

The Gospel Of John

ICEBREAKER

What family traditions did you experience growing up? Do you still do them today?

CONTEXT

In this passage, we find John the Baptist on day two of his testimony with another group of Jews. His proclamation of “Behold! The Lamb of God” launches this section with vivid imagery of the Old Testament sacrificial system that provides them (and us) with a clear picture of who Jesus is and what He has come to do.

PASSAGE

John 1:29-34

DISCUSS

John the Baptist refers to Jesus as the Lamb of God. Using a lamb for sacrifice would have been a familiar illustration to the Jews listening to John’s testimony. Read the following passages and discuss the message that John was trying to convey. How do these examples point to Jesus’ purpose? (Gen. 22:1-14; Ex. 12:1-13; Isaiah 53:6-7)

DISCUSS CONTINUED

Empowered by the Holy Spirit, we are made right with God and enabled to live out His calling on our life. What is something that God is asking you to be obedient to this week?

Does the ritual of bringing a lamb to the slaughter for the atonement of sin seem unjust? Why or why not? What does this say about the justice of God? What does this say about God’s mercy?

What is revealed about the sacrifices the priests offer compared to what Jesus offers through his sacrifice? Read Hebrews 10:11-12

John the Baptist states that he didn’t know who Jesus was but that he knew his purpose was to make him known in vs. 30-34. Share a time when you had faith in God to respond in obedience, like John’s example in this passage. Did your obedience work out the way you expected? Why or why not?

NEXT STEPS

Empowered by the Holy Spirit, we are made right with God and enabled to live out His calling on our life. What is something that God is asking you to be obedient to this week?

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCE

Greg Gilbert, *What is the Gospel?*

“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” That’s what John the Baptist, the camel-skin-clad, locust-eating prophet, said when he saw Jesus coming toward him (John 1:29). What did he mean? The Lamb of God? Taking away the sin of the world?

Every first-century Jew would have known immediately what John meant by “the Lamb of God taking away sin.” It was a reference to the Jewish festival of the Passover, a memorial of God’s Miraculous deliverance of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt some fifteen hundred years earlier.

As judgment against the Egyptians, God had sent ten plagues on them, and each time the Egyptian king hardened his heart and refused to let the people go. The last of the plagues was the most terrible of all. God told the Israelites that on an appointed night, an angel of death would sweep through the land of Egypt, killing every firstborn child and animal in the country. That horrible judgment would include the Israelites, too – unless they carefully obeyed God’s instructions. God told each family to take a lamb without any defect or blemish and kill it. Then using a branch of hyssop, they were to put some of the blood around the doorframe of their house. Then, God promised, when the angel of death saw the blood, he would “pass over” that house and spare it the judgment of death.

The Passover feast – and especially the Passover lamb – became a powerful symbol of the idea that the penalty of death for one’s sins could be paid by the death of another. This idea of “penal substitution,” in fact, grounded the entire system of Old Testament sacrifices. On the annual Day of Atonement, the high priest went into the center of the temple, known as the Most Holy Place, and killed an unblemished animal as payment for the people’s sins. Year after year this happened, and year after year the penalty for the people’s sins was deferred yet again by the blood of the lamb.

It took time, but eventually, the followers of Jesus realized that his mission was not just to inaugurate the kingdom of God, but to do so by dying as a substitutionary sacrifice for his people. Jesus was not the King, they realized. He was the suffering King.