

Research on John the Baptist:

John 1:19, 20, 23, 29, 32-37

“As we know from the Synoptics (Matthew, Mark and Luke) and Josephus, John the Baptist attracted great crowds by his ministry in the Jordan valley. He had come down from the desert of Judea, those barren hills to the west of the Dead Sea, and with apocalyptic zeal was proclaiming the day of judgment. He administered a baptism of water to those who accepted his message and acknowledged their own sinfulness. Little of this appears in John; for the evangelist is not interested in John the Baptist as a baptizer or as a prophet, but only in his being a herald of Jesus and the first witness in the great trial of the Word” (*AYB John i-xii.45*).

19 And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou?

“Priests and Levites. To ask about his baptizing they send the specialists in ritual purification. Such a confrontation of John the Baptist and the priests is interesting in view of the Lucan tradition that John the Baptist was a priest’s son” (Luke 1.5) (*AYB John i-xii.42*).

“The miracle of the Incarnation called for witnesses to substantiate its reality; First in order is that of John the Baptist. His preaching attracted such large crowds that the Jewish hierarchy in Jerusalem decided to investigate him. The priests represented the theological authorities of the nation; the Levites were concerned with the ritual and service of the temple. John did not seem to fit into any ecclesiastical category familiar to the Jewish authorities, and his unusual success demanded an explanation” (*EBC 9.35*).

20 And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ.

“‘Christ’ is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew ‘Messiah, meaning ‘anointed’. It was the title of the prophesied deliverer, who would bring renewal and political freedom to Israel (*EBC 9.36*).

“Declared without any qualification, avowing. *I am not the Messiah but another is*. John 3:28 is the only specific reference to John the Baptist’s preparing the way for the Messiah; it was implied in Luke 3:15-16” (*AYB John i-xii.43*).

23 He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias.

Isaiah 40:3 the prophecy of John the Baptist in preparation for the Messiah

29 The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

“The Lamb of God’ reflects the sacrificial character of Christ’s mission. The word here translated ‘Lamb’ (*amnos*) appears in only four places in the NT: twice in this chapter 1:29,36, once in acts 8:32, and again in 1Peter 1:19. . . The sacrifice of a lamb to take away sin appears frequently in the OT. . . It combines in one descriptive term the concepts of innocence, voluntary sacrifice, substitutionary atonement, effective obedience, and redemptive power like that of the Passover lamb (Ex. 12:21-17)” (*EBC* 9.37).

SH 590:9

Lamb of God. The spiritual idea of Love; self-immolation; innocence and purity; sacrifice.

“The Lamb of God. Is perhaps not the Paschal lamb, but refers to the Suffering Servant of Isa. 53, who is ‘brought as a lamb to the slaughter,’ and whose death atones for sin. Contrast this description of the Messiah with the prevalent idea of a conqueror who would restore the kingdom to Israel. The Jews generally regarded the Messiah, not as ‘the Lamb of God,’ but as the ‘Lion of the Tribe of Judah.’

“The sin of the world. The idea of atonement for the sins of Israel is found in Isa 53: the further idea that the Messiah will atone for the sins of the world, follows naturally from the numerous utterances of the OT prophets which speak of the participation of the Gentiles in the Messianic kingdom” (Dummelow, 777).

32 And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him.

S&H 584:26

DOVE. A symbol of divine Science; purity and peace; hope and faith.

“The dove in the OT tradition as interpreted in first-century Judaism was the symbol of God’s Spirit, hovering over the creation (Gen. 1:2) and caring for his people in the days of their wilderness wanderings (Deut 32:11)” (*ICB* 613).

“The dove, among the Jews, was the symbol of purity or harmlessness (Matt X. 16) and of softness, (Ps lv.7). The form chosen here was doubtless an emblem of the innocence, meekness, and tenderness of the Saviour. The gift of the Holy Spirit, in this manner, was the public approbation of Jesus, (John 1:33,) and a sign of his being set apart to the office of the Messiah. We are not to suppose that there was any change wrought in the moral character of Jesus, but only that he was publicly set apart to his work, and solemnly approved by God in the office to which he was appointed” (Barnes 15).

33 And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.

“John the Baptist’s solemn avowal that he had seen the descent of the Spirit on Jesus and that he is the Son of God is the climax of his testimony.. . John’s emphatic declaration was the reason why the disciples left him to follow Jesus” (*EBC* 9.38).

“Here is emphatic testimony of John to the Messiahship of Jesus. Jesus is so great that John is unworthy to perform for him the function of the meanest slave. . . .” (Dummelow 631).

Baptize in Greek is *baptize* and means “to dip repeatedly, to immerse, to submerge; to cleanse by dipping or submerging, to wash, to make clean with water, to bathe (Thayer #907).

Mary Baker Eddy gives us two inspired definitions:

S&H 581:23

BAPTISM. Purification by Spirit; submergence in Spirit.

S&H 588:7

HOLY GHOST. Divine Science; the development of eternal Life, Truth, and Love.

34

And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.
Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples;

36 And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!

37 And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.

“The repeated allusion to the Lamb of God focused the attention of John’s disciples on Jesus as the basis for the divine forgiveness of sin and for the assurance that their repentance would be accepted. It stirred their interest and prompted them to investigate who Jesus was” (*EBC* 9.40).

Research:

The Anchor Yale Bible: The Gospel According to John (i-xii). Introduction, translation and notes by Raymond E. Brown. New York: Doubleday, 1966.

Dummelow, J. R., ed. *A Commentary on the Holy Bible.* Harrington Park: Sommer.

The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: John – Acts. Ed. Frank E. Gaebelein et al. Vol. 9. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984.

