

## JOHN 1:29-34—WHO IS JESUS?

**INTRO.:** July 4—Isn't it great?

- No King or Royalty—Now only humble servants of the people running the gov't
- No gov't dictating to us from 3000 miles away—Now gov't is in our own backyard
- No longer taxation w/o representation—Now we can tax ourselves!

Makes you want to light some sparklers and shoot off fireworks, doesn't it?

- Our country = an inspiration to the world—and it was *designed* to be—b/c unlike all other nations it was founded on an *ideal*, not merely on an ethnic, tribal, or geographic basis. Thomas Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence consciously appealing to *universal truths*:
  - **We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. — That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed**
    - I just returned from Africa—all want to come here—vs. China/Saudi Arabia
    - Tianamen Square, China, 1989—Students protesting for democracy there quoted from this portion of the D/I—3000 were massacred b/c of their longing for freedom and democracy.
  - Just after those famous words, the D/I says: **The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid world.**
    - The D/I then indicts the King and the British gov't with specific examples of the “injuries and usurpations” that led to our declaring our independence
  - **AND YET**—in the 1<sup>st</sup> draft of the D/I the last indictment of the King said this: **He has waged cruel war against human nature itself, violating its most sacred rights of life and liberty in the persons of a distant people who never offended him, captivating and carrying them into slavery in another hemisphere, or to incur miserable death in their transportation thither. . . . Determined to keep open a market where MEN should be bought and sold, he has prostituted his negative for suppressing every legislative attempt to prohibit or to restrain this execrable commerce.**—In other words, He has promulgated slavery and has refused to put an end to the slave trade—and he foisted slavery on us.
    - Yet Jefferson himself was a slave owner.
    - And that ¶ was elim'd from the D/I b/c of the objections of SC and GA.

What do these things tell us?

- Even in the best of countries, like ours, there is a contradiction inherent within us—our life/our actions do not match our ideals.
- Countries are composed of people—that same contradiction and *fatal flaw* runs through each one of us, *and we all know it*
- Both as a nation and as individuals, *something always goes wrong*. We delude ourselves into thinking that: “If we just elect dif. people or, indiv'ly, if we just get that degree, or more \$, or that ♂ or that ♀ (or, if we get rid of that ♂ or that ♀), or got a dif. job, or whatever, then *all will be well*.”
  - I believe in voting for better people, and in getting a good educ.—\$ is a good thing—being in good relationship and having meaningful work are imp.
  - But none of those things solves the basic problem of *our nature*. That basic contradiction, that fatal flaw inherent in our very nature, is what the Bible summarizes by the word “sin.”

And it is to THAT that the Bible, in today's passage (John 1:29-34), points us to the answer to our problem:

- That answer to the fundamental problem within our nature not only is found in Jesus—but by its very nature CAN ONLY be found in Jesus—as we will see.

**BACKGROUND:**

- No one asks of other great political leaders, or philosophers, or even religious leaders “Who are you?” or “What are you?”—b/c everyone knows that they are human beings. So was Jesus. But the dif. btw. Jesus and other people is that everyone else was and is *only* a human being. Not Jesus.
- People who looked at Jesus, and listened to him, and saw what he did, and interacted with him—whether they were his friends or his enemies—recognized that there was something unique about Jesus. And so people were constantly asking, in one way or another, “Who are you?”

- **John 4:12**—Jesus had promised to give a woman at a well what he called “living water,” and so she asked him: **You are not greater than our father Jacob, are you, who gave us this well?** Later she asked the men of her town: **This is not the Christ [or, Messiah], is it?**
- **John 8:53**—The Jesus had just told the Jews, **if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death.** So they asked him: **Surely you are not greater than our father Abraham, who died? The prophets died too. Whom do you make yourself out to be?**
- **Matt 21:23**—Jesus had cast money changers out of the Temple in Jerusalem, and so the chief priests and other religious leaders came to him and asked him: **By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?** (i.e., “*Who do you think you are?*”/“*Who are you?*”)
- **Mark 14:61**—Jesus was arrested and brought before the religious leaders, and the high priest asked him: **Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?**
- **Matt 27:11**—Jesus was brought before the Roman governor Pilate, who asked him: **Are you the king of the Jews?**
- **Luke 23:39**—When he was nailed to the cross, one of the men who was being crucified next to him asked him: **Are you not the Christ?**

**John 1:29-34:** Book of John was written by one of Jesus’ close followers, the Apostle John. But just before our passage it has been talking about another man named John, known as John the Baptist—who was a prophet and who had come on the scene to prepare the way for Jesus. In our passage it is John the Baptist who is doing the speaking—**READ**

**PROPOSITION:** This passage answers the Q: Who is Jesus? It tells us: **JESUS IS UNIQUE—in all the world and in all hx—JESUS IS UNIQUE.**

**ORG. SENTENCE:** (1) **v.29** identifies the unique role of Jesus; (2) **v. 30-34** then show us *why* he is uniquely qualified for that role. (3) After going through the passage, I will end by talking briefly about what do we do with the answer to the Q.: Who is Jesus?

