



Peninsula City Church

Behold!

Behold the Lamb of God

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Behold the Lamb of God

An Introduction

Q. What does it mean that Jesus is the Lamb of God and how would you communicate this to those you meet?

In this day and age, is the phrase “Jesus is the Lamb of God” of any relevance? Really, if you were to use this phrase in a setting outside of a church setting would people even know what you are talking about? There are many who would say that it is language that is now outdated and from a bygone era. If we are honest, they probably would not know what we are talking about. They may have heard of Jesus Christ, maybe not as the Lamb of God.

So, here it will be discussed what the phrase Lamb of God means and the effect that the ritual had on those involved. Then it will be noted that our sins have been completely forgiven and that it means we are placed back on track.

1. The Lamb of God

Q. What does the Lamb of God mean and how does it affect people?

In reading the gospel of John, he records an incident where John the baptiser being questioned by the religious leaders regarding who he is why he is baptising. Then we read that,

“The next day he (John the baptiser) saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, ‘**Behold**, the Lamb of God, who is taking away (taking up to carry away) the sin of the world!’” (Jn 1:29 ESV)

³⁵ “The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, ³⁶ and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, ‘**Behold**, the Lamb of God!’” (Jn 1:36 ESV)

Between these two verses, John refers back to the scene where he baptised Jesus and saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove and remaining on Jesus (Matt 3:13-17; Mk 1:9-11). Then John the baptiser made an amazing statement,

“I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God” (Jn 1:34 ESV)

John used this illustration of the lamb, because of its place within the Jewish sacrificial system. However, he would have also used it because of the humble and submissive nature of the young lamb that would be sacrificed in the place of the sinner.¹ Humanity had missed the mark and wandered away from God’s Law as His righteous standard. There was a need for someone to get humanity back on track and it could not be done in our own strength.

The fact of the matter was as John saw Jesus coming towards him he declared in the imperative active to those there ‘to be **BEHOLDING!**’ because here is God’s answer to our problem of having missed the mark and wandering off away from God. As the Lamb of God Jesus had to die as the propitiation that is, the sacrifice, which appeased the anger of God for humanity deliberately missing the mark and wandering off on our own way. It has been said that,

“There is only one way in which a lamb can take away sin, and that is by sacrifice... Here, he (John the baptiser) says, is the reality of which all animal sacrifice was the symbol.”²

¹ Morris, Leon. *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1965), 133.

² “John 1.” <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/egt/john/1.htm> (26th July 2017).

The righteousness of God was going to be revealed in Christ as He would atone for sin as God's chosen sacrifice. In the New Testament atonement means to completely exchange humanities unrighteousness for God's righteousness and restore to favour. Jesus acted righteously in the matter of dealing with Humanities sin in accordance with God's standard of righteousness. So, Jesus justified us as the Justifier in light of the requirements of the Law of God of the one who has faith in Jesus the Lamb of God.

Notwithstanding the sacrificial system of offering blood for atonement in the Old Testament, God did not fully punish every sinner and their sin, until the coming of Jesus.³ As the ultimate propitiation, He satisfied the righteousness of a Holy and righteous God. He took the full punishment for the sinner and sin. For that reason, the certainty of full justice was suspended in the Old Testament, until the fullness of time came for Jesus the Lamb of God appeared. That is, it was at the coming of Jesus that the problem of sin was solved through His blood.⁴ Consequently, Jesus came as pure righteousness in the right time, (i.e. the time when Jesus was revealed) or what we may call the day of salvation. Therefore, God is both just and the justifier, of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Therefore, considering all of what has been said, for Jesus to be declared the Lamb of God by John was an announcement of His coming sacrificial death. The Jewish ears of those hearing this truth would have understood the sacrificial lamb. But a person being proclaimed as the Lamb of God would have been weird to the listener. So, John married the two ideas together as God's plan of redemption. But the idea of a lamb as a sacrifice for sin goes back even further than John's announcement. For example, the Old Testament says,

“And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them” (Gen 3:21 ESV).

Although this verse does not specifically mention a lamb here, with what follows in the rest of the Old Testament for the atonement (covering) for sin, it is possible that this may have been a lamb. In the Old Testament, the lamb was the main (but not the only) animal that was used for sacrifice. The lamb that was chosen to be sacrificed needed to be perfect in every way. This was not just a good idea but was the chosen way to atone for sin in coming before the holy God. The word that was used in the Old Testament meant to cover and referred to the covering of the sin by the blood of the sacrifice.

The following sections of the Old Testament deal with the sacrifice of the lamb. It could be a burnt offering, a Passover offering, or even a guilt offering. The first one that is mentioned here is used in the binding of Isaac by Abraham,

“Abraham said, ‘God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son.’ So they went both of them together” (Gen 22:8 ESV).

