

# Behold the Lamb of God

## John 1:29

The most important thing about you is what you believe about Jesus Christ. What do you believe about the person of Jesus? Who do you believe Him to be? What do you believe about the work of Jesus? What did He come to do?

So far in the prologue John 1:1-18 and in last week's text as well we have been learning about the Person of Jesus Christ. John the apostle has presented Jesus Christ as the Word, the Light, the Life, and as God's only begotten Son. John the Baptist is the first witness to the person of Jesus Christ and we saw last time that He testified that the Messiah was here. He was among them. He also testified of Christ's superiority as the one who **"is preferred before me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose,"** (John 1:27).

John the Baptist appears at the beginning of each of the Gospels then falls to the background because he is a link or a bridge between the Old Testament and the New Testament. He is prominent at the beginning of the Gospel because he is part of the roots of the Gospel. We saw in the prologue to this Gospel that the roots of Jesus go back to eternity. He was in the beginning with God (John 1:1-2).

Over and over we will see in this Gospel that John the writer explains Jesus in terms of the Old Testament. Jesus doesn't appear on the scene of history without historical preparation. God had been at work since the creation of the world putting in place a historical backdrop for Him to send His Son. This backdrop is rooted in history, the law, and the prophets of the Old Testament.

John the Baptist is a root partly underground in the Old Testament and partly exposed in the New Testament. John the Baptist appears like one of those great tree roots that protrudes above the ground a few feet out from the trunk of the tree. He has a foot in both worlds—a prophet something like Elijah (but not Elijah reincarnate, 1:21) and voice crying that the Lord, the long-expected Messiah has come.

Listen to the Word of God as I read our text today, John 1:29-34:

**29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"**

**30 "This is He of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me.'**

**31 "I did not know Him; but that He should be revealed to Israel, therefore I came baptizing with water."**

**32 And John bore witness, saying, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him."**

**33 "I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.'**

**34 "And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God."**

## 1. Jesus is the Lamb of God

The Apostle John concludes his Gospel by saying that Jesus said and did so many things that **“if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written,”** (John 21:25). So, if there is a world full of things about Jesus that could be written, then it should get our attention when we first see Jesus in this Gospel, John the Baptist points Him out as Lamb of God.

The entire Old Testament is full of references to lambs. We first find a lamb in Genesis 4 when Abel, the son of Adam and Eve, brought an offering to the Lord from his flock. Genesis 4:4 says, **“Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering.”** So from the very beginning a slaughtered lamb was offered to God in worship. You can’t offer the fat of the flock without slaughtering the lamb. The lamb is slaughtered.

Many of you are familiar with the account of Abraham and his son Isaac in Genesis 22. God tested Abraham by asking him to offer his only son Isaac as a burnt offering. As Abraham as his son approached the mountain, **“Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, “My father!” And he said, “Here I am, my son.” Then he said, “Look, the fire and the wood, but where *is* the lamb for a burnt offering?””** (Gen. 22:7). Abraham answered Isaac, **“My son, God will provide *for Himself* the lamb for a burnt offering.”**

The rest of the story is that as Abraham raised the knife to kill his son on the altar, the Lord stopped him and provided a ram as a substitute sacrifice. The lamb is a substitute, provided in place a person.

We see a similar picture of substitution in the story of the Passover in Exodus 12. God told Moses to have His people kill a lamb and paint its blood of their doorposts and lintels and when the plague of the death of the firstborn came, the angel would pass over that house no one there would die. The spotless lamb (Ex. 12:5) was to be slaughtered and by its blood, the people would be saved. John connects Jesus to the Passover lamb when he quotes Exodus 12:46 writing about the death of Jesus in John 19:36, **“For these things were done that the Scripture should be fulfilled, “Not one of His bones shall be broken.””** The slaughtered lamb is a substitute.

In addition to these references in the Old Testament you also have the daily sacrifices that God required for atonement for sin. Two lambs were to be offered day by day continually, one in the morning the other in the evening (Exo. 29:38-39). The Jews had observed this ordinance for centuries. If someone sinned and wanted their guilt atoned for, they also could bring a lamb to be sacrificed for the forgiveness of sin (Lev. 4:32-35). The lamb was a sacrifice for sin. But ultimately all that blood of the daily sacrifices, of the guilt offerings and sin offerings could not atone for sin. That whole system was pointing forward to what would happen someday in a final sacrifice for sin. The book of Hebrews elaborates on this:

**22 And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission. 23 Therefore [it was] necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. 24 For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, [which are] copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; 25 not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another-- 26 He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. (Heb 9:22-26)**

Lambs were slain in the Old Testament sacrificial system to point us to the ultimate Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world through His blood. 1 Peter 1:18-19 says, **“knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, [like] silver or gold, from your aimless conduct [received] by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”**

Isaiah the Prophet understood that in order for sin to be removed there would have to be a special lamb, One God, himself would provide. He wrote these words some 700 years before Christ came to fulfill them:

**4 Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. 5 But He [was] wounded for our transgressions, [He was] bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace [was] upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. 7 He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth. (Isaiah 53:4-7)**

The ultimate lamb that God Himself would provide would be a sacrifice who would be slaughtered as a substitute for our sins.

