

Session 5 — How Can I Know Jesus Really Is the One Who Can Save Me?

John 1:19–34 — The Lamb of God Who Takes Away Sin

Main question: *What can Jesus actually do about my guilt, failure and sin?*

Big idea: John the Baptist identifies Jesus not merely as a teacher or prophet, but as **”the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world”** (John 1:29). That language draws together several Old Testament sacrificial themes, especially **Yom Kippur**, when one goat’s blood made atonement for the sanctuary and another goat carried Israel’s sins away. The Passover lamb also contributes important imagery of deliverance, substitution and rescue from death.

Main passage

- John 1:19–34 (memory verse: John 1:29)

Parallel passages

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| • Exodus 12:1–14 | • Genesis 22:1–18 | • Hebrews 10:1–14 |
| • Leviticus 16 | • Leviticus 4:27–35 | • 1Peter 1:18–21 |
| • Isaiah 52:13–53:12 | • Hebrews 9:11–14, 23–28 | • Revelation 5:6–10 |

Read John 1:19–34 in **NASB95, NIV and KJV**, paying special attention to:

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|---------------------|----------------------|----------------|
| • “Who are you?” | • “takes away” | • “Son of God” |
| • “the voice” | • “sin of the world” | |
| • “the Lamb of God” | • “Spirit” | |

Session goals

By the end of the study, we should understand:

- John the Baptist deliberately redirects attention away from himself and toward Jesus.
- Jesus fulfills Israel’s expectation of the coming Messiah and the LORD’s promised saving action.
- “Lamb of God” evokes several sacrificial themes rather than only one ritual.
- “Takes away the sin of the world” especially fits the **removal aspect of Yom Kippur** in Leviticus 16.
- Yom Kippur uses two goats to portray complementary aspects of atonement: cleansing/covering and removal.
- The Passover lamb contributes the themes of deliverance, protection from death and redemption from slavery.
- The timing of Passover and Yom Kippur creates a notable calendar parallel: the Passover animal is selected on the **10th day of the first month**, while Yom Kippur occurs on the **10th day of the seventh month**.
- Jesus is identified by the Spirit and by divine testimony, not merely by human opinion.
- Salvation addresses not only guilt but also the removal of sin’s burden and defilement.

Brief recap: Sessions 1–4

Session 1 — John 3:16–17: Can God really love me?

God loved the world and gave His Son to rescue rather than condemn.

Biblical “belief” means **trusting** Jesus, not merely acknowledging facts about Him.

Key truth: God loves, God gives, and we respond by trusting Him.

Session 2 — John 1:1–5: Who is Jesus?

Jesus is the eternal **λόγος** (*logos*, “Word”), present before creation and active in creation.

John deliberately echoes Genesis 1:

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|--------------|-------------|-------------|
| • beginning, | • creation, | • light, |
| • Word, | • life, | • darkness. |

Key truth: Jesus is not merely part of creation. He is the eternal Word through whom creation came.

Session 3 — John 1:6–13: Can I belong to God’s family?

John the Baptist is a witness to the Light.

Those who receive Jesus and trust His name are given the right to become children of God.

Key truth: Identity in God’s family is received from God, not earned through ancestry or religious performance.

Session 4 — John 1:14–18: What is God really like?

The Word became flesh and **”tabernacled”** among us.

John deliberately echoes:

- the Tabernacle,
- Moses asking to see God’s glory,
- and God’s revelation of Himself in Exodus 34 as compassionate, gracious and faithful.

Key truth: Jesus makes the unseen God known and embodies His grace and truth.

Historical context

John the Baptist's ministry took place during a period of intense Jewish expectation.

Many were waiting for:

- Messiah,
- Elijah,
- “the Prophet” like Moses,
- Israel's restoration,
- and God's judgment and deliverance.

John's baptism and wilderness ministry therefore raised an obvious question: **Who exactly is this man?**

Priests and Levites are sent from Jerusalem to investigate him.

That matters because John's ministry was not occurring privately. It had become significant enough to attract attention from religious authorities.

John 1:19–23 — “Who are you?”

The representatives ask John whether he is:

- the Messiah,
- Elijah,
- or “the Prophet.”

John denies all three identifications in the sense they intend.

