

John the Baptist's Testimony to Christ

Scripture: John 1:19-37

Code: 1503B

Our Scripture for the morning as a setting for our message is from John's gospel chapter 1 verses 19 through verse 37. We are coming into a different type of study. I believe in the expositional method of preaching, that is just take a book and go through, when you get done, take another book and go through and just keep going like that all the time. It eliminates having to worry about what you're going to talk about because the Holy Spirit has it prepared for you each week. And so, we have studied the book of Romans which is doctrine. We have studied basically 1 and 2 Peter which are doctrine in many ways as well as practical areas, but there's much doctrine there. We have been emphasizing doctrine even in the book of Revelation in its initial aspects. And we have also been teaching doctrine in the first part of John's gospel. And now for really the first time in our time together as pastor and flock we shall approach a narrative passage. And for the rest of the gospel of John we will be dealing not so much with systematic doctrine as we will be dealing with narrative. We'll be dealing with the account of the life of Christ as He is presented by John as the Son of God.

As I've said in several times in the past few weeks, John wants to present Christ as God's Son. He does not concern himself with Christ a man so much, although he does bring that up, of course. He does not concern himself with dimensions of Christ's relation to Israel as Matthew does. But he concerns himself with proving by the use of many witnesses that Christ is indeed and in fact the very Son of God, God in a body. That's John's burden. That's John's message. And now as we look at verse 19 we come into the narrative, the historical narrative of Christ's ministry. John hasn't even bothered with the first 30 years of the life of Christ because they had no relationship to His ministry and He did not present Himself as the Son of God until He began His ministry so John isn't concerned about those times when He was not acting as the Son of God and when He was not official stating His place as Messiah.

Now you'll remember that John's purpose is stated in chapter 20 verse 31 where John says he's presenting Christ as the Son of God in order that men might believe. That's what he does in the whole book. Here is Christ, here is His salvation, believe. That's John's message all through this book as we shall see. He is presenting Christ the Son of God, the salvation that He offers and men who believed and then some who rejected.

And so he uses all the witnesses he can in this book, all through the book he musters up everybody that he can call on to testify to the fact that Christ is the Son of God. John knows that the weight of evidence is greater if there are more than one witnesses. So he says I believe He's the Son of God

and I'm going to add to that, so does he and so does this and so does that and so does this and he piles it all up, a rather...well it proves, put it that way, it proves the deity of Christ in terms of witnesses. It's as if he's in a courtroom and he calls everybody in to testify. It's a conclusive case because of the many witnesses. He calls on God to witness that Christ is His Son and God does. He calls on the very words of Christ and Christ admits that He's God. He says the works of Christ prove that He's God. The disciples lives and testimonies prove that He's God. All believers of all times by the very life they live prove that He's God, etc. Everything speaks to the fact that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, He's God in a body.

But the first witness that John the Apostle calls is John the Baptist. And anytime you see the name "John" in the gospel of John, it does not refer to John the writer who was the Apostle, it always refers to John the Baptist because John never names himself. He always calls himself "the disciple whom Jesus loved," or "that disciple." He's very humble. And I don't know, I kind of like calling myself the disciple whom Jesus loved, it's kind of nice. It's true. And John always expresses himself that way. And so, whenever he mentions the name John, he's referring to John the Baptist. And so the first witness that John the Apostle brings up to corroborate the statement that Christ is God is John the Baptist.

Now in the first 18 verses of chapter 1 John has been saying that Christ is God, right? He said it from every angle imaginable. And now he is said in verses 6 to 8 that there was a man sent from God whose name was John. And he came to bear witness to the light. And he interjects the idea that John the Baptist was his first witness. And now John the Baptist's testimony comes in verses 19 to 37. And so in our study for today we're going to see the testimony of John the Baptist to the fact that Christ is God. And you can't come to Jesus Christ with anything less. Christ was not just a good man, Christ was not just a great teacher, Christ was not just somebody who was so good that God zapped Him with a little deity somewhere long the line. Christ was not somebody who when He got to the cross God sort of injected Him with a logos and then it left after His resurrection, which are all kinds of heretical doctrines, you don't need to know about them, just learn truth and you can take care of error.