If we stop and think about it, Abraham needed enough wood to burn the whole offering. So that must have been quite a bit of wood, even too much for Abraham to carry. This would tend to suggest that Isaac was not the young boy that many illustrations suggest, but an adult to be able to carry that much wood. If this is the case, then it adds further insight to Isaac's willingness to be bound and burnt as an offering to God.

Next is the Passover Lamb,

³ “Tell all the congregation of Israel that on the tenth day of this month every man shall take a lamb according to their fathers' houses, a lamb for a household...¹¹ In this manner, you shall

³ Murray, John. *Redemption: Accomplished and Applied*. (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1979), 119.

⁴ Morris, Leon. *The Epistle to the Romans*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1988), 183 n.144.

eat it: with your belt fastened, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. And you shall eat it in haste. It is the Lord's Passover. ¹² For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the Lord. ¹³ The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt" (Ex 12:3,11-13 ESV)

The verb that used here in verse thirteen for passing over is also is the same on that is used in Isaiah 31:5 for the birds flying overhead and protecting and rescuing. This gives an idea of what is meant here by, passing over the houses of the Israelites.

The required daily burnt offerings, i.e. the *Tamid*, meaning 'standing,' 'regular,' or 'perpetual 'as it was a standing daily before God,

³⁸ "Now this is what you shall offer on the altar: two lambs a year old day by day regularly. ³⁹ One lamb you shall offer in the morning (9 am) and the other lamb you shall offer at twilight. ⁴⁰ And with the first lamb a tenth measure (22 kgs) of fine flour mingled with a fourth of a hin (3.5 litres) of beaten oil, and a fourth of a hin of wine (3.5 litres) for a drink offering. ⁴¹ The other lamb you shall offer at twilight, and shall offer with it a grain offering and its drink offering, as in the morning, for a pleasing aroma, a food offering to the Lord. ⁴² It shall be a regular burnt offering (for sin) throughout your generations at the entrance of the tent of meeting before the Lord, where I will meet with you, to speak to you there. ⁴³ There I will meet with the people of Israel, and it shall be sanctified by My glory. ⁴⁴ I will consecrate the tent of meeting and the altar. Aaron also and his sons I will consecrate to serve me as priests. ⁴⁵ I will dwell among the people of Israel and will be their God. ⁴⁶ And they shall know that I am the Lord their God, who brought them out of the land of Egypt that I might dwell among them. I am the Lord their God" (Ex 29:38-42 ESV; see also Lev 1:1-17).

Then there is the guilt offering,

¹² "And the priest shall take one of the male lambs and offer it for a guilt offering, along with the log (.32 litre) of oil, and wave them for a wave offering before the Lord. ¹³ And he shall kill the lamb in the place where they kill the sin offering and the burnt offering, in the place of the sanctuary. For the guilt offering, like the sin offering belongs to the priest; it is most holy" (Lev 14:12-13 ESV).

"Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush Him; He has put Him to grief; when His soul makes an offering for guilt, He shall see His offspring; He shall prolong His days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in His hand" (Is 53:10 ESV).

Both Isaiah and Jeremiah mention the coming sacrificial Lamb of God, which with having the New Testament we know is Jesus Christ. Isaiah in chapter 52 prophetically highlights the redemption of Israel and then flows into chapter 53 dealing with the same matter. Then probably unbeknown to him, he prophesied about the coming sacrifice of Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. With this second level of prophetic proclamation in mind let's look at the next verse,

"He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so He opened not his mouth" (Is 53:7 ESV; cf. Matt 26:63; 27:1-14; Acts 8:28,32-35).

Firstly, Jeremiah described himself as a lamb who was led to slaughter, as he felt as was a casualty of a scheme to get rid of him. But, also secondly as with Isaiah unbeknown to him he prophetically referred to the coming of Christ as the Lamb of God,

"But I was like a gentle lamb led to the slaughter. I did not know it was against me they devised schemes, saying, 'Let us destroy the tree with its fruit, let us cut him off from the land of the living, that His name be remembered no more'" (Jer 11:19 ESV)

Then against this backdrop, in the New Testament Jesus was declared to be the Passover Lamb and a sacrificed Lamb of God,

“Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb has been sacrificed” (1 Cor 5:7 ESV)

“But with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot” (1 Pet 1:19 ESV)

After His sacrificial work, John records that he had seen Jesus being worshipped as the glorified Lamb of God,

⁶ “And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain... ⁹ And they sang a new song, saying, ‘Worthy are You to take the scroll and to open its seals, for You were slain (sacrificed), and by Your blood, you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation... ¹¹ Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, ¹² saying with a loud voice, ‘Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honour and glory and blessing!’ ¹³ And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, ‘To Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honour and glory and might forever and ever!’” (Rev 5:6a,9,11-13 ESV)

This is a major theme within the book of the Revelation and is mentioned over and over again, (Rev 5:6; 5:8; 5:12-13; 6:16; 7:9-10; 7:14; 12:11; 13:8; 13:11; 14:1; 14:4; 14:10; 15:3; 17:14; 19:7; 19:9; 21:9; 21:14; 21:22-23; 21:27; 22:1; 22:3).

