

Jesus - the Lamb of God

I. Introduction

A. Jesus - the Lamb of God is a great Biblical picture for Easter.

John the Baptist introduces Jesus as "the Lamb of God."

John 1:29 ... "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

John 1:36 and he looked at Jesus as He walked, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!"

B. The word "lamb" is used 37 times in the New Testament;

It is used 31 times in the book of Revelation.

II. "Lamb" speaks of the blood, a covenantal term.

A. Our redemption was accomplished through the blood of Christ.

1 Peter 1:18-21 knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, 19 but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ. 20 For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you 21 who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

B. Redemption in the Old Testament (Covenant) is always through the blood (of a lamb).

1. The Adamic covenant - God made with man after the fall.

Gen 3:21 The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them.

2. The Abrahamic covenant - God made with Abraham, the nation of Israel and to all who live in faith.

Gen 15 God makes a covenant with Abraham in this chapter.

v. 18 On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram,

Gen 15:8-10 Abraham had to offer sacrifices (shedding of blood) to participate in this covenant.

8 He said, "O Lord God, how may I know that I will possess it?" 9 So He said to him, "Bring Me a three year old heifer, and a three year old female goat, and a three year old ram, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon." 10 Then he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, and laid each half opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds .

Gen 22:7-8 later Abraham obeys God by offering up Isaac.

7 Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." And he said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" 8 Abraham said, "God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." So the two of them walked on together.

3. The Mosaic covenant - the covenant of "Law."

Ex 12 Israel is delivered from Egypt through the blood of the Passover lamb.

v. 3 a lamb was slain for every household.

Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying, 'On the tenth of this month they are each one to take a lamb for themselves, according to their fathers' households, a lamb for each household.

v. 11-they were to eat it with an expectation of leaving immediately.

Now you shall eat it in this manner: with your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it in haste--it is the LORD'S Passover.

v. 13 the blood saved them from the plague of the death of the firstborn; the Angel of death passed over the homes where the blood was applied.

13 The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live; and when I see the blood I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.

4. Isaiah prophesies of the suffering Messiah, the Lamb of God.

Isa 53:4-7

4 Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

5 But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed.

6 All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the Lord has caused the

iniquity of us all to fall on Him.

7 He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, So He did not open His mouth.

III. The New Testament

A. Jesus died at the very time that the Passover lamb was being sacrificed.

John 13:1 Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He would depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end. (Matthew 26; Mark 14; Luke 22; John 13; 18)

B. We can only receive and understand the love of God, through the "Passion" of Christ.

Rom 5:8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

1 John 3:16 We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us;

1 John 4:14 We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.

C. The sacrifice of Jesus would be in vain without the physical resurrection of His body.

1 Cor 15 the resurrection chapter

1 Cor 15:1-4 the necessity of His death, burial and resurrection.

1 Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, 2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. 3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,

1 Cor 15:16-18 without the resurrection His sacrifice would be worthless.

16 For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; 17 and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. 18 Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.

1 Cor 15:20-23 the resurrection of Christ gives hope to us, knowing that we will also experience this one-day, when Jesus returns.

20 But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. 21 For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. 23 But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming,

IV. Observations of "Jesus, the Lamb," from the book of Revelation

A. In the book of Revelation "Jesus, the Lamb," is the main revelation of who He is; 31 times Jesus is revealed as a lamb.

B. Understanding "Jesus, the Lamb," leads us into worship; there are 7 scenes of worship.
(Rev 4:8-11; 5:8-14; 7:9-17; 11:15-19; 14:1-5; 15:2-4; 19:1-7)

V. Conclusion:

A. Let us celebrate!

1 Cor 5:7-8 ... For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. Therefore let us celebrate the feast,

B. Let us embrace all that God has for our life.

Rom 8:32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?

