

In the Steps of the Lamb

*“These are they
which follow
the Lamb
whithersoever he
goeth. These were
redeemed from
among men, being
the firstfruits
unto God and to
the Lamb.”
—Revelation 14:4*

THE “LAMB” IS ONE OF the symbolic titles that the Scriptures apply to Jesus. In Revelation 5:6, as John describes the vision given to him of God’s throne, he says that in the “midst of the throne . . . stood a Lamb as it had been slain.” Here is revealed the lesson which is conveyed by the Lamb symbolism. It is a “Lamb as it had been slain,” denoting a full and complete sacrifice, even unto death. While this is the first reference to the Lamb in the Book of Revelation, this symbol of sacrifice in connection with the outworking of the plan of God is prominent throughout the Bible.

God told Adam and Eve that if they transgressed his law they would die: “In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” (Gen. 2:17) When they ate of the forbidden fruit they were sentenced to death. God also spoke to the serpent, telling him that Eve’s “seed . . . shall bruise thy head.” (Gen.

3:14,15) This statement, while veiled in symbolic language, implied that in some way, not yet revealed, the results of Satan's victory over our first parents would be eradicated.

Later, the two sons of Adam and Eve brought sacrifices to the Lord. Cain's offering consisted of the fruit of the field, while Abel presented a lamb. (Gen. 4:2-5) We read in Hebrews 11:4 that "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." For Abel's faith to enter into the offering of this more excellent sacrifice, it must be that the Lord had revealed to him in some manner that this was the kind of offering that would be acceptable.

It is doubtful that Abel understood why the offering of a lamb would be pleasing to the Lord. However, in the light of the plan of God as it unfolds to us throughout the remainder of the Word of God, we can now understand. Our first parents sinned and were sentenced to death. That condemnation was passed on to their offspring, because all would be born in sin. Yet, God had made a statement which implied that in some way sin was to be remitted, resulting in a release from the sentence of death. Thus, very early in the unfolding of his plan, God began to reveal, using the Lamb symbol, that "without shedding of blood is no remission."—Heb. 9:22

BLESSINGS PROMISED TO ALL

Some two thousand years later, the Lamb symbolism is again brought to our attention. This is in connection with God's dealings with Abraham. God promised this faithful patriarch that through his "seed" all the families of the earth would be blessed. (Gen. 12:3) Abraham's faith (Continued on page 36)

(Continued from page 31) was severely tested in waiting for the birth of this promised seed. He did not understand that the seed which God spoke of in his promise was Christ.—Gal. 3:8,16

After many years of waiting, Isaac was born to Abraham and Sarah. To their understanding, Isaac was the seed of promise. However, when this beloved son grew to manhood, God asked Abraham to offer him up as a burnt offering. (Gen. 22:1-19) Abraham had developed great faith in God and in his promises. He believed that if he gave Isaac up as a sacrifice, God would raise him from the dead, to fulfill his promise that through him all the families of the earth would be blessed. (Heb. 11:17-19) Thus, Abraham proceeded to comply with God's request.

Consequently, we see Isaac stretched out on an altar to be sacrificed, and Abraham with his knife raised to slay his son. Herein we are informed of an important truth relative to God's plan. Before all the families of the earth can be blessed through the seed of Abraham, a loving Father must give up his Son in sacrifice. As the Scriptures continue to unfold the plan of God for the salvation of the world, we learn that the Father who gives his Son in sacrifice is our loving Heavenly Father, who gave his "only begotten Son" for the redemption and salvation of the world. (John 3:16) A ram, or lamb, was provided as a substitute for Isaac, picturing how God would provide his beloved Son as the Lamb, and through his sacrifice all mankind might be blessed.

DELIVERANCE FROM EGYPT

Centuries after Abraham's day, his descendants were held captive in Egypt by Pharaoh, and God sent

Moses to deliver them. Pharaoh, who in this situation might well represent Satan the Devil, was not willing to release the Hebrew children from bondage. Various plagues were inflicted upon Pharaoh and his people, the last one being the death of the firstborn. Some of these plagues fell also upon the Israelites.

God gave instructions to Moses and Aaron as to how the people of Abraham could save their firstborn from death. Each family was to slay a lamb. The blood was to be sprinkled upon the lintels and doorposts of their houses. During the night, the lamb was to be eaten. Under the protection of the sprinkled blood, the firstborn of the Hebrews were saved from death, and the next day the Israelites were all delivered from their slavery in Egypt. (Exod. 12:1-13,28-42, 50,51) Here again, the symbolism of the slain Lamb is brought dramatically to our attention.