So, we see that it was not a new thing that John was saying, but he was seeing what God had already been saying in the Old Testament. Jesus was the fulfilment of the Old Testament types and prophecy. Then some of the other New Testament writers illustrated that Jesus was the predestined ultimate sacrifice for the sin of the world.

2. Portrayed in illustrations of a solution

Q. With our sins completely forgiven, what does it mean to live as new creations – to live as saints instead of sinners?

John the baptiser’s statement “who takes away the sin of the world, illustrates that there was a problem. That problem was that humanity had missed the mark and wandered away and gone off track from God’s Law as His righteous standard. They could not get back on track because they had gone rogue and gone bush (so to speak). So there was a need for someone to get humanity back on track as it could not be done in our own strength. This is where John drew attention to God’s solution to the matter. This is the only solution to be able to deal with the result of humanity going off the track and pay the price for the damage that was done.

So, John declares in the imperative, “BEHOLD,” God’s chosen answer to the problem of humanity going off track. Jesus as the Lamb of God took or carried away our sin once and for all. This was something that we could not do. In briefly presenting this it has been said that,

“The present participle, indicating the chief characteristic of the lamb...has three meanings: (1) to raise or lift up, John 8:59; (2) to bear or carry, Matthew 16:24; (3) to remove or take away.”⁵

⁵ “John 1.” <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/egt/john/1.htm> (26th July 2017).

As a result of this act of Jesus' pardon for sin was given. Has it has been said,

“The very idea of “removing” or “taking away” sin, as expressed literally in both the Hebrew and Greek constructions, is actually understood figuratively as the pardoning or forgiveness of sin.”⁶

In doing this Jesus took the full punishment for the sinner and sin so that, they could be forgiven or pardoned. It has been said that it can “often signify the removal not of evil simply but of guilt.”⁷ So, the guilt and shame of going rogue were placed fully on Jesus, and He bore the full brunt of the consequence for our sin. He was not forced or coerced to do this but did this willingly.

Some concluding thoughts

So, coming back to the opening question,

Q. What's it mean that Jesus is the Lamb of God and how would you communicate this to those you meet?

Jesus as the Lamb of God had to die to appease the divine justice and righteousness as the only acceptable sacrifice. This was because humanity deliberately missing the mark and wandering off on our own way. This was the God chosen solution to be able to deal with the result of humanity going off the track. So, Jesus fully paid the price for the damage that we had done. Remember that, He was not forced or coerced to do this, but did this willingly.

¹⁷ “For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it up again.

¹⁸ No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of My own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from My Father” (Jn 10:17-18 ESV).

So, what will be our response to Jesus the Lamb of God?

- Maybe you have made your peace with God and accepted the work that Jesus has done to get you back on track. Well if that is the case, rejoice in that truth. However, do not take it for granted. Do not go off-track again and go rogue. Also, we need to continually be asking ourselves, who is there around me where I have been placed that is still off the rails and living a rogue life? Well, we have the answer to help them to get their life back on track, which is Jesus the Lamb of God. What are you going to do about it?
- Maybe you have not made your peace with God and accepted the work that Jesus has done to get you back on track. It is never too late to do so, Jesus has paid what was owing, and you need to accept that truth and ask for His forgiveness for going off track and living rogue. You can talk to God right now and as for His forgiveness and accept the work that Jesus Christ has done. Maybe you could say the following:

“Dear Jesus, I have tried to live as a good person, but it hasn't always come off as it should. I have gone off the rails and have been living rogue; I have let You down and hurt You by living this life. However, I need You to change me to be a better person and get me back on track, because I realise from my track record that can't change. I need You please Jesus would you make a difference in my life and be the One who saves me from my sin and myself giving me a second chance in my life. It is You whom I look to for this pure gift of new life and direction. I ask for Your sheer generosity God to put me in right standing with Yourself and to head in the right direction. Yes, indeed.”

⁶ “The Lamb of God.” <https://bible.org/article/another-look-lamb-god> (20th July 2017)

⁷ Barrett, C.K. “The Lamb of God,” *New Testament Studies* 1 (1955): 210.

The following is the song that I want to play around communion:

Behold the Lamb of God - Melody and Truth: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ycEsFBcZHJQ>