

The Lamb Of God John 1:29-36

In our modern day church settings, we are far removed from many of the concepts and practices described for us in the Old Testament scriptures of our bibles, especially the necessity for the sacrifices that were required to atone for the many sins that the people would commit.

Now in our day, two thousand years later, with our understanding of how the Lord Jesus came and fulfilled all of the requirements of the law to make the atoning payment for the debts of sin, our minds often struggle to even imagine what must have taken place as the men would bring their sheep to the temple, confess their sins and then watch as their innocent little lamb would be slain before them to remove those sins they had confessed to committing, the lamb shedding its blood, and giving its life as a "substitute" for their own life that should have rightfully been taken in payment for those sins.

And why God had conceived such a plan as this to bring men's souls to conviction of sin and to repentance we might never fully understand. But we do know that one of the ultimate purposes was culminated in this one concept that John the Baptist was declaring as He saw the Lord Jesus walking towards Him that day there as he was baptizing the people. He said. "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

Such a powerful statement for John to make about this man Jesus. Because the people knew that in the temple the sacrifice for one person's sin was one lamb, but here John was declaring that Jesus was the One Lamb who would take away the sins of everyone, a completely incomprehensible concept to those who would be listening.

But let's pause for a moment and read our passage given here, and we'll talk about it. This is John chapter 1 beginning in verse 29,

²⁹ The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! ³⁰This is He of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me.' ³¹I did not know Him; but that He should be revealed to Israel, therefore I came baptizing with water."

³²And John bore witness, saying, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. ³³I did not know Him, but He who

sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' ³⁴And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God."

³⁵Again, the next day, John stood with two of his disciples. ³⁶And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God!" (John 1:24-36)

John's introduction of Jesus was deliberate and it was exact, no wasted words, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

Perhaps if you and I could truly understand the concept behind "substitutionary sacrifice", we would then be able to hear these words and truly know what they mean, how they are relevant in our day, and how they are relevant to us in our individual lives.

But we don't! And no amount of explaining the concept could ever quite convey its full meaning. I'm convinced that these words are one of those "secrets" spoken about in 1 Corinthians chapter 2, secrets that will only be revealed to us by God's Spirit at some appropriate moment when our heart is ready for His secret wisdom.

I love these words. I've read them to us often, but listen again!

⁷ . . . We speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. ⁸None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. ⁹However, as it is written:

"No eye has seen,
no ear has heard,
no mind has conceived
what God has prepared for those who love him"—

¹⁰but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. (1 Corinthians 2:7-10)

John, the chosen "herald of God", declared simply and plainly. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

As I consider these few words, I do believe that the people of Jesus' day did understand, at least to some degree, the basic concept of "substitutionary sacrifices". Not that they understood God's true meaning, but they had been accustomed to the many forms of sacrifice that had been passed down to them over the generations.

And because of that, they most likely understood the implication that John was making as he spoke those words, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

And no, for many reasons, they probably didn't want to see Jesus in the way that John introduced Him, especially as a "sacrifice lamb for the slaughter". They probably would have much rather had had their "Coming Messiah" introduced as the "Lion of Judah" who would rescue them out of the hands of the Romans.

But whatever their desire, at least most of them knew the implication of the words that John was saying.

But you and I don't. We haven't grown up smelling the blood of animals being sacrificed in the temple. We haven't grown up walking to church with our Dads, leading a cute little lamb on a rope, knowing that it's blood would flow and that it would die and somehow in the whole process, take away the sins that we had hidden within our souls. Those kinds of thoughts are all so foreign to us!

But that was in fact the very words that John spoke that day. He introduced Jesus to the world as "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

God has not given me a message for you today on Old Testament sacrifices, so I won't try to explain their importance. But He has given me a message for you and me on why it is so important that Jesus needs to be our "substitutionary sacrifice". Much like the intended purpose of those little lambs who would by their death serve as a substitute payment for the sins of their owner, so also, the Lord Jesus would serve as a "substitute" to die and to pay the necessary penalty for our sins.

