

**February 3, 2008**

**Introduction to Lent Series: “Jesus ...in every way like us” (Hebrews 2: 17)**

**Part 1: “Ever Been Baptized?(The beginning of Christ’s ministry)”**

**John 1:26-34 NLT**

John told them, "I baptize with water, but right here in the crowd is someone you do not know, 27 who will soon begin his ministry. I am not even worthy to be his slave." 28 This incident took place at Bethany, a village east of the Jordan River, where John was baptizing.

29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look! There is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! 30 He is the one I was talking about when I said, 'Soon a man is coming who is far greater than I am, for he existed long before I did.' 31 I didn't know he was the one, but I have been baptizing with water in order to point him out to Israel."

32 Then John said, "I saw the Holy Spirit descending like a dove from heaven and resting upon him. 33 I didn't know he was the one, but when God sent me to baptize with water, he told me, 'When you see the Holy Spirit descending and resting upon someone, he is the one you are looking for. He is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' 34 I saw this happen to Jesus, so I testify that he is the Son of God."

Today I would like to introduce a new series Pastor Nick and I will be preaching during Lent. We are calling it, “Jesus ...in every way like us”

In Heb 2:17-18 (NLT) it says, “...it was necessary for Jesus to be in every respect like us, his brothers and sisters, so that he could be our merciful and faithful High Priest before God. He then could offer a sacrifice that would take away the sins of the people. 18 Since he himself has gone through suffering and temptation, he is able to help us when we are being tempted.”

Jesus could identify with our humanness. Since He Himself has gone through suffering and temptation, He is able to help us...but how?

Before the start of His ministry, Jesus was baptized by John. John didn’t want to do it, he told Jesus he needed to be baptized by Jesus, not the other way around. John’s baptism was given to those who confessed their sin and were willing to repent or turn from sin. Jesus was sinless, so he could not admit to sin. John knew this, that is why he did not want to baptize Jesus who is the Christ or Messiah, but Jesus insisted on being baptized, why? to identify with us.

Whatever temptations, trials, and troubles you have experienced, Jesus also experienced and probably worse than you will ever experience. Here is how it is recorded in Heb 4:15 (NIV) “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are-yet was without sin.”

We have a God who was willing to become human. We have a God who can relate to us. Not only can He sympathize with us, but, because of what Jesus suffered, He can help us when we are faced with trouble, trials, and temptations...but how?

John the Baptist admits he is not the Messiah, rather he came to tell people to prepare for the Messiah and he came to point people to the Messiah. He says (v26), "I baptize with water," and that is all I can do; I am no more, and can do no more, than what you see; I can do this outward sign of baptism, but that is all. I have no other title than John the Baptist; and while I can baptize, I cannot bestow the spiritual grace signified by baptism." "but," John continues to say (v26), "right here in the crowd is someone you do not know." Wow! That's powerful. John says I am not the One, but right here among us is The One, The Christ. I can say that this morning to you, right here in the crowd is Christ. John says you do not know Him yet...but you will and you can. Jesus stood among the common people, and was as one of them. God Himself is often nearer to us than we are aware of. As when Jacob said, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I wasn't even aware of it." (Gen 28:16 NLT). Christ's presence is among you now...How? By the Holy Spirit.

(v27) John says Jesus, "will soon begin His ministry." And he says, "I am not even worthy to loosen the strap on His sandal as a slave would do." Yet, the he is right here with the common people sympathizing with our needs and coming along side to help us, by His Holy Spirit.

We know from other accounts that right after Christ was baptized He was immediately led into the wilderness, to be tempted; and so He was gone for forty days and forty nights. But, now at last John sees Jesus again, coming to him, returning from the wilderness of temptation. And when John saw Jesus coming toward him and said (v29), "Look! There is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

Why did John call Christ the "*Lamb* of God?"

1. The daily sacrifice, which was offered every morning and evening continually, and that was always a lamb. [See Ex 29:38-39 (NLT), "This is what you are to offer on the altar. Offer two one-year-old lambs each day, one in the morning and the other in the evening."]
2. At Passover a lamb was sacrificed, the blood of which, being sprinkled upon the doorposts, saved the Israelites from death. (See Ex 12).
3. Isaiah prophesied that the Messiah, God's servant, would be led to the slaughter like a lamb. [See Isa 53:7 (NLT), "He was oppressed and treated harshly, yet he never said a word. He was led as a lamb to the slaughter. And as a sheep is silent before the shearers, he did not open his mouth."]