- We could spend hours on what is said here, b/c it is so important—**WE WILL NOT DO THAT!**
- However, if you would like to get more information on this important subject, go to EPI’s website: **www.equippingpastors.com**—click on “Resources” and go to the notes called “Biblical Theology.” There you will find a section on how Jesus fulfills the entire OT. I think you will find it fascinating. I certainly did when I wrote it.

**I. Verse 29 tells us JESUS IS UNIQUE b/c he is “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”**

**A. When John the Baptist looked at Jesus and said, Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, he may have had the prophet Isaiah in mind.**

- Isaiah was written >700years before Jesus came on the scene. But **Isa 53:7-8** refers to Servant of the Lord who “**was oppressed and afflicted...like a lamb that is led to the slaughter...for the transgression of my people**”
- In **Acts 8:26-35**—written probably less than 20 years after Jesus’ death and Resurrection—Philip explained to an Ethiopian that **Isa 53:7-8** was written concerning Jesus.

**B. By this identification of Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, John also appears to be joining the Jewish Passover (which required the sacrifice of a lamb) and the Day of Atonement (in which Israel’s sins were covered).**

- *The NT says that Passover was prophetic of the sacrifice of Christ.* In the OT **Exod 12:46** and **Num 9:12** specify that the bones of the Passover lambs are not to be broken. When Jesus was crucified the Apostle John specifically noted that **the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first man and of the other who was crucified with [Jesus]; but coming to Jesus, when they saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs (John 19:32-33).** Then **John 19:36** quotes from **Exod 12:46** and **Num 9:12** and says, “**these things came to pass to fulfill the Scripture, ‘Not a bone of him shall be broken.’**”
- *But John makes clear in John 1:29 that Jesus goes way beyond the Jewish Passover and Day of Atonement.* On the Day of Atonement, the sins of the Israelites were only covered over for one year. But here, John is telling us that Jesus “takes away”—not just the sins of Israel, but those of the *whole world.*
- How can he do that? That is the great question that most people simply do not ponder—How can a God

who is holy and perfect accept people who have sin at the core of their being?—*And we do.*

- Are we really better than Thos. Jefferson? His sin may not be ours—but we all know:
  - Not to HATE—but we do.
  - Not to LUST—but we do.
  - Not to be so SELF-CENTERED—but we are.
- Does he just say, “Never mind—I’m full of love, so everybody ‘Come on in’”?
  - *How fair is that*—to the oppressed people of the world, for him to say, “You poor people who have been oppressed and slaughtered—you’re no better than your Nazi and Communist and other oppressors”
  - God is love, *but he is not ONLY love*: he is also holy, and just, and there is no sin or evil in his presence.
- That is why JESUS IS UNIQUE: In God’s plan, b/c Jesus was a man who did not sin, he could take our sin onto himself—and he would pay the penalty that God’s justice demanded—AND HE DID.
  - In the OT, God had promised to make a “New Covenant” with his people, not like the Law of Moses: This NC had first been prophesied by Jeremiah about 600 years before Jesus came on the scene.
  - In the NC, God promised to **“forgive his people’s iniquities and remember their sins no more” (Jer 31:34).**
  - At the Last Supper Jesus explicitly said that he was inaugurating the NC in his blood (**Luke 22:20**). The NC was confirmed by Jesus’ sacrifice of himself on the cross (**Heb 9:12-17**).
  - And God demonstrated that he ACCEPTED Jesus’ sacrifice of himself for our sins, by raising Jesus from the dead, and then seating him at the right hand of the Father in heaven.
- No one else—not Muhammad, not Buddha—nobody—ever claimed the ability to do what Jesus did.

JESUS IS UNIQUE.

- No one else COULD take away the sins of *anyone else* (let alone the whole world) because, unlike Jesus, Muhammad, Buddha, and everyone else, were simply human beings who have the same problem of something wrong—sin—at the core of their beings, just like you and I do. JESUS ALONE did not have that problem—and he did what we couldn’t do for ourselves.