Instead he quotes Isaiah: “I am a voice of one crying in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way of the LORD.’” John 1:23 NASB95

Old Testament background: Isaiah 40

Isaiah 40 announces comfort after judgment.

A voice calls for a way to be prepared because **the LORD Himself is coming**.

John applies that passage to his own ministry.

That means his role is not primarily: **“Look at me.”**

It is: **“Get ready. God is coming to rescue His people.”**

Simple point: A faithful servant points away from himself and toward God's saving work.

John 1:24–28 — Why are you baptizing?

The representatives ask why John baptizes if he is not Messiah, Elijah or the Prophet.

John answers modestly:

“I baptize in water, but among you stands One whom you do not know.”

—John 1:26, NASB95

John's baptism is preparation.

Jesus is greater.

John even says he is unworthy to untie His sandal.

Simple point: Religious rituals can prepare people, but Jesus is the One who actually saves.

John 1:29 — “Behold, the Lamb of God”

The next day John sees Jesus and announces:

“Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”

—John 1:29, NASB95

This one sentence draws together several Old Testament patterns.

It should not be reduced to only one sacrifice.

Likely background includes:

- Passover,
- daily and individual sacrifices,
- Isaiah's suffering Servant,
- Genesis 22,
- and especially the **sin-bearing/removal** imagery of Yom Kippur.

Key phrase: “takes away the sin of the world.” Greek: ὁ αἰρὼν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν τοῦ κόσμου *ho airōn tēn hamartian tou kosmou*

The verb αἰρῶ (*airō*) can mean:

- lift,
- carry,
- bear,
- remove,
- take away.

That makes Leviticus 16 especially important. John does not merely say that the Lamb “covers” sin. He says He **takes it away**.

Yom Kippur — Leviticus 16

The Day of Atonement provides one of the clearest Old Testament pictures for understanding the removal of sin.

Two unblemished male goats are presented before the LORD.

Lots are cast: one **“for the LORD,”** one **“for Azazel”**

The two goats perform different but complementary functions.

Goat 1 — “For the LORD”

The first goat is killed as a sin offering.

Its blood is taken into the sanctuary and applied in connection with:

- the mercy seat,
- the holy place,
- and the altar.

Why? Because Israel’s uncleanness and sins symbolically contaminate the sanctuary in which God dwells.

Leviticus 16 therefore presents atonement not only as forgiveness of individuals but also as **cleansing sacred space from the accumulated pollution of sin.**

Simple point: Sin does damage. Atonement cleanses what sin has defiled.

Goat 2 — “For Azazel”

The second goat remains alive.

Aaron lays both hands upon its head and confesses over it:

- Israel’s **iniquities**
- Israel’s **transgressions**
- Israel’s **sins**

Leviticus 16:21 deliberately piles up the Hebrew vocabulary:

- **אֲוֹנוֹת** (*avonot*) — “iniquities”
- **פְּשָׁעֵיהֶם** (*pish eihem*) — “their transgressions/rebellions”
- **חַטָּאתָם** (*hattotam*) — “their sins”

Those offenses are symbolically placed on the goat. The goat then **carries them away** into the wilderness.

Leviticus 16:22 says the goat bears them to a solitary or cut-off land.

This is the part of Yom Kippur most directly resonant with: “takes away the sin of the world.”

Simple point: God does not merely announce that sin is forgiven. He portrays it as being carried away from His people.

What does “Azazel” mean?

Hebrew: **אֶזָּזֵל** (*‘aza ‘zel*)

The term is debated. Major interpretations include:

- the name of a wilderness being or figure,
- a designation connected with the wilderness destination,
- or a term understood in the sense of **removal**.

The KJV tradition produced the familiar English word **“scapegoat.”**

The safest takeaway: Whatever the precise meaning of “Azazel,” the ritual itself clearly portrays the confessed sins of Israel being carried away from the camp.

Why both goats matter

The two goats together portray two dimensions of atonement.

The goat for the LORD

Its blood addresses:

- defilement,
- sanctuary contamination,
- and restored access to God’s presence.
- cleansing,

The live goat

It addresses:

- confessed sin,
- bearing,
- guilt,
- and removal.

Together: **Sin is dealt with before God and carried away from the people.**

That combination helps explain why the New Testament can speak of Messiah both:

- giving His life/blood for sin,
- and bearing/removing sin.

