



Believe

JOHN

MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

Examining the text & our hearts:

Bible Reading: John 1:29-42

²⁹ The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! ³⁰ This is the one I told you about: ‘After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me, because he existed before me.’ ³¹ I didn’t know him, but I came baptizing with water so that he might be revealed to Israel.” ³² And John testified, “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and he rested on him. ³³ I didn’t know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water told me, ‘The one you see the Spirit descending and resting on—he is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ ³⁴ I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God.” ³⁵ The next day, John was standing with 2 of his disciples. ³⁶ When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, “Look, the Lamb of God!” ³⁷ The 2 disciples heard him say this & followed Jesus. ³⁸ When Jesus turned & noticed them following him, he asked them, “What are you looking for?” They said to him, “Rabbi” (meaning ‘Teacher’), “where are you staying?” ³⁹ “Come & you’ll see,” he replied. So they went & saw where he was staying, & they stayed with him that day. It was about four in the afternoon. ⁴⁰ Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, was one of the two who heard John and followed him. ⁴¹ He first found his own brother Simon and told him, “We have found the Messiah” (which is translated ‘the Christ’), ⁴² and he brought Simon to Jesus. When Jesus saw him, he said, “You are Simon, son of John. You will be called Cephas” (... translated ‘Peter’).

SUMMARY:

- Slogans say “Jesus Saves.” But saves from what? When the Baptist identifies Jesus as “God’s Lamb who removes sin,” we echo, “Yes, Christ died from our sins—paying the penalty for our wrongdoings.” That’s true, but that’s not what’s meant here. In John’s unique perspective, singular ‘sin’ means unbelief, a lack of faith—our root problem. John’s ‘Lamb of

God' is the incarnate Word as 'the Living Revealer' to resolve our unbelief. God's Son who's one with the Father is uniquely qualified to reveal God. Jesus' life & supremely his death, reveal God's own being, love & mercy. Salvation is via revelation; it's not binary, but an ongoing fostering of experiential knowledge. Jesus' 7 'signs' and 7 'I AM' sayings incrementally unveil God. The charge to "Look, behold" invites our spiritual perception of Jesus' revelatory life & death & by believing to gain & grow in God's life.

1. The Baptist's Charge—"Look the Lamb of God who takes away the sin..." (1:29)

- o "The Baptist points to Jesus as the Lamb of God... & that he takes away sin but he also indicates *why such a life-giving presence is possible*... John the Baptist locates Jesus' significance in his being 'of God.' Once the message of *the Prologue is seen as the key to the Baptist's use of the term*, then Jesus' oneness with God (1:1-2) provides the key. The Lamb of God takes away sin because the Word is victorious over darkness (1:5), giving authority to all who believe in him & receive him to become children of God (1:12-13). The Word is one with us, flesh & glory at one & the same time (1:14), & his name is Jesus Christ (1:17)." [Francis J. Moloney, "*First Days of Jesus...: Jn. 1:19-51*," ABR 65 (2017) p. 70]
- o "On the narrative opening of the Gospel Jesus is twice (1:29, 36) called the 'Lamb of God'. [It's] a word of revelation... which... *has programmatic significance*..." [Judith M. Lieu (ed.) *Oxford Handbook of Johannine Studies*, p.]

a. What's the source & significance of 'Lamb of God'?

a. Sources—OT Background

- "What is meant by the title 'the Lamb of God'...? The 3 most common solutions [are]: [1.] the Paschal [Passover] lamb (Ex. 12), [2.] the Suffering Servant who's compared to a lamb that's silent at its slaughter (Is. 53:7-8) & [3.] the lamb that God provides for Abraham to replace the sacrifice of Isaac (Gen. 22)... All 3 OT types... are necessary to make sense fully of the Johannine use of lamb typology." [Mary L. Coloe, "*Behold the Lamb of God': John 1:29*," in L.D. Chrupca?a (ed.) *Rediscovering John*, p. 337]

b. Significance—Jesus, God's Son as Revealer & Redeemer

- "The Fourth Gospel focuses on Christ as *Revealer and Redeemer*." [DA. Carson, DJ. Moo, *Introduction to the NT*, 703]
- John's "Son of God was not only *the Revealer of the Father*... he was also [the] Savior & Redeemer through his self-offering... To express this John... introduced a metaphor, the 'Lamb of God'." [Geza Vermes, *Christian Beginnings*, p. 124]

b. Jesus is the Passover Lamb (Jn. 19:36-37)

