

Behold, the Lamb of God!

John 1:29-42a

Introduction

“Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” These words of John the Baptist are a familiar part of our liturgy, called the Agnus Dei.

Lamb of God, You take away the sin of the world.

Have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, You take away the sin of the world.

Have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, You take away the sin of the world.

Grant us Thy peace.

But I want to call your attention to the first word, “behold.” Many translations render the Greek word here as “look.” But there are other Greek words for “look.” What does this word mean that is translated “behold?”

Behold

The word *ide* is used to call one’s attention to someone or something. It can be translated “see”, “lo”, “behold”, or “look.” However, it denotes surprise. It’s saying, “I want you to pay attention to this because there’s something special here.” It comes from the word *eido*, which means “perceive”, “see”, “be sure”, “tell”, or “understand.” This is more than just seeing something with your eyes. One of the themes that runs through the ***Gospel of John*** is “seeing, believing, and knowing.” Not everyone who sees believes. Some believe without seeing. Not everyone who sees knows. Some know without seeing. Others think they know but do not. Behold encompasses all three, seeing, believing, and knowing. John wants us to do all three when it comes to Jesus. He wants us to see Him for who He is, the Savior of the world. He wants us to believe He is the Savior and know Him as our Savior.

The Lamb

So, who is this Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world? The word “lamb” conjures up three images from the Old Testament.

Abraham’s Lamb (Genesis 22)

In ***Genesis 22***, we read the story of Abraham being called to sacrifice his son Isaac. As they begin to climb the mountain, Isaac asks his father where the lamb is for the sacrifice. In ***verse 8***, Abraham says, *“God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.”* And just as Abraham took the knife and was about to slaughter his son, (Read ***Genesis 22:11-13***). As this lamb is, Jesus is the substitute. He died in our place, so we don’t have to.

The Lamb of Isaiah 53

Then there’s the lamb of the Suffering Servant song of ***Isaiah 53*** (Read ***Isaiah 53:6-7***). All of us have gone astray, but the Lord laid on this Lamb all our sin and iniquity. He was stricken, crushed, bruised, and pierced for us and underwent all that without complaining. He willingly suffered and died for our sin.

The Passover Lamb of Exodus 12

There is also the Passover lamb of **Exodus 12**. God gives instructions as to how the Israelites are to care for this lamb, kill it, prepare it, and eat it. Then He says, (Read **Exodus 12:11-13**). The blood of this lamb will save them from the angel of death. But, most importantly, it will deliver them from the bondage of slavery to the Egyptians. Jesus is the Lamb whose blood saves us from eternal death and from the bondage of slavery to sin.

His Source

He is not just any Lamb. He's the Lamb *of God*. He comes from God. This shows us that our salvation comes from God, entirely from Him. We are utterly unable to do anything to atone for our sin. Our salvation is completely in the hands of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God.

His Significance

The Lamb *takes away* our sin. This brings up another Old Testament image—that of the scapegoat. On the Day of Atonement, two goats would be brought to the High Priest. One would be killed and sacrificed for the sins of the people. The priest would lay his hands on the other one, the scapegoat, symbolically transferring the sins of the people to the goat. It would then be led outside the camp and turned loose in the wilderness. God was removing the sins from the people. The Lamb of God removes our sins from us. As **Psalm 103:12** says, *as far as the east is from the west, so far does He remove our transgressions from us.*

His Scope

The Lamb of God takes away the sin *of the world*. There is no exception. There is no sin too big or too small. There is no one too foul for Him to save. He takes away all sin. Surely, He is something to behold. He is our Substitute and Sacrifice. He willingly pays the price for our sin with His own blood. He gives us freedom from sin. He gives us a salvation we can never achieve on our own, as He takes away all our sin and removes it as far as the east is from the west.

Means of Grace

We see Him here today. We see Him in the Word. We see Him in the bread and wine of Holy Communion. As we receive His body and blood, we see, believe, and know. He is the Lamb of God who takes away our sin and strengthens our faith. **BEHOLD, THE LAMB OF GOD**, who takes away the sin of the world!

*And the peace of God,
Which surpasses all understanding,
Will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*