Most of us have heard these words over and over again as we have grown up in the church, but we need to hear them afresh again today.

God hates sin! He hates evil in every form. He hates it so much that His holiness cannot allow it to continue forever in His presence.

We can't fathom the existence of satan and his demons and the sin that lives in them. And we can't fathom the reason behind why God allowed satan access to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, but He did. We only know the results, and that is that God has chosen to permit sin its presence and its effects for a season.

But God has also avowed that sin will not endure forever. At some particular point in time, known only to God, He will declare an absolute end to sin. And sin will be done away with completely. And Jesus, the "Lamb of God" is the beginning step of taking away that sin.

Folks, it was a very merciful and loving thing that God did when there in the beginning He cast Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden. Yes, there was a form of punishment attached to their leaving. But much more than that, it was an act of love and mercy and Grace on the part of God.

After Adam and Eve had tasted of the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil and sin had entered into their hearts, they then had a natural bent and desire for sinful things within their nature. And because of that, a great danger then lay before them if they remained there in the Garden. If they were to eat of that other tree, the "Tree of Life", then they would live forever in their sinful condition.

But God, in His great mercy and grace, said no, I want to give them the opportunity to change, to be redeemed from their sinful condition. So, with great love and mercy, God very quickly sent them away.

We don't know much about the story of satan and his demons, and how they got into the condition that they are in, but by the time that Adam and Eve came along, they had already made their choices. But God so loved His new creation, men and women, that He quickly sent them out from the eternal dangers that were present in the Garden.

And you will recall that God put His angel with a flaming sword at the gate of the garden to prevent any entrance of sin back into His Kingdom.

The angel with his flaming sword, represents the separation that sin has created between God and man. And it is a separation that must continue until sin is removed.

The matter that is of a critical issue for you and me is that the same sin present within Adam and Eve is also present within each one of us.

Sin is a universal condition, yes. All men and women have it, yes. But sin is very much like an infectious disease, it can't be treated universally. Its remedy must be applied personally and individually.

And that is the message of the cross. You and I are sinful. We have been infected from birth with the terminal cancer of sin. It eats away at us daily, debilitating us in our relationship with God, with each other and with all the rest of the world.

I'm reminded of the terrible circumstance that my dear sister endured as she suffered with cancer. She had an awful form of skin cancer on her face. And it metastasized throughout her body, slowly, day by day eating away at everything that she was, her face, her body, her very identity as a person. And eventually, she died from it.

Sin and its effects are much like terminal cancer. As our sin nature is allowed to reside unfettered within us, you and I suffer many of the same kinds of effects upon our souls that cancer wreaks upon our bodies.

As sin is allowed to take its course each day, it slowly eats away at everything that we are. It can and it does destroy our body, our soul, our very identity as a person, until all that is left is a mass of flesh, fit only to be thrown into the pit of hell.

But we must take heart dear friends. Praise be to God, He has provided us with a remedy. He has given us His Son, the Lord Jesus, "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

In Him, in the Lord Jesus, God has said to you and to me, "You are so sinful, and I hate sin so much that you could never pay the penalty that is required to remove it. But My Dear Son has willingly come to be your substitutionary sacrifice. And by His sacrifice, He will pay for, and atone for, the sin that lives within you."

But mysteriously, and incomprehensible to our rational minds God has placed within His provision of Salvation a requirement of choice that we must make. As we have studied in these first few words of this chapter 1 of John, you and I are required to join with the Lord Jesus in His provision of salvation.

Those words again here in John chapter 1 verse 12,

¹²Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. (John 1:12)

Yes, the salvation of our soul is in every way a free gift from our lord. But mysteriously, as part of His provision there is a choice that you and I need to make. We must by faith believe in Him and we must receive Him.

God is saying to us, "while you can do nothing to save yourselves, I will allow you to participate in my sovereign gift to you. I do this so that on that great and terrible day of judgment you will be without excuse. And the choice you will make at that time will determine how you will spend your eternity, an eternity of joy and peace, or an eternity of separation and misery. Will you join with me?"