- In chapter 1 "*John has already had John the Baptist announce Jesus at the very beginning of the gospel as 'the Lamb of God, ...'* [Plus], only John emphasizes that Jesus bones were not broken (19:31-39)" [Gillian Feeley-Harnik, *Lord's Table*, p. 118]
- Jesus "is the perfect [Passover] Lamb [so,] not one of his bones was broken (Jn. 19:36...). The earlier indications... that Jesus was the Lamb of God (1:29, 36) are brought to conclusion here." [Francis J. Moloney, *Johannine Studies*, 488]

c. Jesus—the Lamb provided by God (Gen. 22:8, Jn. 1:29; 19:36)

- "Abraham answered [Isaac], 'God will *provide* for himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son'." (Gen. 22:8 ESV)
- Isaac's "Qtn., 'Where's the lamb?' marks one of the great moments in OT foreshadowing of the Lamb of God"—Wesley Ferguson
- "The Lamb of God is *not offered to God* by humanity, but is *God offered to us* to enable a new humanity"—Jarrod McKenna
- "Yet another passage... uses the link word *seh* [Heb. 'lamb'] to refer to a sacrificial offering. When Abraham, on his way to sacrifice Isaac, is asked by his son where the lamb for the offering is, he tells him, '*God himself will provide the lamb (seh)* for the burnt offering' (Gen. 22:8). A different word ('ram') is used... but 22:8 where *seh* is used, is the point where it's actual said that God will provide the animal. This provision... is underlined by Abraham's... naming of the place 'The-LORD-Will-Provide' (*Yhwh yir'eh*) (22:14 echoing 22:8). *This is what John means by calling Jesus 'the Lamb of God'—the Lamb that God is providing*. Jesus is not a lamb taken from the flocks of Israelites... *he is the lamb that's come*

from God... Only one lamb in the Hebrew Bible is said to be provided by God: the lamb of Genesis 22:8... [Hence,] it seems likely that *John 1:29 alludes to it, as well as the Passover Lamb & the Suffering Servant.* [Richard Bauckham, *Gospel of Glory*, p. 156]

d. Abraham offering his 'only son' prefigures God the Father offering His only Son (3:16-17)

- "God loved the world in this way: He gave his one & only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him." (3:16-17)
- "Consider the influence of Genesis 22 upon Jn. 3:16, & more broadly upon John's view of salvation. The reference to Jesus as 'the only Son' in Jn. 3:16 is undoubtedly an allusion to Gen. 22:2, where Abraham is commanded to offer his 'only son' Isaac on Mount Moriah... *John the Baptist's 'lamb of God' (Jn. 1:29)... probably represents another allusion to Genesis 22...* [In] Jn. 3:16 the Father's gift of the Son constitutes... the *measure* of his love... also the *means* by which he saves the world. The Father so loved sinners that he didn't withhold his own beloved Son, the 2nd Person of the Trinity, but gave him up for us all (Rom. 8:32): ... *One of the Trinity Suffered.*" [A. J. Kostenberger, Scott R. Swain, *Father, Son, & Spirit... John's Gospel*, p. 128]

e. Abraham is not depicted as Judge, but as suffering father

- "Human language [can't]... express this sorrow of the Father, who sends His only begotten Son to... the cross; but this is the *sacrifice* of the Father... the sacrifice of love... If the Son is the sacrifice of love, what is the Father? *Isaac is led to the sacrifice, but who leads him if not his father [Abraham]? Whose heart is torn apart if not that of Abraham.*" [Bulgakov, *Lamb...*, p. 260]

2. For John there's only one, singular, sin—Unbelief

- In John's Gospel, "the predominant use of the word in the singular [—'sin'—] points to the fact that *John understands sin in a general, comprehensive sense: sin is unbelief, lack of faith.*" —Udo Schnelle
- "For [John], *there is... only one sin, unbelief*, which... consists in not believing in Jesus & his mission." —Johannes Beutler

a. God's Lamb removes the Sin of Unbelief (Jn. 1:29; 8:24; 16:8-9)

