

The Lamb of God who Takes away the Sin of the *World*: Implications for the Message of Life

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Introduction

John the Baptist refers to Jesus as the Lamb of God twice in John's Gospel.

John 1²⁹ The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! **The Lamb of God** who takes away the sin of the world!"

John 1³⁶ And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, "Behold **the Lamb of God!**"

The references to the Lamb of God are sacrificial in nature. They clearly point to the Son of God going to the cross. The cross receives much attention in John, because Jesus is consciously heading for it throughout John's account. However, for the purpose of this paper, we will focus upon what Jesus accomplished at the cross, rather than upon the cross itself. This requires that we concentrate upon two phrases of John 1:29: *takes away the sin* and *of the world*.

Takes away the Sin

As we consider this topic, no one would interpret *takes away the sin* as implying that sin ceased to occur. What it means is that sin was judged so completely at the cross that it will be a non-issue at the Great White Throne. Unbelievers' works will be judged, not their sins. Their sins were judged at the cross (so were believers' sins).

John mentions sin a number of times in his Gospel, but does not treat it as the basis for judging unbelievers. Let us test this. Does John view sin as an issue for which unbelievers will be judged? (The following are fifteen of sixteen that mention sin (we already looked at 1:29).

1. 5:14 Afterward Jesus found him in the temple, and said to him, "See, you have been made well. **Sin** no more, lest a worse thing come upon you."

2. 8:7 So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, "He who is without **sin** among you, let him throw a stone at her first."

3. 8:11 She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and **sin** no more."

4. 8:21 Then Jesus said to them again, "I am going away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your **sin**. Where I go you cannot come."

5. 8:24 Therefore I said to you that you will die in your **sins**; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your **sins**.

6. 8:34 Jesus answered them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits **sin** is a slave of **sin**.”

7. 8:46 Which of you convicts Me of **sin**? And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me?

8. 9:34 They answered and said to him, “You were completely born in **sins**, and are you teaching us?” And they cast him out.

9. 9:41 Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you would have no **sin**; but now you say, ‘We see.’ Therefore your **sin** remains.”

10. 15:22 If I had not come and spoken to them, they would have no **sin**, but now they have no excuse for their **sin**.

11. 15:24 If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would have no **sin**; but now they have seen and also hated both Me and My Father.

12. 16:8 And when He has come, He will convict the world of **sin**, and of righteousness, and of judgment:

13. 16:9 of **sin**, because they do not believe in Me;

14. 19:11 Jesus answered, “You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above. Therefore the one who delivered Me to you has the greater **sin**.”

15. 20:23 If you forgive the **sins** of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the **sins** of any, they are retained.

None of these passages sets forth sin as the issue in eternal judgment. In a preliminary sense, then, it might just be that Jesus’ work on the cross so completely judged sin that it will not need to be judged in the future. (Works will be judged in the future, not sin).

The Sin of the world

Now, if the Lamb of God took away the sin of the world at the cross, what people are included in the term *world*? It is common to identify *world* with unbelievers only. Reformed writers have a few passages where they would identify *world* with believers only. It seems better to understand *world* as humanity, which includes both believers and unbelievers.

1. 1:9 That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the **world**.

B+UB

2. 1:10 He was in the **world**, & the **world** was made through Him, & the **world** did not know Him.

B+UB The world (as a whole) did not know Him

3. 1:29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the **world**!"

B+UB

4. 3:16 For God loved the **world** in this way: that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

B+UB but only believers receive everlasting life

5. 3:17 For God did not send His Son into the **world** to condemn the **world**, but that the **world** through Him might be saved.

B+UB Some people within the world will be saved

6. 3:19 And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the **world**, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

B+UB

7. 4:42 Then they said to the woman, "Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard Him and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the **world**."

B+UB Some people within the world will be saved

8. 6:14 Then those men, when they had seen the sign that Jesus did, said, "This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the **world**."

B+UB

9. 6:33 For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the **world**.

B+UB Some people within the world will receive life

10. 6:51 I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the **world**.

B+UB Some people within the world will receive life

11. 7:4 For no one does anything in secret while he himself seeks to be known openly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the **world**.

B+UB

12. 7:7 The **world** cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it that its works are evil.

B+UB The world contains those who hate Him

13. 8:12 Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, “I am the light of the **world**. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.”

B+UB

14. 8:23 And He said to them, “You are from beneath; I am from above. You are of this **world**; I am not of this **world**.”

B+UB He is from God.

15. 8:26 I have many things to say and to judge concerning you, but He who sent Me is true; and I speak to the **world** those things which I heard from Him.

B+UB

16. 9:5 As long as I am in the **world**, I am the light of the **world**.

