

Truth for Today

The Bible teaching radio programme

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The old is in the new revealed: The Lamb of God

First and foremost, this talk, entitled "The Lamb of God", is about the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Let there be no doubt about that.

There are so many facets of His Person and work that no one representation would or could give us a full picture of Him. That is why He is presented in so many different ways in Scripture. In your general reading of Scripture, you might well have noticed terms distinguishing His many glories and beauties. The following way of directing us to where these distinctions are drawn might well be familiar to you.

- The Pentateuch, the five books of Moses, gives us Figures of Christ.
- The Psalms give us the Feelings of Christ.
- The Prophets give us the Foretelling of Christ.
- The Gospels give us the Facts of Christ.
- The Acts give us the Forttelling of Christ.
- The Epistles give us the Features of Christ.
- The Revelation gives us the Future Finale of Christ.

1. Types, figures and illustrations.

In the Bible, many animals, large and small, are frequently used as types, figures or illustrations of people. This is because they all have distinguishing features, habits or characteristics which can be identified in human beings also. The word "type" is used about animals or articles which have inherent features which are intended to be a picture of things or persons. These features are fully and perfectly seen in the fulfilment of the type. This is particularly true of things which are, and are intended to be, a picture of things that can only be fully and perfectly seen in the Person, work, and history, past, present and future, of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Another consideration! Have you heard of The Law of First Mention? It states that the first time a concept or an object is mentioned in the Bible, it very often gives us a very good idea of what to look for in most other cases where the same thing is mentioned elsewhere in the Bible. We shall shortly look at outstanding examples of these principles.

2. Features of lambs.

Lambs, as we very well know, are meek, docile, submissive, appealing, endearing, pure, innocent, and willingly dependent. God has evidently designed and inbuilt such features into the lamb for particular reasons. Just as clearly, God has nominated the lamb as the approved substitute to bear His righteous judgment in so much of the sacrificial system in the Bible. A lamb, clearly inoffensive in itself, is sacrificed before a holy God in place of the sinner, who is unable to meet the valid claims of God on his own behalf. His sins have rendered him incapable of satisfying the righteous claims of a holy God upon him. Hence the need for a suitable substitute, namely a lamb.

3. The lamb as a type of the Lord Jesus.

In particular, and in a very positive way, the lamb is used as an illustration or type to bring before us characteristics and features which can only apply fully and perfectly to the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. They help us to understand things about the Lord Jesus that would otherwise not be so clear to us. Obviously, there were many lambs in the world before Jesus was born at Bethlehem. But, make no mistake about it - The lamb is secondary. The Son of God is not modelled on a lamb. No! No! The primary world is the Spiritual world. The natural world is the secondary world. But God has graciously implanted in the secondary world, the natural world, things that are a reflection of things He wants us to learn about the spiritual world. As we think about Him, we shall see more clearly why the lamb is used to help us to understand what God wants us to learn about the Lord Jesus.

4. Spheres of application (The far-reaching effects of the work of The Lamb of God.)

- a. A Lamb for a Person
- b. A Lamb for a House or Family
- c. A Lamb for a Nation (Israel)
- d. A Lamb for the World
- e. A Lamb for the Universe

a. A Lamb for a Person

The first direct mention of a lamb in the Bible is given in Genesis 22. We read, there, of the lovely incident where God tests the faith of Abraham.

The day came when God instructed Abraham to take his beloved son Isaac to the top of Mount Moriah, kill him, and offer him as a sacrifice to God. Unquestioningly, Abraham set off. Just as unquestioningly, Isaac went with his father, and two of their servants, with all the materials they would need for a burnt offering, as instructed by God. When they arrived near the spot where the sacrifice was to be offered, Abraham said to the servants, "You stay here. My son and I will go the rest of the way by ourselves. We will come back after we have finished." Note that. Abraham had the faith to expect that, when he returned, he would be accompanied by Isaac. When Abraham and Isaac arrived at the appointed place of sacrifice, Isaac said, "Father, I can see the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" "Don't worry, son," said Abraham. "God will provide a lamb for the burnt offering."

God had fully tested the faith and obedience of His servant Abraham. Now, even as Abraham took the knife to slay Isaac, God said, "That's enough. Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from Me. 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." Notice, in this case, the sacrifice was a substitute for a single person, Isaac the son of Abraham.

b. A Lamb for a House or Family

Exodus 12 tells us of the wonderful way by which the nation of Israel was to be released from slavery in Egypt and brought to the land God had long promised to them. It was by the sacrifice of a lamb on behalf of each household or family. God said, through Moses, "I'm going to give you a new start. I'm going to deliver you from your life of slavery in Egypt. This will involve two things. First of all, it will be necessary for Me to execute judgment upon the land of Egypt and upon their cruel leader Pharaoh. Secondly, I will deliver you out of Egypt so that you will be able to serve Me in freedom in a land I will take you to. It will be a very fruitful land, a land full of natural resources. I will deliver you by My own power. I will do for you what you cannot possibly do for yourselves."

