

# The Lamb of God

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"Redeemed . . . with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world." (1 Peter 1: 19).

In these words the Spirit of God carries us back into eternity to open the wonderful story of the Lamb. Christ, as the Lamb of God, was no afterthought with God, He "verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world." And no sooner had sin come into the world than the story of the Lamb was taken up in time. Abel, though dead these thousand years, still speaks of the necessity of the sacrifice of the Lamb. In offering to God the firstlings of his flock he reveals that first great truth, which every poor sinner coming to God must learn, that "without shedding of blood is no remission."

Abraham continues the story of the Lamb in that great scene in which his faith was proved (Gen. 22). God says as it were, "I am going to bring into display the faith which I have long known to be in Abraham's heart. He has been justified before Me by faith, he shall now be justified by works which shall prove the reality of his faith in Me" (James 2: 21). Surely never man was tested like Abraham: Job was tested with the loss of children, possessions and health, but Abraham's test was deeper. Job was required to submit to a loss; Abraham was required to make a sacrifice. One was passive submission, the other active obedience. And how great the demand: "*Take now thy son*"; and yet deeper the sword pierces his soul, for it must be "*thine only son*"; and deeper still, for it must be "*Isaac*," the one on whom all the promises depend; and yet deepest of all, for it must be one "*whom thou lovest*."

But there was more in this great scene than the testing of Abraham's faith. Precious as that was, there was something still more precious, more instructive, important, and soul-moving. Wrapt up in this story is the far greater story of the Father and the Son, of God and the Lamb, of Christ and the cross. Abel tells us *there must be a lamb for a burnt offering*; Isaac raises the question, "WHERE IS THE LAMB?" And Abraham gives the only possible answer, "GOD WILL PROVIDE HIMSELF A LAMB FOR A BURNT OFFERING." No lamb of man's providing could avail to meet the holiness of God or the sin of man. God must provide the Lamb, and, says Abraham, "God *will* provide Himself a Lamb."

Moses next takes up the story of the Lamb. He tells the character of the One who alone can meet the claims of God. The Lamb of God's providing will be a holy spotless victim, a lamb "without blemish" (Ex. 12: 5).

Isaiah completes the Old Testament story of the Lamb. He tells us the manner in which God's Lamb must accomplish his work. He must be an unresisting, willing victim, for, says the prophet, "He is brought as a Lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb so he openeth not his mouth" (Isa. 53: 7).

Passing to the New Testament we leave shadows and types and prophecies behind and find ourselves in the presence of the One who is the very image of the shadows. John the Baptist opens the story of the Lamb, as recorded in the first chapter of the Gospel of John. Abraham looking forward had said, "God will provide Himself a Lamb," and John, "looking upon Jesus as He walked," answers back across the ages, "Behold the Lamb of God." If the message came to Abraham, "Take now thy son," it was but a foreshadowing of Jesus declared to be the Son of God (34). Did God say to Abraham "*thine only son*"? so now we hear the Spirit of God declaring Jesus to be "THE ONLY BEGOTTEN SON" (18 ). Had Abraham to offer up *Isaac, the child of promise*? so Jesus is declared to be "THE

CHRIST," the One in whom all the promises are yea and amen (41): and lastly did Abraham hear those words, "*Take now thy son . . . whom thou lovest*"? so Jesus is presented as the "SON WHICH IS IN THE BOSOM OF THE FATHER" (18).

If John answers to Abraham and presents before us the Lamb in His humiliation, Philip and Peter answer to Moses and Isaiah and present the Lamb in His sufferings. Philip finds the eunuch reading Isaiah's great prophecy, "He was led as a sheep to the slaughter, and like a lamb dumb before his shearers, so openeth he not his mouth," and beginning at the same scripture he "preached Jesus" (Acts 8). Peter reminds us that we are redeemed "with the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1: 19).

The Apostle John in Revelation 5 continues the story of the Lamb, presenting before us the Lamb in His glories. Leaving earth behind John is carried in spirit into heaven, and there he beholds in the right hand of God a book of judgment, but also of blessing reached through judgment. But who can open the book? And if none can open the book how can the judgments take their course? How can the blessings be reached? How can the evil be set aside and the kingdom glories be established?" Who is worthy to open the book?" is the question addressed to the assembled hosts of heaven. Searching through all the myriads of the redeemed John could find "no man in heaven" worthy to open the book. Many great saints were there, Enoch who walked with God, and Abraham who talked with God, Moses who was buried by God, and Elijah who was caught up by God — all are there, but none are worthy to open the book. And then John searches through earth, but if he can find no man in heaven, little wonder that he can find no man on earth, and still less that he finds no one under the earth that is worthy to open the book or to look thereon. Thereupon John falls to weeping. But weeping will not do for heaven. On earth weeping may endure for a night, in hell weeping will endure for eternity, but in heaven "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying." John is the only man that ever wept in heaven, and though he wept much he was not allowed to weep long. 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." And John, who had been so busy looking through heaven and earth, and under the earth, that he had quite overlooked the throne, now turns to the throne expecting to see the all-prevailing Lion, and "lo in the midst of the throne and the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain." The Lion that prevails is the Lamb that was slain.