But basically Christ has to be God or the whole idea is meaningless, you can throw the whole Bible away and forget Christianity from top to bottom. So John wants to show you that Christ is God and he brings in John the Baptist to give testimony and John's his first witness in the case. And John's witness comes in verses 19 to 37, it comes in three parts. John gives three witnesses on three different days to three different groups with three different emphases and talks about Christ in three different ways. And so we come this morning to the witness of John the Baptist as to who Jesus Christ is.

Now you've had the witness of John the Apostle in the first 18 verses. He told you who He was, he said the same was in the beginning with God and He was God. Now he adds to that the testimony of John the Baptist in three dimensions on three different days to three different groups with three

different emphases and saying three different things about Christ.

But before we look at what he says let's think about who he is. John the Baptist was a fascinating character. You've all heard about him undoubtedly from the time you were in Sunday School as a child and you were enamored about the diet and the clothes that he wore. But John the Baptist was a very remarkable man, very remarkable. Evidently he began his ministry just prior to his thirtieth birthday. When he was 29 years of age he began. I think that's a wonderful time to begin, that's when I began. I'm in good company. John the Baptist began when he was 29. There has to be a time of preparation. Even Christ never began his ministry till he was 30 years of age...even He needed the preparation that He had for those 30 years. And so John began a little bit before Christ, was the cousin of Jesus Christ and began his ministry just prior to the time he was 30-years-old as best we can ascertain.

Now he was the first prophet in Israel in 400 years and they had been looking for one for a long time. And so, when John came along the people really went after him. He was dynamic. He was forceful. He was bold. He was filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb and it came across when he communicated. And he got to preaching out there by the Jordan in the Jordan Valley and everybody went out there to hear him. And he may have been fairly well known because he was the son of a priest, Zacharias. He had this tremendous power but interestingly enough he kind of moved away from society and he identified himself with the poor people. And the poor people wore camel's hair and leather belts and that's what he wore. And the poor people ate grasshoppers and wild honey, and so that's what he ate. He completely identified himself with the people in the area where he was, and it wasn't anything abnormal about grasshoppers and wild honey, a lot of people ate it in those days, unimaginable however, but they did. And John the Baptist had a diet and a garb that was pretty much standard stuff for poor people living in the wilderness area.

And when he got out there with all of this dynamic and all of the interest in him as a person, the people began to flock out there to see him. And Matthew tells us in chapter 3 verses 5 and 6 that everybody in Jerusalem, Judea and all the country around went out there to see John. I mean, after all there hadn't been this kind of a dynamic voice in Israel for 400 years. And all of a sudden this guy pops up in the wilderness and everybody's first thought is, "Wow, this just might be the Messiah...this just might be the one we've been waiting for." And Mark also records for us that everybody went out there in chapter 1 verse 5 of Mark. So he was very popular.

Now notice down there for just a second by way of introduction in verse 28 that it says, "These things were done," and it probably says in your Bible Beth-a-bara or Bethab-ara, different pronunciations are possible, either pronunciation is wrong. It is Bethany. And the reason some people have substituted Beth-a-bara or Bethab-ara, is because they feel that it confuses the issue because Bethany isn't over there by the Jordan. But the answer is very simple. There happen to be two Bethanys. There's one down there by Jerusalem where Mary and Martha and Lazarus lived. And there's another one, and

that's what's said here. "These things were done in Bethany." What Bethany? "The Bethany beyond...what?...beyond the Jordan." That one, over by the area of Galilee.

And so, John was out there in the Jordan Valley at a place called Bethany. And he was carrying on his prophetic ministry, preaching repentance for the Kingdom of God is at hand. And when the Bible says "at hand" that means the next thing on God's clock. It doesn't mean it's coming tomorrow, it doesn't mean it's coming in 4,000 years, it just means in terms of what God is doing in the world the next big event is the Kingdom.

