

## The Lamb Of God John 1:29-34, John 3:22-36

Disclaimer: Material for this message was adapted in part from sermons found on the Sermon Central website.

For these last few weeks we have been learning how, after many centuries, God's promised Messiah was finally revealed to the world. It began with the Priest Zechariah when the angel Gabriel declared that he and his wife, Elizabeth, would have a son whom they would name John. This child in the spirit of Elijah, would be a prophet going before the Messiah to "*make a people ready, prepared for the Lord*" Luke 1:17.

Six-months later, Gabriel next appeared to Elizabeth's cousin Mary telling her that she was the one to bear the Messiah, whom she would name "Jesus," which means "The salvation of the Lord."

When Mary's miraculous pregnancy then became evident, her very concerned fiancé Joseph was assured in a dream that this was indeed an act of God through the Holy Spirit because this child would, "*save His people from their sins*" Mt. 1:2.1

And on the night of His birth, a chorus of angels celebrated while telling the good news to shepherds who then told all who would listen of what they had seen and heard concerning this new born baby Savior, "*who is the Messiah, the Lord!*" Luke 2:11

Forty days after His birth, in accordance with the Law of Moses, Joseph and Mary presented their baby to God at the Temple, where an old man named Simeon found them and lifted praise to God for allowing him to see the Messiah with his own eyes. Simeon then prophetically warned the amazed parents that this child "*was destined for the falling and rising of many*"; He would be the Savior of all who accepted Him or a stumbling stone for those who would not. There was also an aged prophetess named Anna who joined with Simeon in praising God and telling all "*who were looking for the redemption of Israel,*" about the child.

A couple of years later, astronomers from the east appeared at Joseph and Mary's temporary Bethlehem home, looking for "*the newborn king.*" After presenting the infant Jesus with precious gifts, they then disappeared as mysteriously as they had arrived. That same night, being warned in a dream of King Herod's murderous intentions, Joseph and Mary got up and fled to Egypt with their son.

Several years later after Herod had died, Joseph and Mary returned to their hometown of Nazareth and we hear nothing more of the child Jesus except for an episode of Him as a twelve-year-old astonishing the Temple scribes with His wisdom and understanding.

Then, some thirty years later, Zechariah's now adult son John, appeared along the banks of the Jordan River gathering around himself a group of dedicated disciples as he preached, "*proclaiming a baptism for the forgiveness of sins.*" Soon such large crowds were coming to be baptized that the concerned priesthood in Jerusalem sent a council down to find out who John was. He assured them that he was neither the Messiah, nor

a reincarnation of Elijah, nor Moses' promised greater prophet; he was just a voice, "crying out in the wilderness, preparing the way of the Lord," but that the Messiah was truly now standing in their midst (Jesus having earlier come to him for baptism).

The Bible records that the very next day, after his inquisitors had left, John saw Jesus coming towards him and in a loud voice declared to everyone, *'Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! This is he of whom I said, "After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me.'* John 1:29-30.

John had earlier told his own disciples that the reason he came baptizing was so **that the messiah might be revealed to Israel** and that he had been looking for God's sign, which was *"the one on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit."* John 1:33 When he had earlier baptized Jesus, John had not only seen the descending Spirit, but he also heard God's voice declaring, *"You are my Son the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."* Luke 3:21

Then, the day after that, when he again saw Jesus walking by, John repeated his amazing declaration, **Here is the Lamb of God.** Having thus been prepared and now urged on by John, several of his disciples left to follow Jesus as He gathered his own school of followers. The Messiah's ministry had begun.

But what was the inspiration for John labeling his cousin Jesus as, "The Lamb of God?" Do you realize the many divine significances in John's answer?

When John called Jesus "the Lamb of God," he was remembering several Biblical promises and images. First, he was answering a question that 2,000 years earlier the young Isaac had asked his father: *"Where is the Lamb?"*

In the book of Genesis (chapt. 22), we are told the story of a man of faith named Abraham. God had promised him that he would have a son who would not only sire an entire nation – as many as the stars in the sky – but also through whom would come one to bless the world. This was the second time that God had promised our world a "Messiah" – a "chosen Savior;" the first time was when He promised our ancient mother Eve, that someday her "seed" would crush the serpent's head.

Finally, when Abraham and his wife Sarah were nearly 100 years old, God gave them their promised son whom He had personally named Isaac (Laughter). The old couple were indeed filled with laughter as they built their lives around this young boy. But then one day, God tells Abraham: *"Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will show you."* Genesis 22:2

Since human sacrifice was anathema to God, the idea that He would ask anyone to sacrifice their child as a burnt offering doesn't square with everything else we know about God. But the outcome of this event was never really in question. God wasn't

going to allow Abraham to go thru with the sacrifice; this was just a test; a very hard test of Abraham's loyalties, and for us a foreshadowing of the price God was willing to pay for our own ransom.

But Abraham didn't know that. Abraham was fully convinced that God intended him to place his son on an altar and sacrifice the boy. Why on earth would Abraham even consider such a thing? According to the book of Hebrews, Abraham had reasoned that God had made him a promise: through this son, Isaac, a great nation would arise and the world would be blessed. Abraham further reasoned God wouldn't lie. So, if necessary God could raise Isaac from the dead to fulfill that promise. Hebrews 11:19

As son and father climbed Moriah, carrying fire, wood, and a knife, this is where Isaac's question, "*where is the Lamb?*" points us to that greater sacrifice yet to come.

