

# Sermon Outline

**“LIFE IN HIS NAME”:**  
THE PURSUIT OF WHOLENESS AND THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

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## **THE TESTIMONY OF JOHN, PART THREE: JESUS, THE LAMB OF GOD**

*JOHN 1:29*

### **I. Introduction**

### **II. The Lamb of God (John 1:29)**

- A. The day after the interview with the Levites, Jesus comes toward John.
- B. John announces Jesus with the words: ‘Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!’ (v 29)
- C. “Lamb of God” is one of the most cherished titles of the Lord Jesus.
- D. There are at least three possible sources in the Old Testament from which John the Baptist might be getting this imagery.

### **III. The Lamb That Spared Isaac (Genesis 22)**

- A. In Genesis 22, God calls Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac.
- B. Isaac: “Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?”
- C. Abraham: “God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son” (Gen 22:7-8).
- D. As Abraham is about to slay his son, an angel stops him, saying, “Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.”
- E. Abraham “lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son” (v 13).
- F. The episode ends with Abraham calling the place, “The LORD will provide,” because it was there that the Lord provided a lamb/ram to sacrifice in place of his son.
- G. Just as the Lord provided a lamb to spare Isaac, the Lord provides the Lamb to spare his people.

#### IV. The Passover Lamb (Exodus 12)

- A. The terminology of the lamb may have come from the Passover sacrifice (cf. Ex 12).  
Exodus 12:26-27: “And when your children say to you, ‘What do you mean by this service?’<sup>27</sup> you shall say, ‘It is the sacrifice of the LORD’s Passover, for he passed over the houses of the people of Israel in Egypt, when he struck the Egyptians but spared our houses.’” And the people bowed their heads and worshiped.”
- B. John Calvin: “Probably John is thinking of the Paschal Lamb” (*The Gospel According to St. John 1-10*, 32).
- C. When the Lord liberated Israel from Egypt, the blood of the Passover lamb averted God’s judgment over the houses of God’s believing people.  
—The Passover lamb represents propitiation (appeasement), mercy, and salvation.
- D. In Paul, the image of the Passover Lamb is superimposed onto Jesus.  
1 Corinthians 5:7: “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.”

#### V. The Lamb-Like Servant (Isaiah 53)

- A. Isaiah foretells the coming of the Messiah, that he would free the captives.
- B. The Lord Jesus saw his mission in terms of Isaiah’s prophecies. Jesus uses Isaiah 61:1 as his manifesto, his mission statement. Jesus sees himself as the Servant of the Lord, whose mission is to free the captives of Israel.
- C. But there is another work that the Servant of the Lord will do, a strange and disturbing one.
  - 1. The nature of it is described for us in Isaiah 53:7  
*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.*
  - 2. The Servant of the Lord will suffer a brutal and bloody death.
  - 3. In some strange, mysterious way, this violence is the key to understanding what the Messiah has come to do.
- D. Isaiah connects the lamb-like Servant to the guilt offering, one of the major types of sacrifices that God gave to atone for the sins of Israel.  
*<sup>10</sup> 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. (v 10)*

1. The phrase “an offering for guilt” comes from the sacrificial system.
  2. The Servant of the Lord not only *removes* the guilt of the individual Israelite (though that is true). He is offered to God to *appease* God’s justice.
- E. The theme of guilt offering continues in Isaiah 53:11-12
- Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied;  
by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant,  
make many to be accounted righteous,  
and he shall bear their iniquities.*
- Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many,  
and he shall divide the spoil with the strong,  
because he poured out his soul to death  
and was numbered with the transgressors;  
yet he bore the sin of many,  
and makes intercession for the transgressors.*
- F. Summary:
1. The phrases—“an offering for guilt”; “bear their iniquities”; “he bore the sin of many”—form a vision of what the Servant of the Lord is going to do.
  2. The Servant of the Lord is a human sin offering, a human sacrifice.
  3. But this is the only human sacrifice that can work—the only one that can make full restitution to God for the millions of insults and offenses that his people commit; and forever remove the need for any kind of punishment to satisfy the wrath of God.

## VI. The Lamb of Lambs

- A. At the end of the day, we don’t have to agonize over which image John had in mind. All of them are related.  
—They are all centered on the appeasement of God’s anger by sacrifice.
- B. Even if John the Baptist had only one source in mind—which is highly unlikely given (1) how idea of sacrifice already permeated Israelite culture, (2) that John himself was the son of a priest and was well familiar with sacrificial lambs!—we can say with confidence that our heavenly Father has all three (and more) in mind.
- C. Ultimately, the source of prophecy is not the prophet but God. God knows all the meanings that are linked with any one theme.
- D. To call Jesus the Lamb of God is to imply that he is...
  1. the lamb that God provides as a substitute for us.
  2. the Passover lamb, who averts the judgment of God
  3. the lamb-like Servant who carries sin away as Isaiah had prophesied.
    - Donald Macleod: “Christ bears away the sin of the world by taking responsibility for it, suffering for it, and, eventually, dying for it” (*Christ Crucified*, 65).

