

## The Lamb of God

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**Last night was Passover.** We celebrated a memorial of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ (Ex12:14,13:9, 1Cr11:24-25). Passover was originally a memorial of the deliverance of the Israelites from the final plague on Egypt – “death of the first-born”. We used the symbols introduced by Jesus at the First New Testament Passover: broken bread representing Christ’s body and wine representing Christ’s blood. The original Passover in Egypt also required “body” and “blood”. A “lamb” was killed; its “blood” was put around the door of the house; the “body” was roasted and eaten. The symbols have changed but are clearly related – the common element is the “lamb”. In the Old Covenant, it was a physical lamb. In the New Covenant, the Lamb is Jesus Christ.

**The Lamb as a Symbol:** We are very familiar with “the lamb” as a symbol of the World Tomorrow (Is11:6-9, 65:25). The “lamb” is a picture of innocence, gentleness, peacefulness in contrast to the “lion”. Starting with Cain and Abel, the “lamb” became the recognized preference for sacrifice (Gn4:4). One or more “Lambs” would have been included in Noah’s sacrifice (Gn8:20). In the sacrificial prescriptions contained in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, “lambs” are mentioned dozens of times as the sacrificial animal of choice. All these sacrifices looked to the ultimate sacrifice – fulfilled in Jesus’ crucifixion (Hb9:11-5, 10:8-14).

**Two Metaphors:** Throughout the Bible, two metaphors regarding “lambs” are developed. First, the metaphor of the “good shepherd” (Is40:10-11). Jeremiah and Ezekiel take it up with specific connotation of the Second Exodus and the New Israel (Jr23:3-4, Ez34:11-16a). In the New Testament, Jesus unequivocally states he is the Good Shepherd – he is the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies (Jh10:1-16). After the Resurrection, Jesus completes the metaphor by passing the responsibility on to Peter as the representative apostle (Jh21:15-17). From the apostles, the mandate has passed to the Church. This is a huge part of our work as a Church – that we all grow in grace and knowledge. The second metaphor: the “lamb led to slaughter” (Is53:7). This is the fourth Servant Song – specifically prophesizing the Messiah. The above verse specifically discusses the crucifixion. The verse is quoted by Luke in Acts, and Luke unequivocally assigns the symbol to Jesus (At8:26-35). Jeremiah applied the metaphor to himself (Jr11:18-21).

**Abraham and Isaac:** The prototypical example of the Lamb led to the Slaughter, and the Lamb of God, is Abraham and Isaac (Gn22:1-14). Verses 8 and 14, “the LORD will provide”: יהוה יִרְאֶה - YHWH yire’e; “the LORD [he] shall be provided”:

יִרְאֶה יהוה YHWH yera’eh. BDB page 908 puts meaning of “appear” in Genesis 22:14 literally “he will appear”, “he shall be appeared”. Clearly prophetic: emphasis on “only son” (compare Mk1:11, 9:7, Mt3:17, 17:5, Lk3:22, 9:35). Verse 8 is prophetic since a ram, verse 13, is provided, not a lamb. It looks to Christ.

**Samuel’s Sacrifice:** At the Battle of Ebeneser (about 1050BC) Israel was defeated, the Ark was taken by the Philistines, and Shiloh was destroyed. God ensured the Philistines returned the Ark. It was located in Kiriath-jearim (about ten miles north-east of Jebus – future Jerusalem) under the care of Eleazer ben Abinadab. This turn of events caused Israel to desire a return to YHWH (1Sm7:2). For twenty years, Samuel assumed the position of Judge of Israel. Samuel sacrificed a lamb in a ceremony to start the people back on the road to serving YHWH (1Sm7:3-11). Mizpah is about ten miles north of Jebus. This was a classic example of the original meaning of the “Day of YHWH” – YHWH fought for Israel and defeated her enemies. The point is that central to the ceremony of renewal was the sacrifice of a lamb.

**The Lamb of God:** John the Baptist is the only prophet who actually calls Jesus “the Lamb of God” (Jh1:29-37). This is soon after the Baptism of Jesus. The two disciples are Andrew and John. John the Baptist was given the sign of the descending Holy Spirit as a direct confirmation from God as to the identity of the Messiah. John reflects his correct understanding of all the prophecies of the Old Testament and of all the symbolism incorporated into the Old Covenant sacrifices and correctly assigns to Jesus to designation of the “Lamb of God” of the New Covenant. Peter was certainly aware of John the Baptist’s designation of Jesus as the Lamb of God, and of the prophecies, and sacrificial symbolism. Peter uses the same metaphor (1Pt1:13-21). Peter unequivocally states that the Plan of God has operated on schedule since the foundation of the world. Salvation through Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, is the basis of faith and hope. This is in fact the only hope for this world.

**The Book of Revelation:** In the Book of Revelation the symbolism of the Lamb of God explodes in full glory. There are about 25 occurrences of the symbol encompassing both metaphors, the Good Shepherd and the Lamb Led to Slaughter (Rv5:6-10, 7:9-17, 14:1-5, 19:6-9, 22:1-3).

**Jesus Christ is our Passover, the Lamb of God.** The sacrifice he made allows us to be holy before God. We are going into the Days of Unleavened Bread where our focus is to be on holiness, to be without sin. Let us look to our Good Shepherd to lead us into this state so that God will see fit to grant us the gift of eternal life.