

Bible Study Guide: Week of 1-9-2023

1. Read through the passage below
2. Read my notes and commentary
3. Read the questions at the end and ponder or discuss with others

Pastor Andrew

John 1:29-42

²⁹The next day [John the Baptizer] saw Jesus coming toward him and declared, “Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” ³⁰This is he of whom I said, ‘After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me.’ ³¹I myself did not know him; but I came baptizing with water for this reason, that he might be revealed to Israel.” ³²And John testified, “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. ³³I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ ³⁴And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God.” ³⁵The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, ³⁶and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, “Look, here is the Lamb of God!”

³⁷The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. ³⁸When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, “What are you looking for?” They said to him, “Rabbi” (which translated means Teacher), “where are you staying?” ³⁹He said to them, “Come and see.” They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o’clock in the afternoon. ⁴⁰One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. ⁴¹He first found his brother Simon and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which is translated Anointed). ⁴²He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, “You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas” (which is translated Peter).

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In the prologue of John’s gospel we are told that “⁶There was a man sent from God whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. ⁹The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.” (John 1:6-9) This is referring to John the Baptizer. Just before our passage today (and just after the prologue of the gospel), John is confronted by priests and Levites who question whether John is the Messiah. He emphatically denies this, referring the leaders instead to the one who will come after him. John’s reference to Jesus as “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” finds its roots in various Old Testament stories including the lambs sacrificed for the Passover, although the Passover lamb was not a sin offering. The Jewish Day of Atonement sacrifices were goats and bulls, not lambs. There are also echoes of parts of Isaiah (i.e. Isaiah 53—the so-called “suffering servant” passages). None of these fully explain what John means by calling Jesus the “Lamb of God.” Obviously this symbolism and imagery would be picked up by later Christians who made overt connections between the Passover Lamb and Jesus. John himself, in fact, in chapter 19, links Jesus’ crucifixion with the hour that Passover lambs were slaughtered on the Day of Preparation. No single Old Testament reference fits John’s characterization of Jesus. Perhaps that is John’s way of signaling that Jesus is going to do something new for the people. Also, note that “Lamb of God” is only one of many titles used for Jesus here in this passage. He is also referred to as “Son of God,” “Messiah,” and “Rabbi.”

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John uses something of a riddle to communicate that fact that, although Jesus’ ministry followed after John’s ministry, Jesus outranks John because he existed before John (indeed, as we read earlier in the chapter, Jesus existed before everything else existed). Unlike in Luke’s account where John and Jesus were relatives and (presumably) knew each other, here John says that he didn’t know Jesus prior

to Jesus' wondrous baptism. Although it is possible the two never met, it is more likely that John is speaking metaphorically. He may have known Jesus as a friend and relative, but he did not yet know Jesus as Son of God, Lamb of God, and Messiah. That all changed when the Spirit came upon Jesus, just as the Spirit told John would happen. Once again John refers to Jesus as the Lamb of God, this time within ear shot of two of John's own followers.

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The disciples follow Jesus literally, but also metaphorically. They, of course, become followers of Jesus not just that day on that road, but throughout their lives. Jesus, upon noticing them, asks them, "What do you seek?" This is the same question he asks those who come to arrest him in the Garden before his crucifixion. The disciples ask Jesus, "Where do you abide?" Just as the term "follow" has a double meaning so does this question. Literally they are asking him, "What house or town are you staying in?" At a deeper level, however, they are underscoring the fact that Jesus has come to abide with humankind. This term for dwelling comes up repeatedly in John's gospel as a major theme. Jesus tells the disciples that his father's house has many abiding places, he urges them to abide in him like branches abide in a vine, and so on. Jesus tells them to "come and see"—again, a repeated phrase. It comes up again later in this chapter as well as in Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well and in his resuscitation of Lazarus.

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Notice that the work of disciples is to bring others to Jesus. Here Andrew brings his brother to meet this Messiah named Jesus. Jesus, meanwhile, is shown to have deep insight into the future as he provides a preview of Simon Peter's eventual nickname.

Discussion/Reflection Questions:

- 1. What images come to your mind when you hear about Jesus as "the Lamb of God?" What do you think John meant by this phrase?**
- 2. What do you think about John's role in this story? How do you think John felt about it? How do you think his followers would have felt about it?**
- 3. Jesus asks these disciples, "What are you seeking?" or "What are you looking for?" How would you answer this question?**