

The Lamb of God

Key Verse: *“I saw,
and bare record
that this is the
Son of God.”
—John 1:34*

Selected Scripture:
John 1:29-34

THE WORD “PROPHET”

refers to one who teaches or proclaims in advance. In some instances, these two characteristics are combined in one person. It was so with John the Baptist. Many prior to John had foretold the coming of the Messiah—his birth by a virgin, his being led as

a lamb to the slaughter, his crucifixion, and his resurrection. To John the Baptist, however, was given the great honor of being the first to plainly announce the arrival of the Son of God, the man Christ Jesus.—John 1:34

Also given to John the Baptist was the privilege of first teaching the people about the now present Messiah. He taught that Jesus had a pre-human existence, which was later confirmed directly by Jesus, and additionally by the Apostle Paul when he declared that the gospel of Christ was “preached before . . . unto Abraham.”—vs. 30; chap. 8:58; Gal. 3:8

John the Baptist was the first to identify Jesus as the one who “taketh away the sin of the world.” (John 1:29) A lamb was a very appropriate symbol to describe the earthly ministry of Jesus and his sacrifice for our sins. His submission to the Father’s will even unto the death of the cross was very lamb-like. The Scriptures had declared that God gave his only begotten Son to be man’s redeemer. (chap. 3:16,17) It was this “lamb” that God provided which would balance the divine scales of perfect justice in accordance with the

character attributes of God. “For as in Adam all die, even so [all] in Christ shall . . . be made alive.”—I Cor. 15:22

John the Baptist declared that he came to baptize with water in order to make Jesus manifest to Israel, but that Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit. (John 1:31,33) In Matthew 3:11, we find additional words from John in this regard: “I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit, and with fire.” These words become clear when we recall that Jesus sent his twelve chosen apostles exclusively to the “lost sheep of the house of Israel.” (chap. 10:5,6) It was to individual Jews that the Holy Spirit was first poured out at Pentecost, while the nation of Israel itself was baptized “with fire” when it was destroyed thirty-seven years following their rejection of the Messiah.—Acts 2:1-4; Matt. 23:38; 24:1,2

With regard to the great honor given to John the Baptist in declaring the presence of the Son of God, let us consider carefully the words Jesus declared of his forerunner. He said of John, “Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.”—Matt. 11:11

Unlike John’s audience, who could not understand the deeper meaning of his message, we have been begotten of God’s Holy Spirit in accordance with his desire to call out from among men a people for his name. “He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself.” (Eph. 1:4,5) To us also is given the privilege to proclaim the invisible presence of our returned Lord, and to continue to declare: “Behold the Lamb of God.” With the help of the Holy Spirit, let us look unto Jesus and transform ourselves as much as possible into his lamb-like character. ■