

John 1:29 | “Behold the Lamb!”

Preached on December 14, 2025 by Pastor Matt Brown

You can turn in your Bibles this morning to John 1:29, as we will be covering just one verse, yet looking at the surrounding context, too. *[pause]*

Now you might be wondering why we are in John, and not Ephesians, and the answer is that I’m taking a 2-week break from Ephesians to do a couple Christmas-themed sermons. *[pause]*

This week, we will be seeing how Christ’s coming leads to our atonement, and next week, we will see how Christ’s coming leads to our eternal life. *[pauseeeee]*

What would come to someone’s mind if the topic of ‘lambs’ came up? *[pause]*

Most likely, they would think of a gentle, farm animal.

So maybe they envision driving past a farm and seeing some lambs there—it’s a picturesque scene. *[pauseee]*

If they don’t think of driving past a farm when they think of lambs, maybe they think of a petting zoo.

They picture kids seeing, petting, or feeding little lambs, and it’s a cute image. *[pause]*

Or maybe they think of that nursery rhyme, “Mary Had a Little Lamb,” and they start singing it in their head. *[pause]*

Still others may say, “I don’t even really think much about lambs, so nothing really comes to mind.” *[pauseeee]*

Well for those steeped in the Old Testament in John the Baptist’s day, a lot of things came to mind when they thought of lambs. *[pause]*

When the topic of a lamb was spoken of in their hearing, it would be like how we open a file folder and there is so much info in there. *[pause]*

Their minds would immediately go to the theme of “sacrifice.” *[pause]*

They were to sacrifice a lamb at Passover, for it would remind them of how the angel of death passed over their ancestors’ houses, due to the blood of a lamb being on their doorposts.

Or they would think about the twice daily lamb sacrifices that were made for the people. *[pause]*

Everyday would be a reminder of lambs, for they were sacrificed regularly for the community. *[pauseeee]*

So while farms, petting zoos, and nursery rhymes come to our modern-day minds when we hear of lambs...

Those used to the Old Covenantal system would think of blood, sacrifice, and death. *[pause]*

But here's the thing—they wouldn't *only* think of those things, for they would also think of atonement, hope, and life.

It was through the blood, sacrifice, and death of a lamb that they knew that God provided a way to a relationship with Him. *[pauseeee]*

With all of that in mind, listen to how John the Baptist introduces Jesus here in John 1:29–30. *[READ]*

Before we get to the title of Jesus as the Lamb of God, let's see that...

I. The Lamb came!

Someone or something coming towards you can be a scary thing *or* a great thing, depending on who it is, what it is, and what their intention is. *[pause]*

If you see a bear coming towards you, it's typically a scary thing, for it's a bear! *[pause]*

Likewise, if you see a massive guy with his fists clenched and an angry look on his face, coming towards you, then you'd probably start to get nervous.

But if a loved one comes towards you, it's usually a great thing, and it brings you joy. *[pause]*

It means they are drawing near to be close to you, hug you, spend time with you, or something like that. *[pauseeee]*

Well here in John 1:29, we see Jesus coming towards John the Baptist, and it brought John joy! *[pause]*

It was Jesus' identity and intention that made all the difference to John. *[pause]*

Here was Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, coming towards him—how could he *not* find joy?

And in that moment, his mouth could only exclaim who Jesus was. *[pauseee]*

Likewise, when we truly come to know who Jesus is, and see that He came to us, how can we not exult in Him? *[pauseeeee]*

When you think about it—Jesus came towards John, but He could only do that because He first came into the world. *[pause]*

You look a little bit before verse 29, up in the beginning of the chapter, and you hear about all how Jesus is the Word, who “became flesh and dwelt among us.”¹ *[pause]*

¹ John 1:14.

He is said to be the true light, who “was coming into the world.”² and so “came to his own.”³
[pause]

John even makes this clear when he says in verse 30, “This is he of whom I said, ‘After me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was *before me*.’” *[pauseeee]*

So the One who was coming towards John the Baptist is the One who came first from Heaven to Earth. *[pauseeee]*

Although John the Baptist was a godly man, Jesus ranked higher than him for He has always existed...

He is the preeminent and supreme One above everyone else. *[pauseeee]*

You see, Jesus isn’t *only* a lamb to be slaughtered, but He is the eternally existing Son of God, who came. *[pauseeee]*

To think that the glorious, always-existing Son of God came to us is a marvel. *[pause]*

He didn’t *only* come towards John the Baptist, but before that, He came towards us in His incarnation.

And that means that, in a way, He has come towards *you* in His incarnation. *[pauseeee]*

You may feel unloved and neglected by many people, for people don’t always come towards you in loving care, but know that Christ came towards you in love and mercy...