In calling Jesus the Lamb of God, John pointed to Jesus as the sacrifice provided by God. Christ was our substitution. He not only suffered as we do, He suffered for us. He was tempted as we are, but did not sin. Because of this, He was able to take our sin upon Himself and pay the penalty of sin for us. The penalty for sin is that a life had to be given - God chose to provide the sacrifice Himself. When Jesus died as the perfect sacrifice, He

removed the sin of the world. The "sin of the world" means the sin of each individual. Jesus paid the price of our sin by His death. Jesus came to take away sin because it is offensive to a holy God, and destructive to the happiness of people. We can claim the forgiveness He provided by first taking ownership of our sin - we must admit your sin (confession) – we must be willing to turn from it (repentance), and ask Jesus to forgive it and believe (Faith).

But look at this verse again. Not only does Jesus takes away the guilt of sin by His death (declaring us pardoned), but He takes away the power of sin (notice sin is singular not plural – He not only forgives the *sins* we committed but as Paul said in Rom 6:14 (NLT), “Sin is no longer your master...” He gives believers power to say no to sin.

In v31 John says, “I didn't know he was the one, but I have been baptizing with water in order to point him out to Israel.” John knew Jesus, He was his cousin, but John did not know Jesus was the Messiah / Savior. That is until, as he says in the next verses (v32-34)

"I saw the Holy Spirit descending like a dove from heaven and resting upon him. I didn't know he was the one, but when God sent me to baptize with water, he told me, 'When you see the Holy Spirit descending and resting upon someone, he is the one you are looking for. He is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' I saw this happen to Jesus, so I testify that he is the Son of God."

God appointed John the Baptist to prepare people for the Messiah and to point Him out when He came. Evidently, he did not know Jesus was the Messiah until he saw the sign God told him to look for, the Holy Spirit descending like a dove from heaven and resting on Jesus. In Matthews account of Christ's baptism (Matt 3:16-17 NLT) we are told that as Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and settling on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, and I am fully pleased with him." Here John gives the testimony himself: "I testify that He is the Son of God."

In well-known prophetic passages, the Messiah was depicted as having the Spirit resting upon him (see Isa 11:1-2a NLT – “Out of the stump of David's family will grow a shoot-- yes, a new Branch bearing fruit from the old root. And the Spirit of the LORD will rest on him...”). One day Jesus said that Isa. 61: 1 referred to Him, which says (Luke 4:18 NLT), "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for He has appointed Me..."

Because Jesus had the Spirit of the Lord, therefore, Jesus can baptize us with the Holy Spirit. The statement that Jesus will baptize with the Holy Spirit speaks of Jesus' divine mission. It does not just point to the Day of Pentecost on which Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to baptize the disciples (see Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8; 2:4); it characterizes Jesus' entire ministry. Jesus came to give eternal life to those who believe in Him. But no one could actually receive that life apart from receiving the life-giving Holy Spirit.

John the Baptist's baptism with water was to prepare for Christ because it was for repentance and symbolized the washing away of sins. Jesus, by contrast, would baptize

with the Holy Spirit, imparting not only forgiveness but also eternal life. He would send the Holy Spirit upon all believers, empowering them to live as He lived and empowering them to teach the message of salvation to others. Through Faith Jesus gives the Holy Spirit and it is the Holy Spirit Who aids all believers to live a victorious Christian life. This outpouring of the Spirit came after Jesus had risen from the dead and ascended into heaven (see 20:22; Acts 2).

All true believers have been baptized by Jesus in the Holy Spirit [see Rom 8:9 (NLT)]  
“But you are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you. (And remember that those who do not have the Spirit of Christ living in them are not Christians at all.)”

John the Baptist baptized with water, people who came to him were immersed, drenched in water. Jesus came to baptize with the Holy Spirit, all who come to Him are immersed in His Holy Spirit. John's baptism was a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sin. Jesus forgives sin and baptizes with the Holy Spirit, a baptism of Eternal Life. This is why Jesus came. The purpose of His death and resurrection was to give Eternal Life to all who believe. Eternal Life begins when we receive the Holy Spirit. It means power to live as people who belong to the Kingdom of God. Eternal Life means we have a daily personal relationship with God the Holy Spirit, which means we have power to live Christ-like lives. Do you belong to Jesus? Are you trusting Him for the forgiveness of your sin? Then you have the Holy Spirit. And if you have the Eternal Spirit then you have Eternal Life. Ever been baptized? Ever been baptized with the Holy Spirit? Have you been immersed in Jesus' Spirit? It is only then that you can experience the life-giving Spirit and enjoy His presence day by day. And it is only then that He can help you as you face the troubles and temptation of life. He came to identify with us and to help us live joyfully, and victoriously, if we will surrender to Him and allow the Holy Spirit to control us.