

BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD

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John 1:29-34

"The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! This is He of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me.' I did not know Him; but that He should be revealed to Israel, therefore I came baptizing with water." And John bore witness, saying, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. 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.' And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God."

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Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. John the Baptist's declaration of Jesus is both curious and profound. It's curious because John the Baptist could have chosen from so many other titles from which he could have drawn from of which to call Jesus. He could have said behold the Christ, or behold the son of David, behold the son of God, but he chose the curious image of a Lamb and then certainly this is not what the people expected. Huh? The Lamb? What? Earlier in the chapter, you can read that when the priests and the Levites were wondering just who John the Baptist might be, they asked if he was the Christ. No. They asked if he was Elijah. No. They asked if he were the Prophet. And no. John the Baptist replied, "I am 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Make straight the way of the Lord." (John 1:23) The religious leaders should have recognized that John the Baptist was quoting **Isaiah 40:3**. They weren't looking for a lamb. If they were looking for a lamb it may have come to their minds what Isaiah prophesied in **Isaiah 53:6-7**, "And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter." They didn't want a lamb, they wanted a mighty king or a mighty prophet to come and deliver them. They saw no need to be delivered from the coming judgment, after all, they were very religious, which is curious also, because one would expect that the priests and the Levites of all people, who spent so much of their time making sacrifices, and so much time interceding for the people that they, of all people, would be looking for the Lamb, but they missed Him. Perhaps they missed Him because they saw no need for their sins to be taken away. They saw greater and bigger, more pressing problems all around them, like being suffocated by Roman rule and so they needed a Deliverer, they didn't need a Lamb. So they were looking for the wrong thing and so when John makes his declaration about Jesus and he

says, "behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world", he's declaring both an unexpected identity and an unexpected mission. The declaration by John the Baptist of Jesus was profound in that His identity IS as the Lamb of God, and his mission IS to take away the sins of the world. This is why Jesus came. You can actually see the rest of the Gospel of John in light of those two things, so let's take a closer look at this image of the Lamb and what John is declaring here, as many scholars have written a lot of things about what exactly John meant when he said, "behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." It is also a profound statement in that Jesus IS the sacrifice, the perfect sacrifice to God, to which all other sacrifices points to, and really in particular, the sacrifice of the Passover lamb. The story of the Passover is rooted in the narrative in **Exodus chapters 7-12**. Moses was told by God to tell the Pharaoh of Egypt to let the Israelites go. The Israelites were slaves in Egypt but God was delivering them from their captivity and was going to lead them to the Promised Land. But first there was the 10 plagues on Egypt. First the water in Egypt was turned to blood. Then there was frogs, then lice, then flies, then all the livestock was stricken with a pestilence, then boils on all the people and the animals. Then hail with fire. Then locusts. Then three days of complete darkness. I think I would have given in after the lice and flies, I don't know. But in all that, the Israelites didn't have to do anything to avoid them. The Israelites were untouched in all of that, even when the plague of darkness came. They didn't have to do anything to distinguish themselves. But for the final plague, God was going to send the destroyer to kill every first born child and not one family or one household of Egypt will be spared and not one household of Israel would be spared...UNLESS they put a certain mark outside of their home. Then the destroyer wouldn't come against them and he wouldn't kill their firstborn. But the destroyer was coming, for all of the firstborn in every household, and he was coming to judge, everyone, Egyptian and Hebrew alike, UNLESS they had the mark. What we see here is something that the Levites and the priests failed to understand, that all are guilty before the Lord, all need to escape the wrath to come, that only the blood of the lamb would act as a covering. The Hebrews could not just say, "Lord we are Your chosen people and therefore you just have to spare us." They couldn't say, "look at our morals, our deeds. Spare us!" They couldn't say "we don't deserve this, spare us!" No, the destroyer was coming and he would not discriminate, just as everyone here today is guilty as well. "For all have sinned [against God] and fall short of the glory of God." (**Romans 3:23**)

We've all sinned! Even apart from the moral law that we find in the Bible, if we judged ourselves according to our own moral standards we fall short. So everyone here stands guilty before the Lord. Going to church will not spare you from judgment. Being a good moral person will not spare you from judgment. Knowing the Bible from front to

back or going to Bible School won't save you, and understanding this should greatly affect the way that you see others. You can't ever look down on others. You can't ever think that you are somehow better than them. You can't ever say, "you need the gospel." You have to always say, "we need the gospel" because we all stand guilty before the Lord. We all deserve judgment. The Hebrews were no better than the Egyptians. They would be judged the same UNLESS they put the mark on their doorposts.

Let's look at this mark. Every Hebrew family was to get a lamb and not just any lamb. It had to be a year old & without a blemish. The destroyer was coming, and there was nothing that was going to stop him. He was going to come and he would kill every firstborn, UNLESS they got some defenseless little lamb and then put the blood of that lamb outside their door.