- The Spirit "will convict the world *about sin... because they do not believe in me [Christ].*" (16:8-9)
- "I told you that... *if you do not believe* that I am he, *you will die in your sins.*" (8:24)
- For John, "*Sin means*, not a misconduct in... decency & custom, morality & (divine) law, but *the state of unbelief*"—Alois Stimfle
- "*John's Gospel... does not say that the Lamb takes away 'guilt' but that he takes away sin – he removes unbelief...* [John] does not relate Jesus' death to the need for divine justice but to *the need for human faith.*" [Craig Koester, *Word of Life*, p. 115]

b. Singular 'Sin' in John vs. the Synoptic Gospels

- "The idea of *sin as failure to believe in Jesus...* permeates John's Gospel." —Jeffrey Siker
- "There is... *one radical sin... refusal to come to faith... God's Lamb... 'takes away' the sin of willful lack of faith*"—Roger Greene
- "*Sin (in this Gospel) is unbelief: Sin...* is not primarily immoral behavior; it... *is unbelief...* Sin in John is *the willful refusal to 'believe' in Jesus.*"— Gary Burge
- "Faith is contrasted with *unbelief, which is for John the essence of sin...* Sin is not... presented as wrongdoings, but in terms of not knowing or accepting Jesus... Negative moral behavior & wrong deeds that... result from unbelief are... mentioned in John, but are not the main focus." [Jan G. van der Watt, *Grammar of the Ethics of John*, 142]
- "Generally the Synoptics describe sin much like Judaism does... some moral or ritual failing that requires forgiveness achieved by... sacrifice or atonement following repentance. The 4th Gospel... refers to *hamartia* (sin) more than any other Gospel... [In] John, the *primary sin...* is the *rejection of God's revelation in Christ.* Sin... is tied to revelation rather than the usual moral categories... [Hence] the famous statement that *sin (in this Gospel) is unbelief: Sin... is not primarily immoral behavior; it... is unbelief...* Sin in John is the *willful refusal to 'believe' in Jesus...* John also fails to refer to repentance. The problem that Jesus confronts is more fundamental than ordinary sins... John... [views sin] as a

foundational...problem in the human heart.” [Gary M. Burge, “*Gospel...of John*,” in K. L. Johnson (ed.) *T&T Clark Companion to the Doctrine of Sin*,]

- “*For John, there is essentially a sin... & that is failure to believe in Jesus...* Jesus’ appearance on earth defines what sin is: ‘If I had not come & spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin. Now they have no excuse for their sin.’—Donald Gowan

3. Jesus, the Living Revealer, brings Saving Revelation (1:18; 12:45; 17:3)

- “No one has ever seen God. The one & only Son, who is himself God & is at the Father’s side—he *has revealed him*.” (1:18)
- “The thesis of the Gospel...[is] found in the last verse of the Prologue (1:18) that ‘*Jesus is the Revealer of God*’.”—David Bernard
- The Fourth Gospel’s “basic idea is...that *Jesus was sent as the Revealer*.” —John Ashton
- “John’s [basic concept] is *revelation...disclosed by Jesus the Revealer* through his words and deeds.”—Benjamin Reynolds

a. Exclusive claims: Jesus’ relation to God the Father (1:18; Matt. 11:27)

- “All things have been entrusted to me by my Father. *No one knows the Son except the Father, & no one knows the Father except the Son* & anyone to whom the Son desires to reveal him.” (Matt. 11:27) “In the light of [Mt. 27:11] & a multiplication of texts...especially in...John, the Church believes that *we have all there is to have of God in Jesus & nowhere else*. Absolutely everything...was handed over by the Father to his Son...[In Matt. 11:27] we are not far from Jn. 1:18 & 14:9” [Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew*, Vol. 1, p. 531]
- “This [assertion] is an obstacle for liberal advocates of religious pluralism, who wish to affirm that God can be truly and redemptively known through a variety of religious traditions [Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, etc.]” [K. Kopic, *Mapping*, 247]

b. Jesus is the Living Revealer (1:18)

