

# Behold the Lamb of God (John 1:29-1:42)

Expository Lessons from the Gospel of John

---

## I. From the Previous Lessons

- a. In the previous two messages we discussed the three questions John the Baptist was asked:
  - i. “Are you the Christ?” (His coming was prophesied by David and others.)
  - ii. “Are you Elijah?” (Prophesied in **Malachi**.)
  - iii. “Are you *the* Prophet?” (Prophesied in **Deuteronomy 18:15-18**, by Moses)
- b. In my opinion, this last question and the famous prophecy given by Moses shortly before his death provide the backdrop for much of the first half of the **gospel of John**. There we will see Jesus presented in parallel to Moses. We have already encountered one example of that:
  - i. “For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.” (**John 1:17**, NKJV)
  - ii. Keep an eye out for more examples of this parallel as we continue to read through the **gospel of John**.

## II. John the Baptist calls Jesus “the Lamb of God” (Read **John 1:29-42**)

- a. John says, “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”
- b. Why a “lamb”? Why not some other animal, like: goat, camel, fox, lion, bull, snake, pig, dog, mule, ant or owl?
  - i. When reading through this passage with unbelievers, they were often stumped by this question.
  - ii. Each animal has certain traits associated with it. What characteristics do *you* think of when you think of a *lamb*?
    1. Innocent looking (white lamb)
    2. Cute young animal
    3. Meek, mild, harmless
      - a. Recall the old saying about the third month of the year: “March goes in like a *lion* and out like a *lamb*, or in like a *lamb* and out like a *lion*.”

- b. Lamb is the opposite of a lion: it can't even defend itself; it needs protection (of a shepherd).
- 4. Lambs eat only grass (unlike pigs or dogs).
- c. John the Baptist, the great Jewish prophet, what did HE have in mind when he referred to Jesus as "the Lamb of God", and what would his disciples have thought when they heard John make this statement? What was the spiritual significance of a lamb *to them*?
  - i. The most famous story involving a lamb and God was on the eve of the Exodus from Egypt, over 1,000 years earlier. Read **Exodus 12:1-51**.
    - 1. Elements of the Passover Lamb story
      - a. Select one lamb for each household on the 10<sup>th</sup> of the month (this month to become the first month of their year)
        - i. Male, of the first year
        - ii. Without blemish (spotless)
        - iii. From among either the sheep or the goats
        - iv. Slaughter the lamb at twilight on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the month
      - b. Eat the lamb's flesh that night
        - i. Eat it roasted along with unleavened bread and bitter herbs
        - ii. Must eat all of it that night; none to remain
        - iii. Must not break any of its bones
        - iv. Eat it in haste, prepared to depart
      - c. Take blood of the sacrificed lamb and put it in a basin. Dip hyssop into the basin of blood and strike the doorposts and lintel of the houses with it.
        - i. "The destroyer" sent by the Lord will bring death to the houses that do not have the blood of the lamb.
        - ii. However, the destroyer will 'pass over' those households protected by the blood of the lamb.
        - iii. People must remain in the house all that night, and not go outside.
      - d. Eat unleavened bread that night, and for the following seven days.

- i. All leaven must be removed from their households during this period of time, “for anyone who eats what is leavened, that person shall be cut off from the congregation Israel.”
  - e. This to be an annual feast for the generations to come. This is to be a night of vigil to the Lord, for bringing the people out of Egypt.
  - f. It can be observed by slaves and foreigners among them also, but only if all their males are circumcised.
  - g. The entire week would be referred to as “The Feast of the Unleavened Bread”. The Passover (sacrifice of the lamb at twilight, followed by the meal of the lamb with unleavened bread) marked the first day of that week.
    - i. “Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they killed the Passover lamb, His disciples said to Him, ‘Where do You want us to go and prepare, that You may eat the Passover?’” **(Mark 14:12, NKJV)**
- 2. If this is what John the Baptist is referring to when he calls Jesus “the Lamb of God”, what could his hearers have concluded about Jesus?
  - a. He would be killed. The lamb was selected to be sacrificed.
    - i. It is interesting to me that Muslims recognize *both* Jesus and John the Baptist as great prophets sent by God.
    - ii. One of the first things John said about Jesus was that he was “the Lamb of God”. To those who understand the Exodus story, that clearly meant he would be killed, sacrificed to save others.
    - iii. Muslims are rejecting what one of their recognized prophets (John) is saying about another one (Jesus).
  - b. Through Jesus’ blood, many would be saved.
- 3. After the death of Jesus on the cross, many elements of the Passover Lamb foreshadowing Jesus, the Lamb of God, became apparent.
  - a. Male, without blemish = without sin
  - b. Selected beforehand to be sacrificed
  - c. We are saved from destruction by the blood of the Lamb

