

AM John 1:19-36 & Revelation 5 Behold the Lamb

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[0:00] Scriptures and our reading at this stage in the service is John chapter 1 verse 19-36.

! We're going to take a break from that series and we're going to look particularly at that verse that I've spoken about to the children, Behold the Lamb of God.

But to set it in its context I'll read from John 1 verse 19. And this is the testimony of John.

When the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask you, Who are you? He confessed and did not deny but confessed, I am not the Christ.

And they asked him, What then? Are you Elijah? And he said, I am not. Are you the prophet? And he answered, No.

[1:23] So they said to him, Who are you? We need to give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?

He said, I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness. Make straight the way of the Lord. As the prophet Isaiah said.

Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. They asked him, Then why are you baptizing?

If you are neither the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the prophet? John answered them, I baptize with water. But among you stands one you do not know.

And he who comes, Even he who comes after me, The strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie. These things took place in Bethany across the Jordan, Where John was baptizing.

[2:27] The next day he saw Jesus coming towards him, And said, Behold the Lamb of God, Who takes away the sin of the world.

This is he of whom I said, After me comes a man who ranks before me, Because he was before me. I myself did not know him.

But for this purpose I came, Baptizing with water, That he might be revealed to Israel. And John bore witness.

I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, And it remained on him. I myself did not know him, But he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, This is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.

And I have seen and have borne witness That this is the Son of God. Let's come again before the Lord in prayer.

[3:43] Well let's turn now to John's Gospel, Chapter 1, And verse 29.

The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, And said, Behold the Lamb of God, Who takes away the sin of the world.

When someone important enters the room, There is often someone to announce his arrival.

I watched recently on TV, The President of America, Donald Trump, Giving his State of the Union address.

And at the beginning, There is a man who stands in the doorway, And says, The President of the United States. And in he comes. Well, Here is a very important person, Arriving on the scene.

[5:09] Far more important than President Trump. And John the Baptist denounces him with these famous words, Behold, The Lamb.

Now these words have been treasured, And talked about ever since. Great composers have set them to music, Usually in Latin.

I promised the children some Latin. Some of them are learning Latin. The Latin for Lamb of God, Who takes away the sin of the world, Is Agnos Dei, Quittolis Peccata Mundi.

And you'll find many composers, Have set those words to music. Because they're wonderful words. In these few words, John sums up the Gospel.

This is the main purpose of Christ's coming. To take away our sins, By his sacrifice on the cross.
[6:30] And it is that which we remember today, In the Communion. I want us to consider this famous saying, Under two headings, Who Christ is, And what he's done.

First, as always though, Let's just notice the background. John the Baptist has been Preaching in the wilderness for some while. Multitudes have been coming, And have been baptized by him. John says, It was at Bethany, Across the Jordan. Some translations have Bethabara. You can go there today, And it is a very wild place.

John was a very wild man. Matthew tells us that he wore a garment of camel's hair, And a leather belt around his waist, And his food was locusts and wild honey.

And he was preaching, Repent, For the kingdom of God is at hand. And people were asking, Who is this?

[7:55] John describes here a delegation of priests and Levites, Who come and ask him, Who are you? Are you the Christ? And John says, No. I am the voice of one, Crying out in the wilderness, Make straight the paths of the Lord.

Quoting from Isaiah chapter 40. But the Christ is coming. It tells them plainly in verse 26, I baptize with water.

But among you stands one who you do not know, Even he who comes after me, The strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie. The Lord is right there among them.

And the next day, He sees him walking towards him. Comparing this account with Matthew, Mark and Luke, It would seem that Jesus has already been baptized at this point, And has already gone away into the wilderness, For the 40 days and 40 nights of temptation.

And has now returned. I say that because John has him in Cana of Galilee, Just three days later. It seems therefore that these words are spoken as Jesus is just about, To begin his ministry.

[9:36] John is announcing the ministry of Christ, Just as it begins. So let's consider that great announcement in verse 29.

And first, who he is? Behold, the Lamb of God. That word behold usually announces something wonderful, Something that deserves special attention.

At the birth of Jesus, The angel says to the shepherds, Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, Which will be to all people.

For unto you is born this day in the city of David, A Saviour who is Christ the Lord. Well, now at the beginning of his ministry, John says, Behold, The Lamb of God.

So at Bethlehem, Behold, The Saviour is born. At Bethabara, Behold, The Saviour is here.

