

Moments *for* You

Volume 55, Number 4

Theme: Lamb of God



THE RECORD OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

“John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth One among you, whom ye know not; He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe’s latchet I am not worthy to unloose. These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing. The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. This is He of whom I said, After me cometh a Man which is preferred before me: for He was before me. And I knew Him not: but that He should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon Him. And I knew Him not: but He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, the same is He which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God” (John 1:26-34).

I fear that many Christians fail to realize how much God, by the Holy Spirit, committed to His servant John the Baptist. Many of us think of him as one who had very little gospel light or understanding of the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he recognized in the Lord Jesus the pre-existent One. He says in verse 15, and again in verse 30, “He was before me.” John recognized in our Lord Jesus One who did not begin to live when He was born here on earth, but One who had life with the Father before He deigned in grace to come down to this world and link His Deity with our humanity, apart from its sin, and be born as Mary’s Child.

In verse 29 we find John giving utterance to one of the greatest truths of the gospel. He sees Jesus coming toward him and exclaims, “Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.” Have you ever thought what must have been involved in that? All down through the centuries Israel had known of the sacrificed lamb. They knew that long years ago when Abraham and Isaac were going up the mountain, Isaac

turned to his father and said, “Father ... behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb?” (Genesis 22:7). And Abraham said, “My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering.”

And then they knew that when Israel was about to come out of Egypt God told them to take a lamb and kill it and sprinkle the blood. The death angel went through Egypt at midnight, but when he saw the blood he passed over the Israelites’ homes” (Exodus 12). And they knew that in the temple service, every morning and every evening a lamb was placed upon the altar for a burnt offering (Exodus 29:38-46). Isaiah had prophesied of the One who would be led as a lamb to the slaughter in order to become the sacrifice for sins (Isaiah 53:7).

Now, at last, He of whom the prophets spoke had come, and John exclaimed, “Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world!” He recognized in Jesus the object of all prophetic testimony and the fulfillment of all the types in the law. Notice how he dwells on the vicarious atonement, the suffering of

one for the sin of another. He knew that in Isaiah it was written of the Lamb of God, “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” (Isaiah 53:5). At last He had come in accordance with the word of God!

Notice he does not say merely “sins.” It is *sin*, in the singular. I think you will find that when people attempt to quote this verse they generally say *sins*. Sins are only the effect of a cause, and the Lamb of God came, not only to take away the individual’s sins, but to take away or deal with, the sin-problem as a whole. The Apostle Paul said, God “hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin” (2 Corinthians 5:21). Jesus is not only the bearer of our transgressions, He not only atoned for all our acts of sin, but He died for what we are as sinners by nature.

I have been guilty of many sins which I have had to go to God and confess, and I know those sins have all been forgiven. But I am a worse man than anything I have ever done! Within this heart of mine there are tendencies to sin which are worse than any act of sin I have ever committed. This is true of us all. We are sinners by nature. Sin dwelleth in us.

Christ died to put away *sin*—not merely *sins*—by the sacrifice of Himself (Hebrews 9:26). God took all of that into account when Christ hung on the cross. He died because of what we were. He took our place. He was made sin for us, and sin—as a barrier—was taken away, and now the vilest sinner can come into the presence of God and find forgiveness.

Do you know this Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world? Have you trusted Him to take

away *your* sin? Won’t you come to Jesus Christ now in this day of salvation? Agree with God that you are a lost sinner, and accept His offer of forgiveness by placing your faith in the Saviour who died for you and rose again.

—Condensed from *Addresses on the Gospel of John* by H.A. Ironside.

“SIN” OR “SINS”?

“Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).

Many people, and even common religious liturgies misquote this verse, replacing “sin” with “sins.” Does it really matter? What is the difference?

Both the apostles Paul and Peter testify that the Lord Himself bore their sins upon the cross (Hebrews 9:28; 1 Peter 2:24). Without this blessed assurance there could be neither peace secured for the believer’s conscience nor a righteous basis for worshipping God. The Christian is exhorted to come boldly into the presence of God by the blood of Jesus, which has purged his sins (Hebrews 9,10), but note that this standing is *only* true of the believer.

In total contrast is the state and condition of the unbeliever. He is far off, in guilt, in darkness, in death (John 3:18). If Christ was the Lamb that takes away the “sins” of the world, all people would stand guiltless before God, but this is not the case.

Jesus Christ is “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” so that we can declare to you that whoever—in the whole world—will believe the gospel message has pardon from God. But all who refuse must die in their sins (John 8:24), and be terribly judged because they refused the message of grace (John 3:36).