You say, "But the next big event wasn't the Kingdom it was the church." You're right, but John didn't know that because the church was mystery. Paul says that. The church was mystery. John was preaching, "Here is Messiah, repent and get ready for him because he's coming to bring His Kingdom." And always in the Old Testament whenever the Jews talked about Messiah coming, they always had the Kingdom coming with Him. Always...they never saw rejection of Messiah in the Old Testament, that's why they didn't know what to do with Isaiah 53. They couldn't figure that out at all, that's why today the Jews when they read through the Bible skip Isaiah 53. Some of them have decided to apply it to Israel because Israel has suffered. The only problem is, Israel hasn't suffered without saying a word...and I don't blame them...and hasn't been done before her shearers. So then the problem in interpreting that is the Jew never wanted to see a Messiah who suffered, you see. And we'll see it in a minute. The Jew thought he needed a king, God knew he needed a Lamb, see. And that's why Christ came and John says, "Behold the Lamb of God," the Jew thought we need a king, God says you need a Lamb, you can't reign with Me until you come into fellowship with Me. And that's where it had to start.

So here was John out there and he was preaching, "Now get ready, Messiah is coming." And people were coming out there and they heard this dynamic guy preaching and they were really getting penitent and repentant and they were saying, "God, I want to be ready for Messiah," and they were going through some spiritual cleansing in their lives and John was baptizing them as a symbol of that spiritual cleansing. It was not the same as baptism after the cross, which is union with Christ in His burial and resurrection. It was different. It was John's baptism.

Incidentally, in case you don't think it's different, twelve of John's disciples were rebaptized by the Apostles. It was different. But John was baptizing as a symbol of the purification of the people of Israel preparing for Christ's arrival.

So, here is John out there at Bethany preaching. Now in his message here, in these verses through verse 37, there, as I said, are three different testimonies. And we're going to get three very important angles on who Christ is and what you are to do with Him and how you are related to Him by what John says and there are three different emphases that are really interesting and present to us really the plan of salvation.

But before we look at the text specifically I want to say one more thing. I want you to see the scene. This is very important, I want you to get the chronology right. It's probably about the last of December in 26 A.D. or maybe the first of January in 27 A.D., it's around that time. John has been out there since perhaps the summer of 26 preaching, baptizing. So a few months have come by and prior to this time when we see John right here in John's gospel he has already baptized Jesus Christ. Christ has already come to him. Been baptized, the Spirit descended upon Him like a dove and departed. Now that probably did not happen at Bethany. Bethany is up the Jordan Valley, it probably happened below because Christ right after His baptism went immediately to be...what?...to be tempted. And the temptation is in a place called the Devastation and it's in the southern part of Israel. So evidently John the Baptist began his ministry in the southern part and moved up the Jordan Valley. And so in the southern part Christ had come to John, had been baptized in the Jordan. After the baptism of Christ he had gone up into the Devastation, as it's called, the wilderness where He was tempted and He stayed there for 40 days. While He went up there John started up the Jordan Valley preaching. Christ stayed up there 40-plus days being tempted. After He won victory over Satan, He came back down and when He came down He started up the Jordan Valley to find John at Bethany.

Now when we come to this passage here, John is already at Bethany and Jesus is on His way up the Jordan Valley. He's finished His trial with Satan, been victorious, He's ready to begin His ministry and He begins it right there at Bethany with John. He picks up His first two disciples right there at Bethany. And so, John is there and he knows Christ is on the way because he's baptized Him. And he's waiting for Him and Christ is coming up the Jordan Valley. And as Christ is coming up the Jordan Valley and John is at Bethany, we enter the scene in verse 19 and we see the first day of John's testimony.

Here it comes. First day, first group, first emphasis..."And this is the witness of John," now that statement tells you what he's going to talk about clear through verse 37. This is the witness of John. John who? John the Baptist because whenever the name John is used it's the Baptist. "All right, John," the Apostle says, "now I'm going to give you the witness of John the Baptist to corroborate my testimony. This is the witness of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, 'Who are you?'"

Now here's the first group. First day, first group, first emphasis and here comes some Levites and some priests from Jerusalem. The Jews have sent them. Now they're a very interesting group. The Levites and the priests were always together because they work together. The priests carried on the ministrations of the temple and the Levites were like the palace riot squad. They were under a series of captains and lieutenants, one of them was called the temple captain, and they were kind of an army to keep any problems down. And so they didn't want to turn loose a lot of priests walking out there in the wilderness so they sent along a kind of a palace guard of Levites. Levites also took care of the menial tasks of the temple, they were in the maintenance department. But basically the priests

would become the questioners and the Levites would merely be the associates and they would give it some official sanction.

