

## "And to exalt the lamb."

F. B. Hole.

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In the very dawn of the world's history the lamb was evidently marked out by God as the animal of sacrifice. The "firstling" of Abel's flock is witness to this, as also is the question asked by Isaac in Genesis 22.

That question, "Where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?" seems to ring all through the Old Testament pages without finding any conclusive answer, for no lamb that fell upon Jewish altars possessed any intrinsic value or was able to take away sins (Heb. 10: 1, 2). Abraham's reply was prophetic, "My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt-offering," and with such a promise men had to rest content, save that the prediction was amplified with further details as time went on. A grand example of such amplification is found in Isaiah 52: 13 to 53: 12, where it was revealed that Jehovah's Servant who should deal prudently, who should be exalted and extolled and be very high, was He who should be "brought as a lamb to the slaughter" for the transgression of Jehovah's people.

To find the glorious New Testament sequel we have to turn to the writings of the Apostle John. Hardly have we commenced his Gospel when the words "Behold the Lamb of God" meet our eyes. We have not proceeded far with the Revelation ere we find heaven's worship centering round the Lamb and expressing itself in the cry, "Worthy is the Lamb."

The Revelation indeed is the book of the glory of the Lamb, and it is worthy of note that the Spirit of God has selected a diminutive form of the word for use in that book, a word meaning "little Lamb." It is as though He would heighten the effect of the contrast by presenting us with the One who became the Sacrifice, and was despised and depreciated as such according to Isaiah 53, now exalted to the highest pinnacle of glory.

The "little lamb" is mentioned at intervals right through the book of Revelation, but it is in connection with the account of the heavenly city (Rev. 21: 9 to Rev. 22: 5) that we have Him mentioned no less than seven times. A city is a place of permanent dwelling, a place of centralized authority, and hence the seat of an influence which permeates the territory comprised within its sphere. It becomes a fitting symbol for the place the church will occupy in the coming age, as the dwelling-place of God, the seat of divine authority and the heavenly centre from whence flow divine and heavenly influences to the earth.

The church, be it ever remembered, is only to be the *seat* of these excellent things and not the *source*. The source is found in "God and the Lamb."

The seven things stated concerning the Lamb are these:

(1) The church as the city itself is the wife of the One who once was the despised and suffering Lamb of sacrifice (ver. 9). Amid all the surroundings of external glory and the glad service of ten thousand times ten thousand, He is to possess an object for His deepest affections who in return can intelligently reciprocate them; who can be to Him what in prophetic type Eve was to Adam amid the unfallen splendours of the first creation. This will indeed be the very crowning recompense, the richest fruit of the travail of His soul which He shall see.

(2) The city clearly is the fruit of His own work. Its foundations have their origin in connection with Him — "twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb." The

names inscribed are the names of the sent ones of the once suffering Lamb of sacrifice. Had there been no Lamb there would have been no apostles, and if *each* foundation had upon it one apostolic name, *every* foundation of the twelve was reminiscent of the Lamb whose apostles they were.

Evidently then He will find His solace and joy in that which is itself the direct fruit of His own work.

(3) Every earthly city is built around *something*. It clusters around some seat of learning, or religion, or authority. Rome was centred in its capitol; Ephesus in the Temple of Diana; Jerusalem was the city of the great King and found its centre in His temple. Of the heavenly city, however, it is said: "I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." Upon earth a sanctuary is needful. Disorder and defilement are upon every hand. In that abode of serene order and purity the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple as well as the Deity enshrined therein — that is, they put themselves directly and unhindered into contact with the city itself. No longer do men see "through a glass darkly" but "face to face."

(4) There, too, no created light is needed. "The glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." Moreover the nations spared to enter the millennial age will walk in the light of the city, so that it will be a sort of luminary or light-bearer for the earth. The light which glows in and through it is, however, the light of the One who became the despised and suffering sacrifice for men. Oh I what a light is that.

"But who that glorious blaze  
Of living light shall tell,  
Where all His brightness God displays,  
And the Lamb's glories dwell?"

(5) Into all this great blessedness none are admitted save those "which are written in the Lamb's book of life."

(6) Next we find that a pure river of water of life proceeds "out of the throne of God and of the Lamb," and connected with this is the tree of life which affords both fruit and healing for the nations on earth. All life and fruitfulness and health-giving influence flows forth from the Lamb who is now upon the throne. He is indeed, as John the Baptist foretold, not only the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, but also He that baptizes with the Holy Ghost, the result being that they who once were submerged in sin are now flooded with life and blessing.

(7) The curse goes out, and "the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it." The authority of God is finally established, but in connection with the Lamb. Who would not gladly bow to such authority — the authority of the One who sacrificed Himself for us.

This is the last mention of the Lamb in Scripture. He is upon the throne.

One practical word. He who is the Lamb is also the Lion of Judah. Yet it is not as the Lion but as the Lamb that He sits upon the throne. The "Lion" is a character He wears; the "Lamb" is what He is. ("I *am* meek and lowly in heart.")

And the Lamb, though not yet manifested, is upon the throne to-day. Let us more fully own His authority, and in endeavouring to submit to it, and perhaps to enforce it on our fellows, let us remember it is the Lamb's authority we maintain.

Authority has often been enforced with lion-like energy during the church's sad history, and

always with disastrous results. It is Lamb-like authority which prevails.

In *that* day "His servants shall serve Him," *i.e.* the Lamb's servants — the servants of the once despised and suffering Lamb of sacrifice — serve the Lamb; and we may depend upon it that in *this* day we shall not properly serve Him except we are dominated by that spirit.