- E. Jesus is the Lamb of God who has come to accomplish the great eschatological restitution and forgiveness.
1. *Restitution*—because he offered himself as full compensation to God for the sins of all his people.
  2. *Forgiveness*—because he releases us from debt and punishment.

## VII. He Takes Away the Sins of the World (John 1:29)

- A. But it is not only Israel's sins that the Lamb removes. Isaiah says the Servant will "sprinkle many nations" (Isa 52:15).
- B. John announces that the Lamb of God "takes away the sin of the world!"
- C. The phrase "takes away" recalls Isaiah 53, where the Servant of the Lord bears the sin of God's people.
- D. The Lamb's sacrifice is powerful enough to compensate God for every sin that has ever been committed and will ever be committed by any and every person in the world.
- E. The sacrifice of the Lamb's sacrifice is sufficient to repay God for all wrongdoing.
- Every gross act of murder
  - Every species of sexual sin
  - Every form of theft and fraud
  - Every shade of idolatry
- F. What sin(s) rests on your conscience?  
—There is no sin that the Lamb's blood cannot erase. We only need to acknowledge our sins, that we need to be reconciled to God—and then trust in the Lamb's sacrifice to cleanse us from our sins.

## VIII. God's Lamb Has Appeared

***God's Lamb has appeared. He has stepped out from the mists of eternity, out of the pages of Scripture, to stand before us in time and space. And his appearance means that things are about to change, that things are already changing with or without our permission. The Lamb has come to set the captives free. He has offered himself as full payment for our debts. He has removed our sins from us. This is the King the prophets were talking about, the One whose appearance would level mountains and raise valleys—and he is a *lamb*, kind and gentle. The Lord comes as the Lamb who takes our sins away.***

## IX. Freedom with God

- A. *We are free to come to God*, to delight in God and dwell in his holy presence.
- Romans 8:1: “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”
  - Ephesians 2: Paul says that Christ “himself is our peace,” who has reconciled us “to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.”
  - Revelation 5:9-10  
*“Worthy are you to take the scroll  
and to open its seals,  
for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God  
from every tribe and language and people and nation,  
<sup>10</sup> and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God,  
and they shall reign on the earth.”*
- B. By removing our sins, the Lamb has made us into a new people that will live forever in the presence of God, a people that can actually begin to delight in God.

## X. The End of Revenge

- A. *We are freed from the need to seek revenge*, from having to demand that others suit our expectations, from having to stay angry and resentful.
- B. This is especially important for church life, because if there is anything that could break a church, it is anger, and the fruit that come from that: gossip, fault-finding, silent treatments, hatred, apathy, etc.
- C. Paul warns in Galatians 5:15, “But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.”
- D. If the Lamb of God has taken our sins away, what does this mean?
1. It means that you don’t have to stay angry.
  2. It means that you don’t have to resort to verbal attacks.
  3. If there is real sin involved, you should take it up with your brother or sister. —But you can also do so in humility and patience.
- E. If God himself is satisfied with the Lamb’s sacrifice, you can be as well.
- F. In sum, the appearance of the Lamb makes *forgiveness* in human relationships possible. Ephesians 4:32: “Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.”

## Questions for Reflection

1. What are three possible sources in the Old Testament from which John is getting his image? What are other possible sources?
2. What was the original meaning of the Passover lamb? Why is Jesus the new Passover lamb?
3. The Servant of the Lord is slaughtered like a lamb (Isa 53:7). How does Isaiah describe his work in relation to our sins (Isa 53:7-12)?
4. Which of these lamb- (or lamb-like) figures from the Old Testament is Jesus? Why is Jesus the “lamb of lambs”?
5. What does it mean to be cleansed by the Lamb? How does the Lamb’s sacrifice free us for God? How (and why) does it free us from the need to take revenge?
6. How can your sins be washed away by the blood of the Lamb? (Look back to John 1:12).
7. What changes are you going to make in your life, now that the Lamb has removed your sins? Ask God to show you where you need to change. Are there relationships that need mending? Are there people you need to forgive? Are there people you need to befriend? Ask him to give you the will and courage to change.