—William Kelly, adapted

THE LAMB OF GOD

What does the term, “the Lamb of God,” mean?

NOTHING BUT THE BEST

The Hebrews sometimes refer to something as being “of God” when they mean that it is the greatest, the noblest, the chief of its kind. For instance, they call the cedars, “trees of God,” and thunder is the “voice of God.” Therefore, we may understand that Jesus, as “the Lamb of God,” is the *chief of all sacrifices*.

All other sacrifices of God’s ordaining were but pictures, representations, symbols, and shadows of Himself. There is only one Sacrifice for sin—there never was another, and there never can be. The blood of Jesus, offered once, has forever put away sin and no further sin-offering can be brought. Whoever rests in Jesus as the true and only Sacrifice is accepted in his faith.

GOD’S APPOINTED ONE

Moreover, our Saviour is called “the Lamb of God” because He is the Lamb of God’s *appointing*. Peter tells us that the Lord Jesus is “a lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world” (1 Peter 1:19,20). Jesus is the choice of the Father. Our hearts rejoice that it is so, for when we rely upon Jesus to save us, we trust in One whom God has appointed to save His people. If, as a guilty sinner, I leave my sin upon Christ, the Lamb of God, I leave it exactly where God has asked me to put it. I rest in a sacrifice which God, Himself, ordained of old.

GOD’S GREAT PROVISION

Thirdly, Christ is called “the Lamb of God” because He is of God’s *providing*. The Father not only appointed His Son to be the Sacrifice for sin, but

He also freely gave Him to be such. Out of the bosom of God came Jesus Christ as love’s richest blessing. He is the Father’s only begotten, God’s dear Son, and to us, “His unspeakable gift” (2 Corinthians 9:15). God “spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all” (Romans 8:32). “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:10). Under the Old Testament law, men were required to provide the sacrifices, but the one Sacrifice of the Gospel is the gift of God.

GOD’S SUPREME OFFERING

Lastly, let us not forget that God Himself had a hand in the sufferings of His Son. It is written: “We did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.... The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.... It pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief” (Isaiah 53:4,6,10). What does that cry mean, “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” (Matthew 27:46) but that God, Himself, had turned away from Him and so had brought His soul into the depths of woe?

When I think of this, that God chose His Son to be the Atonement, that He gave His Son, and then, Himself, offered Him up—I know that the Sacrifice *must* be acceptable and all-sufficient, so that he who rests in it need not have a shadow of a doubt that his soul is saved!

Now then, sinner, do you want to be rid of your sin? God’s way of pardoning you is that your sin be laid on Jesus. As of old the Jew laid his hands upon the lamb and the lamb was his substitute, so lay your trembling hands by faith upon Christ, and He will be your Substitute! Oh that you were led to receive Him now to be yours forever! —C.H. Spurgeon

THE LAMB IN GLORY

“The throne of God and of the Lamb” (Revelation 22:1).

THE LAMB IS WORTHY

In Revelation 5 the Apostle John continues the story of the Lamb. John is carried in spirit into Heaven, and there he beholds in the right hand of God a book. The question is addressed to the assembled hosts of Heaven: “Who is worthy to open the book?” (v. 2). Searching through all the myriads of the redeemed, John can find “no man in Heaven” worthy to open the book. Then John searches through earth, but no worthy man is found. John begins to weep, but he hears one of the elders saying, “Weep not: behold the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, hath prevailed to open the book” (v. 5). John turns to the throne expecting to see the all-prevailing Lion, but “in the midst of the throne ... stood a Lamb as it had been slain” (v. 6). The Lion that prevails is the Lamb that was slain!

On earth John had heard the words, “Behold the Lamb of God” spoken by John the Baptist. He had followed the Lamb in His humiliation. He had stood at the foot of the cross and been a witness of the Lamb in His sufferings. He had seen Him when men pierced His hands and feet. He had seen Jesus as the risen Man on the evening of the resurrection day when Jesus showed His disciples the wound marks in His hands and feet. Now, transported to heaven, surrounded by the vast host of the redeemed, and ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands of angels—in the very center of heavenly glory—he sees “a Lamb as it had been slain.” He sees Jesus with the wound marks in His

hands and feet, the only Man in all that eternal glory who will bear any trace of the sorrows of time.

As John gazes with adoring wonder, he hears the great host of the redeemed break forth into song—the new song—the song of the Lamb, saying, “Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation” (v. 9).