VI. Notes from the experts:

A. Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible

General term used by John the Baptist to show that Christ would fulfill what the OT sacrifices pointed to. John the Baptist uses the expression twice (Jn 1:29, 36), adding on the first instance, "who takes away the world's sin!" He does not explain what the term means. In that it is not used by anyone before him, we cannot appeal to established meaning. Christians use the term freely but what do they mean by it? Why would anyone be called "God's Lamb"?

Some maintain that John sees Jesus fulfilling all that the Passover means and that this is a way of referring to the Passover lamb. It is true that the fourth Gospel places the death of Jesus at the time the Passover sacrifices were killed. But "Passover lamb" is a modern expression; not one example of its use is known to occur in antiquity. When people wanted to refer to the animal killed for this sacrifice, they simply called it "the Passover" (as Paul does in 1 Cor 5:7). The Passover victim was not necessarily a lamb; it might be, and often was, a kid. There is no reason for seeing the Passover in this expression.

In the OT most passages referring to a lamb speak of sacrifice (85 out of the total of 96). Combined with a reference to the taking away of sin, it is difficult to see how a reference to sacrificial atonement is to be rejected. Characteristically the lamb in Scripture puts away sin by being sacrificed. "God's Lamb" means that this provision is made by God himself. A reference to sacrifice seems undeniable, but a connection with any one sacrifice is hard to make. All that the OT sacrifices foreshadowed, Christ perfectly fulfilled. God's Lamb puts sin away finally.

(Elwell, Walter A. ; Beitzel, Barry J.: *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1988, S. 1299*)

B. Tyndale Bible Dictionary

General term used twice by John the Baptist (Jn 1:29, 36), adding on the first instance "who takes away the world's sin!" He does not explain what the term means. Christians use the term freely, but what do they mean by it? Why would anyone be called "God's Lamb"?

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Some scholars think the image comes from Isaiah 53. They see the lamb led to the slaughter (v 7) as a way of referring to the Messiah.

Other scholars think there is an allusion to the triumphant lamb of the apocalypses. The writers of apocalyptic literature used vivid imagery to reveal their meaning to initiates and to conceal it from outsiders. They sometimes used the lamb as a symbol of a conqueror (cf. the use of "the Lamb" for "the Mighty One" in Revelation). These scholars think that John was pointing to Jesus as the Messiah, King of Israel. Many find this view attractive. The royalty it ascribes to Jesus is certainly congenial to John. But against it is the weighty consideration that John was speaking about a Lamb who takes away sin, while the apocalyptic lamb is normally a conqueror. The roles are different. Further, it is not easy to see how non-Jewish readers of the Gospel at the time it was written would have been able to discern the point of apocalyptic imagery.

There are other suggestions. The "gentle lamb" (Jer 11:19), the daily sacrifice in the temple, the scapegoat, and the guilt offering have all been put forward with some confidence. But no one has produced evidence that any of these was ever called "God's lamb."

In the OT passages referring to a lamb, nearly all of them speak of sacrifice (85 out of the total of 96). Combined with a reference to the taking away of sin, it is difficult to see how a reference to sacrificial atonement is to be rejected. Characteristically the lamb in Scripture puts away sin by being sacrificed. "God's Lamb" means that this provision is made by God himself. A reference to sacrifice seems undeniable, but a connection with any one sacrifice is hard to make. All that the OT sacrifices foreshadowed, Christ perfectly fulfilled. God's Lamb puts sin away finally.

(Elwell, Walter A. ; Comfort, Philip Wesley: *Tyndale Bible Dictionary. Wheaton, Ill. : Tyndale House Publishers, 2001 (Tyndale Reference Library), S. 795*)

C. New Bible Dictionary

This expression (LAMB OF GOD) occurs twice only in the NT (Jn. 1:29, 36). The word *amos* is also found in Acts 8:32 and 1 Pet. 1:19, *amos* occurs in Lk. 10:3, and *arnion* is found once in Jn. 21:15 and twenty-eight times in Revelation. The words 'Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world' (Jn. 1:29) are attributed to John the Baptist when acclaiming Jesus. Many possible interpretations of the word 'lamb' have been canvassed.

