

# Behold the Lamb of God

John 1:29

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

This Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world is the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Let us here behold:

1. His *character*;
2. His *relationship*;
3. His *uniqueness*;
4. His *efficacy*.

**I. Behold the character of Jesus Christ:** He is characterized as a “*Lamb*”.

1. Jesus was, like a lamb, *harmless*. You have heard the expression “harmless as a lamb”. For a lamb never harmed anyone.

Likewise, of Jesus the Lamb we read “He is ... harmless” (Hebrews 7:26). He is devoid of malice in His heart, of deceit in His mouth, of reviling in His conduct (1 Peter 2:22f). “He went about doing good” (Acts 10:38) – healing the sick, strengthening the infirm, delivering demoniacs, opening deaf ears and blind eyes, loosing mute tongues, performing miracles for the benefit of others but never for Himself. He never harmed anyone – not even those who harmed Him.

2. Jesus was, like a lamb, *meek, gentle, and humble*. You have heard the expressions “*meek* as a lamb”, “*gentle* as a lamb”, and “*humble* as a lamb”. For a lamb is not ferocious like a wolf nor proud like a peacock.

Likewise, Jesus the Lamb is “*meek/gentle and lowly in heart*” (Matthew 11:29). Jesus, being humble, does not, like the proud, tell sinners to stay away from Him (Isaiah 65:5). And Jesus, being meek and gentle, tenderly receives all who come to Him for salvation.

3. Jesus was, like a lamb, *the prey of predators but the predator against none*. Lambs prey on none, but are the prey of many.

Likewise, Jesus the Lamb preyed on none. But He was the prey of many (Psalm 22:12-16): “Many bulls have surrounded Me; strong bulls of Bashan have encircled Me. They gape at Me with their mouths, like a raging and roaring lion. ... For dogs have surrounded Me; the congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me. They pierced My hands and My feet.”

4. Jesus was, like a lamb, *silent and patient in suffering* (Isaiah 53:7 / Acts 8:32): “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.” He fulfilled the prophecy that “He will not cry out, nor raise His voice, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street” (Isaiah 42:2).

**II. Behold the relationship of Jesus Christ:** He is “the *Lamb of God*”.

1. Jesus is the Lamb *claimed* by God. When John the Baptist baptized the Lamb of God, the Father said of Him, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17; see also at His transfiguration by God in Matthew 17:5). Who would be so wicked as to spurn the only one of whom God has so said!

2. Jesus is the Lamb *predestined* by God. He is the “lamb without blemish and without spot [who] indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you who through Him believe in God” (1 Peter 1:19-21).

3. Jesus is the Lamb *provided* by God. This fulfills the prophecy of Abraham to Isaac, “My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering” (Genesis 22:8). We need not provide our own lamb.

**III. Behold the uniqueness of Jesus Christ:** He is “the *Lamb of God*”.

1. Jesus is unique as the *antitype* fulfilling all the typical sacrificial lambs in the Old Testament. These would include these four:

i. The first type is the *firstborn* lamb sacrificed by Abel at the dawn of creation (Genesis 4:2, 4). Abel sacrificed a lamb “of the firstborn of his flock”. This firstborn lamb was not necessarily the lamb born first. But it was indeed the foremost and choicest “of the firstborn”.

Likewise, Jesus the Lamb is God’s “firstborn” (Hebrews 1:6), the foremost and choicest of His people. God’s Lamb is inferior to none.

ii. The second type is the *substitutionary* lamb provided by God in the place of Isaac on Mount Moriah (Genesis 22:8ff). God provided a lamb to be sacrificed as the substitute for Isaac on Moriah, to die in Isaac’s place and stead, so Isaac could live.

Likewise, God provided Jesus the Lamb to be sacrificed as the substitute for His people on Calvary, so they could live.

iii. The third type is the *Passover* lamb of Israel in Egypt (Exodus ch.12). At the institution of the Passover, God required every Israelite household to sacrifice a lamb. This

lamb was to be “without blemish, a male of the first year” – a perfect specimen in the prime of its life (v.5). They were to apply its blood at their doors, so God’s angel could see it, and pass over house when he destroyed the wicked. They were to roast and eat its flesh.