And so here comes the first little group to hear the testimony of John and it's a fascinating testimony. I want you to catch one word and don't forget it cause as we go through the gospel of John you're going to see it come up and it's always going to come up again in the same connotation and it's the word loudaio, or the Jews. That is a term in John's gospel used seventy times at least. And all the times that it is used, it is used in opposition to Christ. Christ did this but the Jews did this. Or the Jews sought to trap Him. Or the Jews sought to destroy...or the Jews...the term "the Jews," loudaio is always used in speaking of Israel in an opposition to Christ. It's the term that's used. And you remember what John said, "He came unto His own and His own received Him not." And whenever you see the term "the Jews" it just connotes that opposition. It just carries within it intrinsic in its very sound because of its use the idea of opposition.

And so, here comes a crew of people from the Jews already showing their opposition. You say, "Well who are they opposing?" Well they're just opposing anybody who might throw the spiritual religious status quo out of whack. And they're probably sitting in Jerusalem saying, "I don't know who this strange guy is running out there in the wilderness but we've got to do something about him." And so they sent these people after this occasion to find out who he was. And so at the very beginning they're set against John because some of them thought that John was the Messiah and they wanted to know. They were so busy protecting Israel from the false Messiah, they also protected Israel from the true one. And so, as soon as somebody came up with any kind of a variation in their religion, they automatically went after him and the term connotes opposition by its use, not by its form in words but by its use.

So the very mention of the Jews gives us the idea of opposition and they come out after John. They're very insecure, you see. The Jewish leaders were tremendously insecure cause they knew they were hypocrites. There's one thing about a hypocrite, he knows he's one. And they knew. And they were afraid of exposure. And they were afraid of losing their stature, just exactly what they were afraid of with Christ cause He threw the spiritual status quo completely out of kilter.

And so they sent these people out there and they asked John a question, "Who are you?...Who are you?" Because in Luke 3:15 some people had said he might be the Messiah. And so in essence they were saying, "Are you the Messiah?" You know, implying, "What are you doing out here with this ridiculous outfit on in the desert if you're the Messiah?" They had to find out, so they sent this group to find out.

Now watch John's reply...fascinating. "Who are you?" And he confessed and denied not but confessed, "I am not the Christ," which is Greek for Messiah. "I'm not Messiah."

Well they said, verse 21, "If you're not Messiah, are you Elijah? He says no, I'm not Elijah either. Are you THAT prophet or THE prophet?" Now we don't know who this is and scholars disagree completely and really just kind of throw it up and say there's no way of telling who they had in mind with the term "THE prophet." It could be a reference back to Elijah or back to Messiah, or it could be somebody else that they expected. But he said, "Are you Christ? He said no. Are you Elijah? No. Are you that prophet? No, I'm not any of those people."

You say, "Well now why did they ask him that? I mean, why would they ask him if he's one of those people?" I'll show you why. In Malachi 4:5, don't look it up, just listen, in Malachi 4:5 it says this, it says that when Christ comes in the day of the Lord, prior to His coming Elijah will come, Malachi 4:5. Elijah is going to come, God says I will send Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord. And so they figured if Christ is coming and Messiah is coming, maybe this is Messiah. And they thought, "Well, no, if he says he's not Messiah, maybe he's Elijah the forerunner to Messiah." He says no, I'm not him either. And then they throw in this "that prophet, the prophet," and I'm not sure who that is. But he said, "I'm not Elijah."

You say, "Well wait a minute, who is Elijah then? Did Elijah come before Christ came?" Yes. Who was it? It was John the Baptist. You say, "Wait a minute. If he said he wasn't Elijah, how could he be Elijah?" Just this, he was not Elijah but he came as Christ said in the spirit and power of Elijah. You see, they misinterpreted the prophecy. God sent one like Elijah. God sent one who came in the same type of ministry, the same form of ministry, the same power and Christ Himself said of John the Baptist, "He is in that sense Elijah." And you can look it up yourself in Luke 1, Matthew 17, it's all there. He was not Elijah resurrected. Christ Himself said in that sense he was in the spirit and power of Elijah. In Luke 1:7 He says, "He shall come in the spirit and power of Elijah to turn the hearts of the children to the fathers," and so forth and so on. And so he did fulfill the prophecy, but the Jews had misread the prophecy and assumed that it had to mean that Elijah himself would be resurrected and come back. I don't believe that. I believe that John the Baptist was the fulfillment of that prophecy which Israel had misrepresented. So he was really the fulfillment of the prophecy but was not Elijah because he did come in the spirit and power of Elijah with a like ministry and Christ said of him that he was the only Elijah that would come in the sense that he was like Elijah in his ministry.