He proved it with His birth! *[pauseeee]*

He came towards you in your need, and even before you recognized your need, so find joy in His coming! *[pause]*

May this Christmas season continually remind you that He came, He came, He came!

Like John the Baptist, rejoice in His coming and His identity. *[pauseeee]*

As I said earlier, someone or something coming towards you can be a scary thing *or* a great thing, depending on who it is, and what their intention is.

Well Jesus’ coming towards us is the greatest thing because of who *He* is, and what *His* intention was. *[pauseeee]*

He is the eternal Word, who became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth.

And His intentions weren’t to harm us, but to save us, for He, the Lamb of God, came! *[pauseeee]*

² John 1:9.

³ John 1:11.

So the Lamb came, but it's more than that, for...

II. The Lamb came with a monumental purpose!

We do things and go places with a purpose. *[pauseee]*

If I see you at the grocery store, and ask you, “Why are you here?” I highly doubt you will say, “I have no idea.”

Instead, you'd say that you were there for the purpose of buying certain groceries. *[pausee]*

If you are walking down the street, you do it with a purpose.

Either you are trying to get somewhere, get some exercise, or relax a little bit with a leisurely stroll. *[pause]*

We all do things with purpose; we are driven by reasons, intents, and goals.

Well when you think about Jesus' coming, He certainly did it with purpose. *[pause]*

And here's the thing: it was no small or trivial purpose, but He had a monumental purpose. [pauseeee]

John says, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” *[pauseee]*

Consider the first word that John says, “Behold.” [pause]

When someone says, “Behold,” it's because they are drawing attention to something, so as to get people to look and see it.

It's a way of emphasizing or highlighting the presence of something. [pauseeee]

If I talked all about how good my wife's bread was, and then I had some of her bread nearby, I might bring it to you and say, “Behold, here's the bread that I was talking about!”

It's like I'm saying, “Here is it!” [pause]

Well that's what John is doing by saying, “Behold”—he's highlighting and pointing out Jesus as the Lamb of God.

He doesn't want people to miss Him, but really pay attention and look. [pauseeee]

May you pay attention and not miss this Jesus.

Behold, this Jesus spoken of in the gospel of John is truly the Lamb of God. [pauseeee]

So many people go throughout their lives hearing about Jesus, but not beholding Him. *[pause]*

They may know some facts, but they don't truly *know* Him and behold Him with eyes of faith. [pause]

They are so concerned with all the things of this world that they do not behold the One who made the world and then came into the world. [pause]

They are so focused on all the bright lights of Christmas that they do not behold the True Light of whom Christmas is all about. [pauseeee]

This Christmas season may we not be so overtaken with beholding all of the Christmasy things that we do not actually behold Christ. [pauseeeee]

Not only should we behold Christ ourselves, but we should then be like John the Baptist, saying, "Behold!" as we point *others* to see Christ. [pause]

That's what I want to do this very morning, I want you to behold the Lamb! [pause]

May we all be like John, saying to others, "Look, that's Him!" so that the world would know the Savior.

For there's no one greater to behold, and when you truly see Him for who He is, it makes an eternal difference. [pauseeee]

So John says, "Behold," but then he shares an interesting title for Jesus, as he calls Him, "the Lamb of God." [pauseeee]

Do you understand what it means for Jesus to be called this?

Many in our day do not understand why Jesus is called the Lamb of God. [pause]

One commentator tells of a time that he asked one Christian why Jesus was called, "the Lamb of God," and the answer was, "Because Jesus is gentle and nice."⁴ [pauseee]

Is that really *all* it means? Certainly not. [pauseeee]

Earlier, I shared briefly how those steeped in the Old Testament would immediately "get" this image of a lamb, but let me revisit it...

Jesus being the Lamb of God brings up a reminder of the story of Abraham offering up Isaac on the altar. [pause]

When Isaac wonders where the lamb is for the sacrifice, Abraham responds with, "God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son."⁵

⁴ Gary M. Burge, *John, The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 85.

⁵ Genesis 22:8.

And then when Abraham is about to sacrifice Isaac, God steps in and provides a ram in the place of Isaac. *[pauseeee]*

The Passover lamb also comes to mind...

In Egypt, Israel had to kill a lamb and spread its blood on the doorposts, so that the angel of death would pass over their house, and they could live.⁶

It was by a lamb's death that they could be saved. *[pauseeee]*

The daily morning and evening sacrifices used lambs, and so lambs would remind them of sacrifice.

