

“THE LAMB OF GOD”  
Isaiah 53:1-12, Psalm 40:1-11, John 1:29-42  
January 18 & 19, 2020

“A bee one day flew into a car with a little boy riding with his father. The boy began to scream because he was afraid of bees. His father reached out and grabbed the bee and squeezed it in his hand. He then opened up his hand. The bee flew back out and began to buzz around and the boy continued to scream. The father looked back and said, ‘Son, you don’t have to scream.’ He held out his hand, and there inside the palm of his hand was the stinger of the bee. He said, ‘Son, all the bee can do now is make noise because I’ve got the stinger in my hand.’

“On the cross of Calvary, Jesus Christ took the stinger of death away. All death can do now is make noise. It has lost its sting.”<sup>1</sup> Jesus gave His life for us so that we might not fear death any more.

Throughout the history of the world, people have been looking for a way to get rid of the stinger of death. Ever since Adam and Eve, we have been searching for relief from our sins so that we might find new life with God. We have tried a lot of different things over the centuries, but nothing has worked.

But God saw our plight, and He came up with a plan to help us out and enable us to find forgiveness of our sins, so that we might regain a right relationship with Him. The **SACRIFICIAL Lamb of the Old Testament** was the way that God first instructed the people to use for getting rid of their sin. Since many of the people owned flocks of sheep, goats, and other cattle, raising them for feeding their own families, God told the people that they were to use one of them as the way to find forgiveness of their sin. They were to take that animal, lay hands upon it to “transfer their sin to it” and then they would kill the animal as a way of putting to death those sins that had been laid upon it. The sacrifice would then be the substitution of that sin for the people, with the animal paying the price for the sins that were committed. It was common for the folks to use bulls, rams or sheep as their sacrifice. But in many cases, the **ANIMAL** that God directed the people to use was a lamb, either of the sheep or the goats.

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<sup>1</sup> (Tony Evans, *Tony Evans’ Book of Illustrations*, [Chicago, IL: Moody Publications, 2009] pg. 258, #779)

This wasn't to be just any lamb of the flock. The lamb the people were instructed to use was to be a 1 year old male. The male lamb signified the strength of the animal line, and being one year old meant that the animal was still innocent, having never been used to perpetuate the animal line.

Then the lamb was also to be SPOTLESS, meaning it was a purebred. It had to be a pure line of the flock, not inter mixed with any other line. It was common for speckled or streaked or black sheep being a part of the flock, and those were seen as being less valuable than the pure white sheep. Herdsmen wanted the white wool in order to dye that wool whatever color they wanted. So the speckled, streaked or black sheep were not as valuable to the shepherds. So the pure white sheep were more important because it meant that they had no impurities in the line of sheep or goats.

And the lamb was to be Perfect, so that there were no defects such as being lame or blind. The lamb was to be a symbol of purity and wholeness and innocence because it was going to be presented to God, who is also pure, holy and sinless. In this way, this pure animal would now take upon itself the sins of the people and then the death of that lamb would pay the price for the sins laid upon it. Its blood would be used to purify and regenerate those upon whom they had laid their hands upon it, casting their sins on it. In this way the sacrifice would both pay the penalty of the sins, AND symbolically purify those bringing the animal for sacrifice. (See Leviticus 9)

The PURPOSE of the sacrifice was to begin the process of finding forgiveness. The person(s) first had to recognize that there was a separation between them and God because of their sin, and they needed to repent of that sin. The sacrificial lamb was then a SIGN to God that they were indeed sorry for their sinfulness, and sought a renewed relationship with Him. In Exodus 12 we see that God directs the people of Israel to offer the sacrifice of a young lamb (sheep or goat) as preparation for the final plague that was going to affect Egypt. As they killed the lamb, they were to take the blood of that lamb and put it on the doorposts and lintel of the doorway so that the Angel of Death would see the sacrifice of the people and save them from the killing of their first-born males. The blood of the sacrifice was a sign to God that those inside the house were devoted to following Him. The Angel, seeing the blood of the

sacrificial lamb, then passed over that house and saved all those inside. The lamb's death and blood brought life to all those on the inside of the house, saving them from death.

