

John, Part 3: "That He Might Be Revealed" (Part Two)

John 1:29 ESV The next day he (John the Baptist) saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! **30** This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was before me.' **31** I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel." **32** And John bore witness: "I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. **33** I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' **34** And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God." **35** The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, **36** and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" **37** The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus.

- I. Last week we spoke about how John the Baptist, whose ministry was prophesied as much as 600 years before his birth by Isaiah, and Malachi, served as a herald for the coming of the Jesus,.
 1. Malachi's prophecy of him told how he would minister in the spirit and power of the Old Testament prophet Elijah.
 2. We saw that John did not try to make much of himself, but echoing Isaiah referred to himself as merely "a voice".
 3. Instead, he made much of Christ, referring to him as one "the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie" (John 1:27); and saying that he "ranks before me, because he was before me." (John 1:30)
- B. Today, let's take a deeper look at the connection John shares with Elijah.
- II. The OT prophet Elijah is introduced to readers of the Old Testament in 1 Kings 17:1. He is found standing before King Ahab of the northern kingdom of Israel. He is delivering a grave message.
 - A. King Ahab was a sniveling, wicked, compromising coward of a king, and God was not pleased with him. This is because...
 1. We are told that he took Jezebel, a foreign woman, as a wife (which was forbidden for him to do). But the greater problem was that Jezebel was an enthusiastic worshiper of Baal, the fertility god of Canaanite peoples.
 2. She influenced Ahab to build a temple and an altar for Baal. Furthermore, Ahab built an Asherah pole, a symbol of worship to the Hittite fertility goddess, "Asherah", who was given the title, "The Queen of Heaven".
 3. **1 Kings 16:33b ESV** Ahab did more to provoke the Lord, the God of Israel, to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him.
 - B. So Elijah, the prophet, says to King Ahab when they meet, **1 Kings 17:1b ESV** "As the Lord, the God of Israel, lives, before whom I stand, there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word."
 1. This makes Elijah "public enemy #1", so God instructs him to flee and hide in the wilderness, where he will be miraculously provided for.
 2. And just as Elijah said, there is no rain at all. In fact the drought lasted a full three and one half years.
 - a) Imagine the impact of a **total, 3 1/2 year** drought on the South Plains!

- b) But what if you lived in a time and region with a 100% agrarian economy?
How would it effect even the water supply in a well-populated area?
- C. So at the beginning 1 Kings 18, God instructs Elijah to once again confront Ahab, who has been seeking to kill him for the last few years.
1. Ahab was your classic “shoot the messenger” type of leader! instead of repenting of his own wickedness, he wants to murder the man who proclaimed God’s discipline to him!
 2. When they finally meet, Ahab addresses Elijah as the “troubler of Israel”. But Elijah immediately corrects him, saying, **1 Kings 18:18b ESV** “I have not troubled Israel, but you have, and your father's house, because you have abandoned the commandments of the Lord and followed the Baals.”
 - a) Elijah understood that when any politician, employer, teacher, Pastor, or parent, etc. abandons the way of the Lord that trouble soon follows.
 - b) **Proverbs 14:34 ESV** Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.
- D. But Elijah throws down the gauntlet, and proposes a “duel of deities”. He challenges Ahab to gather all the 450 prophets of Baal, and the 400 prophets of Asherah who eat regularly at Jezebel’s table, to meet him atop Mount Carmel.
1. They are to build an altar to their god, and place a sacrifice upon it.
 2. But they are not to burn the sacrifice! It’s time for Baal to be vetted and put his money where his mouth is. The priests of Baal are to call on him to burn up his own sacrifice.
 3. And Elijah tells them that he will do the same thing. He will build his own altar, provide a sacrifice, and trust Yahweh to do the igniting. He tells those that gather for the showdown...
 4. **1 Kings 18:21b, 24b ESV**“How long will you go limping between two different opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him...the God who answers by fire, he is God.”
- E. Well the show begins, and what a show! The 450 prophets of Baal begin making the most embarrassing religious ruckus you ever witnessed! They were limping around their altar moaning and groaning, crying out, “O Baal! Answer us!”
1. About lunchtime, Elijah began to openly mock their foolishness. “Cry aloud!”, he said, “Baal’s a god isn’t he? Maybe he’s just daydreaming! Maybe he’s in the bathroom! Perhaps he’s out of town because he didn’t realize this thing was today! Maybe he fell asleep!”
 2. Then it got really crazy! The prophets of Baal pulled out their swords and lances and began to slash themselves open in order to appease and appeal to their god by blood! And these were no paper cuts! The scripture says that their “blood gushed out upon them” (1 Kings 18:28).
 3. But the Bible says that in response to all of this, **1 Kings 18:29b ESV** ...there was no voice. No one answered; no one paid attention.
- F. So now it’s God’s turn. Elijah begins by rebuilding the altar of God that had been thrown down in the chaos of the false prophets. He took twelve stones, representing the 12 tribes of Israel, in order to affirm God’s covenant with his people, and built the altar using them.

