

Further up, Further in

Resources for Continued Study



LOOKOUT
MOUNTAIN
Presbyterian Church

“BEHOLD THE LAMB”

For individual study or group discussion

John 1:29–34 calls us to **Behold the Lamb**. In today’s passage there is a clear scene change from John 1:19–28. According to theologian Edward Klink, John the Baptist’s testimony, which had been directed toward the Jewish leadership, now expands to a witness before all Israel: “*The voice of the prophet did not cease to be needed. The Word-in-flesh still needed a witness.*”¹ As soon as Jesus appears, John the Baptist introduces him with a redemptive title, “*Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!*” (v. 29). Right at the beginning of his Gospel, John announces Jesus’ mission: acting as a penal substitute in order to reconcile humanity with God.

We are called to behold Jesus, the reconciling and revealed Lamb. (vv. 29–31)

First, we behold Jesus as the reconciling and revealed Lamb. John points beyond the hopes for a martial Messiah who will deliver Israel from the tyranny of Rome to a Messiah who will deliver his people from the tyranny of sin. Drawing from Isaiah 53 and the Passover lamb, the Baptist proclaims a suffering Messiah who redeems by substitution. John baptizes so that this Lamb might be revealed to Israel (v. 31), and through Israel, to the rest of the world.

- The word “*Behold*” means to fix your gaze upon something significant. Read John 19:14. How does the Baptist’s call to “*Behold, the Lamb of God*” at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry prepare you to understand Pilate’s declaration, “*Behold your King!*” at the cross? What does this reveal about Jesus’ identity and how we are called to see him?
- In the first chapter of John, there are seven different names that describe Jesus. In today’s passage, John the Baptist speaks the first name by identifying Jesus as “*the Lamb of God*” (v. 29). Read Exodus 12:1–13. Why might “*Lamb of God*” be the first name given to Jesus in John’s Gospel and why is it significant? (cf. Exodus 29:38–39; Leviticus 17:11; Hebrews 9:22)
- John the Baptist says in verse 30, “*After me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was before me.*” How does this relate to John 1:1–5? What is John trying to teach us about Jesus’ identity?

We are called to behold Jesus, the Spirit-empowered and Spirit-giving Son. (vv. 32–34)

Second, we behold Jesus as the Spirit-empowered and Spirit-giving Son. John the Baptist testifies that he saw the Holy Spirit descend and remain on Jesus, fulfilling many OT prophecies (cf. Isaiah 11:1–2; 42:1; 44:3; and 61:1). The Baptist goes on to say that Jesus will baptize with the Holy Spirit (v. 33). Jesus’ substitutionary atonement meant that the God-man would die on the cross, offering himself up as the ultimate sacrifice, “*like a lamb that is led to the slaughter*” (Isaiah 53:7). As pastor and theologian John Piper contends, “*If Jesus were not first the Lamb of God who takes away sin by dying, he could never be the baptizer who gives the Spirit by rising.*”²

- Read Isaiah 11:1–2 and Isaiah 42:1. The OT expectation was that the Messiah would be marked by God’s Spirit descending and resting on him. What does the Spirit remaining on Jesus teach us about his identity?
- Read Romans 6:23a. What do we deserve as the penalty for sin? According to Mark 10:45 and 14:24, how does Jesus understand and communicate his purpose and mission? (cf. Hebrews 9:24–26)

DATE: January 4, 2026

SPEAKER: Chad/Frank

SERIES: The Gospel of John

PASSAGE: John 1:29–34

Family Dinner Table

Agnus Dei (Lamb of God)

During the Reformation, one of the most beloved songs of the church was the *Agnus Dei (Lamb of God)*. For centuries it had been sung in Latin by choirs, but Martin Luther translated it into German so the whole congregation could sing: “*O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, that takest away the sin of the world.*” His goal was simple: God’s people should not merely hear about Christ’s sacrifice, they should behold it, confess it, and sing it together.

In John 1:29–34, John the Baptist points at Jesus and says, “*Behold, the Lamb of God.*” He reveals Jesus as the reconciling Lamb who takes away sin, not just for Israel, but for the world. Then he testifies that this same Lamb is the Spirit-anointed Son of God who gives the Holy Spirit to his people. For centuries, *Agnus Dei* has been sung by the church as a hymn that echoes John’s witness. Its words remind us to look away from ourselves, to behold the Lamb who reconciles us by his blood and renews us by his Spirit.

- Read Ezekiel 36:25–27 and 2 Corinthians 5:18–19. How do these passages help you understand the substitutionary atonement of Jesus Christ and shape the way you live as one who has been reconciled to God?
- To read more about the history of the hymn, *Agnus Dei*, check out this website, Hymnary.org or read Robin A. Leaver’s book, Luther’s Liturgical Music.

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¹ Klink, Edward W. *Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*. 2016. Grand Rapids, MI. Zondervan. 132–33, 139

² Piper, John. *Behold the Lamb of God*. November 16, 2008. DesiringGod.org. <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/behold-the-lamb-of-god>