

John 1:29 (Daniel Thomas Grimston) 154942

The Lamb of God: September 2018, God's Lamb (1:29)

“Behold the lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). Have we ever gazed upon the Lamb of God, whose Person and work are brought before us in this passage? The Eternal Word—the Creator—the Light—the Life—the Word made flesh—the only begotten of the Father is here exhibited to us as God’s Lamb!

This was not a title which would be foreign to the minds of John’s hearers. It had been the delight of God before His Son came into the world to set up beforehand the faithful guideposts by which they might be encouraged, while surrounded with darkness and wickedness.

Just as signposts encourage a weary traveler as he passes through some lonely area, telling him that the road he traverses leads to the desired end, so these bright gleams of light in Old Testament times tell us that God had not forgotten His people and that He would make good His declaration, spoken in Adam’s hearing, of the Deliverer, the seed of the woman who would bruise the serpent’s head.

Abel’s Offering

Let us consider a few of them — take Genesis 4, for instance. Sin had entered the world when “the Lamb of God’s providing” comes, in type, upon the scene. Abel, in essence recognizing the distance that existed between man and God and bowing his head to the righteous sentence of God as to sin, owns that nothing will avail with God but the life of a sinless victim. Therefore he presents as an offering the “firstlings of his flock and the fat thereof.” He saw that the righteousness of God demanded a substitute for sin, which offering being sinless, could bear the judgment in death. He submitted himself to that righteousness, and his “more excellent sacrifice” obtained for him the witness that he was counted righteous according to God’s estimate of his gift (Heb. 11:4).

Have we bowed to His righteousness and learned that God accepts the sinner, doing so according to His thoughts of the sacrifice of the Lamb of His own providing — His own beloved Son?

Abraham and Isaac

Let us look at another. The moment had come for the trial of Abraham’s faith, and the son in whom the promises of God were centered must die. Obedient to the word of God, the father did not hesitate a moment; early in the morning he started forth on his sorrowful journey to offer up his only son. Faith triumphs over difficulties. He believed that God “was able to raise him up even from the dead.” In simple confidence, then, he trusted God, and in reply to Isaac’s inquiry, he says, “My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering” (Gen. 22:8).

The decisive moment came; the altar was built and the wood was placed in order. Isaac was bound and laid upon the altar, and the hand stretched forth to slay his son, when the voice of God stayed the blow: “Lay not thine hand upon the lad.” And turning about, he beheld “a ram caught in a thicket by his horns”; another sacrifice is provided to offer instead of his son, and he rightly named the place “the Lord will provide.”

The Passover Lamb

In Exodus 12 we find God displaying to us another picture of His provision in grace to shield man from impending judgment. That night He was about to pass through the land of Egypt to execute judgment. But His people must be spared, and therefore a mode of shelter from judgment is proposed to them, by sprinkling upon the lintel and door posts of their houses the blood of “a lamb without blemish.” They believed in the coming judgment; they obeyed the directions given, took the lamb, and killed it. Then, with the blood upon the door post and lintel, they sat down in security and fed upon the one whose blood was the sole ground of their safety on that night of awful judgment. They rested simply on the word of Him who said, “When I see the blood I will pass over you.” How plainly does this point us to the “lamb without blemish and without spot,” by whose precious blood His people are redeemed (1 Peter 1:18-19)!

The Lamb of God

We are at our journey’s end, for these types and shadows have conducted us to the brightness of the presence of “the Lamb of God” Himself; guideposts now are no longer needed. Signposts are passed and forgotten in the presence of the glory of the Lamb of God. In obedience to His Father’s will He had come (Psa. 40:7-8). In obedience to the same will “He is brought as a Lamb to the slaughter” (Isa. 53:7) and crucified. God presents Him thus as an object of faith for all who will receive Him.

But there was one important difference between the sacrifices of Old Testament times and the Lamb of God. In old times the offeror had to bring his lamb; he was an actor in the proceedings, and without his activity there could be no sacrifice. Not so now; it is God who has provided, God who has brought His Lamb, God who has accepted Him. Man could have no share in the work, for the plan had been devised of God and accomplished of God. The sacrifice is of God’s providing, and therefore the sinner’s acceptance is according to the value God sets upon His own Lamb.

Has the reality of this entered into our souls so that we can say, I am accepted according to the value God sets upon His Lamb, that in love He provided for me?

Notice now the character of His work. It is twofold. He “taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29), and He “baptizeth with the Holy Ghost” (John 1:33). Can anything be more complete, more suitable to the nature of God than this? Not merely do I see my sins removed, but I see sin itself dealt with in Christ, when He as God’s Lamb bore its judgment — bowed His head and died! How complete a work; sin itself is dealt with in all its horrible enormity! Only through unbelief is the sinner deprived of an interest in the work accomplished by the Lamb of God.

But this is not all. His work being finished, He rises and ascends up where He was with the Father, to give us a more abundant blessing than before. Those who have received Him are now baptized with the Holy Spirit, thus uniting them to their absent Head and Lord. “By one spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free” (1 Cor. 12:13). And thus we who have believed are linked to Christ and to each other.

The Reception of Christ’s Testimony

Now notice the way in which those who first heard the message of good news received it, and through abiding with Jesus received strength to testify of Him. “The two disciples heard him speak and they followed Jesus” (John 1:37).

How simple and beautiful! “Faith” came “by hearing” (Rom. 10:17). They heard the word, they received Him, they believed in His name, and all things were but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Him. In Paul’s case the sevenfold crown of fleshly glory (Phil. 3:5-6) was cast aside in the presence of the more excellent glory of the Lamb of God. They received “power to become the sons of God”; they followed Him and abode with Him. This was the place that Mary chose (Luke 10:39-42). This again was the place that John took, not because he had a better right to it than Peter, but because he loved it more (John 13:23). This is the place that we have an equal right to share, for Jesus says, “Abide in me” (John 15:4).

Those of us who know something of this may well cultivate habitual nearness of heart to Christ, continual dependence on Him, and constant outflow of affections towards Him of whose changeless love we have been assured. To cultivate this, beloved, the result will be peace flowing “as a river” and abundant fruitfulness. Remember, without Him we can do nothing, and service, though outwardly dazzling, is worthless unless it flows from continual fellowship with Him and habitual nearness of heart to Christ!

Their Testimony

Now comes their testimony: “One of the two ... was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah. ... And he brought him to Jesus” (John 1:40-42).

May we learn our lesson from this, too, and go forth fresh from the presence of our Lord to win those who are “without God in the world” to Christ. We may well delight to tell of the One whom we have found. Surely like the woman in John 4 we may say, “Come see a man that told me all things that ever I did,” or like Mary Magdalene of John 20, we may tell of the One who is now ascended to His Father and to our Father, and to His God and our God. It is thus we know our ascended Lord; may we so testify of Him that those around us may know the Lamb of God in the glories of His Person and in the virtues and excellencies of His work!

D. T. Grimston (adapted)

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