[10:49] Now, to people today, Unless they know their Bible, Behold, The Lamb of God, Might seem a very strange thing to say.

If a man walked through the door right now, And I were to say to you, Look, A lamb. You'd look at me slightly bewildered, And you'd say, No, no, that's not a lamb, That's a man.

What does it mean? It's lambing season right now, And we have the lambs all around us, Especially those of you who are up on the farm.

And we think of them as rather delightful little creatures. But to the Jews, There was a deeper significance. Because every day in the temple, Lambs were offered As a sacrifice for sin.

So they would have understood perfectly What John was saying. Many Old Testament passages Might have come into their minds.

[12:07] They might perhaps have thought of Abraham, Genesis 22, As Abraham trudged up the mountain With his son Isaac, With instructions from God To offer up his son.

Isaac asks in all innocence, Behold the fire and the wood, But where is the lamb For a burnt offering? And Abraham answered enigmatically, God will provide for himself The lamb.

That incidentally is the first time That the word lamb is used in the Bible. Although of course, Right back to the beginning, Abel offered the firstlings of the flock.

God did actually provide a ram Caught in a thicket in place of Isaac. Well, God has now provided The true lamb.

The lamb of God Who will die in our place. Or they might have thought of those daily sacrifices.

[13:22] Exodus 29, 39 One lamb you shall offer in the morning And the other lamb you shall offer at twilight. Every day. Millions of them Had been sacrificed.

If those priests and Levites From the previous day Were still there, Then they must surely Have thought of that. Because they were the ones Who offered up Those daily sacrifices.

I think above all, They will have thought of the Passover. We know from chapter 2 and verse 13 That Passover was approaching. Would have been lambing season in Israel also at that time.

But more important, Last year's lambs Were being prepared For the sacrifice at Passover. Exodus 12 When God brought Israel out of Egypt The last of the plagues upon Egypt Was the death of the firstborn.

God commanded that each Israelite household Was to sacrifice a lamb. A perfect, unblemished lamb One year old.

[14:46] They were to put the blood on the doorposts And the lintels of their house. And they would be spared. When the firstborn of Egypt died, God promised, When I see the blood I will pass over.

And every year They were to reenact That sacrifice As a reminder How God had redeemed them Out of Egypt. Very soon These crowds Who were listening to John Would be Choosing their lambs Or buying their lambs To offer up For the Passover.

But what was Passover all about? It was to prepare them For Christ The perfect, unblemished Lamb of God Whose blood must be shed As a sacrifice for us To redeem us From the slavery Of sin.

He is the true Passover lamb As Paul says Christ our Passover Is sacrificed for us. Being out in the wilderness They might also have thought Of the day of atonement When a goat Was sent out into the wilderness The scapegoat Bearing away Taking away The sins Of Israel Admittedly a goat Not a lamb But it was the same idea They should certainly Have thought of Isaiah 53 In verse 7 He was led as a lamb To the slaughter John had described His own ministry In terms of Isaiah's prophecy No doubt he'd quoted Isaiah Often in his preaching Well here Right in front of them Was the lamb That Isaiah That Isaiah Had prophesied He is The lamb Of God Notice Not just A lamb But the lamb The only One there is The only one There ever Needs to be And he's the lamb Of God Because He's the lamb That God Has provided The lambs That Israel Had provided Over the centuries Millions of them Could never Take away sin They were Only ever A symbol Of the one True lamb Who stood Before them Now Now that he Had come Those Old Testament Sacrifices Were no longer Necessary The Jews Did in fact Continue them For another Forty years Until the temple Was destroyed But it wasn't Necessary Those words

[17:50] Behold the lamb Of God Marked the end Of the Old Testament System Of sacrifice Those priests And Levites Were about To be put Out of a job No more lambs Were needed The lamb Of God Had come But what exactly Will he do John says He takes away The sin Of the world And each phrase Is significant There First he Takes away Our sin He removes It from us Completely When Christ Died on the cross He bore Our sins In his own Body On the tree Suffering God's judgment For us They're gone Now And they will Never be Returned To us As that 103rd