On earth John had heard the words, "Behold the Lamb of God." 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 at the place of the three crosses, "where they crucified Him, and two others with Him, on either side one and *Jesus in the midst*"; he had seen Jesus as the risen Man on the evening of the resurrection day when Jesus came and "*stood in the midst*" and showed His disciples the wound marks in His hands and feet; and now, transported to heaven, thronged with the vast host of the redeemed, and ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands of angels — in the very centre of heavenly glory — he sees "*in the midst of the throne . . . a Lamb as it had been slain.*" He sees the Lamb in His glories — 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.

And 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."

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 "innumerable company of 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."

But earth cannot remain silent when heaven is telling the glories of the Lamb, and so there falls upon John's ears a fresh 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." The four living creatures add their "Amen" to this threefold burst of praise, and the blood-bought saints, with hearts filled to overflowing "fall down and worship Him that liveth for ever and ever."

But in the course of the book of the Revelation further glories of the Lamb pass before us. The scene now changes from heaven to earth and we are permitted to see the Lamb in His power and in His wrath, executing judgment. As He had redeemed His saints by blood, so now He redeems the inheritance by power. It is the Lamb that opens the seals and forthwith judgment takes its course (Rev. 6: 1); it is before the wrath of the Lamb the nations cry out in terror (Rev. 6: 16); and 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, and crowned with a crown of thorns, — is the Lord of lords and King of kings (Rev. 17: 14).

But once again the scene changes from earth to heaven, and in chapter nineteen we are permitted to see fresh glories of the Lamb. On earth that vile system which had so long borne the name of the Lamb, and so long denied the character of the Lamb, has at last been judged, and heaven rejoices over its destruction. But the destruction of the false professing church on earth makes way for the presentation to Christ in glory of the true church. The judgment of the great whore leads to the marriage of the Lamb. In this great scene there passes before us the bride, the Lamb's wife (Rev. 19: 7 and Rev. 21: 9), the marriage of the Lamb (7), and the supper of the Lamb (9). The bride presents the church as the object of Christ's intimate love. As such He loved it and gave Himself for it. As such He has in tender love nourished it and cherished it all the days of the wilderness journey. Weak, failing, persecuted, scattered and broken as the church may be, yet never has it ceased to be the object of His love and affection. Through flood and flame and persecution Christ has brought His bride, ever having in view the great day of the marriage of the Lamb; for espousals, however sweet to the affections, will not satisfy the heart. The intimacy of love between the bride and the Lamb is precious, but love is not content without the possession of its loved object. And while the bride speaks indeed of love, the marriage speaks of the possession of the object of love. Says the Apostle, "I have espoused you to one husband ": but with what end in view?" That I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Cor. 11: 2). The espousals have in view the presentation — the day of the marriage of the Lamb. The love that has borne with the church in its wilderness journey, that has sanctified and cleansed it, has held on its way in view of the marriage of the Lamb. Having loved His own which were in the world He loved them unto the end, and that end, "that He might present it to Himself a glorious church not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing." And when the marriage takes place the supper will begin. If the bride speaks of the intimacy of love, and the marriage of the possession of the object of love, the supper of the Lamb proclaims the delight and joy with which heaven will celebrate the marriage of the Lamb.

One more scene remains and earth again takes up the tale to tell these further glories of the Lamb. In heaven we have seen the marriage of the Lamb; but the Lamb is not content to possess His bride, He will display His bride before the world. 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." A symbol, surely, of the church displayed in glory, but, above all, the glory of the Lamb displayed in the church, for above and beyond the glories of the city John sees the glories of the Lamb. 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 — and all this is exceedingly beautiful, but we ask, "Is this all?" And John as it were answers back, "Oh, no, I can tell you more, I can tell you the things that are not there, I saw no temple, no sun, no moon, no candle, no night, no evil, and no curse." And again we say this is very blessed, but is there nothing more?" Indeed there is," John seems to say, "for 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, "And the Lamb is the light thereof." How indeed would the gold and the pearls and the precious stones display their beauty apart from the light?" The Lamb is the light thereof."

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," and His name shall be in our foreheads. May the transforming power of the story of the Lamb be manifest in our lives even now.

"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."