized each other if they saw each other on the street), but came to know each other through Divine revelation at Christ’s baptism. This seems to explain this phrase the best.

- T. John the Baptist was willing to put his reputation on the line, speak truth to power, receive scrutiny, later die by beheading, etc. all because he lived in the deep conviction that Jesus was the Son of God.
- U. The Question for us today is, will we?
- V. Today’s Church wobbles in the face of adversity. We justify ourselves and our behaviors for crazy reasons seeking only Heaven, not so much the Jesus that makes Heaven, actually Heaven.
- W. Many of us have grown up in church our entire lives but do not have a clear grasp of who Jesus is. We have grown to love:
  - the pop-culture Jesus,

- the “nice” Jesus
- the ‘cool and hip’ Jesus
- the Jesus of no accountability
- the Jesus that lets you slide in your sins as if your sins weren’t that bad.
- the Jesus who is more like a therapist than a judge.
- the Jesus who is always encouraging, and approving of whatever lifestyle you choose, and one you can always count on to be on your side no matter your decisions.

But not the Biblical Jesus that calls us to:

- to follow Him at all costs
- to face danger for His sake
- to uncover our lies to seek the truth.
- to no longer live under the traumas of our past for the sake of His healing
- to be held accountable for our sins.
- to love when it hurts
- to sacrifice for the sake of joy.
- to worship Him with complete allegiance
- to serve His cause and forget ours
- to bow our lives under His authority as the one true King.

This is the Jesus being introduced onto the scene of human history.

## CONCLUSION

I am reading a book by Larry Hurtado called *The Destroyer of the Gods: Early Christian Distinctiveness in the Roman World*. This book looks at pagan criticism of the Jesus movement and in that, we find what made Christianity unique. He uses Pliny as an example of pagan criticism and what he put the early followers through. Hurtado states, “He reports his rather decisive actions against those accused as Christians. He says that he first gave them three opportunities to renounce their faith, and if they steadfastly refused despite his threats, he either ordered their execution or, if they were Roman citizens, had them sent to Rome for further trial. (page 22 of *The Destroyer of the Gods*) Nero, the famed lunatic Roman Emperor, as told by Tacitus, arrested Christians and then subjected them to various hideous forms of death. In addition to suffering “mockery of every sort,”

they were torn apart by dogs, nailed to crosses, or set afire to serve as human torches for Nero's night-time spectacle. (Ibid., 21). Hurtado then makes this statement, "In light of the social and, increasingly, the political consequences of being a Christian in these early centuries, one might well wonder that the movement grew and why people became Christians. But obviously, those who did so under those circumstances had strong reasons. There must have been things about early Christianity that made it worthwhile to become an adherent in spite of social harassment and potential prosecution (even execution). So, not only was early Christianity different in some key respects, but also participation in Christian faith must have offered things that attracted converts and compensated for the considerable social costs incurred in becoming an adherent (Ibid., 35)."

What made it different? What made them different? It was Jesus! The reason John the Baptist later lays his head on the chopping block is because He knew who Jesus is. The question is do those filling the church buildings today know who Jesus is as revealed in the Bible?