

## **Who influences your thinking?** **John 1:19-34**

### **Introduction**

I think that we are influenced by our parents. My father was a hard worker and I was influenced by him. My mother became a Christian before I was born, her devoted faith influenced me, although I was surrounded by non-believers. One of my friends has been reading a lot of self-help books lately. He is at a point in his life where he is trying to figure out how he can change. He agrees with the ideas of the authors of the self-help books and has received many good tips on how to improve his personality and circumstances.

Sometimes I worry about my children's future and their thought process. They do believe in Jesus now, but they are surrounded by influences from their school and friends who have no interest in Jesus.

### **Who influences your thinking?**

People you admire also had great things to say about Jesus.

First, Jesus is the Lord of the Old Testament.

Secondly, Jesus is the Lamb who takes away sins.

Third, Jesus is the Son of God who gives us the Holy Spirit.

The Lord, Lamb, and Son of God.

### **Who influences your thinking?**

#### **People you respect have also had great things to say about Jesus.**

First, Jesus is the Lord prophesied by the Old Testament.

John 1:19.

Now this was John's testimony when the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was.

### **John 1:19-34**

<sup>19</sup> And this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" <sup>20</sup> He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ." <sup>21</sup> And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No." <sup>22</sup> So they said to him, "Who are you? We need to give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" <sup>23</sup> He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight[a] the way of the Lord,' as the prophet Isaiah said."

<sup>24</sup> (Now they had been sent from the Pharisees.) <sup>25</sup> They asked him, "Then why are you baptizing, if you are neither the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?" <sup>26</sup> John answered them, "I baptize with water, but among you stands one you do not know, <sup>27</sup> even he who comes after me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie." <sup>28</sup> These things took place in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

<sup>29</sup> The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! <sup>30</sup> This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was before me.' <sup>31</sup> I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel." <sup>32</sup> And

John bore witness: "I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. <sup>33</sup> I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' <sup>34</sup> And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son[b] of God."

**Context:**

Today's passage is about John. John is just John in this Scripture, but in the other parts of the Gospel, he is called John the Baptist. The reason for the difference is that the other parts of the Gospel distinguish between John the Baptist and John, one of Jesus' disciples and the son of Zebedee, who wrote the Book of John. But John, the author of this Gospel, humbly wrote himself without a name, but just "the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved (John 20:2). He did not write his own name, so in his gospel, John refers to John the Baptist. And this is John's testimony.

John the Baptist was a very famous man of his time. The Gospel of Mark describes his activities this way, "The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River." (Mark 1:5)

Matthew explains it this way, "People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan" (3:5).

Another historian of the time, Josephus, who was not originally a Christian, wrote about John's influence in this way:

"Herod feared John's influence and thought the people might rebel against his authority because they seemed to follow whatever he advised."

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John the Baptist, who was very influential and famous, was baptizing a large number of people in the Jordan River, so the Jews in the capital city of Jerusalem sent their priests and Levites to ask John the question, "Who are you?"

John replied that he was not the Christ, nor was he Elijah or Moses of the Old Testament.

John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, "I am the voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way for the Lord.'"

Six hundred years before the time of John, God prophesied through a prophet named Isaiah about judgment, but also about salvation and restoration. At the time of salvation, in preparation for salvation, there would be a man in the wilderness who would cry out with a loud voice, "Make straight the way of the Lord." According to John, that voice would be him. He would be the one to make the preparations.

And according to Isaiah, he is the one who prepares the way of the Lord and prepares for the coming of the Creator of the Old Testament.

So the celebrated John, John the Baptist, merely prepares the way, and the one who comes after him is the Lord prophesied in the Old Testament.

So first, Jesus is the Lord prophesied in the Old Testament.

Sometimes I think our image of Jesus is too small. With Japan's polytheistic background, we live surrounded by the original Shinto concept of God. Since the gods of polytheism

are the eight million gods, each god governs a rather small area. One god is this forest, another god is safety in this place, and so on. Against this backdrop, a single God has only a limited amount of influence. But according to John the Baptist, Jesus is the only Creator. He is the Lord prophesied by the Old Testament. In other words, the Lord, the Creator, who appeared in the first book of the Old Testament, Genesis, came into the world as Jesus. If so, then we should have a big picture of Jesus. He is an omniscient, omnipotent God.

I have been reading a lot lately the words of a famous Christian named Kanzo Uchimura. As I'm sure you all know, he was born in 1861 and died in 1930. He was quite brilliant and was chosen by the government to receive his education in English in Sapporo with a rather limited number of other brilliant people. His grades at the university were the best among the other bright people. He worked as a teacher at one of the best schools in Japan and then became a reporter for a newspaper in Tokyo and a famous social critic. He became a Christian when he was a student and has been convincing people that Jesus is the Creator and the Son of God ever since. People around him thought that if he took Jesus seriously, then they ought to too. And so was John's influence to those around him in his time.

2) Sometimes I worry about my children's future and their thought process. They do believe in Jesus now, but they are surrounded by influences from their school and friends who have no interest in Jesus.

However, John quotes a book in the Bible called Isaiah to describe the fulfillment of that prophecy. Even in the time when Isaiah was written, the Jews were in captivity in Babylon, influenced by the Babylonian concept of god, and few people trusted in the Creator God. In John's time, in the first century A.D., the Jews were also taken captive by the Romans, and considering the Roman Empire as a whole, the Jews were a minority. But even in this situation, John proclaimed that Jesus was the Lord prophesied in the Old Testament.

