

## Exegetical Notes, John 1:29-34 “Behold the Lamb of God”

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### Verses 29-31

*The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”<sup>30</sup> This is the one I meant when I said, ‘A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.’<sup>31</sup> I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel.”*

- The next day was the day following that one on which John had been questioned by the delegation from Jerusalem about his identity and why he baptized. On that day, John had told the delegation that he was sent to "prepare the way for the one who would come after him." See John 1:23, 26-27.
- On this day, John saw Jesus coming toward him and exclaimed that Jesus was "The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." The phrase, "Lamb of God," is used in the Bible only in these verses and in John 1:36. It appears nowhere else in the Bible. Isaiah 53:7 says, "Like a lamb led to slaughter." Jeremiah 11:19 says, "I was like a gentle lamb led to slaughter." Genesis 22:8 says, "God will provide for Himself a lamb." But until John used the phrase on this day, "Lamb of God" was not considered a Messianic title. The title "Lamb of God" means that Jesus is the sacrificial lamb which God provided to bring salvation from sin to all who believe.
- On the previous day, John had said that this person for whom he "prepared the way" was greater than he. On this day, he declares that Jesus is that one.
- On the previous day, John had declared that the person of whom he spoke was "standing among them" at that moment, but they did not know who he was. On this day John declares that even he did not know who that greater one was on the previous day. He now knows who the greater one is. Even before he knew who the greater one was, he knew that his purpose was to point to this one so that the greater one might be revealed to Israel. This seems strange. Luke tells us that Mary, Jesus' mother, and Elizabeth, John's mother, were "close relatives." See Luke 1:36. Luke also says that when John, still in his mother's womb, heard Mary's voice, he "leaped in her

womb." See Luke 1:41. The implication is that until this day, Jesus' reality as the Son of God had not been made clear to John.

### **Verses 32-34**

***Then John gave this testimony: "I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. I would not have known him, except that the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.'"<sup>34</sup> I have seen and I testify that this is God's Chosen One."***

- At this point in the story, the other Gospels, Mathew, Mark, and Luke, tell us that Jesus requested that John baptize him. See Matthew 3: 1-17, Mark 1:3-8, and Luke 3:2-17. John does not repeat the story of Jesus' actual baptism. The other Gospels make it clear that after Jesus was baptized, the spirit of God descended upon him "like a dove." John makes it clear that this sign, the descending of the "spirit of God" was the confirmation he had been told to watch for by God. He saw the Holy Spirit of God descend upon Jesus after Jesus' baptism. Thus he now knew who Jesus was... the "greater one" who would come after him whose sandals he was not worthy to untie"... the one "who would baptize with the Holy Spirit." It was through this sign that John knew that Jesus was Israel's Messiah.
- That Jesus baptized others with the Holy Spirit of God was proven on the day of Pentecost. See Acts 2.

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