

THE LAMB TAKES AWAY THE SIN OF THE WORLD

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Jesus was a child of twelve when He witnessed His first Passover. Like all children, He wondered what the killing of the Passover lamb meant. No one could help Him, not even His mother. But His sinless mind was gradually able to grasp the truth—the blood of billions of Passover lambs could not wash away even one human sin. He sensed the meaning of Psalm 40:6-8, “Lo, I come . . . to do Thy will, O God.” Someone holy, undefiled, must give Himself to be “the Lamb of God.”

Through His young human soul there surged a great desire: “O Father, let Me be the world’s ‘Passover Lamb!’” From that moment, the divine-human Messiah in His childhood grew to be absorbed “in [His] Father’s business” (Luke 2:49). John the Baptist caught Christ’s total consecration at the age of thirty when he cried out, “Behold the Lamb of God!” (John 1:29).

The age of twelve is still very significant. The Holy Spirit today is often forced to by-pass older people because they quickly become full of themselves and stay that way; children are sensitive to the call of heaven to give themselves to the One who gave Himself for them—if only someone can be humble enough to step aside and let Christ be revealed to them. Said Jesus: “Except ye be converted, and

become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 18:1-3).

Little children have not much pride of opinion of their own. Grown up ones are not so ready to learn.

The sanctuary teaching of the atonement illustrates the cross. In the Levitical service, the daily morning and evening sacrifice prefigured this universal offering of Christ for “all men.” While there were individual sacrifices for individual sinners who repented, the “daily” offerings of two lambs were an unconditional sacrifice for the corporate whole of the nation, including the strangers and sojourners in the land. These lambs were offered whether or not all individuals believed and repented. John the Baptist’s name for Christ was “the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world,” an allusion to this daily unconditional ministry. This is what John means by “the propitiation . . . for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:2).

Shortly before Jesus met the woman at the well at Sychar (John 4), John the Baptist had baptized Him. But that meant a prerequisite of repentance, for the only people that John could baptize were those who had repented. But Jesus never had sinned! Then how could He let Himself be baptized? To be baptized without repenting would be hypocrisy, for John’s mission was only “the baptism of repentance” (Acts 19:4). John knew this. That’s why He refused Him the rite.

But here’s the wonder: the sinless Son of God lets Himself be lowered into the water the same as any

common sinner, making a public confession of repentance. (It's childish to think the reason was He merely wanted to show us the physical method—John could do that; or make a “bank deposit” of “merit” to be transferred to some disadvantaged people like the thief on the cross).

Jesus actually did experience repentance. He had to, or John could not have baptized Him; but it was not for His own sins, but for ours. Therefore it had to be a shared (corporate) repentance. Totally sinless, He was “made to be sin for us who knew no sin” (2 Cor. 5:21). He identified with the human race so closely that He felt that our sins were His own. Don't you want understanding and compassion? Sure. So Jesus learned how to feel that burden for others, including the five-times loser at the well.

Some people say that if you've never gone bungee-jumping you've missed real fun. Or if you've never been to Disney Land, you're deprived. But let me ask a sobering question: Have you ever experienced repentance before God? If your answer is No, then you truly have missed out on something that is wonderful, refreshing, and encouraging! Repentance is not breast-beating, wearing hair-shirts, self-flagellation, paying penance, doing Rosaries, going on painful pilgrimages, or giving heavy donations to the church. It's deeper than all that.

The Bible talks about it over 100 times. Far from being a sad experience, it's joyous, like the gateway to heaven, like being healed after sickness, like recovering from a painful accident, or like coming out

of prison after long incarceration. It's getting back on the right road after you've lost your way in a distressing detour.

Jesus' baptism was a precursor to His cross. Christ voluntarily gave Himself a sacrifice that the world may temporarily, universally, be justified. This is one of the big ideas which God invites us to wrap our minds around. God's government is under an all-out assault from Satan in an ideological warfare of ideas to annihilate it.