The angels cannot sing this song, neither can they keep silent when it is sung, and so John hears a fresh burst of praise in which all Heaven joins—the living creatures, the blood-bought saints, the angels—all join as with a loud voice they cry, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing” (v. 12).

Earth cannot remain silent when Heaven is telling the glories of the Lamb, and so there falls upon John’s ears another burst of praise. This time all created beings in heaven and earth join in one great anthem of praise to God and the Lamb, saying, “Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever” (v. 13). The four living creatures add their “Amen” to this threefold burst of praise, and the blood-bought saints, with hearts filled to overflowing “fell down and worshipped Him that liveth for ever and ever” (v. 14).

THE LAMB IS MIGHTY

In the course of the book of the Revelation, further glories of the Lamb pass before us. The scene changes from Heaven to earth and we are permitted to see the Lamb in His power and in His wrath, executing judgment. It is the Lamb that

opens the seals and allows judgment to take its course (6:1). It is before the wrath of the Lamb the nations cry out in terror (6:16). Eventually, it is against the Lamb that the nations, under the leadership of the beast, make war only to be overcome, and to discover that the Lamb of God—the One they had despised and nailed to a cross—is the Lord of lords and King of kings (17:14).

THE LAMB IS THE BRIDEGROOM

Once again the scene changes from earth to Heaven, and we are permitted to see fresh glories of the Lamb. The destruction of the false professing church on earth makes way for the marriage of the Lamb, the presentation to Christ in glory of the true church. In this great scene there passes before us the bride, the Lamb's wife (19:7), the marriage of the Lamb, and the supper of the Lamb (19:9).

The word "bride" presents the church as the object of Christ's intimate love. As such He loved it and gave Himself for it (Ephesians 5:25). "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end" (John 13:1), "that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing" (Ephesians 5:27).

THE LAMB IS EVERLASTING LIGHT

One more scene remains to tell further glories of the Lamb. John is carried to a great and high mountain to see the bride, the Lamb's wife, but what he actually sees is "that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of Heaven from God" (21:10). He tells of its jasper walls great and high, he speaks of its gates of pearls, the streets of gold, and the foundations garnished with all manner of precious stones. It is a symbol, surely, of the church displayed in glory, but more

than that, it speaks of the glory of the Lamb displayed in the church.

"The Lamb is the light thereof" (21:23). How could the gold and the pearls and the precious stones display their beauty apart from the light? John seems eager to say, as it were, "In the midst of all the glories, and above all the glories of this celestial city, I saw the Lamb. The One well known to us in the days of His pilgrim journey, the One who walked with us, and talked with us, who dwelt among us full of grace and truth, who shared with us our poverty, who bore with us in our weakness, and wept with us in our sorrows, the One who loved us and gave Himself for us—this is the One I saw in the midst of the city—the Lamb of God."

The glories of the city may captivate our minds, the absence of all evil will surely satisfy the conscience, but the presence of the Lamb will alone satisfy our affections, and make every saint at home in the midst of these transcendent glories. We shall see the glories of the city, we shall see the river of life and the tree of life, but above all we shall see the Lamb—we shall "see His face" (22:4).

May the transforming power of the story of the Lamb—the crucified, risen, ascended, and glorified Lamb—be manifest in our lives even now!

—Hamilton Smith, condensed

*The bride eyes not her garment,
But her dear bridegroom's face;
I will not gaze at glory,
But on my King of Grace—*

*Not at the crown He giveth,
But on His pierced hand:
The Lamb is all the glory
Of Immanuel's land.*

—Anne Ross Cousin

WHO SHOULD BEHOLD?

John the Baptist said “Behold the Lamb of God” (John 1:29,36). What does it mean to “behold” something? It means to look at, to observe, or watch it carefully. Who should take a closer look at Jesus?

THE CARELESS SINNER

Those who live in the neglect of God and of their own souls know little of the true evil nature of sin. But let careless sinners view the Son of God leaving Heaven’s glory and assuming our nature to atone for sin; let them go to Gethsemane and behold Him bathed in a bloody sweat through the agonies of His soul; let them follow Him to Calvary, and hear Him crying, “My God, My God! why hast Thou forsaken Me?” Let them view Him expiring under the curse and condemnation of the law; and then let them judge whether sin is “no big deal.” Let them behold Him whom they have pierced, and mourn.