And so, they said if you're not all these things, verse 22, then they said unto him, "Who are you because we want to give an answer to them that sent us? What sayest thou of thyself?" Come on, John, now who are you? I love this. I mean, you know what John could have said? They said, "Who are you, John?" He could have said, "I am the son of Zacharias, top drawer priest. Not only that, I have been filled with the Holy Spirit since my mother's womb, super spiritual. Not only that, I am the greatest man who ever lived, there has not been one born of woman greater than I. And if that's not enough for you, I'm also the herald of the Messiah." He could have said that. You know what? It all was true. You know what he said? I love it, fantastic, verse 23, you know what he says? "I am the

voice." What's a voice? I'm not even a person, I'm a voice. O listen, you see the greatness of humility? He says, "Who am I? I'm nobody, I'm nothing, I'm just a voice. He's the Word, I'm the voice. I'm the voice of somebody, nobody, standing here in the wilderness crying, make your heart ready for the Lord." And that's what he means by prepare the way straight into your heart, straighten it out. I'm standing here telling you Christ is coming and I'm nobody, I'm a voice. Did you get that, disciples of John? He's nobody. He's nobody. That's the genius of greatness, folks. He could have said I'm everything. And you know what? He would have been right.

I like Paul when he says to the Ephesians chapter 3 verse 18 I think it is, he says, "I am the least of all the saints." You see, there's a brilliance in humility and a truth in it. What do you say...well what am I supposed to say if someone comes to me and says, "Who are you?" What are you supposed to say? Well, I'll tell you. If someone comes to you and says, "Who are you?" You know what you can say? Listen to this, a couple of conditions first. If you have obeyed all of Christ's commands, every one of them. If you're still in there I'll give you another one. And on top of that, watch this, if you have done every single thing that could be done in serving Christ, you've obeyed all His commands, you have served Him with all your heart, done every duty possible you could do, then you can say and only when you've done all of that, you can stand up and say, "I am one of God's most unprofitable servants." Unprofitable, right. You know, you don't even qualify to be unprofitable...neither do I.

You say, "MacArthur, where do you get that kind of stuff?" Out of the Bible. Luke 17:10, I wouldn't say it if I couldn't support it and I want to show you that. You know, we get to thinking we're pretty hot stuff and then we pick up a verse like this and it really knocks out the pins out from under us. Listen, when you've done everything there is to do and done all the duty that God could ask of anybody, then you get the privilege of saying, "I'm unprofitable." Luke 17:10, listen to this, Jesus says, "So you also when you shall have done all those things which are commanded you, may say, 'We are...what?...unprofitable servants.'" We have done that which was our duty to do, isn't that wonderful? You can get so elevated that you could actually become unprofitable.

Does that put you in the right perspective and me too? Just when we get to thinking we're really hot stuff, we haven't even gotten up to being unprofitable yet. And so, John could have said, "Oh, am I something?" He says, "Listen," he says, "I'm a voice, I'm nobody." When you start relating me to Jesus Christ, I don't even belong in the same sentence. Paul said, "If I am anything, I am what I am by...what?...by the grace of God." I didn't do it on my own, it's nothing but what God gave me. Oh, there's a beauty in humility. It's all of grace. So John says I'm nothing, I'm a voice, and he quotes Isaiah 40 verse 3 which was prophetic of this time, and he says I'm just telling you to straighten the path for the Lord is coming.