C. Thus, Rev. 5:6-8 shows Jesus as the Victorious Lamb—equated with God himself: a Lamb who takes away the sin of all those who belong to him through faith, by having borne our sins and paid our debt to God; but a Lamb who takes away the sin of those who do NOT belong to him through judgment and ultimately banishing them from his presence.

II. The rest of this passage shows us why JESUS IS UNIQUE—i.e., why he is the only one who is qualified to be “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”

A. Verse 30 [READ]—What is this telling us? That JESUS IS UNIQUE because he is pre-existent.

1. In Matt 11:11 Jesus said: **There has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist.**

2. Now, John the Baptist is saying “*Jesus has a higher rank than I, for he existed before me.*”

a. PHYSICALLY that is not true, b/c Luke 1:36 tells us that John the Baptist was conceived 6 months before Jesus.

b. But in John 8:56-58 Jesus said **Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad.** So the Jews said to him: **You are not yet 50 years old, and have you seen Abraham?** And Jesus told them: **Truly, truly I say to you, before Abraham was born, I AM.**

c. Notice that he said “*before Abraham was born I AM,*” not, as we might expect, “*Before Abraham was born I WAS.*” He did that deliberately. When Jesus used the words “I AM,” he was going back to what is written in Exod 3:14, when God appeared to Moses in the burning bush. Moses asked God to tell him his name, and God said: **I AM WHO I AM** and **you shall say to the sons of Israel, I AM has sent me to you.**

d. So when Jesus told the Jews, **before Abraham was born I AM,** he was saying: “Yes, I pre-existed Abraham—because I AM GOD.” Muhammad never made that claim. Buddha specifically denied that he was God. But JESUS IS UNIQUE.

e. *And the Jews knew exactly that that is what Jesus was saying*—because John 8:59 says that **they picked up stones to throw at him**—because stoning to death was the punishment for blasphemy.

B. Verses 31-32 [READ]—What is this telling us? That the Holy Spirit identified Jesus as Unique.

1. John is referring here to Jesus' baptism in the Jordan River. **Matt 3:16-17; Mark 1:10-11; and Luke 3:21-22** tells us that, at his baptism, the heavens opened, the Holy Spirit publicly came down upon Jesus in the form of a dove, and the voice of God the Father said: **This is my beloved son, in whom I am well-pleased.**

2. John is telling us: "I saw this. I heard this. I was there. Jesus is no ordinary man. He is unique."

**C. Verse 33 [READ]—What is this telling us? That JESUS IS UNIQUE because he has the power to send the Holy Spirit to others.**

1. *In the OT, the Spirit of God only came upon limited numbers of people, usually those in positions of religious or political authority, in order to perform specific functions (see, **Exod 31:3; Num 11:16-29; Judg 3:10; 6:34; 14: 6, 19; 1 Sam 10:1-11; 16:13-14; 19:20-24**). Moses had prayed, "Would that all the Lord's people were prophets, that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them!" (**Num 11:29**).*

2. Remember the New Covenant that had been promised in the OT. One of those NC passages is **Ezek 36:25-27**, where God said: **I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh and I will put My Spirit within you.**

3. Then came Jesus. And HE promised to send the Holy Spirit who would "**be with you forever**" and who "**will be in you**" (**John 14:16-17**). Beginning on the Day of Pentecost (50 days > Jesus' Res.), he did that. And he still does that today. No longer is the Spirit or his gifts limited to the few, but now in the New Covenant God has poured out his Spirit on all of his people, regardless of age, sex, or race (**Acts 2:14-18**; see also, **Rom 8:9; 1 Cor 3:16; 6:19**). Now, "**all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God**" (**Rom 8:14**).

4. NOTICE: by his *power* to send the Holy Spirit to those who are his followers—and by his *doing so*—Jesus is demonstrating that he is doing what only God had promised to do in the OT. Because: JESUS IS UNIQUE. He IS God.

**D. Verse 34 [READ]—What is this telling us? That JESUS IS UNIQUE b/c he is the Unique Son of God.**

1. *Many people say: "We are all children of God equally."* In ONE since that is true, since the Bible tells us that all human beings, whether followers of Christ or not, God is involved in making us all, and all people have been created in the IOG. In other words, human beings are different from animals in a profound way.

2. *However, in another sense, according to the Bible, NOT all human beings are equally children of God.* **Rom 8:14** tells us that **all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.** Only followers of Jesus Christ are being led by the Spirit of God—b/c only followers of Jesus Christ HAVE the Spirit of God—b/c Jesus only GIVES his Spirit to those who follow Him. Elsewhere it says that only those who are followers of Jesus Christ have been adopted by God into his own family.