- “*Jesus the Living Revealer*: An...important...theme in John is *the ‘living revealer*,’ which is the meaning of *Logos* (‘Word’) in Jn. 1:1-18. It is commonly agreed that...revelation is central in John. Jesus is the One who came from heaven *to reveal God* to the people of the world. To meet Jesus is to meet God...” [Philip Comfort, *Gospel of John*, p. 13]
- “Jesus as the Word in John 1...is *the living revealer of God*.”— Grant Osborne
- John “portray[s]...Jesus as *the consummate Revealer of God*... ‘the only Son...who has made him known (*exegesato*)’ —has ‘revealed’ (NAB) the Father, ‘explained’ (NASB) the Father, ‘exegeted’ the Father.” [F. Scott Spencer, *Passions of Christ*, p.]
- “Jesus’ role is defined from the outset [1:18] as...revealing the Father. Throughout the prologue the emphasis falls on revelation rather than atonement. Jesus’ mission as the revealer is itself redemptive... Jesus’ mission is redemptive because he revealed the Father. Salvation, or eternal life, consists in coming to know God through this revelation and living in response to this knowledge of God (17:5). That, ultimately, is *what it means to believe*.” [R. Alan Culpepper, *Gospel & Letters of John*, 94]
- “Jesus as the divine revealer...revealed *God*, the Son revealed the Father, the uttered Word revealed the one who uttered the word. To know this was to know...Jesus...& thus to know God, the Father. ‘This is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, & the one you have sent —Jesus Christ’ (17:3). So the revelation of God (1:18) was essentially [saving] in effect— it’s...the conveyer of the life promised, as a process of revelation...continuing in the work of the [Spirit].” [James D. G. Dunn, “*Earliest Interpreters of Jesus Tradition*,” Porter (ed.) *Horizons in Hermeneutics*, p. 136]

c. Jesus is both the Revealer & the Revelation

- “*Christ is simultaneously the revealer..., the revelation...and the content of revelation*.” —Gerald O’Collins
- John’s “prologue [indicates]...God has sent forth his Word...in the person of Jesus Christ. Through his words & deed, [is] given a revelation of God superior to...Judaism [etc.]. What...is this *revelation that’s brought by the Revealer, Jesus Christ?*... It’s ‘life’ ...life in its fullness, the life of God mediated to human beings in Jesus Christ [10:10]... ‘Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, by believing you may have life in his name’ (20:30)...This theme of life...runs through all the metaphors...*The revelation is* not some...

secret formula which Jesus...reveal[s]...but...his own person.” [J. Macquarrie, ...*Christ in Modern Thought*, pp. 119-20]

- “The whole history of revelation is summarized by the closing verse of the Prologue: ‘No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son...has made him known’ (1:18). With the Holy Spirit, *Christ* is simultaneously *the revealer* (or agent) of divine self-revelation, *the revelation...and the content of revelation*.” [Gerald O’Collins, *Inspiration*, 91]
- Jesus “not only brought revelation from the Father, *he is the revelation*.”—James Dunn
- “Jesus...reveals the true reality of God...Christ not only brought the word of God...he is the Word. He *not only brought revelation from the Father, he is the revelation* [1:18; 12:45]...‘Whoever has seen me has seen the Father’ (14:9), He and the Father are one (10:30). He utters the divine ‘I am’...” [James D. G. Dunn, *Neither Jew Nor Greek*, p. 768]

d. God’s Son brings Saving Revelation

- “Because Jesus as the Son of God & heavenly Son of Man is *from* heaven—i.e., *from* God—...he is able to bring the saving revelation of the truth, the saving revelation of God’s love & judgment.” [Stephen C. Barton, “*Johannine Dualism*,” in Richard Bauckham (ed.) *Gospel of John & Christian Theology*, 11]
- John’s “2 primary emphases are Christ...(with Jesus [being] both God & the living revealer of God) & [salvation] (...centering on ‘believing’ in Jesus by coming to ‘know’ & ‘see’ him...leading to ‘eternal life.’)” [Joel B. Green, *Dictionary of Jesus*, p.]
- “Jesus is the Revealer who has revealed the Father. Those who accept him as the Revealer have become the ‘children of God’ (1:12).” [Watson E. Mills (ed.) *Mercer Dictionary of the Bible*, 462]

a. “God’s revelation saves humanity *from...unbelief*”