- d. He was killed at twilight on the eve of the Passover.
- e. None of His bones were broken, in contrast to the two thieves crucified on either side of Him. (**John 19:31-37**)
- f. Reference to eating the flesh of the Passover lamb that was slain, and a regular commemorative meal:
  - i. “Then Jesus said to them, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him.’” (**John 6:53-56**, NKJV)
  - ii. “And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, ‘Take, eat; this is My body.’” (**Matthew 26:26**, NKJV)
  - iii. “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**, NKJV)
- ii. I can think of one other reference to a famous lamb in the Old Testament; especially regarding what John the Baptist said in the second half of his statement, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (**John 1:29**, NKJV). Let us read **Isaiah 52:13-53:12**, which speaks about the “Suffering Servant”.
  - 1. “He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb is silent before his shearers, so He opens not his mouth.” (**Isaiah 53:7**, LXX, OSB)
    - a. This is the very passage that the Ethiopian eunuch was reading aloud in his chariot when Philip intercepted him, explained that this passage was all about Jesus, brought the eunuch to faith and baptized him. (in **Acts 8:26-39**).
    - b. (A side note: the passage from **Acts 8** where **Isaiah 53** is quoted is taken word-for-word from the LXX. This is one more example of why I generally prefer to use Old Testament translations based on the LXX, over most modern translations based on the Masoretic Text. I want to follow along in *the same text that Philip and the*

*Ethiopian were reading from, while they were riding in the chariot!)*

2. There are many references in the passage to this Suffering Servant who is bearing, taking up or taking away the sins of many other people.
  - a. “He bears our sins and suffers for us” (**Isaiah 53:4**)
  - b. “He was wounded because of our lawlessness and became sick because of our sins. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him” (**Isaiah 53:5**)
  - c. The Lord delivered Him over for our sins” (**Isaiah 53:6**)
  - d. “Because of the lawless of my people He was led to death” (**Isaiah 53:8**)
  - e. “The Righteous One who serves many well...He shall bear their sins” (**Isaiah 53:11**)
  - f. “He bore the sins of many and was delivered over because of their sins” (**Isaiah 53:12**)
3. From this famous prophecy from **Isaiah** about one who would be like a lamb, we learn:
  - a. There would be nothing beautiful or attractive in his outward appearance.
  - b. He would be “a man of suffering”; despised, dishonored and ill-treated.
  - c. He would bear our sins; he would be delivered over to death, by the Lord, because of our sins. We would be healed through his suffering.
  - d. He would be led like a sheep to the slaughter; and killed, unjustly.
  - e. He would not open his mouth (to complain nor to defend himself).
  - f. He would be called “the Righteous One”, yet he would be considered among the lawless.
4. Keep in mind that this detailed prophecy about the suffering and death of Christ is in the Jewish Scriptures written about 700 years before the time of Jesus.
- iii. In the New Testament, other than the gospel of John, the most fully developed portrait of Jesus as the Lamb of God is found in the Book of Revelation.
  1. We see several images of Christ in the **Book of Revelation**.

- a. The one “like the Son of Man” whose eyes are like flames of fire, who walks among the golden lampstands (reminiscent of **Daniel 7**).
  - b. The great prophet who addresses the seven churches of Asia and calls many of them to repent.
  - c. The warrior-king called “Faithful and True”, the Word of God who leads the armies of God into battle: mounted on a white horse, wearing a robe dipped in blood, with a sharp sword coming out of His mouth, in **Revelation 19**.
  - d. However, the dominant image is that of *the unusual lamb, introduced in **Revelation 5*** (and referenced throughout that book over 30 times).
2. Read **Revelation 5:1-14**. This is no ordinary lamb!
- a. This Lamb is also a lion (fulfilling the prophecy of **Genesis 49:8-10** regarding the “lion of Judah”).
  - b. It looks as if it had been slain. (Does it have a large gash in its neck from being slaughtered? Scar where it was pierced to the heart?) Yet clearly it is alive.
  - c. This lamb also has seven eyes (presumably to be able to see everything) and seven horns.
  - d. This lamb shares the throne with Jehovah, God.
  - e. This lamb is worthy of many unusual things.
    - i. The only one worthy to open the seven sealed scrolls.
    - ii. Worthy of praise and even worship, for being slain and redeeming people from every nation by his blood.
    - iii. Worthy to receive power, wisdom, honor and glory.
  - f. In later passages in **Revelation** we will learn about this unusual lamb:
    - i. This is a lamb who is to be feared. The kings of the earth will try to hide from “the wrath of the Lamb”. (**Revelation 6:16**)
    - ii. His followers would be able to overcome Satan, by the power of this lamb’s blood and by the word of their testimony. (**Revelation 12:10-11**)

- iii. This lamb will make war against and overcome his enemies, the kingdoms of this world. He is the Lord of lords and King of kings. (**Revelation 17:12-14**)
- iv. This lamb has a bride, the church; and a wedding to which we are invited. (**Revelation 19:7-9; 21:9**)
- v. This Lamb possesses a very important book: “the Lamb’s Book of Life”. Only those whose names are written in it, and not blotted out nor erased from it, will enter the heavenly City. (**Revelation 21:22-27**)