A second purpose of the sacrificial lamb was a sign of humility before God. Those offering the sacrifice recognized their sinful condition and humbled themselves before the Lord God, seeking repentance and forgiveness of their sins that separated them from the Lord. In humbling themselves to God's requirement for reconciliation, the people found the forgiveness that God offered, and the relationship was renewed. In contrast, the proud believed they were ok without any sacrifice.

The purpose of the sacrificial lamb also represented the means for forgiveness. The lamb takes on the SINS of the people, thereby becoming the sin of the people. This innocent, perfect, wholesome lamb became sin for those who were sinners, transferring the sins from the humans to the lamb.

And then the blood of that sacrificial lamb atoned for the sins of the people, removing their sin and regenerating them into pure, perfect, whole people before the Lord God. To atone for the sins of the people meant that once more the relationship between God and humanity was restored and they were at-one with each other. Sin no longer separated God from humans because of the sacrificial lamb's blood.

But lest all of this confuses you, let me explain the REASON for the sacrifice straight forward again. First, we are all lost, having wandered away from God's laws and commandments. This means we are all **SINNERS** in need of God's great mercy. None of us is perfect and we have all done what is wrong in God's sight, big or small. As the Apostle Paul states, "*for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God*" (Romans 3:23). We have all wandered away from God's ways.

Then sin in our lives **SEPARATES us from God**. God is pure and holy and will not tolerate any evil or wickedness in His presence. Since we disobey God's commands and fail to do according to His Law, that sinfulness separates us from Him, and keeps us from being able to be with Him.

And no matter how good we are, no matter what we do, no matter how hard we try to fix our relationship with God on our own, we can't save ourselves! Since all of us are imperfect and sinful, there is nothing we can do on our own to make things right with God. We can't pay enough for our sins to be

forgiven. We can't do enough to earn our forgiveness. We can't change ourselves enough to fix our relationship with God. We cannot save ourselves, since we are all stuck in this condition of sin.

That means that all of us need a **SAVIOR!** We need someone outside of the human race to step in between us and God and make it possible for us to have our sins forgiven so that we can reestablish a right relationship with God again. We need one that is perfect, who is without sin, to come guide us back to God so that we might be freed from our sinfulness and be able to stand before God without fault or sin.

And that's where the **SUFFERING** Servant comes into the picture in Isaiah 53. Isaiah relates God's plan for His Servant to come to the Earth to make a way for us to lose the sting of death and find the forgiveness we need to be welcomed back into God's presence.

In Isaiah 53:2 we see the direction of God with regard to His servant. *"It was the will of the Lord that His servant grow like a plant taking root in dry ground. He had no dignity or beauty to make us take notice of Him. There was nothing attractive about Him, nothing that would draw us to Him."* So God's Servant is Humble and common, nothing outstanding in Him that draws people to Him. He's not a rock-star musician. He's not a Hollywood actor. He's not a statesman. He's not a wealthy business owner. He's not a government leader or a politician. He's not a king. He's not a TV sitcom host or a famous writer or playwright. The Servant of the Lord is common, like most of us. And He is humble to present Himself just as we are.

But even though the Lord's Servant is humble and common, He is **DESPISED** and **rejected**. Verse 3 says, *"We despised Him and rejected Him; He endured suffering and pain. No one would even look at Him – we ignored him as if He were nothing."* God's chosen Servant, the Way for us to find forgiveness and new life, being as common as He is, is looked upon with disgust and displeasure. His message is too simple, His teachings unreasonable, and His ways too unordinary. His claim to be anybody is outstandingly ridiculous in the eyes of those who first see Him. How could anyone even begin to consider following His ways? What would make us follow Him instead of following our own ways? So the Servant of the Lord is ignored by so many, and His teachings are ridiculed and belittled.