When God commanded Adam not to eat of “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, . . . for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die (Gen. 2:17), it is true that Adam died spiritually; but more profoundly, God told the truth and He had reference to literal, physical, eternal death. Adam sinned and “the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23). Why wasn't Adam struck dead?

The reason is that before the creation of the world, God the Father and God the Son made a promise,—or covenant to one another,—as they were planning the creation of free-will agents to live in an environment of God's love on the earth. The Son pledged Himself as Surety for man should he choose to sin. Since the first man, Adam, was the head of the new race of intelligent beings; should he sin, Satan, would demand that sinning Adam receive his just reward by instant death.

God's ways are always just and true. He must legitimize sinning man's survival of eternal death. He did this on the basis of the everlasting covenant

between the Father and the Son. God justified the existence of fallen man by means of the last Adam, Jesus Christ. God's government justified the existence of sinful man on the pledged Lamb's death for sin from the foundation of the world. "Ye were . . . 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 1:18-20).¹

No society or government can exist without the rule of law and a court system to adjudicate and administer the law. God's government is no exception. It is not by sheer despotic force that God maintains sinful man's existence in the eyes of sentient cosmic beings, angels, and demonic principalities and powers. It is some form of democracy which acclaims and perceives that He is acting upon the rule of law and yet dealing mercifully with the erring giving them a second probation because of their representative Head.

Why did Christ teach Nicodemus the truth of the most well-beloved and memorized verse in all of the Bible, John 3:16? It must have been because of a deep theological misunderstanding which Nicodemus

¹ "As soon as there was sin, there was a Saviour. Christ knew what He would have to suffer, yet He became man's substitute. As soon as Adam sinned, the Son of God presented himself as surety for the human race, with just as much power to avert the doom pronounced upon the guilty as when He died upon the cross of Calvary." Ellen G. White, "Lessons from the Christ-life," *The Review and Herald* (March 12, 1901), par. 4.

had regarding God's dealings with the world. Jesus told him, "For God so loved the world."

Nicodemus believed, as did all the religious leaders and elite of Judaism, that God's covenant with Israel meant that only they were the elect ones for salvation. Nicodemus was the Calvinist of his day. Only the Jews were predestined for eternal life. All the Gentiles were predestined for damnation and destruction.

This theology continues to this day in the great systems of religion including Catholicism and Protestantism. Its Protestant representatives are Presbyterians, Reformed Baptists, Reformed Church, etc.

The other evangelical counterpoint to this is Arminianism which arose during the seventeenth century in Europe which saw the universal dimensions of Christ's death for the world. It teaches that Christ's death was sufficient to embrace every one, but it is not effective until faith is exercised by the recipient. In other words, Christ offers salvation to all, but it is not effective until you do something right. The atoning sacrifice is an atonement for sin provided one believes. So there is prevenient grace and means by which God has of reaching mankind with the gospel of Jesus Christ, but man must choose to believe. The gift of eternal life is only *provisional* until one believes. This might be expressed in terms of showing some genuine proffer of building a relationship with God. It is just here that faith becomes a human work.

However, Jesus taught the pure truth to Nicodemus when He said, “For God so loved the world, that He *gave* His only begotten Son” (John 3:16). Christ is God’s *gift* to the world. This gift has a legal basis in that Christ has been constituted Head of the race; and this gift is voluntary in that Christ of His own volition, motivated by love, pledged Himself as Surety for sinners.

Christ uses a legal term to indicate what this means for the world. “For God sent not His Son into the world to *condemn* the world; but that the world through Him might be saved” (John 3:17). If the world was condemned by God in sending His Son, then it would be instantly destroyed for its sin. But it does not stand in a judicial state of condemnation for it is not condemned. The extent of this Divine judicial action embraces the totality of the world.

Jesus went on to teach, however, that the present, individual choices with respect to God’s gift of Christ, short-circuits God’s pardon. “He that believeth on Him is not condemned: but He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (John 3:18). Thus the future day of judgment for the unbeliever becomes a present reality of condemnation. Nevertheless, the probationer continues to live briefly by the gracious life of God given to him or her; and at any time prior to death or the coming of Christ one may choose life in the Son (John 3:36).