THE SELF-RIGHTEOUS

It is strange that anyone who calls himself a “Christian” should expect to receive salvation through good works. Why then should the Lamb of God have come down from Heaven to atone for our sins, if sin could have been taken away by any righteousness of ours? To trust in our own merits or religious works of any kind, thinking that our place in Heaven can be earned as a reward or bought at any price, is an insult to God and to His Lamb. Let the self-righteous person renounce all vain hopes, and rather “behold the Lamb,” trusting His all-atoning sacrifice entirely.

THE BURDENED AND BROKEN

What sight can be greater to a humble, repentant sinner than the sight of Jesus dying in the sinners’ place? Let the burdened and broken

soul come at once to find rest in the Saviour. The Lamb of God was appointed to be the sin-bearer, and He stands ready, willing, and able to take away the sin of all who will behold Him in faith. View Him as He is—infinite in both power and grace—and listen to His encouraging invitation: “Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37).

THE FOLLOWER OF CHRIST

Those who have turned to God and placed their faith in Jesus Christ may glory in the security which His blood affords them. But remember that He not only removes the guilt of sin; He removes the power of it also. Therefore, while we behold the Lamb of God as the basis of our eternal hope, let us also behold Him as a pattern for our imitation. Let us follow His steps in all meekness and patience, in all purity and holiness. Let us never forget that “we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10).

—C.C. Crowston, adapted

A FIVE-WORD SERMON

Many years ago there was a true man of God who was the most remarkable preacher on earth. The whole country came to hear him. If such a thing occurred now, it would be considered a great revival. On one occasion, however, we are told that this very same preacher had a congregation of just *two people*. He preached on this day a sermon of only *five words*, but the effect was marvelous. Right then and there, both hearers became faithful, devoted followers of Christ.

Do you know the name of this preacher sent from God? He was

none other than John the Baptist. You may read an account of his great revival preaching in Matthew 3, but let us focus instead at the short sermon to the two. "John stood, and two of his disciples; and looking upon Jesus as He walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God! And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus" (John 1:35-37).

"Behold the Lamb of God." What a living text! Without these five words, tons of volumes of theology are worthless. Here was the Son of God; and He was the Lamb of God. Behold Him. How simple, yet this is the power of God. Has this message come to your heart yet, and turned you from everything else to follow Jesus? You may have gone to confession, and you may have been baptized, and you may have done many other things, but has this blessed Person, the Lamb of God, attracted your heart to follow Him?

One of those who heard John and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He immediately becomes a preacher to the first person he meets (John 1:41). Oh, if every true

follower of Jesus, the Lamb of God, would just go out and seek another person to bring to Jesus! We are all surrounded by people who for years have been seeking salvation by law-keeping, by sacraments, by works, by their church. But they are saying to themselves, "I am as far away from God as ever. I have no rest, no real peace. I cannot say I am saved. I cannot look death and judgment in the face. There are so many opinions that I am bewildered. I have so many sins: I try to forget them but it does not work. If only I could find the truth, the real way to God."

If you have experienced the grace of God, go share the good news with a friend or family member. Simply say, "I have found the Saviour." Tell them how you have found all that you need in Jesus, the Lamb of God. Do just as Andrew did when he brought his brother to Jesus. He is ready to receive them. Oh, beloved reader, have you come to Jesus? Do you abide with Him? Do you follow Him? Have you told others about Him? The Lord give us more of this kind of preaching.

—Charles Stanley (1821-1888), adapted

Lamb of God, our souls adore Thee,
While upon Thy face we gaze;
There the Father's love and glory
Shine in all their brightest rays;
Thy almighty power and wisdom
All creation's works proclaim;
Heaven and earth alike confess Thee
As the ever great I AM.

Son of God, Thy Father's bosom
Ever was Thy dwelling-place;
His delight, in Him rejoicing,
One with Him in power and grace:
Oh, what wondrous love and mercy!
Thou didst lay Thy glory by,
And for us didst come from heaven,
As the Lamb of God to die.

Lamb of God, when we behold Thee
Lowly in the manger laid;
Wandering as a homeless Stranger,
In the world Thy hands had made;
When we see Thee in the garden
In Thine agony of blood,
At Thy grace we are confounded,
Holy, spotless, Lamb of God.

When we see Thee, as the Victim,
Nailed to the accursed tree,
For our guilt and folly stricken,
All our judgment borne by Thee,
Lord, we own with hearts adoring,
Thou hast washed us in Thy blood:
Glory, glory everlasting,
Be to Thee, Thou Lamb of God!

—J.G. Deck