

*“Mary had a little lamb, little lamb, little lamb.  
Mary had a little lamb its fleece was white as ...  
\_\_\_\_\_.”*

Did anyone have trouble finishing that nursery rhyme? Even the youngest here know how that rhyme goes. What you probably didn’t know, is the history behind it.

Some say this rhyme was written in 1830 by Sarah Hale, a classmate of Mary Sawyer who brought her lamb to their school in Sterling, Massachusetts one day.

Others say this rhyme was developed in England as a way to teach children about Jesus, the Virgin Mary’s little lamb.

That’s not a bad way to think of Jesus, as long as we remember that he’s **“More Than Mary’s Little Lamb.”** He’s also God’s Lamb, whose sacrifice made it possible for every sin to be erased.

It was John the Baptist who first called Jesus *“the Lamb of God.”* Although, Isaiah did prophesy 700 years earlier that the coming Savior would be led like a lamb to the slaughter.

Now to us, John’s words are precious words. But, when those words were first spoken, we can understand if John’s disciples reacted with, *“Huh? Who are you talking about? That guy over there? He’s the Lamb of God? He’s mighty enough to take away the sins of everyone in the entire world?”*

Can you imagine what this must have been like for John? His mom, Elizabeth and Jesus’ mom, Mary, were related. Then there’s all the excitement when it was announced that Elizabeth’s son would be the one who would prepare the people for the arrival of the Savior. Did John wonder if his relative, Jesus of Nazareth, was really the Savior they’d been waiting centuries for? Could he trust this family story?

Most people wouldn’t consider it a compliment to be called a lamb. Lambs are weak and helpless.

They aren’t very smart. But clearly, John wasn’t insulting Jesus. He continues: **“This is the one I meant when I said, ‘A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.’”**

Although John was 6 months older than Jesus, he claims Jesus existed before him. That’s only possible if Jesus was more than Mary’s little lamb. Jesus could have existed before John only if he was an angel, or God!

Thankfully, John didn’t have to guess about Jesus’ identity. It was revealed to him at Jesus’ baptism, where he states: **“I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. And I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, ‘The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.’ I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God.”**

Jesus is not just the son of Mary; he is also the Son of God! So why wouldn’t John have simply said, **“Look, the Son of God ...”**? Why call him the Lamb of God? John was describing what the Son of God came to do for you and me.

During OT times God had commanded his people to sacrifice lambs for their sins. He was teaching them that sin is serious business, deadly serious. The punishment for sin is death. The lambs offered for the sins of the people were butchered and burned.

Jesus, the Lamb of God, had to give up his life because none of the millions of lambs sacrificed during OT times could actually pay for even one sin. Those animal sacrifices were simply an I.O.U. They delayed the paying of the real debt for sin. Human sin can only be paid for with human blood and a human sacrifice.

So, either we’re going to die eternally in hell, or we’re going to need a substitute to pay the eternal price - death. That’s why God’s Son became Mary’s son – he had human flesh and blood.

There are other similarities between Jesus and the lambs sacrificed during OT times. The lambs offered to God could have no physical defects because God wanted his people to know that he would only accept a perfect sacrifice for sin. Jesus' fleece was "*white as snow.*" His life didn't have even a single smudge of sin.

Since Jesus came to do all this for us, no wonder John was excited to see him and shouted, "**Look!**" ..... like a person seeing mountains or an ocean for the first time in their life.

Do we get that excited about Jesus? Do we shout, "**Look!**" so that others notice Jesus, too? Or, have we become used to him, even bored by him, like the person who gets an eye-full of mountains or an ocean out their window every day.

We won't take Jesus for granted when we keep reminding ourselves what it is he did for us.

- Each time we complain about the way our neighbor shovels or doesn't shovel the sidewalk.
- Each time we make fun of our classmates.
- Each time we roll our eyes when our parents ask us to do something.
- Each time we grumble about our leaders ..... we fall short of God's perfect standards. While each fall should kill us, it doesn't because the Lamb of God was crushed instead.

How can we be so confident that Mary's little lamb has forgiven us? Because he's more than Mary's little lamb, he's the Lamb of God.

Look again. He isn't just the Lamb sent from God, he's the Lamb who **IS** God! His walking in our footsteps has value for us. His walking is perfect and it's credited to our account. Through faith God now views your life the way he views Christ's life - it's perfect!

As John the Baptist pointed out Jesus as the Lamb of God, he was also pointing us back to a special OT sacrifice.

Each year, on the Day of Atonement, and only on that one day, could the high priest enter the holy of holies in the tabernacle or temple. First, he would offer a sacrifice for his own sins, then he would offer a sacrifice for the sins of the people and take the blood of that sacrifice behind the curtain and sprinkle it on top of the ark of the covenant.

Then we would come out from behind that curtain. Next on his list of important things to do once a year was the sacrifice of the scapegoat.

You know what a scapegoat is. It's the person who takes the blame. The one everybody points to and says: "*It's all his fault.*" And that's exactly what the OT believers did with their scapegoat on the Day of Atonement.

God directed them to have 2 scapegoats (lambs). First, the high priest would kill one of them, and then with his hands soaked in the blood of that lamb, he would place his bloody hands on the head of the other lamb - the scapegoat.

What happened to that scapegoat? It was led off into the desert - with the people's sin - never to be heard or seen again.

Doesn't that beautifully picture Jesus? He's more than Mary's little Lamb! He's the Lamb upon whom the LORD has placed our sins. He's the Lamb who by his death took our sins to the cross and left them there - never to be heard or seen again.

Yes, Jesus is more than Mary's little lamb - he's your Lamb too!