Look at verse 29 again phrase by phrase.

“*The Lamb* of God” means that Jesus is the *supreme* Lamb and the *only* Lamb that God has provided to take away our sins. There is no other.

“*Of God*” means that the lamb is provided by God and is the Son of God. God sent His lamb, His only Son Jesus Christ to bear our sins. He is God’s gift to us (John 3:16).

“*Takes away*” signifies “atonement, and that by substitution” (Morris, p. 148). He was made sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21). He died so that sinners who trust in Him will not incur God’s judgment. Jesus’ sacrifice of Himself put an end once for all to all of the Jewish sacrifices (Heb. 9:24-10:18). “*Takes away*” is also in the present

tense, meaning that Jesus' sacrifice is available at all times for every sinner who will trust in Him. He is still taking away the sin of the world.

*"Sin"* is singular, heaping together all the trillions of sins in human history into one gigantic pile. It also means that Jesus not only took away the guilt of our many individual sins (1 Pet. 2:24), but also the guilt of the inborn sin that we inherited from Adam (Rom. 5:18). John MacArthur says that the Lamb of God did not just take away the symptoms, he took away the disease.

*"Of the world"* Does this mean that Christ takes away the penalty for every sinner who has ever lived? If that is true then all people are saved without exception. By *"the world"* he does not mean people without exception. Rather, it means he took away the sin of all men without distinction. He didn't take away sins of Jews only, but of Gentiles also. The atoning work of Jesus extends to all nations. It is not limited at all. The animal sacrifices in the Old Testament were only for Israel. But the sacrifice of the true Lamb of God is for the whole world. As John puts it (Rev. 5:9), You **"purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation."** *"Of the world"* also points to the sufficiency of Christ's atonement for any person, no matter how terrible that person's sins may be. His sacrifice is sufficient for all sin.

Jesus is the Lamb of God, because He would die for the sin of the world. That is why God sent Him. That is why the Word became flesh because unless He became flesh, he could not die. The Word who was in the beginning, who was with God and was God became flesh to be the substitutionary sacrifice for our sin.

Those two truths—death and worldwide sin-bearing—are summed up together in later in the Gospel in John 11:50–52. The high priest Caiaphas, an enemy of Jesus, spoke prophetically like this:

**"nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish." 51 Now this he did not say on his own [authority]; but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, 52 and not for that nation only, but also that He would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad."** (John 11:50-52).

John put it like this in his first letter: **"He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world"** (1 John 2:2).

Propitiation means that His death removes the wrath of God against our sin because it takes away our sin. The Lamb of God takes away sin and removes God's wrath, for those who would believe from among all nations.

And we see this precious wrath-removal in John 3:36: **"He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."** This means that when John says, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world," he means every person in the world will be saved if they believe in the Son of God, Jesus Christ. If they believe, their sin has been taken away by the Lamb.

To as many as receive Him, who believe on His name (John 1:12), their sins are taken away (John 1:29; 1 John 3:5) and the wrath of God is removed (John 3:36; 1 John 2:2) and they are made the children of God (John 1:12) and given eternal life (John 3:16).

Everyone in this room is a sinner deserving of God's wrath. There is only one way to have your sins taken away and find favor with God. It is not working for God. It is not going to church. It is not doing good things. It is not cleaning up your life first. The one way is believing in Jesus as the glorious Lamb of God. Jesus said in John 8:24, "**if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins**" (John 8:24).

There is one more word in John's proclamation: "*Behold.*" It's a command to look to Jesus. John doesn't say, "Look at me! I'm a great prophet!" He doesn't say, "Look at your good works; they will save you." He doesn't say, "Look at your religious rituals; they will put you in good stead on judgment day." He doesn't say, "Look at your religious heritage or your church attendance." He says, "Look to the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" Jesus saves sinners who look in faith to Him.

Jesus is the Lamb of God, therefore, if sin is to be removed it must be by His sacrifice. There is no one else, no other name given to men by which we must be saved. This whole book is about the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. The Old Testament anticipates His coming, asking Isaac's question, "Where is the lamb?"

The New Testament gospel proclaims the truth that John the Baptist cried out, "Behold, the Lamb of God." And Heaven will be filled with praises to Him who died for our sins and was raised to life. Revelation 5 shows us a picture of heaven where myriads of people and angels worship around the throne of God saying a loud voice: "**Worthy is the Lamb who was slain To receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor and glory and blessing!**" (Rev. 5:12).

Where are you at in your spiritual journey today? Are you recognizing the deadly seriousness of your sin problem and are asking "Where is the lamb?" Where is the solution for sin in my life?

Have you seen Jesus as the only solution for your sin and have begun to say, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away my sin!"? Believe in Him today. Trust in His all sufficient substitutionary sacrifice for your sin. Believe in Him as your risen Lord. He will save you today.

Are you already a child of God because your sins have been taken away when you believed in Jesus? Then worship Him with your whole life. Proclaim with everything you are and everything you do, "**Worthy is the Lamb who was slain!**"