1. But what he does next is truly puzzling. He made a trench deep enough to hold about 3 1/2 gallons of water around the altar. Then he places the wood and the pieces of the sacrifices on top of the altar.
 2. Next, he asks for four big stone jars of water to be poured on the entire sacrifice. Then he says, "Do it again." And then a third time. By the time they're done, the entire altar is soaking wet, and the trench around it is full.
 3. After all of this stacking of the deck against his own cause (after all, water doesn't burn!), listen to Elijah's humble prayer. No screaming. No dancing around. Certainly no cutting! Just simple, childlike trust.
- G. **1 Kings 18:36 ESV** And at the time of the offering of the oblation, Elijah the prophet came near and said, "O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that you are God in Israel, and that I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at your word. **37** Answer me, O Lord, answer me, that this people may know that you, O Lord, are God, and that you have turned their hearts back."
1. Well, you have probably guessed by now that the fire of God fell from heaven at this simple prayer, and it burned up not only the sacrifice, but the Bible says that it also consumed, "the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench." (1 Kings 18:38)
 2. **1 Kings 18:39 ESV** And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and said, "The Lord, he is God; the Lord, he is God." **40** And Elijah said to them, "Seize the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape." And they seized them. And Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon and slaughtered them there.
 - a) The God who had been hidden, ignored, slandered, and forsaken was now revealed in power and fire! And everyone saw it and acknowledged it.
 - b) The result was that an oppressive religious system ended! It was slaughtered by the brook in obedience to, and honor of God!
- III. Great story, right? But what does it have to do with John the Baptist? Remember that last week we talked about how the angel that visited Zechariah told his father that John would minister in the "spirit and power of Elijah"? How would that look?
- A. I already mentioned last week that, according to Luke 1, John the Baptist, like Elijah was prepared in the wilderness. Like Elijah, a big part of his ministry was confronting the existing powers; Pharisees, Sadducees, Herod, etc.
 - B. But what are the other prophetic similarities of John to Elijah and why do they matter?
 1. Take another look at John's words that we read this morning: **John 1:31 ESV** I myself did not know him (Jesus), but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, **that he might be revealed to Israel.**
 - a) Just as Elijah came to an Israel who had abandoned Yahweh for idolatry, to reveal God through a show of his power, John's ministry was similar.
 - (1) The Jews of John's day were in the throes of national, political, religious revival. The Pharisees were calling people to a rigorous, highly-ceremonial form of worship with the newly-renovated temple in Jerusalem as its centerpiece.

- (2) Anti-Roman sentiment was high, as was pro-Jewish nationalism. Insurrections were common, and those who were martyred for trying to overthrow Rome were national heroes.
 - b) But the problem with all of this was that it cherished self-righteous observance of the law, and national identity. If you were Jewish, did the right things, and maintained the proper public status, you were in the club.
 - (1) But when Jesus arrived on the scene, he was far more concerned with dealing with the things that separated people from God so that they could be reunited with Him in an eternal relationship, based on grace.
 - (2) **Matthew 9:13 ESV** Go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."
 - c) Never forget that religion is religion, is religion - pagan religion, Jewish religion, or even so-called Christian religion; all religion is the same.
 - d) In fact, there is no "Christian Religion" because that which is truly Christian is never religious, and that which is religious can never be truly Christian. But being a follower of Christ is so much more than religion!
 - (1) Religion is always man's vain, unsuccessful attempt to reach God, but the story of the Gospel is that God gloriously and effectively reached mankind, when we weren't even looking for him!
 - (2) John's ministry was to make this distinction. Religion's grip, like in Elijah's time, was about to be pried loose from God's people, and this time for good. The power behind it would be slaughtered once and for all!
 - (3) **Colossians 2:15 ESV** He (Christ) disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, **by triumphing over them in him.**
- C. Elijah revealed God and defeated religion by calling for Yahweh to send down fire. John did it by the simple proclamation of Christ, and baptizing him publicly.
- IV. **John 1:29 ESV** The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"
- A. John is standing on the stage of a grand performance and has the honor of introducing the star, with this beautiful, long-awaited pronouncement. "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"
 - 1. It's important to note that this was not mere drama on John's part, however.
 - a) John was the member of a priestly family (the priesthood, by the Law's decree, stayed within a family -the descendant's of Aaron). In fact, he was performing a very important priestly function by his declaration.
 - b) **Leviticus 2:20 ESV** You shall not offer **anything that has a blemish, for it will not be acceptable for you. 21** And when anyone offers a sacrifice of peace offerings to the Lord to fulfill a vow or as a freewill offering from the herd or from the flock, **to be accepted it must be perfect; there shall be no blemish in it.**
 - c) It was the task of priests to inspect lambs and bulls to insure that they were "blemish-free", and acceptable for the purpose of sacrifice.
 - 2. With priestly authority, John was declaring that Christ was perfectly suited to be Israel's final, acceptable sacrifice. There was no defect found in him.

