

**Armagh Baptist Church**  
**Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> May 2009 – 7:00pm**  
**“Behold the Lamb of God” John 1:19-34**

**Introduction**

Tonight we are going to be thinking about John the Baptist.  
This is our second study in John’s Gospel (John 1:19-34)  
I am simply going to introduce John the Baptist to you under 3 headings:  
John the Baptist – The Man, His Message and His Motive.

**1. John, the Man**

John the Baptist was quite a character. He would certainly have stood out in a crowd. If he walked up the Mall in Armagh tonight, he would certainly turn a few heads!

**(i) Because of what he wore (see Matt 3:1-5)**

Camel skins and a leather belt (v.4)

Not a camel skin coat and the finest Armani belt – these were the basics!

**(ii) Because of what he ate**

Locusts – probably the insects – like large grass hoppers.  
We brought them into the schools when we did the Amazing Journey. But I suppose it conjures up ideas of ‘*I’m a Celebrity – Get me out of here*’ when you think of crunching into a live locust!!

But there was another kind of locust – it was like a bean pod.  
So we’re not sure whether it was *animal or vegetable* that John ate!

Wild honey – lovely and sweet – but still on the honeycomb, it is in fact a staple diet in the Middle East.

So John ate locusts and wild honey.

**(iii) Because of what he did**

He was out in the desert – the Wilderness of Judea (Matt 3:1), baptizing people in the Jordan River, near Bethany (Matt 3:6). He was out there preaching a message calling people to repent of their sins, in preparation for the coming of the Messiah (Matt 3:2-3).

And strange as it may seem, even though he was out in a desert, he was attracting quite a crowd!! (Matt 3:5)

John was the fore-runner, the one sent on ahead, to prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah, but many thought he himself was the

Messiah!

In John 1:19-22 a delegation of Priests and Levites was sent out from Jerusalem into this desert to interrogate John to find out exactly who he was – they were beginning to wonder if he was in fact the Messiah! But John very quickly, and very clearly points out that he was not the Messiah.

Look at v.20 – ‘I am not the Christ!’

v.23 – ‘I am only a voice in the desert’

But in v.26-27 – he wants to tell them about somebody else who was coming after him. So that brings us to think about...

## **2. John’s Message**

His message can be summed up in one verse that he repeats twice in this passage: John 1:29 and also verse 36.

***‘Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!’***

***(v.29)***

***‘Behold the Lamb of God’ (v.36)***

Let’s take a closer look at this message:

**(i) Behold!** – We rarely use that word anymore today.

We don’t really have a modern English equivalent for it.

(NIV) *‘Look!’* – doesn’t really get it, does it?

The French have a word for it – *‘regardez!’*

It means watch carefully; look into it; examine it closely.

In other words, ‘pay attention’ this is worth looking into.

John wants us to pay close attention to what he is about to say about this man he is pointing us to...

**(ii) The Lamb** – Now when we think of a lamb, we think of a wee white

cute woolly thing that skips around the fields at this time of the year.

But remember the people John was talking to here were from Jerusalem. That great City where the Temple dominated the skyline and overshadowed everything else that went on there from day to day. There’s now a Muslim mosque on the site, but in John’s day there was a Jewish Temple instead.

So these people would probably have passed the Great Temple on their way out to see John, and they would have walked passed lambs that were being bought and sold to be taken to be sacrificed there at the temple. They would have probably seen the blood that

was shed when the lambs were being killed, and they would certainly have smelt the strong pungent smell of the lamb being burnt as part of the sacrificial ritual at the Temple. That's what these people would have thought of when John said, '*Behold the Lamb!*' – They would have thought of one thing, sacrifice, when John said '*Behold the Lamb!*'

But notice something else about John's message. This wasn't just any old lamb, this was

**(iii) The Lamb of God** – Again these people would have known exactly what John was talking about here.

Every year on 'Yom Kippur' – The Day of Atonement (29<sup>th</sup> Sept) – among all the ritual that took place on that special day was 'The Sacrifice of the scapegoat.' (By the way the word for goat and the word for lamb in Hebrew is exactly the same). The background to this is Leviticus ch.16.

### **Two goats or lambs were brought to the Temple.**

Lots were cast to see which would be God's Lamb (The Lamb of God) and which would be the people's lamb (The Lamb of the People). As the sacrifice proceeded, it was God's Lamb that was killed, and its blood was shed, and its blood was sprinkled on the heads of the worshippers to cleanse everyone from their sin. (Lev 16:15-19)

### **But what about the People's lamb or goat?**

Well according to Lev 16:20-22 the people's animal was brought to the High Priest, who placed his hands on the goat's neck, and by so doing symbolically transferred the sins of the people onto that goat.