The Epistle to the Romans contains the teaching of God’s universal justification for the existence of all sinful life. Notice that the first half of the sentence contains the word “all” which is understood as the subject of the last half of the sentence. “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; [the “all” are] being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 3:23, 24). It isn’t difficult to see that without exception, everyone born into the world has sinned. It is the “all [who] have sinned” that are “being justified.” This, of course, is a legal term meaning pardoned from sin, on the basis of a redemptive price paid by Christ. As an objective, legal reality, all human life is acquitted from sin because of the redemption of the cross.

“Christ died for the ungodly” (Rom. 5:6). The “ungodly” are the impiously wicked. This is the natural inheritance from Adam of all who come into the world. But “while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8). There is no need to emphasize that the class of “sinners” involves all for whom Christ died.

Furthermore, “when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son” (Rom. 5:10). So the whole class of sinners, as enemies of God, were “reconciled,” (past tense), “by the death of His Son.” The notion of enemies being in a state of hostility toward God requires a legal settlement of hostilities, as well as a pathway to experience a restoration of peace. God has set forth the judicial peace at Calvary. This initiates the road map to

experience peace by which we are “being reconciled” to God and “shall be saved by His life” (Rom. 5:10).

Paul forthrightly states the objective, legal, setting right of the race in Rom. 5:18: “Therefore as by the offence of one *judgment came* upon all men to condemnation [the punishment of eternal death]; even so by the righteousness of one *the free gift came* upon all men unto justification of life.” Adam’s one sin was judged (vs. 16) by God and he was pronounced guilty for his personal sin, but since he was the fountain head of the whole human family and could only pass on to his descendants that which was in him, “all men” receive “condemnation,” i.e., the punishment, meaning eternal death.

However, Adam’s one offence is reversed by “the righteousness of one” which is “upon all men unto justification of life” (vs. 18).² There is a reference here to “one act of righteousness” [see margin of KJV];

² “There is no exception here. As the condemnation came upon all, so the justification comes upon all. Christ has tasted death for every man. He has given himself for all. Nay, he has given himself to every man. The free gift has come upon all. The fact that it is a free gift is evidence that there is no exception. If it came upon only those who have some special qualification, then it would not be a free gift. It is a fact, therefore, plainly stated in the Bible, that the gift of righteousness and life in Christ has come to every man on earth. There is not the slightest reason why every man that has ever lived should not be saved unto eternal life, except that they would not have it.” E. J. Waggoner, “Studies in Romans. The Free Gift,” *The Signs of the Times* 22, 11 (March 12, 1896), pp. 164, 165.

i.e., one judgment or decision. Obviously it was the Divine judgment against sin, which act was publicly displayed before the world, at the cross. He received the punishment for all the world’s sin. The Divine wrath against sin was executed upon Christ.

The cross was not done in a corner. Satan saw it. The angels beheld their beloved commander crucified. Our human representatives were there as eyewitnesses. It has been recorded as a witness for eternity in the Sacred Word. By means of the cross of Christ, it came “upon all men unto justification of life” (vs. 18). All of human life both in the past, present, and future exists because it is justified by the cross. Calvary justifies the existence of all life. So when reference is made to “justification of life” it is a specific Scriptural term for the legal reality of legitimizing, from God’s standpoint in His government, because of the great controversy with Satan, why He has given a second probation to sinful mankind. And this temporary probationary life of each individual is a real pardon from sin whether they are believers or unbelievers. It is a reality that goes far beyond the enjoyment of bread, food, family, loving relationships, a semblance of societal bliss, an accommodation of living within laws of social respect, etc. It goes far beyond making it possible for God to treat sinners in Christ as though they had never sinned. It is a fundamental answer to Satan’s charges to destroy sinners immediately if God’s government is one of law and order.

