

## Passover Sacrifice

Reading: Exodus 12, John 6:35-71

HN 29/2/04 am, SS 7/3/04 am

Study: John 1:29

Psalms: 119:169-end, 22:1-6, 22:13-18, 22:22-25, 22:27, 28, 31

*Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.* This was the cry of John the Baptist when he saw Jesus coming toward him at the Jordan. How those words must have echoed along the Jordan valley over 2000 years ago. I hope they are echoing in your heart as you hear them again today.

Look up and see Jesus, and say the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. You come today to remember him, the lamb without blemish, who gave himself as the perfect sacrifice for your sin. Proclaim this great truth in your home and in the streets of land. It is the gospel, the good news for all people.

You may have to explain some of the terms in this great statement because many people have an incomplete understanding of who Jesus is. Many today even in the churches see him as a great example for us to follow – the perfect man we should seek to emulate.

I was in the bookshop the other day and saw all these nick knacks with WWJD stamped on them. I think its stands for 'what would Jesus do'. There is this teaching out there it would appear that says ones aim in life should be to do what Jesus did. To what extent the Cross is included in this teaching I do not know but clearly it is not central – as it must be.

Remember the crowds that came to John the Baptist asking what shall we do? Or the Philippian jailer who asked Paul and Silas what must I do to be saved? Did they point to Jesus and say do what he does. Here comes Jesus let us do what he does! No! What did John say? “*Behold*”...and Paul? “*Believe*”.

It is impossible to do what Jesus did. We must learn from how he lived and what he taught, but how can we possibly emulate him when we are **sinner**s and dead in our sin, when we are still in bondage. Moreover, are you going to say that you will die for the sins of the world? That what John tells us here about Jesus.

I read the same sort of message in a newsletter recently. It is typical of much teaching today. It was a little meditation on Gethsemane with the message that Jesus was not afraid to show his feeling so we should not be either. My dear friends, Jesus was going to die, he was about to die bearing my sin, the sin of the world. How can I possibly analyse how he felt and then compare myself to him.

Of course the world can understand much better when you start talking psychology rather than sin. But John the Baptist was not talking psychology he was talking sin. And this is what we must proclaim. Why? Because sin is our problem, we are in bandage to sin and only the Lamb of God can take away our sin. Only the Lamb of God can set us free from the power of sin, that we might live to please him – and not the devil.

We asked last time what John might have understood by the words *the Lamb of God*. We saw that for a Jew lamb meant sacrifice. Then we saw that the story of Abraham offering up his son was part of the background to his understanding of this term. *Son, God will provide for himself the lamb* (Genesis 22).

There is another part of their history and ours if we are children of Abraham that centres upon the sacrifice of a lamb. What is that? The Passover, the Paschal lamb. Calvin comments 'it is probable that John alluded to the Paschal lamb'.

The Passover was remembered by a celebration each year in the Jewish household. John would have been part of such celebrations as would most of his hearers. *Behold the Lamb of God* they heard him cry out. The daily sacrifice of lambs for atonement was going on in the temple but there was also this great event in their past. The lamb whose blood was taken and sprinkled on the doorposts. That blood that saved them from death and through which they were delivered from slavery.

This Passover sacrifice of the Lord (Exodus 12:27) then was –

**To save them from death**

Those who took the blood of this lamb, this special year old lamb without defect, and sprinkled it on the doorpost of their house were saved from the angel of death that passed through the land that night. In every house without blood there was death.

Death came to those who sinned – those who sinned by disobeying the word of the Lord. Those who did nothing died. There were probably some of the children of Israel who failed to attend to the words of the Lord. Did they suffer death? Yes. There were probably some of the Egyptians who heard what their neighbours were doing and did the same.

John said the Lamb of God who takes away the sin **of the world**. Jew and Gentile alike receive this salvation because it is by grace through faith, not by works of the law. By 'world' John meant all nations – people *redeemed out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation* (Revelation 5:9).

What about today? What of those who fail to heed the word of the Lord and sprinkle blood on their doorposts – of their heart as it were. It is the same is it not. They are condemned to certain death. The default setting for mans life is death. Those who live without making any response to this cry of John will die for their sins. They will suffer eternal punishment – weeping and gnashing of teeth in outer darkness as Jesus said. No blood meant death.

**To deliver from slavery**

The people of God were forced to work under harsh conditions in Egypt. They were slaves to a hard taskmaster. The Passover sacrifice was the key to their deliverance. Those who participated in this sacrifice, those who ate in haste were set free from slavery. They escaped the clutches of Pharaoh.

The Israelites were saved from death, and they were delivered from bondage – physically. For death still ruled in their midst. They were still in bondage – bondage to Satan and to sin. The Passover sacrifice was a type, it was pointing forward to the true sacrifice, the true lamb that God would provide. It prefigured that great sacrifice upon the Cross for it is that sacrifice alone that can deliver a person from sin and from death.

That unique sacrifice can cleanse any and every person from sin, can bring eternal life in Christ and freedom from the clutches of Satan. This is what John was declaring to those who would listen. This is the free offer of the gospel that comes to you today if you have not yet believed. It is the free offer of the gospel that we proclaim to a lost world just as John proclaimed it all these years ago.

This lamb is the Lamb of God, it is the lamb provided by God as we saw with Abraham. The Passover lamb was not immediately provided by God but still it was called the *Passover sacrifice of the Lord*. The lamb John spoke of was the very Son of God. Animal sacrifices were not effective in removing sin, in taking away sin – *it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins* (Hebrews 10:4).

Remember Jesus as the Word, *the word was with God and the word was God. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us*. Now we see that word called the Lamb of God. God the Son came into this world to die for the sin of the world. This was the great plan of God for our salvation – for the Son to bear the sin of the whole world.

There is not the slightest hint of universalism in this text – nor in any text of the Bible. Not every single person will have their sins taken away. What is freely offered to all is not effective in all. Why? Because it is by grace through faith. Many hear but do not take the step of faith. Moreover, the grace of God is dispensed according to the sovereign will of God – *I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy as he told Moses* (Romans 9:15).

*Takes away sin* is in the present tense here denoting a continuing act. This is because we continue to sin and continually need cleansing. But it is still that one sacrifice to which we look for cleansing. 'These words are intended to show the completeness of Christ's satisfaction for sin and the continual application of his once made sacrifice' (J. C. Ryle).

As you look at the Cross, at Jesus who was stripped and struck, who was beaten and bruised, who was pricked and pierced, do not look with pity for him but pity for yourself. Many people are watching the latest effort to dramatise the

passion of Christ but this is the great danger of such depictions. Jesus said *do not weep for me but weep for yourselves and for your children* (Luke 23:28).

And it is even a danger for us as we read of his crucifixion. Remember why he was beaten and bruised, why he was pierced – *he was pierced for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities. By his stripes we are healed*. Is that what you are saying in your heart as you look to the Lamb of God and to the cross on which he was sacrificed?

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