

#1688

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John 1:6-9,19-29¹
John the Baptizer
points directly to Jesus.
3rd Sunday in Advent
Supplementary Lectionary Series "B"
Gospels, adapted

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Grace WELS Durand MI
December 11, 2011
Potluck
Voters' meeting
Sunday School Rehearsal

⁶ There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness to testify concerning that Light, so that through him all men might believe. ⁸ He himself was not the Light; he came only as a witness to the Light. ⁹ The True Light that enlightens every man was coming into the world.

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¹⁹ Now this was John's testimony when the Jews of Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. ²⁰ He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, "I am not the Christ."

²¹ They asked him, "Then who are you? Are you Elijah?"

He said, "I am not."

"Are you the Prophet?"

He answered, "No."

²² Finally they said, "Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?"

²³ John replied in the Words of Isaiah the Prophet, "I am the voice of one calling in the desert, 'Make straight the way for the LORD'" (cf. Isaiah 40:3).

²⁴ Now some Pharisees who had been sent ²⁵ questioned him, "Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?"

²⁶ "I baptize with water," John replied, "but among you stands One whom you do not know. ²⁷ He is the One who comes after me, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie."

²⁸ This all happened at Bethany on the other side of the Jordan [east side of the Jordan], where John was baptizing.

²⁹ The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

JOHN THE BAPTIZER TESTIFIES CONCERNING JESUS

- I. HE IS THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD
- II. HE IS THE CHRIST
- III. HE IS THE LORD
- IV. HE IS THE SAVIOR

¹ *The New International Version*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House) 1984. All Scripture references are taken from this translation unless noted otherwise.

In the Name of Jesus, to whom John the Baptizer points as “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world,” Dear Fellow-Redeemed,

When the Angel Gabriel announced to Zechariah, the father of John the Baptizer, that John would be born to him and his wife Elizabeth, the Angel described John’s work: John “will go on before the LORD, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the LORD” (Luke 1:17). John would be the forerunner of the LORD Jesus Christ. John would prepare hearts for Jesus. John the Baptizer continues to do that today, for his testimony concerning our LORD Jesus has been preserved for us in God’s Word. JOHN THE BAPTIZER TESTIFIES CONCERNING JESUS. JOHN THE BAPTIZER TESTIFIES CONCERNING JESUS ... I. HE IS THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD; II. HE IS THE CHRIST; III. HE IS THE LORD; and, IV. HE IS THE SAVIOR.

JOHN THE BAPTIZER TESTIFIES CONCERNING JESUS
I. HE IS THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

Jesus is the Light of the world. The Apostle John writes concerning John the Baptizer’s witness as follows:

⁶ There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness to testify concerning that Light, so that through him all men might believe. ⁸ He himself was not the Light; he came only as a witness to the Light. ⁹ The True Light that enlightens every man was coming into the world (1:6-9).

During the time of his earthly public ministry, Jesus said of himself, “I am the Light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the Light of Life” (John 8:12b). What Jesus says about himself actually tells us what Jesus means when he says, “I am the Light of the world.”

Jesus says that the one who follows him “will have the Light of Life.” Those who do not have Jesus, walk in darkness. Since Jesus equates having him, the Light of the World, with having Life – eternal life – not to have Jesus is to dwell in the darkness of death – eternal death and damnation in hell. Jesus came into the world, however, to be the Light of the world.

Concerning Jesus as the Light of the world, the Old Testament Prophet Isaiah stated, “The people walking in darkness have seen a great Light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a Light has dawned” (Isaiah 9:2). Jesus, the Light of the world takes away the shadow of death – Jesus takes away death itself. St. Paul also speaks regarding Light in reference to Christ Jesus.

St. Paul writes,

³ And even if our Gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. ⁴ The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the Light of the Gospel of the Glory of Christ, who is the Image of God. ⁵ For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as LORD, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. ⁶ For God, who said, "Let Light shine out of darkness" (cf. Genesis 1:3), made his Light shine in our hearts to give us the Light of the Knowledge of the Glory of God in the Face of Christ (2 Corinthians 4:3-6).

On the one hand, St. Paul refers to those who are perishing, to those who reject the Gospel of Jesus – the Good News of salvation through Jesus alone – Paul speaks of them as being blinded; they cannot see the Light; they are therefore in the darkness of unbelief and headed for destruction. On the other hand, St. Paul refers to believers as having in their hearts “the Light of the Knowledge of the Glory of God in the Face of Christ.” Jesus is the Light.