Notice the parallels in this story:

- Abraham was asked to sacrifice his only son, as one day God would have to do the same.
- Abraham was to take his son to Mount Moriah and offer him as a sacrifice which is where, many years later, the Temple would later be built and where Jesus offered Himself to be sacrificed.
- When asked, Abraham had told his son that God would supply the lamb. Indeed, God did provide a substitute for Isaac's life, so that he would not have to die. Many years later Jesus offered Himself as our substitute so that we would not have to die.

Do you see the picture God was painting, of what He was going to do when He later sent us His only Son? The promised Messiah had always been intended as the sacrifice that God would supply so that we would neither have to die for our sins, nor ever fear death.

Thus from the very start, with the book of Genesis, God was beginning to reveal the Gospel message of Jesus, the coming Messiah, who was the seed of the woman and who would be for us all, as well as Isaac, our substitute sacrifice. Without that lamb – Isaac had no hope! Without The Lamb of God, neither would we have any hope!

Scholars often refer to Hebrews, chapter 11, as the "FAITH HALL OF FAME," because this chapter speaks about the faith of all the great men and women of the Old Testament – that God would keep His promises. At the end of this chapter we read of those faithful OT saints: "*Yet all these, though they were commended for their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better so that they would not, without us, be made perfect.*" Hebrews 11:39-40 Now, because of Jesus, ***the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world***, they have received what was promised and we also along with them.

This imagery of a substitutionary sacrificial lamb is then repeated all through the rest of the Old Testament. God drove home over and over again that a LAMB could and would bring both cleansing from sin and deliverance from death.

- Lambs – without spot or blemish - were sacrificed for the cleansing of lepers who had been healed.
- Unblemished lambs were offered up as voluntary/freewill offerings at feasts and when folks wanted to seal a vow before God.
- Their sacrifice was mandatory for those desiring to take the Nazarite vow; setting themselves apart in dedicated service to God.
- But perhaps, the most significant sacrifice of all happened every day at the Temple, with the blowing of a horn at the third and the ninth hour (9a, 3p) a lamb was offered on the altar as the first and the last sin sacrifice of the day. <https://www.agapebiblestudy.com/charts/Tamid%20Sacrifice.htm>
- Then, there was one more time, once a year, when a lamb was offered up as special sacrifice commemorating that day in Egypt when, seeing the blood of a lamb on the doorposts of their homes, God's death angel had passed over them

Thus when John declared Jesus to be. *the Lamb Of God who takes away the sin of the world*, he was remembering all these promises, all these images.

- Having lived a sinless life, Jesus would be our Lamb, without blemish or defect, who could be offered up for our sin.
- He would be offered up on Mount Moriah where God first provided a substitute sacrifice for Isaac's death.
- At 9 in the morning, when Jesus was nailed to the cross the temple horn was sounding for the first sacrifice of the day. In the same way, at 3 in the afternoon, as Jesus bowed His head and died, the horn sounded again for the last sacrifice. Mark 15:25, Matthew 27:46
- Also, the very day Jesus died was the celebration of Passover, when every family sacrificed a lamb in remembrance of the death angel passing them over.

So with His life and death, Jesus was offering Himself as both our sacrifice for sin and also our substitute deliverer from death. Because of Jesus *the Lamb Of God who takes away the sin of the world*, those who come to Him in faith, can live knowing they have been forgiven and no longer need to fear of death.

One more point. The sacrificial lamb must be perfect, any defects or blemishes were not acceptable. A blemished lamb was not good enough!!!! So, if it came to a choice between ME dying for your sins... or one of the Elders, or one of the Sunday School teachers... or even the most righteous and holy person in this church...it wouldn't make any difference. Because God wouldn't take anything less than a pure and undefiled sacrifice. Which was His own offered substitute, freely given so that we might live: Jesus – the Lamb of God.

Dr. Harry Ironside once shared a story that was the clearest illustration of the Gospel I have ever heard. He said that he was visiting a South Texas sheep ranch where he spotted what he thought to be a two-headed lamb. He asked the foreman of the ranch, "*Why in the world does that lamb have two heads?*" The foreman smiled and said, "You are a city slicker. Let me explain what we did. The other day we had two ewes who gave birth to lambs. One of the ewes died in childbirth and one of the lambs also died. We took the living lamb and put it in the pen with the living ewe to see if she would nurse. She smelled of the lamb and walked away. It wasn't her own."

"What did you do?" Ironside asked. "Well, we took the coat off of the dead lamb and wrapped it around the living one and put it back in the pen. When the mother smelled the blood of her very own lamb.....she accepted the little lamb and began to nurse."

Dr. Ironside said, "Thank you for sharing with me the greatest picture of the Cross I have ever seen. For without Christ, I am hopeless for eternity. God will not accept me into Heaven on my own works. But, when I stand before Him covered with the body and blood of His own Son, Jesus.....He accepts me as part of His family!"

Let's pray about this.