Psalm says As far as The east Is from The west So far Does he Remove Our transgression From us Micah 7 You will Cast all Our sins Into the Depths Of the sea And as Someone has Said Put up a Sign saying No fishing I hesitate To use This Illustration But Think about The bin Men Taking away Our rubbish We don't Want it In the house But the bin Men come And they take it away And they dispose of it And we never See it again Well sin Is like so much Rubbish In our lives And Christ Has come And taken it All away From us If I could Press that illustration A little further How surprised we would be If we saw that The king Had come To take away Our rubbish What amazing Humility And what if we Then learned That it had Cost him His life To do so Well Christ The king Of kings Has humbled Himself Come down And died To take away Our sins And this is Exactly what These crowds Needed And they knew It Remember Why they'd Come Okay some Of them Perhaps had Only come Out of curiosity To see this Wild man In the desert But most Of them I'm sure Had a real Concern For their Souls The kingdom Of God Was at hand And they Wanted to be Ready And they Were worried About their Sins And they Wanted to Be cleansed John Rightly Told them To repent And be Baptized

And that is what they'd done but baptism was only a symbol of cleansing who would actually cleanse them sin was a great burden to them and they desperately wanted it taken away well here is the great burden bearer who would take away their sins I hope that you too are concerned about your soul so many today are not concerned about their souls their bodies yes but not their souls conviction of sin is rare today isn't it I suppose we shouldn't be surprised at that if people don't believe in God why should they care about offending God they may feel regret over past mistakes may even feel remorse over having hurt people but that's it there's no real sense of sin today and even Christians often seem to care about happiness more than holiness and treat sin lightly if you don't care about sin then you won't care about Christ taking away your sin if that's you may the spirit of God convict you and open your eyes but if you do feel your sin here is the answer the Lamb of God who takes away our sin and notice it's present tense he takes away our sin continually he died for sins once once forever but our experience of that is a continual experience as often as we sin there is forgiveness there which is just what we need notice

[22:51] Also he takes away our sin the word is singular implying the whole body of sin all of it Christ is not selective in which sins he will forgive there are no sins too great that he's unable or unwilling to forgive there are no sins too small that he refuses to be bothered with all sin the entire horrible mass of it is taken away if I could take up my bin man illustration again there are some things that the bin men won't take away large items dangerous items there is nothing that Christ will not take away what about the unforgivable sin you might say well Jesus does speak about an unforgivable

Sin Matthew 12 but that I believe is the final total rejection of Christ reject the sin bearer and there's no other sacrifice for sin but trust in him and all your sin will be forgiven finally he takes away the sin of the world now that can't mean that everyone in the world will be saved John himself says elsewhere!

That the chaff will be burned with unquenchable fire some will be lost seems best to take it as meaning all nations the Passover lamb was for Israel the daily sacrifices were for Israel but Christ is the saviour not just of Israel but of the whole world the crowds that day were mostly Jews of course but maybe even that day there were a few Gentiles Luke mentions the soldiers Roman soldiers perhaps how glad they would be to know that Christ was their saviour too very soon the gospel would go out into all the world and nation after nation including Scotland would find Christ is our saviour the Jews

themselves should have rejoiced in that that their Messiah saves the world how wonderful and they should have expected it too it's there in Isaiah chapter 45 verse 22 turn to me and be saved all the ends of the earth this especially impressed John who was there remember the apostle John and he mentions it repeatedly in his writings John 3 God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son the world John 4 the Samaritans say this is indeed the saviour of the world John 9 Jesus says I am the light of the world 1 John 2 verse 2 he is the propitiation for our sins and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world Revelation 5

All heaven breaks out in praise for the Lamb who has ransomed people from every tribe and language and people Revelation 7 great multitude no man can tribes and languages crying out salvation belongs to the God our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb you see the whole world saved by that one sacrifice on the cross and this should be precious to us here in Dumfries even within our little congregation Scots and English and Irish Brazilian and Iranian whatever we are Christ is our saviour too well John goes on to say more about Christ he tells them how God revealed all this

[27:29] By a sign the spirit descending upon him like a dove he tells us how Christ will baptize with the spirit he says plainly this is the son of God wonderful things but there's nothing more wonderful than this and the next day John returns to that same thing behold the Lamb we'll shortly be coming to communion where we remember that Lamb if you're not a believer or you're not sure then of course you cannot take the bread and the wine but don't remain in that state forever there is salvation full and free for you as well if you will only trust in the Lamb but if

you Are a Believer Come With Thankfulness

In your Heart Come Believing That all Your sin Has been Forgiven Don't Hesitate Because of Some Sin That is Upon Your Conscience In your Heart Confess That sin Now Right Now And it Will be Forgiven Well may These wonderful Words of John Rest in Our hearts Behold The Lamb Of God Who takes Away The sin Of the World Remember The Lamb And rejoice In so Great a Salvation And so Great a Saviour To