- “John affirms that God saves &...indicat[es]...what it is that God’s revelation saves humanity *from*...In John it is *unbelief*...The 4th Gospel sees *revelation as the means of salvation and knowledge* (in the sense of fellowship...) *of God as salvation itself*...John constru[es] *salvation as revelation*.” [A. Scrutton, “*Truth Will Set You Free*,” Bauckham (ed) *Gospel of John...*, pp. 366-7]

b. “Revelation is the means of salvation” & “knowledge...of God is the substance of salvation” (17:3)

- “Toward the end [of the 4th Gospel] it becomes clear that *revelation is the means of salvation*, and *knowledge of God the substance of salvation itself*...Our *experiential knowledge of God in Christ is our salvation*...The individual’s potential is fully realized only through fellowship with God, involving the individual’s *experience of God’s saving revelation*.” [A. Scrutton, “*Truth Will Set You Free: Salvation as Revelation*,” in R. Bauckham (ed.)...*John & Christian Theology*, 363, 365, 367]
- The “salvation harvest...[e.g.] of Samaritans in 4:39-42, is the *consequence of Jesus’ self-revelation ‘I am’* (4:26)...[Jesus’] work itself entails revelation...[It] includes the ‘works’ [which]...reveal the Father in the Son, & it includes the cross...It’s ultimately through Jesus’ death that the...harvest is made possible. Thus *salvation harvest & revelation are inseparable* in the 4th Gospel. *Jesus’ mission entails divine & self-revelation*, & results in salvation harvest (or life-giving). {For John, *revelation is the means of salvation, & knowledge of God the substance of salvation itself*.}...[It’s] no surprise, since salvation is contingent on *knowing* the Father & the Son (17:3), & *knowing* the ‘one true God’ (1:3)...Jesus achieves his ‘work’ ...*through the self-revelatory claim ‘I am’*...[This] summar[izes] other...‘I am’ statements as well.” [J. Coutts, *Divine Name in...John*, pp. 79-80]

c. John’s Gospel doesn’t focus on Substitutionary Atonement, Repentance, or Forgiveness

- “Throughout the prologue the emphasis falls on revelation rather than atonement.”—R. Alan Culpepper
- In “*the 4th Gospel...salvation [is] primarily about revelation*, consigning other themes ([e.g.] sacrifice & victory) to 2nd place. While the 4th Gospel includes...Christ’s death as sacrifice & or a victory over the devil...such imagery goes only skin-deep...The [4th] Gospel itself is not determined by categories of sacrifice & atonement.” [A. Scrutton, “*Truth Will*,” Bauckham (ed.) p. 363]
- “Forgiveness is *not* a key theme in John [only 20:23]...because forgiveness supposes a more legal view of sin, ‘a judicial notion of sin as a debt which God in his mercy remits.’ Sin is a complex reality that cannot be dealt with solely by forgiveness...[But,] Jesus’ death ...is a revelation of God’s love that will draw all men to Jesus & will thereby save them from sin & procure for them eternal life.” [A. Scrutton, “*Truth Will Set You Free*,” in Richard Bauckham (ed.) ...*John & Christian Theology*, 366]

d. Christ’s Revelation encompasses incarnation & the cross:

- “The cross...is the fulfillment of the incarnation...The *incarnation is ‘the beginning of the revelatory process* which culminates in the supreme revelation’...*Incarnation & crucifixion* should not be seen as 2 competing or even complementary events, but as *two stages on one [saving] revelatory event*.” [Anastasia Scrutton, “*Truth Will Set You Free*,” Bauckham (ed.) *Gospel*, 365]