We note that the blood of the lamb first brought salvation to Israel's firstborn. In Hebrews 12:23, the Apostle Paul speaks of the "church of the firstborn." The Scriptures also reveal that, following the salvation of the church of the firstborn during the present age, all mankind is to be delivered from the bondage of sin and death. This, too, is made possible through the Lamb that is slain, and is illustrated by all of Israel being delivered from Pharaoh's hand.

"TO THE SLAUGHTER"

The prophecies of the Old Testament also refer to the slain Lamb. In Isaiah's prophecy, we read, "The LORD hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God." (Isa. 52:10) The "arm" of the Lord is Jesus in his exalted kingly glory, the

seed through whom all the families of the earth are to be blessed. How reassuring it is that through him “all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.”

However, in the next chapter, Isaiah asks, “Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?” Instead of this arm of God being revealed to all nations, as Isaiah had previously seen in his prophetic vision, he now sees Christ as having “no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: . . . we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.”—chap. 53:1-3

Isaiah continues his prophetic description of the disesteem in which Jesus was held by the people, and of the cruel persecutions which were inflicted upon him. In verse 7, we read, “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.” Thus, the one who in God’s plan of redemption and deliverance was destined to bring salvation to “all the ends of the earth” first became the Lamb which was slain.

THE LAMB IDENTIFIED

John the Baptist identified the Lamb foretold in the Old Testament. As he saw Jesus approach him, John said, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” (John 1:29) John spoke under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and may not have understood the full import of his statement. To us, however, it is clear that he was speaking of

the one who was the antitype of the lamb which Abel offered to God. This, also, was the one foreshadowed by the lamb which God provided as a substitute for Isaac on the altar of sacrifice. Here is the one typified by Israel's Passover lamb which was slain, and the one Isaiah foretold would be led as a "lamb to the slaughter." Here was the real Lamb, "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

In corroboration of John's testimony, the Apostle Paul referred to Jesus as "Christ, our Passover lamb," identifying him as the antitype of Israel's Passover lamb. (I Cor. 5:7, *English Standard Version*) Peter, too, confirmed this same truth, writing, "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But 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."—I Pet. 1:18-20

Thus, we see that the Lamb symbolism is traced through the Old and New Testaments, finding its climax in the Book of Revelation. In this vision, John sees the "Lamb as it had been slain" as the one found worthy to "open the book," which was held "in the right hand of him that sat upon the throne." (Rev. 5:1-7) Later, he sees the Lamb on "Mount Sion," and speaks of the time when "the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready." Finally, John views a "river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb."—chap. 14:1; 19:7; 22:1

THE LAMB EXALTED

Associated with many of the Bible's references to the slain Lamb is another line of prophetic testimony which is quite different in character. Peter sums up this additional testimony, saying that the Holy Spirit, speaking through the prophets, "testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." (I Pet. 1:11) Many of the prophecies pertaining to the sufferings of Christ, shown in part by the symbolism of the slain Lamb, also reveal wonderful promises of the exaltation and glory of the Lamb which would follow his suffering and death.

A wonderful description of this promised glory is presented in verses which follow the previously cited words of Revelation, chapter 5. In this subsequent depiction, John writes: "I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne . . . : and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."—vss. 11,12

It is in keeping with this that in chapter 14, as noted earlier, we find the Lamb standing on Mount Zion. Having been rewarded with "the glory that should follow," he is now highly exalted. It has been suggested that, in the natural realm, when sheep and goats are left to roam as they will, the goats invariably climb to the tops of the hills, while the sheep ordinarily seek the low places and valleys. To John, it must have seemed very unusual that a lamb should be seen on Mount Zion.

This brings to light a vital truth concerning Jesus, the Lamb of God. He did not attain to his high position on Mount Sion by means of self-exaltation. Being sheep-like, he had sought the low places. Jesus humbled himself, and because of this his Heavenly Father had exalted him. Paul calls this to our attention, saying: "Let this disposition be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who, though being in God's form, yet did not meditate a usurpation to be like God: but divested himself, taking a bondman's form, having been made in the likeness of men; and being in condition as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. And therefore God supremely exalted him, and freely granted to him that name which is above every name; in order that in the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those beneath; and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, for the glory of God the Father."—Phil. 2:5-11, *Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott*

In the 12th chapter of Hebrews, we are given another example of Jesus' humility, which resulted in his exaltation by God. Here, Paul admonishes us to look upon Jesus as a guide in our own endeavors to be pleasing to the Heavenly Father. We read: "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin."—vss. 2-4

“CONTRADICTION OF SINNERS”

Jesus endured an almost constant contradiction of sinners from the beginning of his ministry to the end, when on the cross he cried, “It is finished.” (John 19:30) This contradiction was in small things as well as in matters of great importance. Even the great truths concerning his life were contradicted. He was the Son of God, but this was contradicted. He came to earth to be Israel’s Messiah and king, and this also was contradicted. Indeed, it was the contradiction of these vital facts concerning Jesus that led to his crucifixion.

