

THE LAMB OF GOD
John 1:29

Intro: This verse belongs to vv. 30, 31 which also formed a part of John the Baptist's message at this time.

But v. 36 shows that this also was a summation of John's preaching--as we might summarize a person's message in one statement. This was the very essence of the preaching of John. It would be very difficult to state the Gospel any clearer, or with fewer words.

He began with . . .

I. A WORD TO ATTRACT ATTENTION: "Behold."

It indicated something important, something the people needed to hear. It spoke of that which weighed upon the heart of the speaker, and he wanted to impress upon his hearers that they could not ignore this without great loss.

But it was more than that.

It was a word of invitation. John was inviting them lit. to see, by which he (and the rabbis of the day who commonly used it) meant that people were to learn. It was the word of a preacher who felt called to be a teacher. He wanted people to discover something which they had not known before and to feel the effect of it in their lives. It is a word which we have over and over in the Scriptures.

But now let us see what was . . .

II. THE SUBJECT OF HIS MESSAGE: "the Lamb of God."

By his use of the article, "the," John was speaking of one particular person who could claim this title. He was not one of many lambs, but "THE Lamb of God."

The article also points to one who was well-known, expected, by the Jews to whom he was speaking.

The history of the Jewish rabbis of this time shows that it was common to refer to the Messiah by this term, and to base it upon the prophecies of Isaiah 53. Shortly after this the opposition of the Jewish leaders to Christ caused the rabbis to change their interpretation. But when John spoke these words, they were definitely Messianic.

This would bring to the mind of John's hearers that rich body of OT truth which was present in every animal sacrifice which they offered.

This one, specific "Lamb" was "the Lamb OF GOD." He came from God. He belonged to God. (Godet speaks of this as the genitive of possession.) He was God's provision, and, as such He was acceptable to God.

These truths are brought out in the Gospel of John more fully, but we can see why the Apostle John would use this theme from John the Baptist's preaching here at the beginning of the Gospel.

This term applied to our Lord would bring out several things:

- 1) The meekness of the Lord Jesus.
- 2) The sinless perfection of the Lord Jesus.
- 3) The substitutionary nature of His work.

So John preached Christ. He wanted the Jewish people to learn about Him, and to know that there never had been, and never would be, another like He was.

But then John spoke of:

III. THE WORK THE LAMB CAME TO DO: "which taketh away the sin of the world."

As "the Lamb of God" He had no sin of His own, but He came to deal with the sins of men.

What does it mean that He would take sin away?

We could say that it meant that one day He would deliver this world from sin. And He will! But that was not what John was concerned about here.

To take away sin obviously meant to cleanse, to forgive, to deliver from the final judgment of God upon sin. John was preaching the grace of God although He still lived under the dispensation of the Law.

How would He do it--take away sin?

Would it be by His example? There was no OT basis for that kind of teaching. Would it be by the works of sinners? That, too, was foreign to the truth connected with the lamb in the OT. No, it was by substitution, by sacrifice, by death. This is the prediction of Isaiah 53, and this was portrayed again and again in the OT sacrifices. Why did the priests put their hands on the head of the sacrificial lamb except to picture the transfer of sin and its guilt to the lamb which would be slain.

However, the writer of Hebrews has told us that "it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats" (or any other

sacrificial animal) should take away sins" (Heb. 10:4).

How did He do it?

By His death, to be sure, but having been made, first of all, "sin for us." Cf. 2 Cor. 5:21. Also Isa. 53:6. Who among the people of God can really describe what that means? The sinless One took our sins upon Himself in order that we might be forgiven.

That was not the kind of teaching that the Jews were hearing from their teachers. It is no wonder that John began by saying, "Behold."

Only two other times in the NT do you have the same Greek word for lamb that John used in his preaching. They are to be found in Acts 8:32 and 1 Pet. 1:19. The Lord is called "the Lamb" all through the Book of the Revelation, but it is a different word from what John the Baptist used (although the significance would no be affected).

Thus we have salvation through the meek and lowly "Lamb of God" through His death on the Cross--and there is no salvation on any other basis in all of Scripture. Therefore, your faith must be in Him.

But what will we do with the last phrase: "which taketh away the sin of the world."

We come here to the purpose of Christ's death. Did He die for all men everywhere in every generation without exception? If so, then the universalist is right--all men will eventually be saved. How could a person die if Christ died for Him? If Christ died for all, and then some spend eternity in hell, we can only conclude that God has demanded double payment for their sins. Christ paid for their sins, and then they have to pay for their sins all over again. How can we harmonize such teaching with the righteousness of God?

We know that all men are not being saved, so the universalist is not right. Neither is the person who says that Christ died for all, and yet some will eventually be lost--that there are some people in hell whose sins were paid for by Christ.

But some will say, "People will go to hell, not because Christ did not die for them, but because they did not believe on Him." Let me ask you: Is unbelief a sin? Then did Christ die for all sins except the sin of unbelief? A little thinking will help us to see that we have a problem here. How did Jesus Christ take away the sin of the world?

FOR WHOM DID CHRIST DIE?

Cf. Matt. 1:21. This teaches particular redemption. Christ died for those who were chosen by the Father, and given by the Father to Him.

But He is the One Who takes away the sin of the world in the sense that He is the Saviour of Gentiles as well as of Jews. All over the world in every generation there is only one Gospel, only one Saviour. We do not preach a different Gospel to Gentiles from that which we preach to the Jews. If a Gentile is to be saved, he must trust Christ. If a Jew is to be saved, he must trust Christ. Christ is the world's only Saviour.

Concl: As we come to the Lord's table tonight, may these truths mean more to us than before, and may our hearts rejoice that God in His grace has chosen us, Christ died for us, and the Holy Spirit has regenerated us.

If you do not know the Saviour, then we cannot ask you to partake with us. But I say to you, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."