### **Who has influenced your thinking?**

**John, who was respected by the people of his time, said some great things.**

**Second, Jesus is the Lamb who takes away sins.**

Verses 24, 25: **24** Now the Pharisees who had been sent **25** questioned him, "Why then do you baptize if you are not the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?"

The priests and Levites were sent by the Pharisees who were in Jerusalem to ask John by whose authority he was baptizing people. John replied that someone great would come after him.

Verses 26, 27: **26** "I baptize with [c] water," John replied, "but among you stands one you do not know. **27** He is the one who comes after me, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie."

How great is the one who comes after him, so great that even the great John the Baptist was not worthy to untie the laces of his sandals. And the role of that great man was to take away the sins of the people of the world. Verses 28, 29: "**28** This all happened at Bethany on the other side of the Jordan, where John was baptizing. **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!

If you read the Old Testament, especially Leviticus, an offering was needed to take away the sins of the people. As a punishment for people's sins, the offering would lose its life instead of the people. It had to be an unblemished lamb made as a pure offering. The great man who came after John had the same role of removing the sin of mankind.

However, it wasn't for the sake of just one sinner, but for the sins of the world. What does this mean? Does the sacrifice of Jesus take away the sins of every person in the whole world? No, it does not. But in this world, if anyone, not only Jews, but also Greeks and other Gentiles, accepts Jesus, His sacrifice will take away their sins. Verse 12 of this chapter already says that: "Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—."

The great man who was to come after John is the one who was before John, the very Creator, as we see in verse 30: "This is the one I meant when I said, 'A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me..'"

Then, after giving this explanation, John answered the question asked. His baptism was for the purpose of revealing the One who would come later. Verse 31: "**31** I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel." "Jesus is the Lamb that takes away our sins."

I don't think a lot of people today feel that sin is a big problem. If you ask people what is the biggest problem in the world, hardly anyone will tell you that it's sin. But the Bible says that the biggest problem is sin. Sin is failing to thank God and turning away from Him, even though we are created by God the Creator and supported by Him every second of our lives. Moreover, we defy God and live selfishly. From the origin of sin, all iniquity and injustice are created. The Creator hates sin so much that He now turns people over to it as punishment for their sins, but one day He will judge the whole world in righteousness. Since we are all sinners, we all need to have our sins removed.

Kanzo Uchimura used to preach every Sunday from 1919 to 1923 at what is now Otemon Tower in Otemachi. He said the same thing: "In order to save a person, you must first make him realize that he is a sinner. To do this, he brought up the bold claim of universal guilt as the natural order of things, followed by a clear statement of the doctrine of salvation. A teacher who does not condemn the sins of his listeners, but only tries to curry favor or win their hearts, is an immature teacher who does not know the doctrine of salvation. Those who aspire to salvation and those who know how to lead others to salvation will first of all cry aloud for the guilt of all." (Studies in the Book of Romans, pp. 150-151)

- 1) When we hear the message that Jesus takes away our sins, we have to admit our sinfulness, but it is as if the most beautiful flower ever sprouted and bloomed from the black soil. Uchimura put it this way: "Knowing that all my sins, even the most flagrant ones, are forgiven and I am saved, I am filled with infinite gratitude."

What about you? Some people are fully aware of their sinfulness, but they don't feel grateful or joyful because they haven't accepted through experience that Jesus is the Lamb who takes away their sins. But once they accepted Jesus, all their sins were completely forgiven through his sacrifice on the cross.

Second, Jesus is the Lamb who takes away sins.  
Who has influenced your thinking?

John, whom the people of that time respected, also had great things to say about Jesus.

### **Third, Jesus is the Son of God who gives us the Holy Spirit**

According to John the Baptist, Jesus is the Lord of the Old Testament, the Lamb who takes away sins, and the Son of God, the King of the whole world, who is chosen and filled with the Holy Spirit. Verse 32: "**32** Then John gave this testimony: "I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him.

John saw with his own eyes that the Holy Spirit was given and descended upon Jesus. Before that, John did not know that Jesus was a great man who would come after him. Verse 33: And I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.'

John baptized people with water in a place called Bethany along the Jordan River, but the great man to come would baptize people with the Holy Spirit. The expression "baptizing with the Holy Spirit" is a reference to the Old Testament. In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit was given to one king, Saul, for a time. Then, the Holy Spirit was given to the next king, David, on a long-term basis. 1 Samuel 16:13: "So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon David. Samuel then went to Ramah."

And in Isaiah, it says that when God's chosen servant comes, God will give him the Holy Spirit. And in Ezekiel, it says that at a certain time, God will give each one of his people, all of them, the Holy Spirit, along with a new heart. So the person who comes after John is God's chosen king, and he is given the Holy Spirit, and then he also baptizes other people with the Holy Spirit, so that they will also be given the Holy Spirit, and their hearts will be renewed. John saw with his own eyes that the Holy Spirit had come upon a man, and he testified that it was the great man whom God had said was the Son of God, the King. 34 I have seen and I testify that this is God's Chosen One.

The image of the Son of God is mainly from Psalm 2. In that scene, God first anoints a man as a king. God has a very close relationship with the king, like a father and child. The king would rule the whole world and exterminate his enemies, but he would also bless those who revered him. According to John, Jesus is the Son of God. And John was testifying to it to others. Jesus is the Son of God who gives us the Holy Spirit.