B+UB

17. 9:32 Since the **world** began it has been unheard of that anyone opened the eyes of one who was born blind.

B+UB

18. 9:39 And Jesus said, For judgment I have come into this **world**, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may be made blind.

B+UB

19. 10:36 do you say of Him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the **world**, “You are blaspheming,” because I said, “I am the Son of God”?

B+UB

20. 11:9 Jesus answered, “Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this **world**.”

B+UB

21. 11:27 She said to Him, “Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the **world**.”

B+UB

22. 12:19 The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, “You see that you are accomplishing nothing. Look, the **world** has gone after Him!”

B+UB The Pharisees speak of (many within) the world following Jesus

23. 12:25 He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this **world** will keep it for eternal life.

B+UB

24. 12:31 Now is the judgment of this **world**; now the ruler of this **world** will be cast out.

B+UB

25. 12:46 I have come as a light into the **world**, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness.

B+UB

26. 12:47 And if anyone hears My words and does not believe, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the **world** but to save the **world**.

B+UB Some of the world will be saved

27. 13:1 Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this **world** to the Father, having loved His own who were in the **world**, He loved them to the end.

B+UB

28. 14:17 the Spirit of truth, whom the **world** cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.

B+UB Unbelievers within the world cannot receive the Spirit, until they believe

29. 14:19 A little while longer and the **world** will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also.

B+UB

30. 14:22 Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, "Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the **world**?"

B+UB

31. 14:27 Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the **world** gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

B+UB

32 . 14:30 I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this **world** is coming, and he has nothing in Me.

B+UB

33. 14:31 But that the **world** may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave Me commandment, so I do. Arise, let us go from here.

B+UB

34. 15:18 If the **world** hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you.

B+UB Unbelievers are part of the world's polulace

35. 15:19 If you were of the **world**, the **world** would love its own. Yet because you are not of the **world**, but I chose you out of the **world**, therefore the **world** hates you.

B+UB Unbelievers are part of the world's polulace

36. 16:8 And when He has come, He will convict the **world** of sin, and of righteousness, and . of judgment:

B+UB

37. 16:11 of judgment, because the ruler of this **world** is judged.

B+UB

38. 16:20 Most assuredly, I say to you that you will weep and lament, but the **world** will rejoice; and you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy.

B+UB

39. 16:21 A woman, when she is in labor, has sorrow because her hour has come; but as soon as she has given birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the **world**.

B+UB

40. 16:28 I came forth from the Father and have come into the **world**. Again, I leave the **world** and go to the Father.

B+UB

41. 16:33 These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the **world** you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the **world**.

B+UB

42. 17:5 And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the **world** was.

B+UB

43. 17:6 I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the **world**. They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word.

B+UB

44. 17:9 I pray for them. I do not pray for the **world** but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours.

B+UB unbelievers are part of the world's populace

45. 17:11 Now I am no longer in the **world**, but these are in the **world**, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are.

B+UB

46. 17:12 While I was with them in the **world**, I kept them in Your name. Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.

B+UB

47. 17:13 But now I come to You, and these things I speak in the **world**, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves.

B+UB

48. 17:14 I have given them Your word; and the **world** has hated them because they are not of the **world**, just as I am not of the **world**.

B+UB He is from God

49. 17:15 I do not pray that You should take them out of the **world**, but that You should keep them from the evil one.

B+UB

50. 17:16 They are not of the **world**, just as I am not of the **world**.

B+UB Believers are now also from God

51. 17:18 As You sent Me into the **world**, I also have sent them into the **world**.

B+UB

52. 17:21 that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the **world** may believe that You sent Me.

B+UB

53. 17:23 I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the **world** may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.

B+UB

54. 17:24 Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the **world**.

B+UB

55. 17:25 O righteous Father! The **world** has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me.

B+UB

56. 18:20 Jesus answered him, "I spoke openly to the **world**. I always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where the Judeans always meet, and in secret I have said nothing."

B+UB

57. 18:36 Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this **world**. If My kingdom were of this **world**, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Judeans; but now My kingdom is not from here."

B+UB

58. 18:37 Pilate therefore said to Him, "Are You a king then?" Jesus answered, "You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the **world**, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."

B+UB

59. 21:25 And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the **world** itself could not contain the books that would be written. Amen.

B+UB

Although, by-and-large, the population of the world is weighted towards unbelievers, it contains both unbelievers and believers. Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the whole world.

In that light, 1 John 2:2 makes perfect sense:

And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.

Jesus has so completely judged sin that the issue for the unbeliever is to believe in Christ for His promise of everlasting life. It is in light of this truth that Jesus in John's Gospel emphasizes believing in Him for everlasting life (that we should never perish): John 3:16; 5:24; 6:47, etc.