- a) He was not only the lamb that **would** take away sin, but that **could** take away sin! He would be a perfect, effective sacrifice!
 - b) He was not only the Lamb that would cover sin for a year, like that lamb slaughtered every year on the Jewish Day of Atonement, but he was the Lamb that would “take away sin”.
 - c) And he would not take away the sin of the Jews, but the “sin of the world”! That means all of us uncircumcised, Gentile losers! We get in on this deal!
3. So just as Elijah baptized the sacrifice so long ago, now it was up to John to Baptize the final sacrifice, preparing the sacrifice to uniquely demonstrate God’s glory, just like on Mount Carmel so long ago.
 4. Just as the heavens opened and fire fell on the original sacrifice, consuming it entirely; the heavens would open once more and Holy Spirit and fire would descend on Jesus, the final sacrifice, consuming him entirely and in John’s words, he “remained on him”.
 - a) **Isaiah 61:1a ESV** The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor...
 - b) This is the verse that Christ read in the synagogue in Nazareth, proclaiming that the scripture had been fulfilled that very day! (Luke 4:21).
 - c) But as amazing as this truth is, Christ never intended the daily supply of the Spirit’s power to be limited to his life alone. He wants all of his children to be filled and led by the power of the Spirit of God. This is why John said **John 1:33b ESV** “He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.” (Interestingly, John says in the other Gospels, “the Holy Spirit and fire”)
 - (1) As Christ ministered as a human man, in the power of the Holy Spirit, so are we to do. This may be the most vital, yet neglected truth in all of Christian preaching.
 - (2) Being a Christ follower has never been a proposition of gritting your teeth and pulling yourself up by your bootstraps, but by resting and relying on the indwelling Holy Spirit to bring his power and Jesus’ life to operate in our lives.
 - (3) This is the only way we can defeat sin, love and serve others, supernaturally forgive, see people healed and delivered, walk in joy and peace in all circumstances, etc., etc.
 5. God was clearly revealed when the fire fell at Elijah’s request. Remember? The people fell on their faces, crying out, “The Lord he is God! The Lord, he is God!”
 - a) Similarly, we are told in other gospels how Jesus was “made known” at his baptism. When the heavens opened, and the Spirit descended on Christ, one other thing happened: the Father spoke.
 - b) **Matthew 3:17 ESV** and behold, a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”
- B. John fulfilled the mission that had been prophesied so long before. Through his announcement of the Lamb of God and his obediently obeying the command of Christ to baptize him, he had revealed Christ. He had literally shown that the

Messiah had arrived. **John 1:34 ESV** And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.”

- V. Epilogue: **John 1:35 ESV** The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, **36** and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God!” **37** The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus.
- A. What about us? What truth from this story can change our perspective? Simply this. That all of our living, our of our working, our playing, our business, our education, our relationships, and certainly our ministry and our worship, should be done with one single end in mind; that he might be revealed.
- B. John is standing around the day after the baptism of Christ when he comments for the second time to two of his disciples that Jesus is the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.
1. Because of the the confidence and trust they have in John, and because he has been a faithful steward of the influence God has given him in their lives, John testifies about who Jesus is, and two young men go from being disciples of John to being disciples of Christ.
 2. And John doesn't whine, moan, or cry foul. He doesn't say, “Hold on, Jesus! Those are MY disciples! They go to MY church!” Why? Because this is the ultimate goal of our mission. That the people with would follow Christ.
 3. Who are you influencing? Who trusts you? Who has confidence in you? Are you being a faithful steward of that influence to the point that God can use you to reveal Christ to them? It's a hard truth, but this is what separates the mere adherents of Christianity from the true followers of Jesus.
- C. Therefore, my prayer is that City View grows in this passion. We are going to be presenting strategies and opportunities for you and I to become more successful at this in the coming weeks, starting with my announcement of our most basic strategy at our Thanksgiving potluck. But mostly, we're going to pray.
1. And my prayer is that many of you (yes you) will begin today to take the risk of building relationships, and having perhaps awkward-feeling conversations about the gospel with your friends, family members, co-workers, neighbors and even complete strangers.
 2. My prayer is that in the very near future many of you (yes you) will start new ministries that will help you to reveal Christ in your circle of influence (your school, business, etc.) and begin making disciples for Christ.
 3. My prayer is that many of you (yes you) will heed a call to reach the forgotten of this city; form the very poorest to the wealthiest lost, in unique, Christ-centered ways.
 4. My prayer is that many of you (yes you) will hear God calling you to plant new churches and begin new missions, even if that means laying down lucrative careers and being misunderstood by your families.
- D. And my prayer for all of us is that we would be those who are passionate about all of this, recognizing that **Romans 13:11 ESV** Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. **12** The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.