

Why is Jesus called a Lamb?

By
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The grandson of a friend of mine at church had a question , so I wrote a little letter to him in hopes of answering his question for him. But then I got to thinking that perhaps some of you might also have that same question. So now I'm talking to you about it. The boy's question was about why in the Bible Jesus was called a lamb.

And yes, in the Bible Jesus is called a Lamb, the Lamb of God. Now, Jesus wasn't actually a young sheep, was He? He didn't have wool all over His whole body and four legs and a little tail, did He? No, of course not! Jesus came to earth as a human, a man. but He was also still God at the same time. He is always God. After all, Jesus created the whole world! And He is also still God in heaven now.

Then why was He called a Lamb, the Lamb of God? Do you remember something in the Bible about that? That's right. The Bible tells us that one day John the Baptist saw Jesus walking along, and John the Baptist said to the people around him, "Look! There is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!"

But what did John the Baptist mean? A lamb?! Why, John was sort of using a nickname for Jesus by making a picture. But what do I mean by making a picture? Well, let me give you some examples of what John the Baptist was doing and what I mean.

Have you ever been called "Honey"? Or have you ever called anyone "Honey"? I have. But the people who are called "Honey" aren't actually a sweet, sticky liquid, are they?! No, of course not! They are people! But when we call people "Honey", we are saying that they are nice like honey and that we like them. We would be sort of making a picture describing how we felt about them by what we called them, wouldn't we?

And sometimes a boy will be called "Tiger". And the basketball team at my cousin's high school is called "the Tigers". So are boys or high school basketball players really a 4 legged animal with stripes and a tail?! No, of course not! They are people! But that is a way of saying that someone is brave and strong and maybe even fierce. It's sort of describing them, making a picture by what they are called, isn't it? Why there's even the famous golf champion, "Tiger" Woods, though his real first name is Eldrick. "Tiger" is just his nickname.

And there's a football team called the Ravens. If you saw one of the players, you might say, "Oh, there goes one of the Ravens." But the football players aren't really big, black birds, are they?! No, of course not! They are men! Maybe you can think of other nicknames that people or sports teams are called.

And that was what John the Baptist was doing. He was making a sort of picture by what he was calling Jesus. You see, in Bible times often lambs were sacrificed for sins. And Jesus was going to die on the cross as a sacrifice for our sins, wasn't He? So by calling Jesus a Lamb, the Lamb of God,

John the Baptist was telling the people who heard him that Jesus was going to die as a sacrifice for our sins, just as lambs died as sacrifices for sins. John was making a picture, wasn't he? A picture to describe what Jesus would be doing. Actually, the lambs that were sacrificed for sins, all of these lambs were a picture of Jesus and when He would die for our sins. Of course, those animal lambs couldn't really forgive sins, could they? But if we believe in Jesus, then our sins will be forgiven, won't they? And, of course, Jesus didn't stay dead, did He? No, 3 days later He was alive again, and He's still alive in heaven! And if we trust in Jesus to save us from our sins, someday we can be in heaven with Him!

Besides calling Jesus a Lamb, the Bible also calls Jesus "the Lion of the tribe of Judah". But is Jesus a fierce, 4 legged animal? No, of course not! Just as Jesus isn't a meek, 4 legged, little fuzzy lamb! Jesus is a man and God. But Jesus' mother Mary was from the tribe of Judah, so that means that Jesus was from the tribe of Judah. And the lion is a big, powerful animal and is often called the king of beasts. And someday Jesus is coming back with great power, and then He will be the King to rule the whole world. %% Yes, the Son of God Jesus, as a human, is from the tribe of Judah. So calling Jesus the Lion of the Tribe of Judah is sort of making a picture that describes who Jesus is and what Jesus will be doing someday, isn't it?

Now, I find it interesting that there was a prophecy in the Bible in the Old Testament about the man Judah who was Jesus' great-great-great grandfather. Judah was the beginning of the tribe of Judah. And in this prophecy Judah had also been called a "lion". Of course, Judah himself wasn't really a lion, either, but it sort of described him. Judah seems to have been fierce and brave and to have been a leader among his brothers. And though Judah himself didn't become a king, this prophecy also said that many of Judah's descendant would be kings -- and they were. You see, many of the kings of the Jews (including King David) were descended from Judah. And, as I've just said, King Jesus is a descendant of Judah through His mother Mary.

In a way, "Lamb", "Lamb of God", and "Lion of the Tribe of Judah" are sort of nicknames for Jesus, aren't they?

I hope this helps you understand why Jesus, who is both a man and God, is also called a lamb -- and a lion. Does it help you, Tiger?! Does it help you, Honey?!