- “If Jesus’ role as revealer is...[taken] as a whole, the revelation becomes meaningful: Jesus reveals God’s love *through his life of love, & through his death...* in the face of jealousy & antagonism.” [A. Scrutton, “*Truth Will...*,” Bauckham (ed.) *Gospel*, 365]
- e. Jesus’ Role as Revealer climaxes in his death on the cross (12:32)
- “If I’m lifted up from the earth I will draw all people to myself.He...indicate[d] what kind of death he was about to die.” (12:32)
 - “Jesus’ death...is a revelation of God’s love that will draw all men to Jesus & will thereby save them from sin and procure for them eternal life.” [A. Scrutton, “*Truth Will Set You Free*,” in R. Bauckham (ed.) ...*John & Christian Theology*, 366]
 - “The cross of Christ in John is evaluated...*in terms of revelation* in harmony with the theology of the entire Gospel, rather than in terms of vicarious & expiatory sacrifice for sin.” [J. T. Forestell, *Word of the Cross: Salvation as Revelation...*, p. 191]
4. Fulfillment of the Passover Lamb—‘The pierced One’—Christ’s Crucified (19:33-37)
- “When [the soldiers] came to Jesus, they did not break his legs since they saw that he was already dead. ³⁴ But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, & at once blood & water came out. ³⁵ He who saw this has testified so that you also may believe. His testimony is true, & he knows he is telling the truth. ³⁶ For these things happened so that the Scripture would be fulfilled: ‘*Not one of his bones will be broken.*’ ³⁷ Also, another Scripture says: ‘*They will look at the one they pierced*’” (19:33-7)
- a. Christ Crucified as the Passover Lamb (19:36; Ex. 12:46, Num. 9:12)
- “The Scripture would be fulfilled: ‘*Not one of his bones will be broken.*’ (Jn. 19:36)
 - Jesus “legs were not broken...fulfilling OT Passover symbolism...The reference to bones not being broken in Ex. 12:46 comes in the context of...Passover observance...*A powerful link is established between Jesus’ sacrificial death & the Jewish Passover...* This marks Jesus as the ‘*lamb of God*’ who takes away the sin of the world in keeping with the Baptist’s witness...Jesus is shown to fulfill Passover symbolism.” [A. Kostenberger, *John*, GK Beale, DAS Carson, *Commentary on NT use of OT*, p 503]
- b. Christ Crucified as the Pierced One (19:37; Zech. 12:10)
- “Another Scripture says: *They will look at the one they pierced.*” (Jn. 19:37)
 - Jn. 19:37 “provides the second of two texts said to be fulfilled by the Roman [soldiers’] actions in 19:34 [‘*one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, & at once blood & water came out*’], namely Zech. 12:10 ‘*They will look at the one they pierced*’...John saw the fulfillment of Zech. 12:10 at the crucifixion as confirmation that the Messiah was Jesus...It is as the one pierced that Jesus becomes the source of salvation for those who look to him in faith.” [A. Kostenberger, *John*, in G. K. Beale, D. A. Carson, *Commentary on the NT use of the OT*, pp. 503-4]
 - “At a minimum John considered Jesus the [Passover] lamb...in Ex. 12...the one of whom ‘not a bone was broken,’ & the one ...to be looked upon for salvation [Zech. 12:10]...The truth of the 4th Gospel’s witness regarding the crucifixion is a saving truth that leads...to salvation in relationship to Christ...*Revelation [is] salvation* in the 4th Gospel...‘Revelation is the means of salvation, & knowledge of God the substance of salvation itself...Our experiential knowledge of God in Christ *is* our salvation.’... [John] 19:37 is a climatic key verse in leading the audience to the experience of God’s revelation in Christ...” [William R. Bynum, “*Quotations from Zechariah in the 4th Gospel*,” Alicia D. Myers (ed.) *Abiding Words: The Use of Scripture in...John*, pp. 71-2] “The 4th Evangelist does not place the ‘*looking on*’ the Messiah in faith exclusively in the distant future (...cf. use of Zech. 12:10 in Rev. 1:11), but rather...he projects a believing vision of Messiah into the present & immediate future...The Evangelist himself is the first to have seen Jesus pierced & has believed (note in 19:35 the perfect tense ‘*he has seen*’) so that you too may believe.” [A. J. Kostenberger, *John*, in GK. Beale, DA. Carson, *Commentary on the NT use of the OT*, p. 505]
- c. *Inclusio* (‘Bookends’)—“Look the Lamb of God” (1:29) “Look at the Pierced One” (19:37)
- “If I’m lifted up from the earth I will draw all people to myself’...indicat[ing the] kind of death he was about to die.” (12:32-3)
 - “Jesus’ death...is a revelation of God’s love that will draw all men to Jesus &...thereby save them from sin & procure for them eternal life.” –Anastasia Scrutton