Oh dear friends, these words that we are reading here in our bibles is all about this transaction of salvation for our souls. Here, two thousand years ago, God presented us with a confrontation of choices. He put a fork in our road. And while we too often want to hesitate in making hard choices such as these, we just aren't permitted to straddle that fork. We must make a definitive choice, and that choice has eternal significance.

Moses, so clearly, bespoke this kind of confrontation there in Deuteronomy chapter 6. He said,

¹⁵See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction.

¹⁶For I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and the LORD your God will bless you . . .

¹⁷But if your heart turns away and you are not obedient, and if you are drawn away to bow down to other gods and worship them, ¹⁸I declare to you this day that you will certainly be destroyed.

. . . ¹⁹This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live ²⁰and that you may love the LORD

your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life.
(Deuteronomy 6:15-20)

This is what Jesus provided for you and me two thousand years ago. We may not understand the concept behind His substitutionary sacrifice. But it was a truth, for you and me, the greatest and most loving truth that has ever come to mankind.

Two thousand years ago, on a late Thursday evening, the chief priests and soldiers took the Lord Jesus, the Lamb of God, from the Garden of Gethsemane and the ritual of sacrifice began.

And oh dear friends, it was no coincidence that it was the chief priests that came for Jesus. Remember that it was them, the Priests who were responsible for preparing the sacrifice for slaughter.

But true to their corrupt character, these priests also allowed others to participate in the “sacrifice of this special Lamb, the Lamb of God”, the Romans and even the mob of bystanders.

But all in all, the sacrifice went as God had planned it. He generously allowed everyone their say, their input into the death of His Dear Son. He did that so that no one could ever plead ignorance or innocence. They would be without excuse on their great and terrible day of judgment.

Oh dear friends, it truly will be this way for every one of us when we stand before our Lord on that day of judgment. We will be without excuse. Our one and only hope will be in the precious blood that He shed that day for us. And yes, for those of us who believe in Him and receive Him, His blood will be enough.

Oh dear friends, these few simple words that John the Baptist spoke as He saw the Lord Jesus walking towards Him are so very, very meaningful. Jesus truly was, and truly is the “Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.”

There, two thousand years ago, as Jesus suffered each of those terrible sufferings, the beatings by the Roman soldiers, the humiliation, the nails in his hands and feet, the excruciating pain of hanging there on that cross, it was all for a purpose. It was all necessary to take away the sins of the world, yours and mine.

Every stripe, every bruise was purposeful and healing. In Isaiah chapter 53 we are told that "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."

They took Jesus and made Him walk those last steps, carrying His cross. Being almost dead already from the beating, those Roman soldiers forced a stranger, Simon of Cyrene, to help Jesus carry the cross.

But folks, that was no simple coincidence. Simon, in so many ways, represents you and me. Jesus had a few more steps to go to complete all that He had begun back there when John first declared Him to be "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." And God generously gave Simon the opportunity and the privilege of helping Him with His last steps.

And so it is with you and me. Colossians 1:24

²⁴Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church. (Colossians 1:24)

God has left a portion remaining for you and for me, a portion of the sufferings that Christ endured. And those sufferings have been held in trust for you and me, if we are only willing to get under the other arm of that cross and help Jesus walk those last few steps of the way.

He is saying to you and to me that we need to "Go ye into all the world and make other disciples for Him", to continue and to complete the work that He began.

And yes, it will be a journey of suffering if we choose to walk it with Him. It's only a few steps, but they are truly awful and they are painful. But like Simon, we can't let the loving grace of God fail because of us.

There is not much remaining in the sufferings of Christ. His work was truly finished. But for some reason He still wants you and me to walk those last few steps with Him. And we must, we must.

And perhaps, if we are fortunate, some of the blood that came from His bruised and broken body will spill onto us and cleanse us from all our sins.

“Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”

Pray with Me.