Isaiah 53 — The suffering Servant bears sin

This Servant of the LORD:

- bears griefs,
- is pierced for transgressions,
- bears the sin of many,
- carries sorrows,
- is crushed for iniquities,
- and intercedes for transgressors.

The language strongly overlaps with the **bearing-away** aspect of Yom Kippur.

John’s “Lamb of God” can therefore evoke both:

- sacrificial animal imagery,
- and Isaiah’s Servant who bears sin.

Simple point: Jesus does not merely tell sinners to improve. He bears the burden they cannot remove themselves.

Passover — Exodus 12

Passover supplies another major background for “Lamb of God.” Israel is enslaved in Egypt. God announces judgment. Each household takes an animal from the flock, keeps it until the appointed day and kills it. Its blood marks the household. Judgment passes over. Israel is freed.

The Passover lamb represents:

- deliverance from judgment,
- protection through blood,
- rescue from slavery,
- and the beginning of a new life as God’s redeemed people.

John later emphasizes Passover repeatedly, especially as Jesus approaches His death.

Simple point: Jesus saves not only from guilt but also from slavery and death.

Passover and Yom Kippur — the 10th-day connection

There is also an interesting calendar correspondence.

Passover preparation: Exodus 12:3 commands Israel to take the Passover animal on the **10th day of the first month**. It is then kept until the 14th day.

Yom Kippur: Leviticus 16 and Leviticus 23 place the Day of Atonement on the **10th day of the seventh month**.

Thus two of Israel’s most important redemption/atonement observances are marked by the **10th day**:

- **Month 1, day 10:** the Passover animal is selected.
- **Month 7, day 10:** Yom Kippur occurs.

This does not mean Scripture explicitly identifies the Passover lamb with the Yom Kippur goats. However, the calendar parallel is striking and thematically compatible:

- **Passover:** deliverance from slavery and death.
- **Yom Kippur:** cleansing from and removal of sin.

Together they form complementary pictures of redemption.

Genesis 22 — “God will provide for Himself the lamb”

Abraham is commanded to offer Isaac.

Isaac asks: “Where is the lamb for the burnt offering?”

Abraham answers: “God will provide for Himself the lamb.”

In the immediate story, God provides a ram.

But the narrative establishes a powerful biblical theme: **God Himself provides what is needed for sacrifice.**

John says: **“the Lamb of God.”**

That can mean not merely a lamb belonging to God, but the Lamb **God provides**.

Simple point: Salvation originates in God’s provision, not ours.

Leviticus 4 — Sacrifice for sin

Leviticus repeatedly teaches that sin disrupts relationship with God and requires atonement. Animals must be without defect. The worshiper identifies with the offering. Blood is applied. Forgiveness follows.

These sacrifices are part of Heaven’s lived-out lesson within which John’s audience would hear “Lamb of God.”

Simple point: Sin is serious, but God provides a way for restored relationship.

John 1:30–31 — “He existed before me”

John repeats the point already made in Jn 1:15. Jesus appears after John publicly.

Yet John says: “He existed before me.” Chronologically John was born first. The statement therefore points again toward Jesus’ preexistence.

Simple point: Jesus’ earthly ministry began after John’s, but Jesus existed before John.

John 1:32–33 — The Spirit remains upon Jesus

John testifies that he saw the Spirit descend like a dove and remain upon Jesus. The key word is **remain**.

In the Old Testament, the Spirit could come upon people for particular tasks. But Jesus possesses the Spirit in a distinctive, abiding way.

Isaiah 11: The Spirit of the LORD rests upon the coming Davidic ruler.

Isaiah 42: God puts His Spirit upon His Servant.

Isaiah 61: The Servant announces: “The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me.”

John therefore presents Jesus as:

- Messiah,
- Servant,
- Spirit-anointed King,
- and the One who gives the Spirit.

Simple point: Jesus does not merely receive God’s Spirit for Himself. He gives the Spirit to others.

“He who baptizes in the Holy Spirit”

John baptizes in water. Jesus baptizes in the Holy Spirit. That contrast points to prophetic promises of inner renewal.

Ezekiel 36:25–27 — Cleansing and Spirit

God promises:

- clean water,
- cleansing from uncleanness,
- a new heart,
- a new spirit,
- and His Spirit within His people.

Notice how these themes overlap with John 1: **cleansing + Spirit + new life**

We talked about this “new birth” in Session 3.