All this typified Jesus the Lamb. For believers are assured that “indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us” (1 Corinthians 5:7). He was a male in the prime of life (33 years old). And He was perfect, “a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:19), having neither natural deformity nor taint of sin. His blood has been applied to our hearts, so that God will pass over us when He destroys the wicked. And we have obeyed His call to “eat the flesh of the Son of Man” by believing in Him (John 6:53).

iv. The fourth type includes all the *Old Covenant* lambs sacrificed under the Law. These numbered in the untold thousands, and include the lambs sacrificed every morning, every evening, every Sabbath, on the annual holy days, and for personal transgressions (Exodus 29:38-42; 28:9f; Numbers chs.28f; et.al.).

The sacrifices of all these lambs ceased with the sacrifice of Jesus the Lamb of God on Calvary. This is true because they were but “a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ” (Colossians 2:17). He is the fulfillment of all they typified.

2. Jesus is unique as the *only* Lamb of God in this day and age.

Each of the thousands and thousands of Old Testament lambs sacrificed to God was “a lamb of God”.

But Jesus is uniquely “*the* Lamb of God” – the only one that forever satisfied God for the redemption and salvation of His people.

**IV. Behold the efficacy of Jesus Christ:** He “*takes away the sin of the world*”.

1. What is “the sin” here mentioned? Scriptures speak of “a sin” as anything that misses or falls short of God’s standard of absolute perfection (as in Romans 3:23). Here “*the sin*” is used in a collective sense, inclusive of sins of each and every sort, including these six:

- both *original* sin and *actual* sins;
- both sins of *commission* and sins of *omission*;
- both *public* sins and *secret* sins;
- sin as both *guilt* and *defilement*;
- sins of *thought* and *word* and *deed*;
- sins of both *individual persons* and a *collective group*.

No sin, nor the aggregate of them all together, is above the ability of Jesus to take away.

2. How is it that Jesus “takes away” the sin of the world?

God the Father took the sin of His people away from them and laid it on Jesus His Lamb, who as their sin-bearer bore their sin away completely and forever (Isaiah 53:6, 4): “Jehovah has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. ... Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows” (also vv.11b, 12b).

Jesus bore those sins for that infinite distance as far as the east is from the west (Psalm 103:12) and then cast them into the uttermost part of an unfathomable sea, far behind God’s back (Micah 7:19; Isaiah 38:17). The sins of God’s people will never be found (Jeremiah 50:20).

Consequently, God now declares that “their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more” (Hebrews 8:12).

Jesus took away the sin of His people in His death (Hebrews 9:28; 1 Peter 2:24). But three years before His death, John the Baptist described Him as the Lamb who “*takes away the sin*”, using a verb in the present tense and active voice. That is, John declares Jesus to be already doing what He would do in the future.

This is true because Jesus is “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Revelation 13:8): slain *before* the foundation of the world in God’s eternal decree; slain *since* the foundation of the world in type and shadows and finally in reality; and eternally efficacious.

The prophet Isaiah therefore, writing almost 750 years before Jesus’ physical death, rightly spoke of His death and salvation as a past, present, and future event (Isaiah ch.53).

3. What is this “world” whose sins are taken away by Jesus? It is the aggregate of all persons whose sins have been taken away by Jesus, and who therefore will not die in their sins.

They who advocate universal atonement aver that this “world” includes *all people without exception*. They err! For Jesus did not take away the sins of everyone. Jesus Himself declared this to be true when He told those who did not believe in Him that “you will die in your sins” (John 8:24). If they die in their sins, Jesus did not take their sins away from them.

Rather, Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of all who believe in Him, whether they be Jews or Gentiles. These are the “children of God” who confess that “the Son of God was manifested to take away our sins” (1 John 3:5, in the context of vv.1-8).

Have you with the eye of saving faith obeyed the command to “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world”?

Or will you instead shut your eyes to Him and die in your sins?