APPROPRIATION

Jesus is your Light. By nature, you, along with all people, live in the darkness of sin and unbelief. By nature, you are hostile to God and do not and are not able to submit to God's will (cf. Romans 8:6-8). The darkness in which you exist by nature, leads further on into the darkness of death, the gloom of the tomb and eternal damnation in hell. But Jesus is your Light – your Light to heaven.

Through the Light of his Word, Jesus shows you and is your way to heaven. Jesus said, “I am the Way and the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). The Light of Jesus' Word brings you to faith in Jesus, and, by that faith, you have eternal life. Jesus does this for you because he is also the Christ.

JOHN THE BAPTIZER TESTIFIES CONCERNING JESUS II. HE IS THE CHRIST

Our text states,

¹⁹ Now this was John's testimony when the Jews of Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. ²⁰ He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, "I am not the Christ" (1:19,20).

Repeatedly, John emphasizes that he is not the Christ, not the Messiah, not the Anointed One, whom God promised to send into the world. John also states that he is not some reincarnated or resurrected Elijah – although he certainly preaches in the spirit of Elijah, calling for repentance (cf. Luke 1:17). Neither is John one of the reincarnated or

resurrected Prophets of the Old Testament, although John the Baptizer is the last Prophet of the Old Testament. Rather, John points to and testifies concerning the Christ. Jesus is the Christ.

Jesus is the Christ. As such he fulfilled three Old Testament offices: Prophet, Priest and King.

On the one hand, John the Baptizer “came, baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins” (Mark 1:4). Jesus the Prophet came and preached the Good News – the Gospel – of the forgiveness of sins. Jesus announced the forgiveness of sins to repentant sinners and demonstrated the validity of this announcement and his authority to make this announcement.

Jesus demonstrated the validity of his announcement to forgive sins and his authority to forgive sins. One example of this was Jesus’ healing of the paralytic.

Jesus was in a house preaching and teaching, and there was a great crowd both in and outside of the house. Some men came carrying a paralyzed man on a litter – a stretcher. They could not get into the house to see Jesus, so they went up on the flat roof of the house, removed some of the boards, and lowered their friend right down in front of Jesus. Jesus announced to the paralyzed man, “Son, your sins are forgiven.” Then, to demonstrate the validity of his announcement and his authority to forgive sins, Jesus said to the paralytic, “Get up, take your mat and go home.” The man got up, took up his mat – litter or stretcher – and went home healed (cf. Mark 2:1-12; Luke 5:17-26). All of Jesus’ miracles demonstrated that he was the Christ and that his proclamations as the Prophet were true. Jesus is also the Priest – the Great High Priest.

In the Old Testament, Priests represented the people, offered sacrifices for the people, and prayed for and interceded for the people (cf. Hebrews 4:14 – 5:10; 7:1 – 8:13; 9:11 – 10:18). Jesus did and does all of these things.

First of all, Jesus offered up himself as the one perfect sacrifice for sins for all people and for all time. All of the blood of Old Testament animals did not take away one sin (cf. Hebrews 10:4); those sacrifices, rather, pointed to the perfect sacrifice of Jesus for the sins of all. The writer to the Hebrews tells us that Jesus entered the very presence of God “once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption” (Hebrews 9:12b). Jesus also functioned and continues to function as the Great High Priest by his prayers and intercessions for his people.

St. Paul writes to the Romans, “Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us” (Romans 8:34b). John says the same thing in his First Epistle: “But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One” (1 John 2:1b). Jesus is our Advocate before the Throne of his heavenly Father. Jesus is the Great High Priest. Jesus is also the King.

In the Old Testament, the rulers of God's people were to be Shepherd-Kings. They were to care for, defend and provide for God's people. Jesus is the Shepherd-King. He lays down his life for his people and he takes back again his life for his people (cf. John 10:15b,17,18). In laying down his life for his sheep, his people, Jesus took away sin and won the battle against death and hell. Jesus also rules as King today; he governs, controls, directs and guides all things for the benefit of his people (cf. Ephesians 1:19-23). Moreover, Jesus rules his people by placing his Word in their hearts. No, John the Baptizer was not the Christ; Jesus is the Christ – the Prophet, the Priest, and the King. John the Baptizer pointed to Jesus as the Christ.

APPROPRIATION

Just as John the Baptizer was not the Christ, neither can you be your own Christ. As a Prophet, Jesus proclaimed God's Word. How often instead of God's Word coming out of your mouths have come instead cursing, unnecessary swearing, obscenities, false testimony, gossip and rumor?

As the Great High Priest, Jesus offered up himself as the sacrifice for the sins of all people. You cannot offer up sacrifices for your sin, let alone for the sins of others. Even if you sacrificed your own life, it would not be enough to take away your sins and get you into heaven, for God demands a perfect sacrifice. Only Jesus is the perfect sacrifice for the sins of the world.