"Your part," said God "is this. On the tenth day of the month, each family must take a young lamb, under one year old, which, as far as you can tell, is absolutely perfect. It must be thoroughly checked over to make sure it has no defect at all. It must be kept under constant scrutiny for four days, to make sure no defect emerges which was missed at the first examination, or which has developed since then. Then, at twilight on the fourteenth day of the month, it must be taken and slaughtered, in sacrifice, on behalf of the family. Dip a sponge in the blood of the lamb and apply it to the outside of the frame of the door of the house. The flesh of the lamb must then be roasted and a meal made for the family from the roast lamb, to which must be added unleavened bread and bitter herbs."

"Make sure," God said, "that all the lamb is eaten. If any of the families find that they are too small to eat all the lamb, let them share it with other families." Note the order. God gave His instructions. Moses passed them on to the people. The people carried them out.

What a feast that must have been! Roast lamb, with the tang of bitter herbs, to remind them of the bitter years of slavery they had endured, and accompanied by the unleavened bread. What thoughts must have gone through the people's minds while they were eating! God was about to deliver them from their great enemy and taskmaster. They needed strength for the journey that God had said they were about to take. A journey which would eventually take them to a wonderful land promised to them since the days of Abraham, a land, they were told, flowing with milk and honey!

Speaking to Christians, the Apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 5:7-8, "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

For the Israelites, deliverance was conditional upon their acting upon what God said. An acceptable sacrifice had to be offered to God. His claims must be recognised and met. The blood of the sacrifice must not only be shed, but also applied. Remember what God said, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." Deliverance for them did not depend upon their understanding the deep theology involved. They were given no options to choose between. Faith, absolute faith, taking God at His word because it was God Who said it! That was the only stipulation. So, with us, deliverance from the penalty and power of sin is only available to those who have faith in the blood, not now the blood of an animal, but the precious blood of Christ, the only truly perfect sacrifice. To quote again the verse referred to, "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us." Listen to the Apostle Peter, "ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold ... but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:18-19). Listen to the words also of the Apostle John, "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

c. A Lamb for a Nation (The Nation of Israel)

When Jesus comes again, appearing in power and great glory, He will personally deliver the nation of Israel from the enemies who will appear to be on the point of exterminating them for ever. At the very moment of deliverance, the Jews of the day will look up, and realise for the first time the identity of their long-awaited Messiah. "What!" They will cry in absolute astonishment. "Him! Jesus! The despised Nazarene. We didn't realise it would be Him." In the language of Isaiah 53:3-10, they will then say: "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. 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. 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. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand."

Think about it. Over 700 years before the Lord Jesus was born into the world, Isaiah was led to prophesy what the Jewish nation will eventually confess to Him about 2,000 years after the Lord Jesus left the world to go back to heaven. Marvellous!

d. A Lamb for the World

John the Baptist, in his ministry, carried on preaching repentance to the nation of Israel, as many prophets had done for many years. But John was brought into the world, as he himself said, to herald the coming not only of the Messiah of Israel, but of the Saviour of the World. When he saw Jesus coming towards him, he singled him out and identified him for all to take notice.

In John 1:29 we read, "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

What a wonderful thing! The value to God of the death of Jesus on the Cross would be sufficient to pay the penalty due to every sin that had ever been committed by every sinner that has ever lived in the world. (As Romans 3 teaches us, the blessing accruing from the death of Jesus is available "unto all", and effective in those "who believe that Jesus died for them and rose again".)

In John 1:35-36, we read, "The next day after, John stood, and two of his disciples; and looking upon Jesus as He walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!" Even greater to John than the value to God of the work of Christ was the glory of the Person Who did the work. So should it be with us.

e. A Lamb for the Universe

From eternity to eternity The Lamb of God, and the work He would accomplish on the Cross of Calvary, has been the focal point of the revealed will of God. The Lord Jesus is marked out as The Lamb of God relative to the past, present and future.

As to the past, only The Lamb of God could deal with the sins that made us condemned before God. The Lamb of God was marked out as our Saviour before the foundation of the world. 1 Peter 1:18-20, say "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold ... but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and

without spot; who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world". Calvary was no afterthought - it was marked out in eternity.

As to the present, The Lamb of God is in heaven now, commanding our obedience and loyalty as Lord, caring for us as our Shepherd, our Friend in every kind of trouble, High Priest in the presence of God, safeguarding our interests in the presence of God.

In the future, any time now, He will come again, to receive us unto Himself, take us to be His bride and wife, to be identified alongside with Him when He comes to judge and reign.

Then, throughout eternity, He will be the supreme object of our praise and worship. We shall ever remember Him as The Freshly-Slain Lamb (Revelation 5:6). That is, our appreciation of the way His love took him all the way to Calvary shall always be as fresh to our souls as though it had just happened.

What a multiple climax! Joy for the Lamb! Victory for the Lamb! Praise for the Lamb from the whole created universe, ever and eternally, as Revelation 5:13 affirms. The only realistic and intelligent response is to join in now with the words of the poet:

*"Praise the Lamb, for He is worthy
Sweet eternal strain!
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
Praise the Lord! Amen."*

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