

“THE LAMB OF GOD”

John 1:29-37

Intro: The people of Israel were well acquainted with a sacrificial lamb. Throughout their history an countless number of lambs had been offered in sacrifice to God. We are not told in Genesis 3 what animal the Lord killed in order to provide “coats of skins” for Adam and Eve before they were put out of the garden, but in all likelihood it was a lamb.

The first instance of a lamb being used for a sacrifice was when God called Abraham to offer up his son as a burnt offering to the Lord. You will remember that as Abraham and Isaac left the servants after traveling for three days, the question of what animal they would sacrifice was raised by Isaac, because he did not know what the Lord had told his father to do. This is the record of the conversation between Abraham and Isaac which is found in Genesis 22:6-8:

6 Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together.

7 And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?

8 And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together.

And the Lord did just that. At the very moment that Abraham was ready to offer Isaac, we read this in verses 9 through 12 of the same chapter:

9 And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood.

10 And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.

11 And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I.

12 And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me (Gen. 22:9-12).

And then verse 13 tells that the Lord provided a lamb:

13 And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went

and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son (Gen. 22:13).

There is no doubt but that both of these instances in the book of Genesis were intended to be types, or pictures of Christ.

The next time a lamb is specifically mentioned in the Bible was when the people of God in Egypt had to prepare for the Passover. Then it was that a lamb became a matter of life or death. The account is given for us in Ex. 12:1-13. **(Read.)**

Here again is the idea of substitution by death. There were specific requirements for the lamb which had to be met, but it was not the living lamb which saved the firstborn, but one that had been killed and whose blood had been applied to the door of the home in which he lived. And this is another passage which clearly points to Christ.

As God gave the Law to Moses, and then Moses gave it to the people, what the people were to do in maintaining their fellowship with the Lord had to do with the sacrifice of lambs, as well as other animals, and even birds. But always death was involved as well as the shedding of blood. And all of these sacrifices pointed to Christ. In fact, every day, morning and evening, there was what was called “a continual burnt offering.” A lamb was offered in the morning, and another lamb in the evening. And these lambs were to be offered every day regardless of what other sacrifices the people were required to bring. All of these point to Christ.

When we speak of the sacrifice of lambs, we must not overlook that great fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, and especially verses 6 and 7 which speak of the promised Messiah. This is what we read in those verses:

6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth (Isa. 53:6-7).

So again we have substitution by death.

However, in spite of all this seeming endless number of sacrifices, we are

told in Heb. 10:1-4 that all of those sacrifices could never “take away sins.” Let me read that passage to you:

1 For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.

2 For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.

3 But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year.

4 For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins (Heb. 10:1-4).

Remember those words, “take away sins.”

So it is apparent that those OT sacrifices were of no value in themselves, but they pointed on to Christ, and this is what gave them value and made them important.

Now we are ready to go back to the message of John the Baptist, “Behold, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.” (John 1:29). And again in John 1:36 we see that he said to two of his own disciples, “Behold, the Lamb of God!” At that point they left John the Baptist, and began to follow the Lord Jesus.

Now let us look at the verse. It must have been both:

I. A FAMILIAR, YET STARTLING, MESSAGE.

The Jews were familiar, as we have seen with animal sacrifices, and, in particular, the sacrifice of lambs. With that much they were familiar. But to have that title linked with the Lord Jesus Christ, had to be most startling.

One thing that got me started thinking about this verse was the title that was given to our Lord, “the Lamb of God,” as compared with what the Lord told the children of Israel about the Passover Lamb. The Lord called it in Ex. 12:5 “your lamb”! That is, they were to select it, to keep it for four days, kill it, and then apply the blood to the door posts of their homes. But John the Baptist said in effect, “This is God’s Lamb. As the children

of Israel selected their lamb, now it becomes apparent that God has selected His Lamb. And just as they were to sacrifice their lambs, so, as Isaiah predicted, the Father would bruise to death His own Son as His Lamb. The comment in the JFB commentary is this:

But in calling Jesus “the Lamb,” and “the Lamb *of God*,” he held Him up as the One ‘God-ordained, God-gifted, God-accepted’ sacrificial offering(IV, p. 352).

This made it final, if there had been any doubt before. The only One appointed by God and approved by God, to take away sins, was His own and only Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. This statement at once excludes every other way that people in any age might believe is acceptable with God for the salvation of their souls. Revelation 13:8 speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ as “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” It was ordained before creation that the Lord Jesus would be the One Whom God would send for the salvation of men.

But next let us notice:

II. THE VERB WHICH JOHN THE BAPTIST USED.

It is the verb, “taketh away.” And this word means *both to take up and to take away*. He took up the sins of His people upon Himself, and He took them away – as David said in Psalm 103:12, “As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.” That is an immeasurable distance because as far east as you go, you still can go farther east, circling the earth for eternity you can never bring the east and the west together.

So this means that what the Lord has done with our sins means that they are gone forever. And so we should not be surprised to read that He will remember them against us no more. That is what it says in Hebrews 10:17.

But there is one more point.

III. WHAT ABOUT THE WORLD?

Does this mean that the Lord intended to save everyone? No, because if that had been His purpose, everyone would be saved. But it is apparent that everyone is not saved. Millions upon millions of people have not

wanted to be saved. You can tell them about Christ, but they want nothing to do with Him. And you and I would have been like that if the Lord had not awakened us from our sleep of death, showed us our need, and drawn us to Christ.

No, what John meant has already been indicated in the verse, is that wherever people may live, whatever language they speak, in whatever generation they may live, and regardless of what sins they have committed, if they are to be saved, it can only be through Christ!

Concl: These are the great truths that we are remembering tonight as we come to the Lord's Table. We are not remembering just one of many Saviors. We are remembering the only Savior, the God-appointed Savior. Those who choose some other way, have chosen the way that leads to eternal death. As Solomon has told us twice his book of Proverbs, "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Prov. 14:12; 16:25).

How thankful we can be that the Lord has led us to believe what the Apostle Peter said long ago, agreeing thoroughly with John the Baptist, that

Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved (Acts 4:12).

So let us come with full and thankful hearts once again to remember our Lord in the death He died to take away our sins.