What does he mean straighten the way? He means the way to your heart, prepare your heart. Straighten the road right inside you that Christ might have entrance there, He's coming. I'm just a...I'm just a nobody but the somebody is coming, the King is on the way, I am just the least of all

slaves that I can stand up and tell you He's coming. And I can just see John's heart and his mind, he's thinking, here I am telling them the King is on the way and He's walking right up the Jordan Valley. Fantastic thought. I mean, he must have been just impassioned with this thing. I know how I get when I preach on the Second Coming, I sometimes feel like John the Baptist, I used to be John the Baptist but then I changed denominations. But I know how I feel myself, you know. Sometimes when I've been preaching in Revelation and I stand and I think I'm announcing the coming of Jesus Christ and sometimes I can almost just sense, you know, it's just kind of looking over my shoulder. Jesus Christ is coming again, isn't He? Very soon. And I don't know, I can feel a little bit like John must have felt when he was standing there saying, "Hey, the King's coming," and he could think in his mind and he's coming right now up the Jordan Valley.

And he says the first message is He's here...He's here. And John says prepare your heart, I'm only the voice, the Word is coming. And so he says in verse 24, John the Apostle says, "And they who were sent were ek out of the Pharisees," they were Pharisees, these Levites and priests were also Pharisees. And they said unto him in verse 25, and this is interesting, "They asked him and said unto him, 'Well why baptizes thou then if thou be not that Christ nor Elijah, neither that prophet?' All right now, John, you're not Christ, you're not Elijah, you're not the prophet...what are you doing baptizing these people?"

You say, "Well why did they ask him that?" Just this, listen, in the Old Testament associated with the coming of Christ was some sort of cleansing. For example, Ezekiel says, "Christ is going to come," and he says, "I'll sprinkle clean water upon you and you shall be clean." That's in chapter 36 of Ezekiel, it's also in chapter 37 of Ezekiel that when Messiah comes there's going to be some kind of cleansing going on. Not only...and cleansing in the Old Testament had the idea of purification which was done with water. And also in Zechariah 13 verse 1 it indicates the same thing that when Messiah comes there's going to be some kind of a purification, some kind of a cleansing. And so the Jew in his mind had associated the coming with Messiah with some kind of cleansing and purification. And baptism was just such a symbol. So they figured that when Messiah came, He'd do the baptizing. And if it wasn't Him to do it, it would be Elijah who came before Him to do it, or that prophet. And John, if you're not any of those, what are you doing doing it? Because they figured that baptism would come along or some form of cleansing, and this is what John was doing, they figured that was coming with Messiah. And if he wasn't Messiah or Elijah the forerunner, or that prophet, whoever that is, then what's he doing baptizing? But see, they didn't recognize that he was the spirit and power of Elijah doing what was going to be done prior to Messiah's coming.

But John interestingly enough answers and really minimizes baptism, he says in verse 26, John says, "Oh I baptize with water," you know, no big thing, just water. I'm just water. And then over in verse 33 he says, "You wait till one gets here who is going to baptize you with...what?...the Holy Spirit." My baptism, I'm just baptizing with water. You see, John was preaching repentance and when somebody repented John baptized them as a symbol of their cleansing, that's all. It had nothing to do with the

baptism that Christ was going to give when He came and gave the Holy Spirit. And John says my baptism is simply a baptism of water. It's just a sign or a symbol of repentance.

And then I love this in verse 26 when he says, "There stands one among you whom you know not." What do you mean stands among you? Well it's not so much the idea that he's literally standing there as the idea that there's somebody right in your world and your society and your generation living with and among you and you don't even know who He is. You're all worried about what I'm doing, listen you're missing the point. And when Christ finally comes He's going to baptize you not with water but with...whom? With the Holy Spirit. And let me put it as simply as I can. Every believer at the moment that you receive Jesus Christ, you are baptized with the Holy Spirit once for all. It never is repeated. First Corinthians 12:13 says, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body." And Paul said that to the Corinthians, the most messed-up Christians in existence. And if they had received the baptism of the Holy Spirit and they were at the bottom of the totem pole, spiritually speaking, it's a part and parcel of every believer, 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 constant happening over and over again, it's a once-for-all thing. And people who take the baptism of the Holy Spirit and apply it to some kind of a off and on occurrence of tongues have missed the point. It's never associated with that any place in the Bible any time, never. That's misconstruing 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.

John was doing a symbol, Christ was going to do the reality and cleanse us indeed and in truth by the Holy Spirit. So John's baptism and Christ's coming were two different things.