### III. What is the significance to us, in seeing Jesus as the “Lamb of God”?

#### a. In evangelism

- i. This is where Philip began in preaching Christ to the Ethiopian eunuch, a truth-seeking Gentile, in **Acts 8**.
- ii. Jews struggle with the idea that the Messiah, the king sent by God, could have suffered such a horrible and despised death as crucifixion. And that their own people could have done this.
  - 1. Paul, a very devout Jew who had persecuted and killed Christians, recognized how offensive this was to his own people. He told the Corinthians,
    - a. “but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness,” (**1 Corinthians 1:23**, NKJV)
  - 2. Yet this is exactly what Moses foreshadowed in the story of the Passover, over 1,000 years before Jesus.
  - 3. The Jews re-enact this every single year, in their own Passover meal.
- iii. Muslims follow the teaching of Mohammad, who came *600 years after Christ*. Mohammad taught that John the Baptist and Jesus were both true prophets of God, yet Jesus did not actually die on the cross. (Muslims claim that Christians changed that part of the story, later). Yet the sacrifice and death of Christ was referred to by John the Baptist in **John 1**, when he identified Jesus as “the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world”. This is clearly portrayed in the Jewish Scriptures 700 (Isaiah) and 1,000+ (Moses) years before the time of Jesus. It is impossible that the Christians could have altered these things!

- b. Significance of Jesus as the “Lamb of God” to most Christians today (in the United States):
  - i. Popular contemporary Christian songs focus on *certain aspects* of this.
  - ii. Twila Paris song includes the line, “O Lamb of God, *sweet* Lamb of God; I love the holy Lamb of God...”
    - 1. After reading the references to the Lamb of God in the book of Revelation, not sure I would use the adjective “sweet”. Maybe “scary” or at least “to be feared”?
  - iii. The attitude in many modern churches (partly true, but plenty wrong):
    - 1. Jesus sacrificed himself for our sins, as the lamb of God.
    - 2. We don’t have to do anything because He did it all for us. Simply accept the sacrifice he made on our behalf.
    - 3. Because of his sacrifice, his blood washed away all our past, present and future sins; obedience to his commands and perseverance are not necessary.
    - 4. He is the worthy one; we are by nature depraved, completely unworthy of anything, in any way.
    - 5. Let’s get together and have a “worship experience” led by professional musicians, similar to a rock concert performance, where we can have an emotional experience of celebrating and ‘lifting up’ Jesus in gratitude for all He did for us.
    - 6. Then go home after church; hopefully our gratitude for what Jesus fully accomplished for us will produce an upwelling response of obedience; if not, try to improve the worship experience.
    - 7. Seeing Jesus as the sweet, precious, innocent Lamb of God who accomplished everything on our behalf (so that we don’t actually have to do anything) can be a centerpiece to this “worship experience”.
- c. How the apostles saw the significance of Jesus being the Lamb of God.
  - i. Paul, dealing with the problem with immorality in the Corinthian church, calls on the Lamb of God. (Read **1 Corinthians 5:1-13**)
    - 1. Paul was aware that the Christians in Corinth (a fairly young, mostly Gentile church) knew the story of the Passover, the unleavened bread, and Jesus being the Lamb of God. Paul referred to something they already knew, to make his point regarding sin in that church.



2. Paul's point: the Passover Lamb (Christ) has been slain. We don't just sit around singing songs; now it's time to *clean out the house of all the sin* (represented by the yeast)!
3. We need to take inventory, clean sin out of our own lives, and clean it out of the church. This is why we expel immoral people from the church and those involved in other serious sins Paul mentioned here (covetousness, idolatry, drunkenness, theft, etc.).
  - a. "For seven days no leaven shall be found in your houses, since whoever eats what is leavened, that soul shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he is a stranger or a native of the land." (**Exodus 12:19**, LXX, OSB)
  - b. Jesus also referred to sin as being like yeast (spreads and takes over all): "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy." (**Luke 12:1**, NKJV)
  - c. The death of the Passover Lamb has very practical consequences for us; how we live our own lives, and how we live as a church!
- ii. Peter, in describing how we treat others, calls upon the Lamb of God as an example for us. Read **1 Peter 2:18-25**.
  1. When Peter calls Christians to lead holy lives, to submit to the governing authorities, and even for slaves to submit to harsh masters, he reminds us of the lamb of God that Isaiah spoke about.
  2. He suffered, leaving an example that we should follow in his steps. We are called to follow the lamb in his suffering and death.
  3. Reminds me of what it says regarding the 144,000 virgins who are held up in the **Book of Revelation**: "These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb." (**Revelation 14:4**, NKJV)
- d. Very practical implications for us (seeing Jesus as the Lamb of God)
  - i. Recognizing that the Lamb of God has been sacrificed for us, we need to take inventory and clean out the yeast of sin from our own lives, lest we be cut off. This is serious!
  - ii. We need to address sin within the church. That includes being prepared to expel any among us who refuse to repent of wickedness.

- iii. We are called to 'follow the Lamb' wherever He goes. That includes imitating the character of Jesus, *being lambs who are willing to suffer* for the sake of righteousness.