- “‘Seeing’ in the sense of spiritual perception, is...a prominent theme in the 4th Gospel...It is obvious... that there’s a focus on, even a specific call for, ‘seeing,’ ‘observing,’ & ‘beholding’...Christ. Here *the inclusio of 19:37...extends to the first chapter of the 4th Gospel & the call to ‘behold’ in 1:29, 36, & to ‘come & see’ in 1:39.* The ‘they will look’ in 19:37...can indicate a perception of truth deeper than... simply seeing...This ‘seeing’ & ‘looking’ is...a directive on John’s part to gaze upon the crucified Christ in transformative contemplation. Nor need it be seen as...a vision that simply leads to faith, [it’s] interactive.” [William R. Bynum, “*Quotations from Zechariah in the 4th Gospel,*” Alicia D. Myers (ed.) *Abiding Words, 71*]
- “The 4th Gospel concludes the crucifixion episode by drawing...attention to the pierced one, it makes no evident reference to guilt & condemnation...Instead [there’s] the offer of salvation: ‘This is John’s purpose in recording these verses: *that you might look to Jesus & trust him. There is salvation in such a believing look.*” [William R. Bynum, “*Quotations from Zechariah in the 4th Gospel,*” Alicia D. Myers (ed.) *Abiding Words: The Use of Scripture in...John, 70*]
- “It [is] much more in harmony with the Gospel...to see its reference here [19:37] to ‘looking upon the pierced one’ as, [1.] first of all a literal fulfillment...[by] the actual persons present at the crucifixion...[2.] A call for the entire audience, contemporary...& future, to participate in an extended fulfillment by gazing upon the crucified Christ. This pierced one is also...the resurrected Christ & ascended Lord.” [William R. Bynum, “*Quotations from Zechariah...*,” Alicia D. Myers (ed.) *Abiding Words, 70*]

5. Faith & Unbelief; Darkness & Light—Not Binary Options

- “One might conclude that people either know nothing of God or they know him completely, that they are either in the darkness or are fully enlightened [Binary options]...[However,] Koester finds such an assessment ...to be inadequate on the basis of John’s portrayal of Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman, & the man born blind...Although ‘separation from God’ is overcome for John through faith, *this separation ‘does not fully go away’ in the lives of believers.* Its denouement will occur only when the faithful ‘see Jesus face to face’.” [Mathew E. Sousa, *Sin, the Human Predicament, & Salvation in...John, 10*]
- “Sin is overcome when individuals turn to God & become that for which God created them. God’s forgiveness is only the *beginning of this process.* The individual’s potential is fully realized only through fellowship with God, involving the... experience of God’s saving revelation. Thus experiential, incarnational knowledge of God’s love as revealed in Christ is decisive for the individual’s salvation.” [A. Scrutton, “*Truth Will Set You Free,*” in Bauckham (ed.) *John & Christian Theology, 367*]

6. Our Response—“Look the Lamb of God” (1:29) “Look at the Pierced One” (19:37) “Come & You’ll See” (1:39)

a. “Behold! Look!”—Not mere physical sight, but spiritual perception

- “Simply ‘seeing’ the crucified Lord...is not synonymous with ‘believing,’ as indicated by 6:36, ‘you have seen me & yet do not believe,’ & 20:29 ‘because you’ve seen me...blessed are those who have not seen’.” [WR Bynum, *4th Gospel & Scriptures, 179*]
- “The use of *horao* [to look, see] in John consistently refers to *spiritual sight, spiritual perception*... Looking upon the pierced one in a simple physical dimension is *not* considered by John in & of itself to have any importance for salvation. However, when *one perceives in that look the revelation of God’s love in the person of Jesus, it...become[s] transforming & salvific.* If [we] accept Scrutton’s insistence that...*revelation in the 4th Gospel...[is] ‘the primary if not sole means of salvation,’* then...‘our experiential knowledge of God in Christ is our salvation’.” [Wm. Randolph Bynum, *4th Gospel & Scriptures, p. 179*]

b. Believe the Truth-testimony of Eye-witnesses & Scripture (19:35-37)