Now John begins explaining how the Messiah brings it.

Joel 2:28–32 — God pours out His Spirit

Joel promises that God will pour out His Spirit broadly.

The Messiah’s work therefore involves more than removing guilt.

He creates a Spirit-filled people.

Simple point: Jesus does not merely clean the record. He gives new life.

John 1:34 — “This is the Son of God”

John concludes his testimony: “I myself have seen, and have testified that this is the Son of God.” —John 1:34, NASB95

John’s conviction is based on what God had shown him.

He does not identify Jesus merely because Jesus was persuasive or impressive.

God provided the sign: **The Spirit descended and remained upon Him.**

Old Testament background: “Son of God”

The title has several biblical layers.

Israel

God calls Israel: “My son, My firstborn.” —Exodus 4:22

Davidic king

Psalms 2 says of the king: “You are My Son.”

Messiah

By the first century, these themes converge around expectations of the promised Davidic king.

John will go further. Jesus is not merely one more covenant son. He is the unique Son who was with the Father before creation.

Parallel passage — Hebrews 9:11–14

Hebrews uses Yom Kippur imagery to explain Jesus’ work. Jesus enters the greater sanctuary. He does not offer animal blood. He offers Himself. His blood cleanses the conscience.

Simple point: The sacrifices pointed beyond themselves to a deeper cleansing that only Messiah could accomplish.

Parallel passage — Hebrews 9:23–28

The high priest repeatedly entered the sanctuary. Jesus offers Himself once for all time, forward and backward.

Hebrews says He appeared: “to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.”

That expression closely matches the theme of John: “takes away the sin of the world.”

Simple point: Jesus deals with the root problem rather than merely repeating symbolic cleansing.

Parallel passage — Hebrews 10:1–14

Animal sacrifices repeat. Messiah’s offering is once, for all time forward and backward. The Torah sacrifices serve as shadows, types, a pattern. Jesus fills to fullness what they pointed toward.

Simple point: The sacrifices teach us how serious sin is and prepare us to understand Messiah’s self-offering.

Parallel passage — 1 Peter 1:18–21

Peter describes Messiah as: “a lamb unblemished and spotless.” That language strongly recalls sacrificial requirements.

Peter connects Messiah’s blood with redemption.

Simple point: The unblemished animal sacrifices point toward Messiah’s sinlessness and costly redemption.

Parallel passage — Revelation 5

John later sees: “a Lamb standing, as if slain.”

The Lamb:

- has been sacrificed,
- is alive,
- is worthy,
- redeems people from every nation,
- and reigns.

John 1 begins: “**Behold, the Lamb of God.**”

Revelation shows the destination: **the slain Lamb reigns.**

Key words

Lamb: ἀμνός (*amnos*, “lamb”). Used for sacrificial imagery and especially associated with innocence and offering.

Take away: αἶρω (*airō*). “Lift,” “carry,” “bear,” or “remove.” This makes both Isaiah 53 and Yom Kippur particularly relevant.

Sin: ἁμαρτία (*hamartia*). Sin is not merely a mistake. Biblically it includes rebellion, failure, guilt and alienation from God.

World: κόσμος (*kosmos*). The scope of Jesus’ work extends beyond Israel to humanity. This anticipates John 3:16.

Spirit: πνεῦμα (*pneuma*). God’s Spirit gives life, empowers and renews.

Remain: μένω (*menō*). A major word in John, meaning: remain, abide, stay. The Spirit does not merely visit Jesus. He remains upon Him.

Main truths

Jesus deals with sin at its deepest level: He does not merely improve behavior. He bears and removes sin.

Yom Kippur helps explain “takes away”: One goat’s blood cleanses the sanctuary. The other carries confessed sins away. Together they picture sin being both dealt with before God and removed from the people.

Passover adds the theme of rescue: The Lamb means: protection from judgment, liberation from slavery, and new life as a redeemed people.

Jesus fulfills multiple sacrificial patterns: No single sacrifice exhausts the meaning of His death. Passover, Yom Kippur, sin offerings, Isaiah’s Servant and Genesis 22 all contribute.

Salvation is God’s provision: Human beings do not invent a solution to sin. God provides the Lamb.

Jesus gives the Spirit: Forgiveness is not the end of salvation. God also cleanses, renews and indwells His people.