But the Suffering Servant of the Lord came as one who is innocent, pure of all blemish, and perfect in every way. That distinguished Him as different from the rest of us and it caused us to be offended by Him. Yet, that was His purpose, His reason for being here with us. *“...He endured the suffering that should have been ours, the pain that we should have borne. All the while we thought that His suffering was punishment sent by God. But because of our sins He was wounded, beaten because of the evil we did. We are healed by the punishment He suffered, made whole by the blows He received. All of us were like sheep that were lost, each of us going his own way. But the Lord made the punishment fall on Him, the punishment all of us deserved. He was treated harshly, but endured it humbly; He never said a word. Like a lamb about to be slaughtered, like a sheep about to be sheared, He never said a word. He was arrested and sentenced and led off to die, and no one cared about His fate. He was put to death for the sins of our people. He was placed in a grave with evil men, he was buried with the rich, even though he had never committed a crime or ever told a lie”* (53:4-9). He came to become the Sacrificial Lamb of God, the pure and holy and spotless lamb that took all of our sins upon Himself and offered up His life to death so that we could be forgiven.

You see, this is God’s plan of SALVATION for the whole world. *“The Lord says, ‘It was My will that He should suffer; His death was a sacrifice to bring forgiveness...’* (53:10a). God accepted the Suffering Servant’s sacrifice in order to renew what was broken, to fix that which we could not, to redeem those who would come to Him and claim Him as their Savior. *“He willingly gave His life and shared the fate of evil men. He took the place of many sinners and prayed that they might be forgiven”* (53:12b). What a marvelous plan that God initiated for all of us! When we were trapped in the midst of our sin, leading us to death, at just the right time, God brought His Sacrificial Lamb to the earth to pay that tremendous price for the sins of the people. While we were yet sinners, The Lamb of God died for us and has given us the forgiveness we need to be saved from God’s anger (Romans 5:6-9).

So Who is this Suffering Servant? The LAMB OF GOD in the New Testament is revealed to us as we look at the Gospel of John chapter 1. Listen as I read verses 29-42. (READ John 1:29-42)

John identifies **JESUS** as the Lamb of God. The day after Jesus is baptized in the Jordan River by John the Baptist himself, John sees Jesus and makes this great statement, "...*There is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!*" (1:29). John understands that he, John, is not the Messiah, he is only the one leading the people TO the Messiah. He has told the Jewish authorities that. He told them, "*I am the voice of someone shouting in the dessert: Make a straight path for the Lord to travel!*" (Jn. 1:23).

But when Jesus is baptized, John recognizes Jesus as the One who has come to fulfill God's plan of Salvation, the One who comes as the Lamb of Sacrifice Who will pay the price of the sins of the people. And as he experiences Jesus' baptism, and sees the heavens open, and watches as the Holy Spirit descends upon Him like a dove, and hears the voice of God say, "*This is My own dear Son, with whom I am pleased*" (Matthew 3:16-17), John gives **TESTIMONY** of Jesus' baptism, and remembers how God directed him to know the One who would follow him as the Messiah. John saw it with his own two eyes and was not afraid to proclaim to all the people around him, "...*I tell you that He is the Son of God*" (Jn. 1:34).

The Son of God! Of course, only the pure, holy, perfect Son of God can take the place of the Suffering Servant to become the Lamb of God "*who takes away the sins of the world.*" Only one without sin can step into our place, who have sin in our lives, and free us from the punishment of that sin by taking our sin upon Himself and be sacrificed to pay the penalty of that sin, which is death. John sees it perfectly that Jesus has come to fulfill God's plan of Salvation.

And the very next day, John again sees Jesus and this time tells his disciples, "*There is the Lamb of God!*" (1:35). And that day, someone takes him at his word and decides to check it out to see if John really knew what he was talking about. Two of John's disciples follow Jesus to investigate Him to see for themselves if John is right. And as Jesus sees them following Him, He invites them to join Him, and they spend the rest of the afternoon with Him, observing and talking with Him.

Now it's not recorded the questions they must have asked Jesus. We have no record of what was

said or done, but what we do know is that Andrew and the other disciple are so excited about what they see in Jesus, **THEY TOO** become convinced that Jesus is the Messiah, and they tell others about Jesus. Andrew goes straight to his brother, Simon, to report the news of what he had learned from the afternoon with Jesus. He's so excited and he tells Simon, "*We have found the Messiah!*" (1:41).