Neither are you a King compared to Jesus. Jesus revealed his royalty by defending his flock, by laying down his life and taking back again his life from the grave. Can you, on your own, raise yourself from the dead? Not hardly! You need Jesus to do that for you.

Jesus, then is your Christ, your Messiah and Anointed One, your Prophet, Priest and King. By faith alone in Jesus, you share all of the blessings Jesus won for you, including forgiveness of sin and eternal life with him in heaven. Only Jesus can provide these blessings for you, because Jesus is also the LORD.

JOHN THE BAPTIZER TESTIFIES CONCERNING JESUS III. HE IS THE LORD

When the Angel Gabriel announced to Zechariah that he would be the father of John the Baptizer, the Angel also said that John would "go on before the LORD, in the spirit and power of Elijah" (Luke 1:17a), and that John would "make ready a people prepared for the LORD" (Luke 1:17c). The Angel was referring to the Word LORD in the sense that this is the God of free and faithful grace. John makes a similar reference in reply to those who asked him who he was.

John denied that he was the Christ or Elijah or the Prophet. What John did say about himself came from the Old Testament Prophet Isaiah. Isaiah wrote "A voice of one calling: "In the desert prepare the way for the LORD; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God" (Isaiah 40:3). Thus, John the Baptizer said of himself, "I am the voice of one

calling in the desert, 'Make straight the way for the LORD'" (1:23b; cf. Isaiah 40:3). John referred to the One Coming as the LORD – L O R D in all capital letters. Jesus Christ is LORD.

APPROPRIATION

Jesus Christ is your LORD. When God revealed this Name, LORD, to Moses, he said,

⁷ "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, ⁷ maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation"
(Exodus 34:6b,7).

The Name LORD refers to the God who forgives sin; the Name LORD refers to the God who punishes sin. For you, Jesus brings together these two conflicting characteristics of God; Jesus does this by his cross. For on the cross, Jesus takes away the sin of the world by suffering the punishment of God for all sins – for your sins too. Now Jesus, your LORD and your God gives you mercy, forgiveness and life, by his grace – his undeserved love for you. This forgiveness is guaranteed to you by Jesus' cross.

In Jesus Christ, we see the LORD who graciously forgives sin. John the Baptizer also testifies to this.

JOHN THE BAPTIZER TESTIFIES CONCERNING JESUS IV. HE IS THE SAVIOR

John's baptism was a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins (cf. Mark 1:4). John was preparing the hearts of people for the coming of Jesus. Thus, when John sees Jesus, he says, "Behold! The Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (1:29b).

John refers to Jesus as "The Lamb of God." In the Old Testament, lambs were often sacrificed for sin; and, of course, one of the most important observances in the Old Testament that involved sacrificing a lamb was the Passover celebration.

For the celebration of the Passover, a year old male lamb without blemish or defect was slaughtered at twilight. His blood was spattered on the doorposts and window sills of the house. The lamb was roasted whole and eaten with bitter herbs and unleavened bread – bread made without yeast. This celebration especially pointed ahead to Jesus, the Lamb of God.

During the first Passover, when the Angel of the LORD passed over the house and saw the blood of the sacrificial lamb, the Angel passed over that house and harmed no one inside. Wherever that sacrificial blood was absent, the firstborn in that house died.

Jesus, the Passover Lamb, takes away death by taking away sin – taking away the sin of the world by his blood (cf. Exodus 12:1-30). Only Jesus could accomplish this because he is LORD and Christ. Jesus is the Savior of the world.

APPROPRIATION

You cannot take away your sin; you cannot take away the sin of anyone else. You might say, “Well, never again will I commit the particular sin that I have just committed”; but, that does not take away the fact that you did commit the sin already. Moreover, you cannot guarantee that you will never commit again a particular sin. Nor can you offer any kind of sacrifice to take away your sin.

One of the Psalmists writes in Psalm 49:7-9:

**7 No man can redeem the life of another
 or give to God a ransom for him—
8 the ransom for a life is costly,
 no payment is ever enough—
9 that he should live on forever
 and not see decay.**

You cannot redeem your soul nor anyone else’s soul. But Jesus has done that for you. Jesus is your Lamb of God who has taken away your sin. You know this, because Jesus has taken away the sin of the world (cf. John 1:29b,36b; 1 John 2:1,2).

CONCLUSION

John the Baptizer is dead and gone; but, his Words live on and continue. John calls for you too to repent of your sins. John also directs your eyes to Jesus, the Lamb of God who, on the cross and by his blood, took away your sins and the sins of all. Continue to hold on to Jesus by faith as you continue in his Word. Amen.