In Egypt that night you were either going to have a dead lamb or you were going to have a dead son-in every household. But why kill a cute little lamb and how is that going to keep out this mighty destroyer? Why does that have to be the symbol? Why not tie a yellow ribbon around the old oak tree out front? Why not put a wreath on the door? Why not some other symbol? Why does it have to be a lamb? You ever live in a neighborhood where there were a lot of burglaries. You ever been robbed before? Let me tell you, a lamb's blood though is not going to keep out a common thief. It may creep them out, I mean if you paint blood on the door, but really that's not going to help. I'd rather have a couple of deadbolts, a growling dog, something like that. But blood on the doorposts? What's so special about that? The destroyer is coming! It had to be a lamb. This lamb was to be taken four days before they killed it. I, being a lover of animals, can't help thinking, how awkward is that? Four days you're to be taking care of this cute and cuddly lamb. But then you have to kill it. When you examine this story, you come to realize that God is making sure also that the image of the Lamb is intact, that it is in no way to be destroyed. You weren't allowed to chop it up. You couldn't have lamb chops. You couldn't make it into a stew. You had to roast the entire lamb and then serve it as such. So when you ate this lamb it had to still look like a lamb in front of you. So this is not like when you go to Chick-fil-A. When you eat a chicken sandwich there's no head coming out of the side of the bun, with the eyes and the beak and there's no feet coming out the back of the chicken sandwich. No, they knew that they were eating a lamb and they were aware (perhaps painfully) that something had to die in order that they might live. **Exodus 12:13** tells why exactly they had to do this. Verse 13 is really the key to understanding that chapter and reads like this, "Now the blood shall be a sign **for you** on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt." Notice the Lamb's blood on the outside of the door is a sign **for them**, and

it's a sign for us, it's a sign that points us forward 1400 years to Jesus, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." (John 3:16-17)

The Lamb of God is not just taking away the sin of some family huddled in a home as the destroyer passes over, like a family that is waiting out a hurricane, but the Lamb of God takes away the sin of the whole world. This story, this image points us to Jesus, the Passover Lamb, without spot or blemish, undefiled by sin. That's what John the Baptist is declaring here when he says "behold the Lamb of God." He takes away the sin of the world and as I mentioned earlier, at this declaration by John the Baptist, it really sets the tone for the rest of the Gospel of John. It gives us "eyes to see", so to speak, in which we can read through the rest of the Gospel. To illustrate this, we'll just look at a couple of stories that follow John's declaration. In chapter 2 we have Jesus's first miracle when He turns water into wine. This is perhaps Jesus' most famous miracle. It certainly is the most unusual. He doesn't do anything like this again. It's also really puzzling because Jesus is launching his ministry here and he chose this as His first miracle. I mean He could have raised someone from the dead. He could have made the lame to walk. He could have at this time fed 5000 people but instead he chose to fix a wedding caterer's faux pas, by turning water into wine. Just before Jesus was to die on the cross, He celebrated the passover with His disciples. He said to "drink this in remembrance of Me." A symbol of Jesus' blood with wine. From a lamb's blood, to the blood of The Lamb. **John chapter 2** begins by saying that on the third day there was a wedding at Cana of Galilee and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus was also invited to the wedding with his disciples. When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to Him, "they have no wine", and Jesus said to her, "woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come." Now why is Jesus here talking about his hour, which we know to be the time of his death? Why is He talking about this at a wedding? I mean weddings are happy, joyful times and the receptions are supposed to be fun. You don't go to a wedding and think about your upcoming death but Jesus does, and I think one reason He's doing so is He is doing what many single guys or single women do when they go to a wedding. They can't help but wonder about their own wedding. For Jesus, it's the wedding of the Lamb. John the Apostle had a vision of this wedding and in **Revelation 19:7,9** he recorded, "Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready...Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!" But Jesus knew it was going to be a day of sorrow that He longed for. His wedding day, His Marriage Supper of the Lamb would come at a great cost in order to make the bride ready. It couldn't be

JUST the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. It was going to be the Lamb that was slain first in order for Jesus's bride to be holy and without blemish. She was going to have to be sanctified through the washing of his blood and so when Jesus is asked to provide for the wedding feast He said my hour has not come.

