

## THE GOSPEL OF JOHN -- MESSAGE 7

SOME GOSPEL IMPLICATIONS AND APPLICATIONS FOR THE GOOD OF OUR SOULS BASED ON THE DESIGNATION OF JESUS AS THE LAMB OF GOD. JOHN, CHAPTER ONE

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A few years back an English Art gallery opened with nice, new white-washed walls and cards with descriptions of the items but with no actual art! You were suppose to use your imagination to "picture" things after reading the card and conjuring up images. Incredibly, some people actually paid twice to go through the "gallery".

Many in the world think that everything about God, everything about Christ and everything about the Bible falls in that category as well. Spiritual concepts can't really be grasped. Someone somewhere has just conjured all this stuff up.

The Gospel of John actually serves in many ways at the New Testament "Art Gallery". It contains so many word pictures -- truth made plain. This should come as no surprise. The God who made us certainly knows that we learn by comparison by associating things unfamiliar with things already known.

Consider just some of the many pictorial displays of spiritual reality in John: The Word, Light in Darkness, Lamb of God, New Wine, New Temple, New Birth, Son of Man lifted up like the serpent in wilderness, Living Water, Bread from Heaven, Light of the World, Door of the Sheep, Good Shepherd of the Sheep, Resurrection -- Life after Death, The Pathway to Truth and Life and the True Vine.

Today we want to consider one of these, Christ the Lamb of God. We typically picture lambs as playing around in a field. But this Lamb not in a field at all. He's on an Altar -- of Sacrifice . . . the lamb suffering and dying in the place of others.

This "Lamb as Substitute" association has long offended people. It offended the Jews of that time. The idea that the Old Testament laws of sacrifice could be superseded and replaced by Jesus was seemingly heretical to them. Jesus was changing the unchangeable. And regarding modern sensibilities . . . the necessity of a substitutionary sacrifice is entirely suspect. People today readily accept a death for some great principle, cause or ideal. But for God to require the death of Jesus to reconcile sinners to Himself . . .

Additionally, many have problems with the exclusive claim of Jesus to be "THE" Lamb of God - - "THE" only way to the Father to the exclusion of every other way. This violates the modern inclusive-rule, the tolerance-rule and the many-ways-to-God rule. If God exists, He accepts and loves all as a matter of course. The way to God is open to all and there is no need for God to "pay" Himself with a costly sacrifice in order to forgive us.

Thus the biblical atonement proclaimed in John, chapter one, is abandoned. Here's a great irony. In the attempt to be inclusive people today would exclude all from heaven, exclude all from forgiveness and exclude all from God. "There is a way that SEEMS right to a man, but the end thereof is the way of death"

Only when we admit that Jesus is exclusive, the one and only sacrifice capable of restoring us to the Lord, do we begin to be inclusive in right way. Regarding Christ our Passover sacrificed for sinners . . . "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved."

There is a special need then today for all Christians to go into John's Divine Art Gallery and especially pause before the painting entitled, "Behold the Lamb of God." And find that this was no new emphasis made up by John the Baptist on the banks of the Jordan River. It is a central theme of the Bible.

Consider this! That before creation and before time began, "Behold the Lamb of God" was being proclaimed. For indeed, Jesus was the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." (Revelation 13:8)

When time began and immediately after the fall of Adam and Eve into sin, the message was sounded out being applied by God Himself in covering our first parents with the skins of animals slain. To represent Jesus symbolically and cover sin and shame. Only through the shedding of blood was forgiveness afforded.

Abel offered a more acceptable sacrifice than his brother because his offering was in blood. The day that Abraham took Isaac up Mount Moriah and was prepared to offer him there as a sacrifice . . . and was stopped by God who also provided a substitute sacrifice. On that day the message, "Behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world" was proclaimed.

And so it was in Egypt when the children of Israel offered the Passover lamb and escaped the judging angel of death. The law of sacrifices announced the message on a daily basis. Once a

year on the great Day of Atonement the High Priest entered into the Most Holy Place to intercede for the nation through the blood of a lamb.