Now notice what John says because it's very important in verse 26, he says, "There stands one among you whom you know not." And in essence here's John's first message...first day, first group, first emphasis, here's his message, three words, "He is here." Did you get it? He's here. Messiah's around. He's here. He's present. He's in your generation. I've already baptized Him...not for repentance but as a commissioning. He's here, He's in your world. And as I said, in their effort to expose all the false Messiahs, they also ignored the true Messiah. But he said He's here, He's here.

Now listen to this, folks. That's where salvation begins. Now I'll say it again. That's where salvation begins with a recognition that Christ is and that He is alive. Do you see that? He is and He is alive. And so John says He's here, that's my first message, He's here.

Then in verse 27 he says, this is the same one who comes after me, and He's coming up the Jordan Valley after I've already been here, but He's really preferred before me. In fact, He's so much greater than I am that I'm not even worthy to untie His shoes. And you know, that was the lowest of the low, the lowest slave in the household got the job of untying the master's shoes. The old rabbinic

teachings used to say that even a disciple would not be left with untying a master's shoes, only a slave of slaves. And John says I'm not even so elevated I could untie His shoes, I haven't even become unprofitable yet. He's so great. And then in verse 28 it just says, "These things were done in Bethany beyond Jordan."

So the first day, the first group from the Jews came and said, "Who are you?" He said I'm not anybody that you think I am but I don't want you to worry about who I am, I just want you to worry about the fact that Jesus Christ the Son of the living God is here. That's my first message.

Now watch his second message on the second day to the second group with the second emphasis, verse 29. We know it's the second day because it says the next day. John sees Jesus coming unto him and says, "Behold, the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world." Notice it's sin, not sins. He doesn't take away only the symptoms, He takes away the disease. "Behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world." You say, "Why does he call Him the Lamb of God?" Well those Jews would have understood that, wouldn't they? They knew all about the centuries when Israel had gone through the sacrificing of the lamb. They knew all about Abraham and Isaac and when God told Abraham that He would provide a lamb for sacrifice, they knew the Passover where a lamb's blood was shed and sprinkled on the door. They knew all about every morning and every evening of every year of every decade of every century in the temple without an exception, the lamb was slain in the morning, in the evening, in the morning, in the evening, never ending...slaying of the lamb for the burnt offering for sin. They knew about that. They also knew that Isaiah had prophesied that there would come a lamb who would be slaughtered, and here He is, John says. Here is the lamb of God, the one final sacrifice. And the writer of Hebrews says that He ended sacrifice once for all by the death of Himself, the lamb.

And as I said, 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 there's sin in the way. And so God had to send a sacrifice to get rid of sin before there could be a relationship. And it's just that simple. Until you come to the point of sacrificially realizing...of realizing the sacrifice of Christ for your sin, there's no place for fellowship between you and God. And so God came to die on a cross as a lamb because He had to be a lamb before He could ever be a King because He'd have nobody to reign with if He didn't die for their sins.

And so, John's first message is just simple. What is it? He is here. Watch his second message. Behold Him. Do you see the difference? Here He is, now look at Him and see Him for who He is. You see, that's the second step in salvation. Once you know that Christ is and that He's alive, the second thing you want to do is see Him for who He is. And who is He? The living Word and the Lamb of God. And when you see Christ as the Lamb of God, you recognize your own sin too, don't you? And so John says behold Him, the living Word, the dying lamb. My first message is He's here, my second message is look at Him and see Him for who He is.

And then in verse 25 he says...pardon me, verse 29...30, how I got back there...verse 30, "This is He of whom I said after me comes a man who is preferred before me, for He was before me." I think John wants to get that across. That's the third time he said it. Now watch this in verse 31, really interesting. "And I knew Him not." Isn't that interesting? Do you realize that John the Baptist was the cousin of Jesus? Do you realize that he must have known Him for 30 years and never knew who He was? You see, Christ never expressed His Messiahship till after His baptism. John didn't know. John didn't know. I didn't know Him, he said. He said, all I knew, watch it in verse 31, all I knew was that He was coming and He was going to be made manifest to Israel and that I was supposed to be here baptizing. God didn't tell me the whole shot at the beginning, He just told me that Messiah was coming and I was to get down here and baptize for repentance and preach repent for the Kingdom is at hand. That's all I knew, I didn't know who it was. I only knew I was to preach and baptize.

