

Read: John 1:29-41

The Lamb of God

John 1:29

The next day, John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look! The Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Today, let's take an imaginary visit to a really old church from the Bible. It was called a tabernacle, and later the temple. There was an altar. On it, animals were sacrificed. During the thousand-year history of God's people of Israel, how many animals were sacrificed on that altar? Hundreds of thousands of animals, if not millions. So many that you lose count. Does the thought of that altar make you sad?

Why would God want his people to sacrifice so many animals? He did it to teach them some very important lessons.

The first lesson that God wanted to teach his people is that death is very serious. Death is the end result of sin. If an Israelite sinned, they would bring an animal to the temple where it would be killed. The two go together: if there's sin, there has to be death.

But the second lesson that God wanted to teach his people is that even though there has to be death, it doesn't have to be your own death. If an Israelite sinned, an animal could be killed as a substitute. The animal would take your place.

There was a problem with all those lambs offered at the temple. They didn't actually have the power to take sin away. The blood of millions of lambs isn't worth enough to pay for even one sin.

Those sacrifices pointed ahead to Jesus, just like John the Baptist pointed at Jesus and said, “Look! The Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”

When Jesus went to the cross, all of the world's sins were put on him. When Jesus sacrificed himself on the cross, his blood was valuable enough to pay for all those sins.

So yes, because of your sin, there had to be death, but because of Jesus, it didn't have to be your death. He loved you so much that he was willing to die for you, in your place, as your substitute.

Because Jesus died for you, you get to live for him now. Because the Lamb of God died for you, you get to live with him forever.

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for the Younger Children

- In today's devotion, you heard of an altar in a temple. What happened on that altar that might have made you sad?
- What makes us happy is the word "substitute." What is a substitute? How is Jesus your substitute?

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- Read Isaiah 53:4-9. How do those verses add to the idea of Jesus being the Lamb of God (the sacrifice)?
- How do those verses add to the idea of Jesus being our substitute?

Questions for Middle School and Above

- How might you respond to someone who doesn't like the Bible focus on bloody sacrifices?
- Why don't we offer animal sacrifices anymore? Check out Hebrews 9.

Closing Prayer:

Jesus, Lamb of God, have mercy on us and give us your peace. Amen.