Jesus knew what it was going to take to make His bride ready. For us to be able to go to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb of God. Yet He was not yet slain immediately following this wedding at Cana. Jesus goes to the temple. The synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) all have Jesus coming to the temple during the week of his crucifixion. John writes about this here so your two choices are either, it's the same event just putting it in different places in Jesus's life, or it's two separate events. It really doesn't matter here regardless. John is recording this close to the declaration of John the Baptist and it seems to make sense looking at it in that way. Jesus enters into the city he goes straight to the temple which is the focal point of the story. When He gets there, if you know the story, he goes ballistic, absolutely ballistic. Driving out the livestock, turning over the money changers tables and He makes a whip and drives out the money changers. It's hard for us to imagine this scene as this happened, during the Passover. Some scholars estimate that there was roughly around 200,000 visitors, or maybe even much more than that, and they would come during that week passing through the temple gates. For Jesus to clear out the area during that time, an analogy would be like going to the Mall at Christmas time, with all the craziness that's going on, and then start turning over kiosks and telling all the vendors to get out, and then thrashing a whip at them. You'd have to have some authority to do that. Why did Jesus do this? We can safely assume that there were abuses and extortion going on in the temple. But that's not the real reason for Jesus' drastic and aggressive action. We know from Scripture that at least from the time Jesus was 12 years old that He had been going to the temple. I'm sure his father Joseph kind of walked him through and told him what everything meant, what the sacrifices were for, and as that was happening I'm sure his Heavenly Father was also teaching Him the same things, what the sacrifices were for and who they pointed to. So when Jesus comes into the temple and he sees it, with all its hustle and bustle and noise, with thousands upon thousands of people crammed in there, where the people hardly have even a moment to rest as they bought their sheep, or doves or whatever and then turned around to give it to the priest and then had to move along quickly to get out of the way, that there was probably no time to really meditate on what you were doing and no time to reflect on what it all means, they just had to buy their stuff, pass it on and then get out of there. But then Jesus goes ballistic. All of those sacrifices were to be pointing to Jesus, but in the rush and go, the buying this and sacrificing that, the meaning was lost. As Jesus drove out all of the sacrificial animals and the money changers, Jesus then stood alone.

Do you see what he's doing at that moment? He drives out every sacrifice except for one and Jesus stands there alone, in the temple, as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! The Lamb which all other lambs point to. The sacrifice of which all other sacrifices point to. Jesus is the final sacrifice! In Matthew, Mark and Luke, all of them record this immediate conflict with Jesus and the chief priests and the elders and they all read pretty much the same. They asked Jesus, "By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority?" But Jesus answered and said to them, "I also will ask you one thing, which if you tell Me, I likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things: The baptism of John—where was it from? From heaven or from men?" And they reasoned among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' He will say to us, 'Why then did you not believe him?' But if we say, 'From men,' we fear the multitude, for all count John as a prophet." So they answered Jesus and said, "We do not know." And He said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things."
(Matthew 21:23-27)

For the longest time as I read that I thought Jesus was merely trying to quiet these priests and these elders. You know, give them this stupid question answer just to shut them up. I don't think that anymore. Look carefully at what Jesus is saying, the thrust of his question is this—do you believe what John the Baptist said was true? Was it true? I don't think he's talking about just a general repentance here it's about "behold the Lamb of God who takes away The sins of the world." John the Baptist was pointing people to Jesus! Jesus is the perfect sacrifice! So what should we do? A key component to a message is application. How do we apply this message? John the Baptist says, "behold the Lamb", therefore we need to look to the Lamb! After Jesus was crucified and rose from the dead on the third day, conquering death, He said to His disciples, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." (Luke 24:46-47) What that means is the same as what Jesus is recorded as preaching in Mark 1:15, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."

"Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, **looking unto Jesus**, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Hebrews 12:1-2) We need to look to Him and trust Him for every moment of our lives. He is our Wisdom. He is our Righteousness. He is our Sanctification. He is our Redemption. He is our Rock. He is our Fortress. He is our Hope. He is our Deliverer. We can never stand on

any righteousness of our own. We need to always look and "behold the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world." The good news for us today is, Jesus has risen!

1 John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Heavenly Father,
I confess that I have sinned against You.
I ask that You forgive me of my sins.
I believe that Jesus died on the cross for my sins,
I confess with my mouth that Jesus is my Lord,
and I believe in my heart
that You raised Jesus from the dead,
so that I can have forgiveness of sins,
and be reconciled to You,
God, My Father.
I now commit to You,
that I will repent of my sins,
and live in the newness of life,
being led by Your Holy Spirit,
all this I pray,
in Christ Jesus,
my Savior and Lord.
Thank You Lord! Amen.

In **John 6:54** Jesus said, "Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." The image of the Passover was and is a representation of being covered by the blood of Jesus and then feeding on the Word of God. These are things in the spiritual. And then Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, who rose from the dead on the third day, conquering death, will also give eternal life to all who will put their trust in Him. When we partake in what is called the Lord's Supper, or Communion, we are doing it in remembrance of what Jesus did and is doing for us and in us.

Heavenly Father thank You for the giving us Your Son Jesus. May You bless this time of remembrance of the Lord's Supper.

"And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me" (**Luke 22:19**)

"Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." (**Luke 26:27**)