And John's testimony continues in verse 32, look at it. "And John bore witness saying, 'I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove and it abode on Him.'" One day I baptized Christ, Jesus Christ, and at the time I baptized Him I didn't know who He was. I knew Him because I knew my own cousin. And I was baptizing Jesus and all of a sudden the Holy Spirit descended like a dove right on Him.

You say, "Oh sure, he knows by then." No, look at verse 33, what does it say? "And I knew Him not." He still didn't know. Ah, until, watch this, "But He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me," who sent John? "There was a man sent from God whose name was John." So who was it that told him? God told him. "And I knew Him not," verse 33, "but God said unto me," cause God was the one that sent Him. "God said, 'Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on Him, the same is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' And I saw and bore witness that this is the Son of God."

Do you know how John knew that was the Son of God? How? One way, and one way alone. God told him. God told him. You want to know how you know that Jesus is the Son of God? One way, God tells you. Remember Peter? Jesus said, "Whom do men say that I am?" He said, "Oh, some people think You're Elijah, Jeremiah, one of the prophets." "Whom do you say that I am?" Peter says, "Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God." And Jesus looked him right in the eye and said, "Flesh and blood didn't reveal that unto you, but My Father." No man knows God except...no man knows Christ God bring him to a knowledge of Christ because depraved humanity cannot understand things of God, they are beyond his grasp. They're foolishness to him. The natural man receiveth not or understandeth not the things of God. The only way a man will ever know who Christ is is by God's divine revelation. And so it is with even John.

Imagine, he grew up with Him...30 years and didn't even know. Why? Because God didn't choose to reveal it. And so John says, "Oh, finally I knew, I knew because God told me who He was and then I

knew He was the Son of God." And so John says here's my second message, "Behold Him, He's the Lamb of God, the Son of God."

My first message, He's here. My second message, Look at Him and see Him for who He is. That's the second step in salvation. Listen, the first thing you have to do is recognize that Christ is, don't you? That He's the Son of God. And then secondly, you have to look at Him and see Him as the Lamb of God dying for your sin. Oh, I love that thirty-fourth verse, man, that's fantastic. "And I saw and bore witness that this is the Son of God." You know, I can say that, can you? I've never seen Him with my physical eye, but I'll tell you one thing, Jesus Christ is absolutely without doubt the Son of God. And so he gives his two first two testimonies.

Very quickly because it's very short, the third testimony, verse 35, third day, third group, third emphasis, third testimony. "Again the next day John stood and two of his disciples." Remember, John had built a little following of all these people who had repented. And here were a couple of his disciples kind of hanging around. And Jesus probably was walking somewhere over at the side and verse 36, "And looking upon Jesus as He walked, John said, `Behold, the Lamb of God.'"

You say, "What is he saying?" Well look at verse 37 and you can tell what He meant by that. "And the two disciples heard him speak and they...what?...followed Jesus." You know what John says? Listen, John says...testimony number one, He's here. Testimony number two, behold Him. Testimony number three, follow Him. Did you get it? And when John says behold the Lamb of God, do you know what that implies? It implies this, "Hey, guys, what are you doing standing around here? There is the Messiah. There He is. I'm nobody. You want to be hooked up with nobody, there is the Lamb of God, get over there." And they did. And you just met the first disciples Jesus ever had. There they are. They were converted Baptists, and they followed Jesus.

I love that. Don't you love that? I mean, it's so simple and yet can you see what's in this? It just says, I love it, "They followed Jesus...they followed Jesus." And with that statement right there the whole scene in this account shifts and John just fades out. And you know what we do for the rest of this book? Follow Jesus. Oh John pops up in the third chapter for a little while but from now on it's the following of Jesus Christ.

John's first testimony, He's here. John's second testimony, Behold Him for who He is. John's third testimony, Follow Him. That, my friend, is the essence of salvation, isn't it?

Father, we thank You this morning for Your Word to us. We thank You for the tremendous reality of who Christ is and for the testimony of John the Baptist which is still ringing clear these two thousand years after John is gone. And, Lord, continue to teach us by Your Spirit in Christ's name. Amen.

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