

## Shining in Baptism

✠ the Christ (vv.19-28)

✠ the Lamb of God (vv.29-34)

In the name of Jesus, the Lord's **Christ** and **Lamb**, dear fellow baptized believers:

It has never been easy believing there is only one true God. Governments and world religions have long opposed the Creator of heaven and earth. Some government officials reject God's almighty power and seek to establish their own absolute rule. Church officials doubt God's infinite love and seek to make people love them instead. The failure of kings and priests and prophets led to a dark time in the history of God's people Israel. But in stepped Isaiah the prophet, fired up by the Holy Spirit to speak of events seven centuries ahead as if they had already happened: *"The people 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....For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."*

Who could understand how the invincible, eternal King would suffer and die in shame? *"He was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth....After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities. Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."* (Isaiah 9:2,6; 53:7,11f NIV84) Suffering Savior? Conquering King?

After centuries of silence around A.D. 30, the first Jewish prophet appeared in the wilderness calling God's people to repentance. Everyone wanted to know if he was...

✠ the Christ (vv.19-28)

*"This is John's testimony, when the Jews from Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him, "Who are you?" <sup>20</sup>He confessed and did not deny. He confessed, "I am not the Christ." <sup>21</sup>And they asked him, "Who are you then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" "No," he answered, <sup>22</sup>Then they asked him, "Who are you? We need to give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?"<sup>1</sup>*

John the Baptist knew something most people never get. John knew who he was *not*. People spend their whole lives trying to figure out who they are. They could help themselves tremendously just to realize who they're not. It's a simple concept, really. Only seven words. It goes like this: *"God is God, and I am not."* Think about it. When they asked John the Baptist if he was the Christ, he confessed freely – honest and glad to say, "I am not!" If Mohammed had confessed, or Joseph Smith or Mary Baker Eddy, the world today would not be filled with more cults, more versions of the same work-righteous lie. Everyone else claiming to be "the Prophet" tells people how to save themselves by their own efforts.

And here we are in the un-religion of God saving us. Are we as honest as John the Baptist? My dear friends, do you find yourself complaining about the cold? Or thanking God for a roof over your head and the money to pay your bills? Imagine having to cut, split and dry enough wood. Soldiers at Fort Snelling in the 1800's spent all summer stacking firewood, then froze all winter anyway with no

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<sup>1</sup> Draft translation of John by Pastor Mark A. Cordes for the Wartburg Project.

insulation or warm, light layers of clothing. Natural gas comes quietly into fuel efficient furnaces we did not invent, and most of us could not repair. If I was crystal clear that “*God is God, and I am not,*” would I complain if my furnace broke down? Or praise God we are surrounded by skilled repairmen? If “*God is God, and I am not,*” do I only praise Him with cheap words? Or devote my life to God?

John the Baptist had an answer to take back to the Pharisees: “***I am a voice crying out in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way of the Lord!’ – just as Isaiah the prophet said.***”

Does that mean we should all wear camel hair, eat locusts and wild honey? No, but if “*God is God, and I am not,*” I surely want to give God what I promise. Remember our budget shortfall in October? I had to ask God’s forgiveness. My computer showed I missed my October offering. Somehow I failed to write my first check to God as I was taught. “But you’re the pastor!” someone might say. True, but first of all, “*God is God, and I am not.*” Do you realize some Christians with no church membership still set aside an offering for God? My beautiful Savior lives in people who know “*God is God, and I am not.*” My wife once had a daycare mom who paid her too much. When Cindy mentioned the mistake, she said, “I got a raise. I thought you should too.” That same woman spent hours in our church office long before we were blessed with Jill. We still send our Savior’s love and peace to homes she entered into our database. It was several years before we found out she was a PhD. Hired two of our college kids for summer work in her lab. Joel tried to explain the experiments, but I only understood three or four words. Generous humility and a clear life confession: “*God is God, and I am not.*”

***So they questioned [John the Baptist], “Why then do you baptize, if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?”<sup>26</sup>“I baptize with water,” John answered. “But among you stands someone you do not know.<sup>27</sup>He is the one coming after me whose sandal strap I am not worthy to untie.”<sup>28</sup>These things happened in Bethany beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing.***

#### ✠ the Lamb of God (vv.29-34)

***“The next day, John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!<sup>30</sup>This is the one I meant when I said, ‘The one coming after me outranks me because he existed before me.’<sup>31</sup> Even I did not know who he was, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he would be revealed to Israel.”***

Notice something very important here that the Holy Spirit inspired John, “the disciple Jesus loved,” to show in his Gospel account. Isaiah and the rest of the Lord’s prophets had the Israelites looking for the Christ, but no one knew exactly where to look. Isaiah had reported: “***He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.***” There would be no hallow around the Messiah’s head, no shining face to draw you in. He would be “***despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering.***” (53:2f NIV84) Everyone needed help.

***John also testified, “I saw the Spirit descending like a dove from heaven and remain on him.<sup>33</sup>I myself did not recognize him, except that the one who sent me to baptize with water, said to me, ‘When you see the Spirit descend on someone and remain, he is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’<sup>34</sup>I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God.”***

With the Holy Spirit descending like a dove, John could point to Jesus as “***the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!***” For 1500 years God had given His people a children’s lesson. On *Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement, the priest would sacrifice one goat as a sin offering and use another as a scapegoat. The priest would lay his hands on the head of the second goat. Everyone watched as their sins were led away into the desert never to be seen again. “***Surely he has born our griefs and carried our sorrows.***” (Isaiah 53:4 KJV) Brilliantly Jesus is now **Shining in your Baptism**. With God’s Name on you, heavenly Father is pleased with you for Jesus’ sake. You know, “*God is God, and you are not,*” but you are God’s very own treasured possession. Gently He cares for you: “***A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out.***” (Isaiah 42:3 NIV84) Shine, Savior, Shine! Amen.