

WHO IS JESUS?

BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD!

“...John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”

John 1:29, 36

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What does a lamb have to do with who Jesus is? It is a rather surprising exclamation of John the Baptist. The religious leaders had come to John in the wilderness asking him who he was (John 1:19). Was he the Christ? Was he Elijah? Was he the prophet that was promised by Moses, greater than Moses? John's answer to their question was that No, he was not! Rather he was just the one who was preparing the way of the Lord. But there was one in their presence whom they know not: the Christ, the great promised prophet and Messiah. And the next day, as John sees Jesus coming unto him declares, “Behold the Lamb of God...”

Why didn't John just say to the crowd, “Here, here is Christ?” Instead he calls Jesus the Lamb. This is significant. The Jews were looking for a prophet. They desired a king who would deliver them from the Roman oppression. They had no desire for a savior who would deliver them from God's wrath for sinners! The reason is that they had no sense of their sin. It is under these circumstances that John announces Jesus as the “the lamb of God.” The Spirit of God is setting forth Jesus to Israel in the very character which people needed him the most. Sadly, they would accept him on a throne but not on an altar as a sacrifice.

Is it any different today? Many see Jesus as a good man, a wonderful teacher among many, a social reformer, a teacher of ethics. But what you and I need, first and most importantly, is the Christ of the cross. On the cross, Jesus as the Lamb of God offered himself as a sacrifice for sin.

JESUS IS THE LAMB

In the Old Testament, there were all the sacrifices that were made. In Genesis 4, the Lamb is pictured in the first of the flock that Abel offered as a God-pleasing sacrifice. When Abraham is called to sacrifice his son Isaac, Isaac asks, “but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?” In response, Abraham said, “My son, God will provide himself a

lamb for a burnt offering.” With Abraham's obedience, the Lord did provide a ram caught in a thicket by his horns. Abraham beheld the lamb and took it for a burnt offering instead of his son. In Exodus 12, Moses is told to tell Israel of the necessity of taking a lamb without any blemish. They were to kill it and put the blood over the doorposts of their houses and eat the flesh. God would see the blood and would pass over that house with the plague of death.

To whom do all these lambs point? Obviously, these animals themselves could not save. They point to Jesus, the suffering servant in Isaiah 53: 7. John in our text identifies Jesus as the Lamb of God. He is the Lamb that God himself provides for our salvation. And in Revelation 5 and 21, the Lamb is praised by the hosts of heaven and glorified upon the throne.

The sacrifice of the lamb could be for an individual, for a household, and also for the whole nation. The lamb must be “without blemish and without spot (I Pet. 1:19).” What a picture of Jesus. He had no sin of his own. He does not rebel, but “he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.” What willing obedience to his Father in heaven, and willingness to be a sacrifice for our sins. Jesus is the Lamb of God!

JESUS TAKES AWAY SIN

Do you see your need for Jesus, God's Son, who came down from heaven? He came down and took on our human nature. He took our place with all of our sins on himself. Why? So that you and I who believe on him would be passed by with God's anger. God is a righteous God who must punish sin.

Jesus became sin who knew no sin. “For he made him to be sin who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him (II Cor. 5:21)” This means that God transferred our sin to

Jesus, the Lamb of God as our substitute. And God transferred Jesus' righteousness to us.

We are all sinners. "There is none righteous, no, not one (Romans 3:10)." "For we have all sinned, and come short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23)." How bad is it? The Bible tells us that we are dead in sin. A dead person cannot do anything to save himself. Rather we only make things worse! Read Romans 3:10-29. That sin makes us guilty before God. That sin must be punished by a righteous God by death. Jesus came into the world to suffer God's wrath for our sins, and take our deserved death on himself.

Jesus takes away the sin of the world. He takes it away by his shed blood on the cross. It is his blood that washes away our sin like water washes away dirt. This is what baptism is a picture of. Have you been baptized? The Bible says, "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1: 8-10)."

Whom is this for? The religious leaders who came to John the Baptist did not think that they had sin. Therefore they did not feel a need for Jesus. But the following day John again says to two of his disciples, "Behold the Lamb of God!" And those two disciples followed Jesus, went to his house, and had fellowship with Jesus. They believed and became Jesus' first disciples. One of those disciples was Andrew. He was so excited that he immediately went to find his brother and brought him to Jesus.

God's Word in John 1:29 tells us that Jesus is "the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world." Does that mean that Jesus died for every person in the world? That is sadly what some teach. What John 1:29 does teach is that Jesus takes away the sin not merely of individuals, or households, or the

nation of the Jews. Jesus died for his sheep, those who believe in him. They are sheep found in all nations, tribes and cultures. They are those who are rich and poor. They are those who are in high places and also in lowly places. They are all kinds of people. They are the elect of God, given to Jesus, before the foundation of the world, to be saved (John 17:6, 9). Jesus died for many, for his people, for his sheep, for his church. This is the truth of definite atonement.

Why is this truth important? If Jesus died for every person, but many are not saved, then Jesus' work is not all powerful. Then something more is needed. Then Jesus' suffering and death did not do enough. Then Jesus blood was shed in vain for some, his death useless. Then salvation depends upon whether you are willing to be saved.

But our text does not say, "Behold the Lamb of God who is willing to save the world." Rather, we read, "Behold that Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world. Jesus, the Lamb of God did all that was necessary for their and our salvation by his suffering and death. Nothing more is needed. He saves. Jesus saves completely by his shed blood on the cross.

THE CALL TO BEHOLD THE LAMB

John calls the Jews of his day and even his disciples to "Behold the Lamb." Behold! Look closely! Fasten your attention upon him. Look to him as the only hope, the only salvation from sin. He says that one must not only glance, or look once in a while at Jesus. This call is deeply significant in view of its setting. The religious leaders and many of the Jews were looking for what they wanted: a great teacher, or miracle worker, or someone to rid them of oppression.

The Holy Spirit is calling us to look in faith to the only Savior from sin. It is the look of faith. By grace, God works faith in his own to look away from themselves to the only, powerful Savior from sin.

We are all sinners. Do you know yourself as such? You cannot save yourself from sin or the punishment of sin. Look, look in faith to the God provided Savior. "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world."