And then Isaiah 53 talks of a suffering servant who is "like a lamb that is led to the slaughter,"⁷ and it's He who is "pierced for our transgressions...[and] crushed for our iniquities."⁸ *[pauseeee]*

So when John the Baptist calls Jesus the Lamb of God, he's saying more than that Jesus is simply gentle and nice.

He's pointing to His work of atonement, and that's why he adds that this Lamb "takes away the sin of the world." *[pauseeee]*

The purpose of Christ the Lamb is to take away sins. *[pause]*

This was the purpose of the sacrifice of lambs in the Old Testament: it was to cover and so atone for the sin of the people. *[pauseeee]*

The lamb was a substitute for them, and so died on their behalf. *[pause]*

The ram in the thicket died instead of Isaac.

The Passover lamb died so that the Israelites could live.

So Christ the Lamb goes on all the way to cross and dies in our place to atone for our sins, so that we can be forgiven and live! *[pauseeee]*

Like Israel needed lambs to die instead of them, so we needed a Lamb—the ultimate, perfect, sinless, once-for-all Lamb to die for us to take away our sins. *[pauseeee]*

We were unable to take away our sins on our own, for we all sinned against God, and sin deserves judgment and death. *[pause]*

There was no way to merit forgiveness and to wipe our slate clean ourselves, instead, we stood before the holy God as guilty and sinful. *[pauseeee]*

⁶ A reference to Exodus 12.

⁷ Isaiah 53:7.

⁸ Isaiah 53:5.

God can't just say, "It's all good that you sinned against me. I'll just ignore that it happened."

That would make God unjust and unholy, so our sin problem had to be dealt with. *[pauseeee]*

What we needed was something *outside* of ourselves—what we needed was a substitute, who would take our place, like the Passover lamb that was sacrificed. *[pauseeee]*

It's Christ, who takes away sin. *[pause]*

It's by Him that we have been ransomed, for 1 Peter tells us, we were ransomed "with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot."⁹ *[pauseeeee]*

All those who can hear my voice: know that Jesus is the Lamb of God, who takes away sin.

He came for that very purpose! *[pauseeee]*

That's why He was born in a manger, lived a perfect life, and went to die on the cross at Calvary—He came to take away our sins. *[pauseeee]*

We had a sin problem before God, and Jesus is the sin-problem-solver.

It's in Him and *only* through Him that one can have their sins "taken away."

So truly, as 1 Corinthians 15 says, "Christ died *for our sins*"!¹⁰ *[pauseeee]*

You must trust in Him as your substitute, who died in your place, so that you can be forgiven and live eternally. *[pause]*

When you trust in Him, your account is wiped clean before God, as you are now counted as forgiven, righteous, clean. *[pause]*

You can stand before God with no more sin credited to your account, but be deemed holy in His sight, due to Christ. *[pauseeee]*

Oh, what a comforting, fear-relieving truth to think of—our sins can be taken away! *[pauseeee]*

To think that sinners can have their sins before God removed is astonishing.

We certainly don't deserve it, but there's a way, and it's through Jesus, the Lamb of God, who was sacrificed in our place. *[pauseeee]*

Our sins were placed on Him, as He paid for them there, and so we do not stand condemned in our sins anymore, if we place our faith in Him. *[pauseeee]*

What love, what grace, what mercy for Christ to come to us, knowing full well what His task was, for He was born in Bethlehem to be the Lamb of God. *[pause]*

⁹ 1 Peter 1:19.

¹⁰ 1 Corinthians 15:3 (italics was added by me).

He was sent to be a sacrifice. *[pause]*

He came to be killed. *[pause]*

He was born to bleed for us. *[pauseeee]*

In the title, ‘the Lamb of God,’ we don’t only see some things about Jesus, but we also see something about God the Father. *[pauseeee]*

Think about why Jesus is called, “the Lamb of God.” *[pause]*

It’s because Jesus is God the Father’s Lamb that He gave to be sacrificed for us. *[pause]*

As John 3:16 talks about: God “gave His only Son,” and Romans 8:32 says that the Father gave up His Son for us all. *[pauseeee]*

Under the Old Covenant, the people had to bring their own lamb and have it sacrificed, but not so with Christ...

Like the ram in the thicket given to take the place of Isaac, so God provided for Himself the Lamb for the offering.¹¹ *[pause]*

The Lord provided the Lamb! *[pauseeee]*

You see, the Lord’s justice *demand*s atonement for our sin, and the Lord’s grace *provid*es for it. *[pause]*

So not only can our sins be taken away—that in itself is a wonder, but our sins are taken away because of God’s own initiative and provision. *[pauseeee]*

We deserved to die...