The cross of Christ is the legal justification for the existence of life on this earth in the face of sin. It adequately explains how God can maintain the temporal existence of sinners in view of the accusations of Satan that He must execute the punishment due sinners which is eternal death.

CHILD DEDICATION

Not *all* babies have temper tantrums, or exhibit perversity and rebellion. Writes Sr. White: “Before [s]he is old enough to reason, [s]he [the child] may be taught to obey.”³ Our “children have sensitive, loving natures. . . . Brought up under the wise and loving guidance of a true home, children will have no desire to wander away in search of pleasure and companionship. *Evil will not attract them.* The spirit that prevails in the home will mould their characters.”⁴ If these things are true of *our* children, could they not also be true of Jesus? “Even the babe in its mother’s arms may dwell as under the shadow of the Almighty through the faith of the praying mother.”⁵ John the Baptist was an example of a baby who was “filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother’s womb” (Luke 1:15). Yet we recognize that such babies as here described are not born with a sinless nature!

The real problem here is the question of “original sin.” We do not find this doctrine taught anywhere in the Bible or the Spirit of Prophecy. The term “original

sin” does not appear once as a theological term. Paul’s discussion in Romans 5 makes clear that the evil brought upon the race by Adam has been cancelled by Christ. “It follows, then, that as the result of one misdeed was condemnation for all people, so the result of one righteous act is acquittal and life for all” (Rom. 5:18, REB).

The original of Rom. 5:12, for example, does not support “original sin”: “As by one man [Adam] sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men—well, all have sinned.” The *eph ho* is significantly used—Paul is almost on the verge of articulating the “original sin” theory, affirming that because death has passed upon all men it must stem from “original sin” genetically inherited from Adam, but he catches himself and using the *eph ho*, adds, “well, the fact is, *all have sinned.*” Then he goes on to say most clearly that not only as Adam’s transgression brought a curse did Christ bring a blessing, but “much more” so. “As by the offence of one [Adam] judgment came upon all men to condemnation [wouldn’t this be “original sin”?]; *even so* by the righteousness of One the free gift came upon *all men* unto justification of life” (Rom. 5:18, KJV). For “all men” Christ has cancelled out the guilt of “original sin.” We have no reason to adopt the Catholic theory.

Therefore we do not need to present our babies for baptism in order to wash away “original sin” contracted from contamination through Adam’s blood line. Christ has already cancelled our “condemnation”

³ *Child Guidance*, p. 82.

⁴ *Ministry of Healing*, pp. 388, 394.

⁵ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 515.

(“the wages of sin is [eternal] death”) by our following Adam’s example in sin. He has given Himself (eternal life) to *all*. This includes our beloved little ones.

God took a desperate step in order to save Bethany Grace Phipps from eternal death by giving His only begotten (Beloved) Son. Will you Ricky and Jennifer identify with the Heavenly Father’s choice and give Bethany to God?

JESUS’ BAPTISM OUR BAPTISM

The glory of the cross of Christ attracts us to a new and better life. We gladly choose to follow Christ in His example of self-surrender.

The gateway to our new life is baptism together with Him. Jesus Himself was immersed by John the Baptist in the waters of the River Jordan. He went down into the water, and was buried by John in the water, and then, “when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water” (Matt. 3:16). Jesus submitted to baptism thus as an example to us “to fulfill all righteousness” (Matt. 3:15).

Baptism, both in form and in spiritual meaning, represents the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:3, 4).

We live in an age of marvelous miracles, but the most wonderful miracle possible is the change of a

human heart, a transformation from death to “walk in newness of life.” Such is the miracle which the grace of Christ accomplishes for the one who believes Him.

Baptism reveals how the miracle is accomplished in the human heart. Paul explains further: “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him (Christ), that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin” (Rom. 6:6). This “old man” is not Satan, but is our old life of sin, our love of “self.” He is the cause of all our troubles. By the grace of God, he is crucified with Christ upon the cross. And just as surely as day follows night, or harvest follows planting, a “newness of life” is the result.

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