Everyday-life connections

“I can’t get past what I’ve done.” Yom Kippur imagery says sin can be **carried away**. Your identity need not remain chained to forgiven guilt.

“God might forgive me, but I still feel contaminated.” The blood of the Yom Kippur sacrifice portrays cleansing from defilement. God’s answer to sin includes cleansing as well as pardon.

“I keep falling into the same pattern.” Jesus not only takes away sin. He baptizes in the Holy Spirit. God’s answer includes inner renewal.

“I need to clean myself up before coming to God.” The sacrificial system teaches the opposite. God provides the means of approach.

“My failures are too big.” John deliberately says: **“the sin of the world.”** The scope of Messiah’s saving work is greater than the reach of human sin.

Discussion questions

Observation

1. What questions are the religious leaders asking John?
2. What titles does John refuse?
3. What title does John give Jesus?
4. What does the Lamb do?
5. What sign identifies Jesus to John?
6. What does Jesus do with the Holy Spirit?

Understanding

1. Why does John quote Isaiah 40?
2. Why is “Lamb of God” richer than simply “Passover lamb”?
3. How does Leviticus 16 help explain “takes away”?
4. What different roles do the two Yom Kippur goats perform?
5. Why are “sins,” “transgressions” and “iniquities” all confessed over the live goat?
6. How does Isaiah 53 connect a person with the bearing of sin?
7. How does Passover add a different dimension to the picture?
8. What is significant about the 10th-day correspondence between Passover selection and Yom Kippur?
9. Why does John emphasize that the Spirit remains on Jesus?
10. What does “Son of God” mean against Israel’s Scriptures?

Application questions

1. Which is harder for you to believe: that God can forgive your sin or that He can truly remove its burden?
2. What guilt are you still carrying after asking God for forgiveness?
3. Are there sins you treat as small that Scripture treats seriously?
4. Are there past failures that you have allowed to become your identity?
5. What would it mean to trust Jesus as the One who carries away your sin?
6. Where do you need the Spirit's transforming power, not merely greater willpower?
7. Do you tend to think salvation is mainly about escaping punishment, or also about being cleansed and changed?
8. How does Passover change the way you think about freedom from destructive patterns?
9. How does Yom Kippur change the way you think about shame?
10. What would change this week if you really believed that God provides what is needed for your reconciliation with Him?

Simple visual summary

Use two columns:

Yom Kippur goat for the LORD

- killed
- blood brought before God
- cleanses sanctuary
- deals with pollution of sin

Yom Kippur live goat

- sins confessed over it
- bears iniquities, transgressions and sins
- sent away
- portrays removal

Then underneath:

Jesus, the Lamb of God

- gives His life
- bears sin
- cleanses
- removes
- reconciles
- gives the Spirit

The point is not that Jesus mechanically corresponds to only one animal.

Rather: **The whole Tabernacle offering system supplies the vocabulary needed to understand what He accomplishes.**

Memory verse: "The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, 'Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!'" —John 1:29, NASB95

A simple paraphrase: **Jesus is God's provided sacrifice who carries away the guilt and burden of human sin.**

Prayer focus

- Thank God for providing the Lamb.
- Confess sin honestly rather than minimizing it.
- Thank Him for cleansing as well as forgiveness.
- Ask for help releasing guilt that God has forgiven.
- Ask Messiah to break patterns of slavery to sin.
- Ask for the Holy Spirit's work of inner renewal.
- Pray for people who believe their past places them beyond God's mercy.

Practical action for the week

Read:

- Exodus 12,
- Leviticus 16,
- and Isaiah 53.

Make three short columns:

- **Passover** — What does God rescue from?
- **Yom Kippur** — What does God cleanse/remove?
- **Isaiah 53** — What does the Servant bear?

Then reread John 1:29. Ask: **What does "Lamb of God" mean now that I know the story behind it?**

Looking ahead

The next session studies **John 1:35–51** and asks: **"What does it actually mean to follow Jesus?"**

John the Baptist points two disciples toward Jesus. Jesus asks them: "What do you seek?"

Then He gives one of the simplest invitations in Scripture: "Come, and you will see."

The passage introduces discipleship not first as mastering a doctrine or joining an institution, but as **coming to Jesus, staying with Him, learning who He is and bringing others to meet Him.**