Then quite suddenly and amazingly the long-used symbol of a lamb changes. The prophetic expressions of the Old Testament begin to point not to an animal sacrifice but to something else entirely -- to a *someone* who will become a sacrifice. David does this in Psalm 40:6-8:

*In sacrifice and offering you have not delighted, but you have given me an open ear. Burnt offering and sin offering you have not required. Then I said, "Behold, I have come; in the scroll of the book it is written of me: I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart.*

Isaiah is even more clear and bold (52:13-53:1-12):

*Behold, my servant shall act wisely; he shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted. As many were astonished at you-- his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the children of mankind--so shall he sprinkle many nations; kings shall shut their mouths because of him; for that which has not been told them they see, and that which they have not heard they understand.*

*Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.*

*Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, 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 has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

*He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people? And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.*

*Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.*

*Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.*

Then one day John the Baptist rose up and pointed to a specific person -- to Jesus -- and announced the great message, "Behold the Lamb of God." And the following began . . . If you were listening closely, in all the obedience of Jesus and in His sufferings the work of the Lamb was already being accomplished. And certainly when Jesus was singled out, arrested, tried and dragged through the streets of Jerusalem all the way to Golgotha, the Spirit was still proclaiming, "Behold the Lamb of God."

When Jesus was lifted up on that cross, His bleeding wounds pouring out His life, did not all of the little lambs slain on all the altars of sacrifice from the beginning of the world in symbol proclaim, "Behold the True Lamb of God."

For the picture can't save. Only Jesus saves. A glossy photograph of penicillin in the medical magazine can't make anyone well. But the real penicillin cures. The picture of money isn't valuable -- only real money pays. So it is with the death 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, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.*

*For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you 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.*

and in Hebrews (9:11-28):

*But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.*

*For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.*

*Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant. For where a will is involved, the death of the one who made it must be established. For a will takes effect only at death, since it is not in force as long as the one who made it is alive.*

*Therefore not even the first covenant was inaugurated without blood. For when every commandment of the law had been declared by Moses to all the people, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, "This is the blood of the covenant that God commanded for you." And in the same way he sprinkled with*

the blood both the tent and all the vessels used in worship. Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.

Thus it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own, for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

And finally in culmination of all, there will be a time when all those redeemed by Jesus will assemble in His holy presence with the rest of the heavenly multitude and shout, "Worthy is the Lamb!" (Revelation 5:11-14):

Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!"

And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!" And the four living creatures said, "Amen!" and the elders fell down and worshiped.

## **NOTE THE GREAT PROGRESSION:**

### **ABRAHAM**

-- THE LAMB FOR ONE PERSON

### **PASSOVER**

-- THE LAMB FOR ONE FAMILY

### **DAY OF ATONEMENT**

-- THE LAMB FOR ONE NATION

### **JOHN THE BAPTIST**

-- THE LAMB FOR THE ELECT OF ALL NATIONS

### **IN REVELATION AND HEAVEN**

-- THE LAMB FOR ALL ETERNITY

SAMUEL RUTHERFORD'S TESTIMONY TO JESUS: Though the Lord needs no testimony from such a wretched man as I, if I, and all the world, would be silent, the very stones would cry:

It would satisfy me not a little that the throne of my Lord Jesus were exalted above the

clouds the heaven of heavens and on both sides of the sun and that all possible praise and glory were ascribed to him;

that, by his grace, I might put my seal such as it is, unto that song even the new song of those who, with a loud voice, sing:

*'Thou art worthy to take the book and to open the seals thereof; for You were slain and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation and have made us unto our God kings and priests and we shall reign on earth.'*

And blessed were I, could I lay to my ear of faith, and say Amen to that psalm of 'the many angels round about the throne and the creatures and elders; whose number is ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands saying, with a loud voice,

*"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength, and honor and glory and blessing."*

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In view of this great central theme of Scripture and primary theme of redemption, let's not become like the English Art Gallery with empty walls in our soul -- with nothing hanging there but a small religious profession and placard but with nothing else.

Consider that not long ago your picture was hanging in the prominent place of your soul's home. There you were depicted. Your sin was pictured and your shame was painted and your degradation was displayed and your guilt exposed and your condemnation depicted.

But in believing in Him, Jesus has removed that horrendous painting of your corruption and taken it out of the way. And in its place there is now a rich and powerful portrait . . . of Jesus, the Lamb of God.

And He is the center of our worship ("Worthy is the Lamb!") and the center of our discipleship ("They followed the Lamb wherever He went?") as we become a living sacrifice giving thanks to Him.