3. *But, as we have seen, JESUS IS UNIQUE. He is a unique "Son of God."* God is a *complex being*. Very profound and difficult to conceptualize, but: only 1 God, but 3 Persons: Father; Son; Holy Spirit = Trinity. Jesus is God the Son.

4. **Rom 1:1-4** talks about the uniqueness of Jesus as the Son of God, when it talks about: "**the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning his Son...who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead.**" One commentator explains this: "It is God's gospel. . . . It does not primarily deal with our needs as we perceive them—how can I live a better life, overcome my hang-ups, make sense of my existence—although it may include these. The gospel is God's way of dealing with his 'problem' of how he, a holy and just God, can justify and accept the sinner. . . . There is the defined subject matter of the gospel. It is about the Son in a way that it is not about the Father, or the Holy Spirit, or the believer. . . . He is not only God the Son, the second person of the eternal Trinity. He is Jesus of Nazareth [of whom] the central fact of the gospel, which is the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, identified Jesus as the Son of God" (Goldsworthy 1991: 81-82)

5. John the Baptist had that insight even before the Resurrection: v. 33—I didn't recognize him—but God said to him [READ v. 33]

6. So did Peter. After he had been with Jesus for awhile, Peter recognized who Jesus really is. Matt 16:13-17 [READ]

a. You see? That was, and is, the WHOLE Q—*Who is Jesus?*

*But the ANSWER to that question leads to one more question: WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO ABOUT IT?*

## APPLICATIONS:

### I. If you do are NOT currently a follower of Jesus—become one.

#### A. NOTICE: vv. 31 and 33: John the Baptist said: “I didn’t recognize him.”

1. The term translated “*recognize*” in the NASB or “*know*” in the ESV (*oida*) can mean: *know about; or to know on a more intimate level; or to experience; or to respect or honor; or to understand or recognize the significance of.* It’s in these latter senses that John the Baptist is using the word.
2. When John the Baptist said **I didn’t recognize him** *That doesn’t mean that he didn’t recognize Jesus AT ALL—but that he didn’t recognize Jesus as the Messiah, the Christ, the Savior, the Son of God, the one who’s coming to earth had been prophesied and promised in the OT. But then, at Jesus’ baptism, God the Father opened the eyes of John’s understanding.*
3. The same thing happened to Peter in Matt 16. Remember: after Peter said **You are the Christ, the Son of the living God**—Jesus told Peter, **Flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.**

#### B. The same can happen to you.

1. In **John 6:37** Jesus said: **All that the Father gives me will come to me, and the one who comes to me I will certainly not cast out.**
2. In **John 3:16** Jesus said: **For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life.**
3. **YOU CAN KNOW HIM.** Pray that God will open your eyes—like he did for John the Baptist, and Peter, and me, and so many others. Then turn to him. Repent of your sin and self-centeredness. Ask him to forgive you and send the Holy Spirit to you, as he promised—**AND HE WILL.**
4. Don’t just “admire” Jesus. He neither wants nor needs “admirers.” Instead, **FOLLOW HIM.** *That is the difference btw. life and death. He came that you would have life, and have it abundantly. Don’t turn away. You can do that right now, by committing your life to him. Or, if you want someone to pray with you to become a follower of Christ, please see me after the service.*

### II. If you ARE a follower of Jesus—then let’s “RECOGNIZE” him for who he really is, and stop playing games.

There are 2 sort of **OPPOSITE** games that we believers need to stop playing:

#### A. We need to recognize that we have been bought and paid for—we’re HIS now, not our own.

Our sins have been forgiven—We have been granted eternal life—We have the Holy Spirit inside of us—We have been adopted into God’s own family—and Jesus said that he would never leave us or forsake us: **SO WHY DO WE SO OFTEN LIVE AS IF HE WASN’T HERE WITH US—RIGHT NOW—WHEREVER WE ARE?** Recognize that he is here with us, with all the power of the Holy Spirit whom he gives us—and live accordingly.

#### B. We all have sins and wrongdoing—things we should have done that we didn’t do, or things we shouldn’t have done that we did do. They may torment us. So we keep beating ourselves up about them.

I do this myself, especially with respect to how I could have and should have been a better dad to my children when they were growing up. If that’s where you are—let us *stop tormenting ourselves*—because **REMEMBER: Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.**

### CONCLUSION: Hear the words of Richard Wurmbrand—one of the great Christian saints of the 20<sup>th</sup> century **[READ]**

Let us all *recognize* Jesus for who he really is. Let us *receive* the new life that only he can give us, and then *walk* with him in the newness of the life he gives.

**Let us pray.**

**BENEDICTION: 1 John 5:11-12**