Some suggest that it refers to the lamb of the sin-offering, and the phrase 'who takes away the sin of the world' lends support to this. The fact that propitiatory ideas do not seem to be found elsewhere in the Fourth Gospel is not a sufficient reason for rejecting this.

Others believe there is a reference to the paschal lamb. The Jewish festivals have great significance in John, and Jn. 19:36 may well be alluding to the lamb of the Passover. But this would not explain the whole phrase, as the paschal lamb did not take away sins.

Some maintain that we have here a reference to the suffering servant of Is. 53. The word *amos* occurs in the LXX of Is. 53:7. The Baptist quoted from Is. 40 the day before and he may have been meditating on those chapters. The sin-bearing function is clear in Is. 53. The suggestion that *amos* is a mistranslation of the Aramaic *ṭalyā* meaning 'servant' is ingenious, but it has not been proved.

Another possible reference is to the horned ram who led the flock. The 'lamb of God' would thus be the same as the 'king of Israel'. This view is acceptable only if it is claimed that ho airōn tēn hamartian has no propitiatory meaning.

It seems likely that, whatever the Baptist intended, the Evangelist intended his readers to think of the lamb offered in the Temple, the paschal lamb, and the suffering servant. The 'Lamb of God' also reminds us of God's provision of a lamb for Abraham to sacrifice (Gn. 22:8, 13-14).

(Wood, D. R. W.: *New Bible Dictionary*. InterVarsity Press, 1996, c1982, c1962, S. 661)

C. Gerald L. Borchert;

This Lamb-of-God concept in John is most probably a synthesis of two biblical motifs: the servant of the Lord theme as represented in a passage like Isaiah 53 and the theme of Passover.

But this Lamb is a special kind of lamb - one that "takes away [airōn] the sin of the world."
(Remember that the world in this Gospel primarily means the people of the world.)

The theme of taking away sin is directly related to the Hebrew kpr, which involves "wiping away" or getting rid of sin.

The Hebrew carries the idea of wiping away.

Note 1:

1 John 2:2; 4:10 implies getting rid of sin through the vicarious (substitutionary) expiatory death of Jesus for our sins.

Note 2:

The terms used for the death of Jesus have caused confusion. Particularly in English does the concept of kpr cause confusion as in Yom Kippur, normally translated "Day of Atonement" even by Jews. But the term "atonement" in fact selects a Greco-Roman meaning for the rendering rather than the "smearing" concept drawn from the sacrificial system of Israel. Cf. C. Brown, who challenges the popular scholarly view that distinguishes between propitiation and expiation and then dismisses propitiation as an unworthy biblical idea. The biblical view of atonement is neither "arbitrary" nor "unethical" ("Reconciliation," DNTT 3.151-60).

Such "getting rid" is not merely done by "covering" it over and acting as though it were gone. The getting rid of sin in the Bible is done by the smearing of blood, the symbol of God's "pardoning" of humanity through death and the consequent "reconciliation of humanity with God."

(The term πάρεσις, rendered "pass over" at Rom 3:25, probably would be more faithfully rendered by the term "pardon.")

The picture of a bloody sacrifice is not very appealing to the contemporary world, but it is a significant part of the theological framework out of which Christian thinkers have hammered the basic understanding of salvation and Christology.

(Some have argued that Passover is not technically a sacrificial observance, but by the time of Jesus the Passover lambs were killed by the priests and so were for the purposes of reality to be viewed as a sacrifice.)

The task of contemporary Christian communication is not to avoid the idea but to interpret it in a manner that enables modern readers to comprehend the significance of Passover/sacrificial terminology. Getting rid of sin was one of the evangelist's strategic concerns (e.g., 8:21-46; 9:34, 41; 15:22-24; 16:8-9). It is enunciated clearly even in the commission of the resurrected Lord (20:23).

(Borchert, Gerald L.: John 1-11. electronic ed. Nashville : Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001, c1996)