### **And then what happened to it?**

It was then led away into the desert where it was released, set-free, to symbolize the taking away of sin. This goat was known as the scapegoat. The scapegoat carried away the sins of the people and so the people escaped the punishment which they deserved for their sins.

### **Do you see the significance of all of this?**

Remember, John is not pointing at a wee white wooly animal as he says this, he is pointing at Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who was now going to be God's Lamb – chosen to be the last, the final, perfect, sacrifice for sin.

In fact Jesus rolled the functions of both of these goats into one, when he took our sins upon himself and died on the cross.

- His blood was shed for our cleansing and forgiveness.

*'The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses us from all*

*sin.* 1 John 1:7 – His blood was shed for us at Calvary.

- But as John also says, he took away the sins, not just of Israel, or just of the people of his day, but 'he took away the sin of the world!'

Each one of us lives in this world, don't we? So what Jesus did on that cross as the Lamb of God, affects every one of us, because John says, he came to take away the sins of the world!

So this message is for each one of us tonight. Jesus was our scapegoat – our sins were placed upon Him, and he carried them away into the desert to be forgotten about forever!

Or as **Psalm 103:8-12** puts it, '*as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.*'

### **How is Jesus able to do this for each one of us?**

He's able to do this, because His blood has been shed on our behalf at Calvary's cross, to cleanse us from all that sin in our lives - that separates us from God.

Maybe you don't think that this is relevant for you tonight, but let me assure you it is. Sin is your greatest problem – as it is for each one of us.

You try to stop sinning, but you can't do it.

You try to turn over a new leaf, but you can't stick at it, can you?

But Jesus Christ has borne your sin, as the Lamb of God, on the cross of Calvary, He's shed his blood to cleanse you from your sin, He has become the sacrifice for your sin – and all you have to do now, is turn from your sin and all that you know to be wrong in your life, and put your trust in that once and for all sacrifice for your sins on that cross.

And so I say to you, '*Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the World* – he can take away your sins, if you simply trust Him!'

1. John, the Man,
2. John's Message, and...

### **3. John's Motive**

(i) **It was not to glorify himself** – John of all people was totally self-effacing. He wasn't out to draw attention to himself. He wanted to point the spotlight away from himself – and onto Christ.

(ii) **So what was John's motive then?** – Well, he tells us in John 1:7.

- a. He came as a witness.
- b. What was his witness / testimony? (vs.32-34)

c. His motive was to testify that this man, Jesus, the Lamb of God, was also the Son of God, so He is able to save you.

**(iii) But also in John 1:7 – ‘so that through him others would believe’**

If John the Baptist was here tonight, his greatest desire would be that through this message, ‘Behold the Lamb of God’ that some of you here would come to believe in Jesus.

Are you going to trust in Christ tonight, if you’ve never done so before?

- Believe that Jesus is the Son of God
- Believe that Jesus is the Lamb of God, sent into the world to take away the sin of the world by his death for us on Calvary.
- Believe that He bore your sin on that cross as your scape-goat

so that you could be free from your sin and its punishment forever.

Why not Trust in Jesus tonight?

**(iv) Another Motive – John 1:35-37** – John wanted others, not to follow him, but to follow Jesus.

In v.36 when he proclaimed his message, he lost 2 of his own disciples, who went over to follow Jesus.

But John was OK about that – he wasn’t looking disciples for himself, he was out to make disciples for Jesus – that’s all that mattered!

(v.40) One of those men was Andrew.

(v.41) The first thing he did was to go and find his brother, Simon Peter, and bring him to Jesus too. True disciples will make other disciples...

## **CONCLUSION**

So what was John’s motive?

Ans. It was to make followers for Jesus Christ.

He wasn’t out to exalt or promote himself at all.

Are you a follower of Jesus?

**NO** – then ‘Behold the Lamb of God, who can take away your sin tonight!’

**YES** – then are you seeking to witness so that others will believe in Jesus, and follow Jesus for themselves?

John's motives were to cause people to:

1. LOOK to Jesus
2. TRUST in Jesus
3. FOLLOW Jesus
4. BRING OTHERS to Jesus

Where are you at in all of that just now?

1. Have you **looked** to Jesus for salvation?
2. Have you **trusted** in Jesus as your Saviour?
3. Are you currently **following** Jesus as a disciple?
4. Are you seeking to **bring other people** to Jesus for salvation?

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