- “One of the soldiers pierced [Jesus’s] side with a spear, & at once blood & water came out. ³⁵ He who saw this has *testified so that you also may believe.* His testimony is true, & he knows he is telling the truth. ³⁶ For these things happened so that the *Scripture would be fulfilled ‘Not one of his bones will be broken.’* ³⁷ Also... ‘*They will look at the one they pierced.*’ (19:35-37)
- “Sin...is ‘taken away’ [1:29] when it is replaced by faith, & faith is evoked by the love of God that is revealed through the crucifixion of Jesus.” [Craig R. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel, p. 245*]
- “The call to believe is the only demand that John makes, the only response his Gospel seeks for. A call to ‘repent’ or for ‘repentance’ never crosses his lips.” [J. Dunn, “*Earliest Interpreters...*,” S. C. Porter

(ed.) *Horizons in Hermeneutics*, p. 140]

- c. Gather with those who believe—"Come & You'll See" (1:39, 46)
- 2 disciples ask Jesus, "Rabbi," "where are you staying?" ³⁹ "Come & you'll see," he replied. So they went & saw..." (1:38-9)
 - "Philip found Nathanael & told him, 'We've found the one Moses wrote about in the Law (&...the prophets): Jesus the son of Joseph, from Nazareth'. ⁴⁶ 'Can anything good come out of Nazareth?' Nathanael asked. 'Come & see', Philip answered.

QUESTIONS

- Read the 'exclusive' claims in John 1:18; 14: 6, 9 & Matt. 11:27. In view of these statements how would you respond to:
 1. Notions validating religious pluralism [many religions—Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, etc.], employ metaphors like:
 - "All rivers flow to the sea and all roads (world religions) lead to God"
 - Various religions are like "blind people around an elephant, each claiming what they touch/describe is the ultimate 'truth' about this animal."
 - How would you evaluate & respond to such notions in view of NT claims about Jesus (Jn. 1:18, etc)?
 2. Consider the allegation that Christians defending the validity of Jesus' claims of exclusive insight & unique means of access to the Creator God are "backward, narrow-minded &/or intolerant of other, non-Christian religions"? Discuss.
 3. Evaluate the statement (by Frederick Bruner) that, based on John's Gospel, "the Church believes that *we have all there is to have of God in Jesus & [it's] nowhere else* [i.e., not in other, non-Christian religions]." Discuss.
 4. Perhaps you've heard Jn. 1:29 quoted: "*The Lamb of God...takes away the sins [pl.] of the world*" (1:29). Is the difference between "sins" (plural) & "sin" (singular) trivial, inconsequential? Or, might it be significant? If so how?
 5. Consider the statement that "[singular] '*sin*' [in John's Gospel] *is failure to believe in Jesus, it is unbelief.*"
 - a. Where do we see this in John's Gospel?
 - b. If 'sin' is unbelief/lack of faith, (rather than trespasses, unrighteous acts, etc.) how does Jesus Christ save us from this 'sin'?
 6. Phil. Comfort says "An important theme in John is *the 'living revealer'*." How does John 1:18 show us that "*Jesus is the Living Revealer*"?
 7. If "*Jesus is the Living Revealer*" in John's Gospel, how does the "*Living Revealer*" save us? Discuss.
 8. Consider the statements:
 - Jesus "not only brought revelation from the Father, *he is the revelation.*"—James Dunn
 - "*Christ is simultaneously the revealer..., the revelation...& the content of revelation.*"—Gerald O'Collins
 9. What do you understand from these statements? What are these writers trying to convey? Discuss.
 10. Consider the statement by Anastasia Scrutton: "*Revelation is the means of salvation, and knowledge of God the substance of salvation itself...Our experiential knowledge of God in Christ is our salvation...*"
 - This scholar uses the 3 terms—"means, substance, is"—in the 3 statements—
 - a. "Revelation is the means of salvation,"

- b. "Knowledge of God is *the substance of salvation*"
- c. "Experiential knowledge of God in Christ *is our salvation.*"
- o What do you understand by these statements in the context of Jesus as the 'Living Revealer' in John? Discuss.