

Behold the Lamb of God

John the Baptist says in **John 1:29** as he points out Jesus to his disciples, *“Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world”*

God himself had bore witness to John that the Messiah would be made known to Israel through him. God had given John a sign by which he would know the Messiah, namely, the descending of the Holy Spirit as a dove. John took this opportunity to point people to Christ.

John came as a preacher of repentance, but he told his followers to look only to Jesus for the pardon of their sins. Jesus became the paschal Lamb to atone for sin and purchase pardon for all who would repent and believe in Him and the gospel. Jesus who knew no sin became sin for us; the sin offering to replace all sacrifices.

We are so used to calling Jesus the Lamb of God that we can miss the picture of what the Jews hoped for when they first heard John the Baptist’s words.

Most Jews were expecting a Messiah who would be the Lion of Judah, a new David who would drive out the Romans by waging war. It hadn’t occurred to them the Messiah would be a Lamb. Lambs are not exactly known for their prowess in battle.

They don’t kill; they die. Lambs were sacrificed daily in the Jewish temple as an act of worship to God. As a remembrance of the deliverance of the Jews from Egyptian slavery, each year lambs were the central theme of the Jewish Year – Passover.

The final plague that brought Pharaoh to his knees and the Israelites to freedom was the angel of death “passing over” Egypt to take the lives of the Egyptians’ first born sons. The sacrifice of a perfect lamb without spot or blemish prevented Israel from suffering from the same fate. The lamb that was slain by the Israelites was the substitute, just as Jesus, the Lamb of God is our substitute. The blood of the Lamb was smeared on the doorpost of the house of the family and the death angel passed over the Israelites and Pharaoh let the Israelites go.

It was no accident that Jesus was arrested and put to death during Passover. In the Gospel of John, Jesus breathes his last at the very same moment that the Passover lambs were being sacrificed in the Temple. Unlike the custom in most crucifixions, Jesus’ legs however weren’t broken to make sure he was dead. The Romans employed an alternate verification method stated in **John 19:32 – 37**, *“Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe. For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken. And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced”*

Why does John take pains to emphasize this? Because Scripture stipulates that no bone of the Passover Lamb could be broken. In **Exodus 12:46** scripture says, “In one house shall it be eaten; thou shalt not carry forth ought of the flesh abroad out of the house; neither shall ye break a bone thereof”.

The Jews viewed Jesus’ death as a scandal. We however understand that His death is a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, proving that He is the Messiah. **Exodus 12:46** is one example of prophecy fulfilled. Another is

Zechariah 12:10, *“And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn”*

All the words and events of the Old Covenant had great value, meaning and dignity in and of themselves. But they also pointed forward to a greater covenant, to a person who was the Word made flesh, to a Lamb who saved Israel from a deeper slavery than Pharaoh's, to an event that would be the culminating moment in human history. The Word came as a spotless Lamb to offer the perfect sacrifice of love that would outweigh all human evil and therefore take away all sins. The Shepherd offered his blood for our sins and his body as our new Passover meal. The law of God is holy, just, and good; and we should make the proper use of it. But we cannot derive from it pardon, righteousness, or strength. It teaches us to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, but it cannot supply the place of that doctrine. As no mercy comes from God to sinners but through Jesus Christ, no man can come to the Father but by Him; no man can know God, except as he is made known in the only begotten and beloved Son. Jesus Christ is the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one can come to God the Father, except through Him. Jesus is the perfect Lamb who died on the cross so you and I would no longer need to sacrifice a lamb to pay the penalty for our sins. Jesus' sacrifice was once for all. His sacrifice was complete. Many people are living their lives without a relationship with God. If you confess with your mouth and believe in your heart that Jesus is the Lamb of God and repent of your sins, you too can have a relationship with God the Father and have eternal life. If you have never trusted Jesus Christ as your Savior, “Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world”.