You have to remember that the Jews' hope and expectation of God sending His Suffering Servant was very high. They greatly sought the Lord to bring help to them to free them from the occupation of the Romans. Much like their cry for deliverance when they were captive in Egypt, the people of Israel were desperate for one who would save them. Much like the exiles cried out for God to deliver them from bondage to the Babylonians and Assyrians, there was great expectation that God would once more bring a Deliverer to them to help them establish their own country again.

So when Andrew comes to Simon with the news, "We have found the Messiah," there is obviously something worthwhile to get excited about. And this news draws Simon to Jesus where he becomes the first person known as "The Rock." Jesus calls him Petros, Peter, which means rock.

Now, these guys were fishermen, not important or popular men by any means. They were just like us, common, ordinary, sinners in need of God's grace. Yet, because they were seeking newness of life from the God of the Universe, the God Almighty, when John tells them "Here He is!" they jump at the chance to see for themselves. And they can't wait to tell others around them about Jesus. They come quickly to understand that Jesus **AS THE LAMB** of God is the One they have been waiting for for over 400 years. They hadn't lived that long, but they know the promise of God that He would come. And there He is, Jesus, the carpenter from Nazareth, the Rabbi, baptized by John, the Son of God, the Savior, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. So how did they recognize Him?

They saw that Jesus was **HUMBLE**, yet has all authority. In the 3½ years that they walked with Him, they saw Jesus have authority over sickness, paraplegia, demon possession, and even the weather. They saw Jesus speak a word and the fig tree wilts. They saw the blind come into new sight, the deaf come to hear, and even the dead come to new life. Surely Jesus has all authority! And after His

resurrection, Jesus even tells them, “*All authority in Heaven and on earth has been given to Me*”

(Matthew 28:18). Who were they to dispute that?

They saw Jesus’ sacrifice for sin, as He **DIED** on the cross, taking our sins away. And that became part of the earliest statement of faith found in I Corinthians 15:3-7. Jesus, sinless, perfect, and holy, endured the wrath of the leaders of the church and the Roman government and freely gave His body to be beaten to the point not being able to recognize Him. He gave in to being nailed to a cross, taking all the sins of the world upon Himself, and suffering even the rejection of God the Father because He had become sin. He allowed His blood to be poured out onto the earth in order to bring purification to all who would receive Him.

The disciples didn’t understand it right away, but when Jesus **ROSE** again to bring us eternal life, their minds were made up and everything became clear to them that He was the Messiah, the Lamb of God. “*He died for all, so that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but only for Him who died and was raised to life for their sake*” (2 Corinthians 5:15)

They became assured that Jesus will **COME** again in great power to finish the work of Salvation and to take to Himself all those who seek Him and follow His commands. He will **JUDGE** the living and the dead, and punish all those who have rejected Him, but to those who seek Him and follow His commands, He will take to be with Him in His Father’s house.

And Jesus will be **VICTORIOUS** over all things, putting everything into submission to Him. The last thing that is put into submission is death itself, so that we no longer need to have any fear. Death has been defeated, so all it can do is to make noise.

You see, Jesus has **REDEMPTION** for all those who turn to Him. He will not reject anyone who recognizes their need for Him to be their Savior. He welcomes anyone who sincerely repents of their sin and then claims the sacrifice of the Lamb of God for their own. He died for all people of the world. His blood was shed for the forgiveness of sin, for all those who seek Him and believe in Him and receive Him as their Lord and Savior. His desire is for all people to come to Him to find eternal life.

But let me ask you this, “Will you follow the Lamb of God? Will you humble yourself to Jesus, and let Him take all your sins away so that you can begin as a new creature in Christ? Will you submit to His authority and His power and allow Him to guide your life rather than you doing your own thing? Will you do all that you can to follow His will and His ways, being obedient to all of His commands? If you say “Yes,” you’re on your way, and you will have life, indeed. Let’s pray.

Father, thank you for letting Jesus come to the earth for us, to become our Sacrificial Lamb, who takes away the sins of the world. Thank you for giving us hope and real life in Him. God, I ask You to forgive my sin today, and to make me a brand new creature in Christ Jesus. I trust Him. I believe in Him, I will follow Him starting right now, so that I might live as Your child, and then take this great news to all those around me so that they might accept Jesus as their Savior, too. This I pray in Jesus’ most precious and holy name. AMEN.