And so we brought only our sinful selves, where we ought to be judged, face God’s wrath, and die forever without Him, for we sinned against the perfectly good and holy God.

Yet in matchless grace and mercy...

It’s like God takes us down from that place of condemnation and puts His own Lamb, His very Son, Jesus, up on the cross, and says, “He shall take your place.” *[pauseeee]*

And the thing is that Jesus did it willingly...

He was, “Like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.”¹² *[pause]*

¹¹ See Genesis 22:8, 13–14.

¹² Isaiah 53:7.

We brought our sin to the table, but God brought His beloved Lamb, whose precious blood is worth more than silver or gold.¹³ [pauseeeee]

Jesus is the Lamb of God, who takes away sin. [pause]

That statement covers *most* of what John said, but not all, for John the Baptist says, “takes away the sin of *the world*.” [pause]

So ‘the world’ is the “recipient” of the Lamb’s sacrifice. [pauseeee]

Now some people misinterpret this verse by saying, “This means that everyone’s sins are forgiven, for look, He takes away the sin of the world!”

But that’s not true—it doesn’t mean that automatically every single person in the world’s sin is taken away. [pause]

This verse doesn’t mean that everyone is forgiven automatically, but that atonement is provided for everyone, *if they would believe*. [pauseeee]

Look no further than John 3:16, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, *that whoever believes in him* should not perish but have eternal life.” [pause]

Or just a little earlier in John 1, we are told that there are people who do not receive Him, but those *who receive Him* are given “the right to become children of God.”¹⁴ [pauseeee]

So by saying that Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, God is showing us that Jesus’ sacrifice isn’t only for Jews. [pause]

It’s not only for a certain group based on your race, nation, or gender.

But through Him, *anyone* in the world who believes in Him, can have their sins taken away. [pauseeee]

Jesus isn’t the Lamb of God for the Jewish nation only.

He’s the Lamb of God, whose atoning work is available to the whole world. [pause]

Talk about something of global significance!

God wasn’t concerned only with Israel’s sin, but with the world’s sin.

Jesus “gave himself as a ransom for all,”¹⁵ and is “the Savior of the world.”¹⁶ [pauseeee]

Rejoice! Atonement through Christ is available to anyone!

¹³ A reference to 1 Peter 1:18–19.

¹⁴ John 1:12.

¹⁵ 1 Timothy 2:5.

¹⁶ 1 John 4:14.

It doesn't matter your race, gender, nationality, or past—God reaches out His gracious hand to all to find forgiveness through Christ, the Lamb of God. *[pauseee]*

I love this quote found in the commentary of Jamieson, Fausset, & Brown, as it says...

“Wherever there shall live a sinner throughout the wide world, sinking under that burden too heavy for him to bear, he shall find in this “Lamb of God,” a shoulder equal to the weight.”¹⁷
[pauseeee]

If you have never trusted in Him and what He did on the cross, do so today, knowing that your sins can be taken away through Christ's death on your behalf. *[pause]*

Do not keep putting it off, but behold the Lamb and believe in Him! *[pause]*

He came, died, and then rose again, so that anyone who calls upon His name shall be saved!¹⁸
[pauseeee]

Without a doubt, Jesus came as the Lamb of God with a monumental purpose. *[pause]*

He didn't come to boast or to show off. *[pause]*

He didn't come to merely scold us and leave, instead...

Jesus came as the Lamb of God to take away sin!

Around Christmas, there are a lot of nativity scenes. *[pause]*

In those nativity scenes, you (of course) have Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. *[pause]*

Sometimes you will find shepherds or magi, and then sometimes you even have some animals, like lambs around the manger. *[pauseeee]*

I was thinking about those lambs around the manger, and that *may* have been the case when Jesus was born.

But this I know for sure—there was a Lamb there, but He wasn't *around* the manger, He was *in* it. *[pauseeee]*

He may not look like a lamb, for He's not a literal animal, but He is the Lamb, for He's “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.” *[pauseeee]*

As John the Baptist calls us to do: behold Him! *[pause]*

See Him for who He is, look at His grace, His mercy, and love. *[pause]*

¹⁷ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*, vol. 2 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), 129.

¹⁸ A reference to Romans 10:13.

Recognize the Father's grace and provision through Him. *[pause]*

See His sinless innocence, see His substitutionary death, and see His atoning work that takes away our sin. *[pauseeee]*

Behold Him in joy, as you think of Him in the manger. *[pause]*

Behold Him in gratefulness, as you think of Him on the cross. *[pause]*

And behold Him in awe, as you think of how He conquered death. *[pauseeee]*

May we all with praise-filled hearts behold the Lamb, and lead others to behold Him, too.