

Series: John the Baptist #1700

Title: John 1.29; 1 John 3.4
What Is Sin?

Thank you for joining me today from wherever you are and by however you listen as we meet together coast-to-coast here in the United States and all the way around the world. If you have been with us, and as always I sure hope you have, then you know we are studying the life and message of John the Baptist. The older cousin of the Lord Jesus, God sent John as the Lord's forerunner. Referring to this man, Matthew chapter 3 and verse 3 says, **"For this is the one referred to by Isaiah the prophet when he said, 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness, make ready the way of the Lord, make His paths straight!'"**

And John's Gospel chapter 1, verses 6 and 7 says, **"There came a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness, to testify about the Light, so that all might believe through him."** We learned that John was a credible witness who gave testimony about Jesus who is the Light. And it is this testimony that interests us beginning today. After having spent several days on the Baptist's character, discussing the man, we now look at his message. And that is found in John 1, verse 29, **"The next day [John the Baptist] saw Jesus coming to him and said, 'Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!'"**

What does it mean that John declared Jesus to be "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world"? Let's break up this verse into three parts, shall we? To do this we will take these words a little out of order and begin with "the sin of the world." Part one is "the sin of the world." Part two will be: "the Lamb of God" and part three: "takes away." Do not let this confuse you. Just stay tuned and you will see what we mean. Let's begin with this pertinent and penetrating question: what is sin?

The question "what is sin?" is such a necessary question, and yet the very moment I mention the word "sin" many people will immediately reach for the dial and turn to another radio station, turn off the radio altogether, or delete the Podcast. We do not like the word. To Christians it sounds like we are being judgmental, harsh, and critical if we use the word sin. It makes us feel as if we are somehow better than others; we are their judges. We feel our own sin lurking around the corners of *our* souls and so how dare we talk about sin as if we have the right to do so when we, ourselves, are such a mess? We shy away from even talking about it, uttering the word. We avoid it like an airborne virus!

To people who are not Christians the word sin sounds antiquated, like a decrepit piece of junk you would stumble upon at someone's really bad yard sale. It's in the back corner, all covered in dust and is beyond redemption and usefulness even by the most creative and capable of restorers. It's just not a useful word.

"It's fine for the church to use, because after all, Christians are living in their own odd little world anyway. No wonder the churches are empty. But for the rest of us: what has sin got to do with me, living my life, minding my own business and not bothering anyone else? I *do* have the right to live my life the way I want to. So do not trouble me with such archaic vocabulary, please. And whatever you do, Christian person, you must drop any sense of being judge, jury, and executioner of how I live *my* life."

Nevertheless, some Christians want to plunge ahead with it. We recognize this is an important word, err, at least concept and we cannot just ignore it. It's kind of fundamental to being a Christian, isn't it? I mean why else turn to Jesus if we do not have sin and require Him to actually do something about it? But, aware of the criticism we will receive if we dare to define the word and talk about it *publicly* in any great detail, we don't! Instead, we want to come up with some way to murder it, drag the body of sin out back, shoot and kill it, and bury it, never to witness it rising again.

Or, we come up with some very creative ways to make it more popular with the masses. Like pouring salt on potato chips, sugar in brownie mix, and finding the fattest steak at the local market, we want our discussion of this bland, nasty tasting word to be full of salt, sugar, and fat so that the public can at least bite off a piece and chew it and then maybe cut off another slice and easily digest that.

So we season the word in such a way; we dress up the word in such a way so that it's barely recognizable to its original meaning. And again some Christians go through such contortions because sin is perceived to be a big, fat, ugly kind of word. They shutter to use it, but if they *must* then they have to at least market

it differently than before. So “sin” becomes mistakes, errors, a temporary lapse in character, or a simple misdeed.

The words of quote/unquote Christian publishers, writers, musicians, mega-church pastors, and marketing experts ring in our minds and make sense to our judgment adverse thinking: “If you want people to listen, if you want them to keep coming back, and if you want them to actually buy and read this book or article, or hear what you are trying to say in your sermons, in your music, then find a way to make sin more...appealing a topic to discuss!”

And so, when I ask the question, “what is sin?” I do so cognizant of the way the little three letter word “sin” is treated. And yet, I am telling you up front that is not the way I am going to treat sin. And the primary reason I am not going to never mention it, or season it a certain way so it is more palatable to people listening to me, or to in some way dress it up so that we can wear sin everywhere and fit right in is because God doesn’t ever treat sin this way. In fact, there is no possible way any of us can *over estimate* how wretched sin is and how reprehensible God finds it to be. God hates sin. He *really, really hates it!*

Psalms 5, verse 5 says of God, “**The boastful shall not stand before Your eyes; You hate all who do iniquity.**” Psalm 7, verse 11 says, “**God is a righteous judge, and a God who has indignation every day.**” The indignation there is against the *unrighteous* persons, that is those who have not been made righteous by Christ. And Psalm 11, verse 5 says, “**The Lord tests the righteous and the wicked, and the one who loves violence His soul hates.**” And Romans 6, verse 23 says, “**The wages of sin is death...**”

Not only does the Lord define sin exactly as He sees it, but God demands that we do too. We must call out sin for what it is. Sin in me, sin in you, and sin in every single person who has lived, is living, and will live. With only *one single exception*: Jesus Christ, God’s Son. He never, ever sinned. He lived the one perfect life.

And so back to our question: what is sin? Sin is rebellion against God. Let me say that again: sin is rebellion against God. And the objective of sin is the dethroning of God so that I can make myself god. Sin is all out war on God. And I want to battle God for His place as ruler of my life. If I am god then God cannot be God – there can only be one God. And if I am master of my own life, then anything goes, and God must be defeated, brought down, taken as I lead a coup in my heart.

As the Puritan writer Thomas Watson put it, quote, “Sin is God’s would be murderer.” “Sin is God’s would be murderer.” And he continues, “Sin would not only un-throne God, but un-God Him. If the sinner could help it, God would no longer be God.” Unquote. This is what sin is all about: we are god; God is no longer God. Sin is God’s would be murderer and if the sinner had it our way God would no longer be God. That’s why I tell you sin is rebellion against God. And no wonder God *hates it!*

I say that sin is rebellion against God, because this is what the Bible says. I define sin as the Bible defines sin. Consider with me 1 John chapter 3 and verse 4. No longer in the Gospel According to John now, but instead fast forwarding in our New Testaments to John’s first letter. This is the same author, but a different book. We read this. 1 John 3, and verse 4: “**Sin is lawlessness.**” Sin is lawlessness.

Now, what is lawlessness? It is living like there is no law. Lawlessness is living like there is no law. And that’s rebellion, my friends, because there is law. God gives His law to every human being that ever lives; He inscribes it, He writes it right on our souls; He chisels it into our being. And He administers it with clarity in the Word of God (the Bible).

Romans chapter 2 and verse 15 says, “**They [meaning in context the Gentile people] they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them...**” In this sense, there are no atheists! All people know God exists and they know His Law exists, because it is written in their hearts. But, because people are sinners, they attempt to live as if there is no God and God has given them no Law.

I think this is a succinct way to answer the question, “What is sin?” I will let you think this over, respond, may be research this a bit more in your Bible. And then we will continue with John the Baptist’s message next time on God Is.

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