

John (the Baptist) On Jesus John 1:29 - 34

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

³⁰ *This is the one I meant when I said, 'A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.'*

³¹ *I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptising with water was that he might be revealed to Israel."*

³² *Then John gave this testimony: "I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him.*

³³ *I would not have known him, except that the one who sent me to baptise with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptise with the Holy Spirit.'*

³⁴ *I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God."*

1. How did John the Baptist know Jesus was Special?

See v32 to v34. Unlike the other gospels, John's gospel doesn't actually describe the baptism of Jesus in real-time -- it just gives us John the Baptist's reflections looking back.

Although John was a relative of Jesus and would have known him, how much did John know that Jesus was special? He had been told to look for the one on whom the Spirit would come. Although John's baptism was concerned with leading people to repent, its ultimate purpose was to reveal the Messiah.

In Matthew 3:14, John says that it is Jesus who should be baptising him. Had John's parents told him of Mary's visit to Elizabeth some three decades earlier (Luke 1:39-45). How much did John know of the events surrounding Jesus birth, and Jesus prodigious knowledge of scripture - even at 12 years old (Luke 2:41-52)?

Did he just recognise that Jesus was more holy than him -- but not know he was the coming Messiah until the special sign at the baptism?

2. What title does John the Baptist give to Jesus? (Verse 29) What do you understand by this phrase?

"Lamb" in the Old Testament Scriptures --

- Where is the Lamb? (Genesis 22: 2 - 8)
- The Sin Offering (Leviticus 14:10 - 25)
- The Passover Lamb (Exodus 12:21 - 27)
- The Suffering Servant (Isaiah 53:7)

See also

1 Peter 1:19

Revelation (lots of times but see 5:6 - 13) Here we see the Lamb victorious -- his sacrificial work completed.

So "Lamb" combines in one descriptive term the concepts of innocence, voluntary sacrifice, substitutionary atonement, effective obedience, and redemptive power (!)

Further questions --

What are the sins of the world? (1:29)

What sin of yours has Jesus taken away?

How do we receive the forgiveness that Christ bought for us?

3. What is meant by "Baptism in the Holy Spirit"? (Verse 33)

This is a very big subject, and we shall be looking at the whole subject of the Person and the Work of the Holy Spirit several times in John's gospel. Here are some brief thoughts.

Classic Pentecostalism (ie early 20th century) taught of a second experience after conversion. Some texts in Acts give examples of this. The 1970s saw a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the world, across all Western denominations. Christians began to speak in terms of the "Filling of the Spirit" as an event that can happen many times in a Christian's life, rather than as a one-off event.

However you define this, an experience of the Holy Spirit can be very powerful. It can also lead to the manifestation of spiritual gifts as described in 1 Corinthians chapter 12. The manifestation of the spiritual gifts has been the cause of controversy and division in the church - starting in St Pauls time (1 Corinthians 13 and 14). This is because it is easy to fall into the trap of dividing Christians into "first" or "second" class. It should be possible to avoid this without quenching the work of the Spirit or the wise use of the gifts.

Each one of us need to seek the filling of the Holy Spirit -- to give us the power to live as Jesus wants us to, and to do his will in working to extend his kingdom.

Each one of us needs to seek to discover our particular spiritual gift.

But beware, the Holy Spirit is more like a jazz quartet than a symphony orchestra.

Further question --

What role does the Holy Spirit play in your life?