When Jesus was baptized, he heard his Heavenly Father say, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” (Matt. 3:17) Forty days after this, as he came out of the wilderness, Jesus was confronted by Satan. The devil took him, in vision, “into the holy city” and sat him “on a pinnacle of the temple,” and said to him: “If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.”—chap. 4:5,6

Jesus resisted this temptation, replying, “It is written . . . , Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.” (vs. 7) Forty days before this the Heavenly Father had given him assurance of his sonship, and Jesus had complete confidence in the fact that he was the only begotten Son of God. He knew that to do anything in the way of seeking further confirmation of this fact would have been wrong, especially such a foolish thing as to leap from a pinnacle of the Temple.

Satan also tempted Jesus in connection with his kingship. Concerning this we read: “The devil taketh

him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.” (Matt. 4:8,9) Jesus knew that in his Father’s due time he would take over the rulership of the kingdoms of this world, and he did not propose to enter this inheritance on the devil’s terms. He replied, “It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.”—vs. 10

When the mob came from Jerusalem to Gethsemane to arrest Jesus, he said to the religious leaders, “When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness.” (Luke 22:53) Previously, Jesus had said to these religious hypocrites that they were of their “father the devil.” (John 8:44) Satan is the prince of darkness, and Jesus’ remark, “this is your hour,” implied that Satan would now be permitted to do whatever he wanted to with Jesus.

SONSHIP AND KINGSHIP REJECTED

Jesus was arrested and taken to the high priest’s house, where he was humiliated and tortured until morning. Then he was taken before a council consisting of “the elders of the people and the chief priests and the scribes.” “Then said they all, Art thou then the Son of God?” (Luke 22:66,70) To this question, Jesus replied, “Ye say that I am.” To his persecutors this meant that Jesus had confessed, so they said, “What need we any further witness? for we ourselves have heard of his own mouth.”—vss. 70,71

The point here is that Jesus was indeed the Son of God. Therefore, his acknowledgment of this fact

was not blasphemy. His persecutors, though, did not believe this. Hence, their charge of blasphemy was part of the contradiction of sinners. The same Satanic mastermind which three and one-half years before had said to Jesus, "If thou be the Son of God," prove it by casting yourself down from a pinnacle of the Temple, was now seemingly victorious. Jesus had not proven to the Jewish leaders that he was the Son of God, and was now judged worthy of death for blasphemy.

However, the religious leaders of Israel did not have the authority to put Jesus to death. Only the Roman government could do this, so he was taken before Pilate, the governor, where he was charged with claiming to be a king. If this were true, it could be construed as insurrection against Rome. Pilate asked Jesus, "Art thou a king?" Jesus replied, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth."—John 18:37

Following this, Jesus was scourged, a crown of thorns was put upon his head, and he was clothed in a purple robe and hailed "King of the Jews!" (chap. 19:1-3) Later Pilate "wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS." (vs. 19) Jesus was the King of the Jews and was destined to be King of the whole world—the "King of kings." (Rev. 17:14) In these moments, though, everything that was being said about his kingship by his enemies was only a further manifestation of the contradiction of sinners. Jesus had refused to bow down and worship Satan in order to become king over the nations, and now he was condemned to death because he rightly claimed to be a king.

Those who watched Jesus being crucified cried out to him, “If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.” (Matt. 27:40) This was the identical challenge that had been hurled at Jesus by Satan, when he called upon him to leap from a pinnacle of the Temple to prove his claimed sonship. Jesus then refused to tempt his Heavenly Father, but now a final opportunity was given to him. By coming down from the cross, he could prove that he was the Son of God. By refraining to do so, his claim was construed to be false—another manifestation of the contradiction of sinners.

The bystanders also shouted: “He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him.” (vs. 42) Once again, Jesus refused to vindicate himself in the eyes of his enemies, choosing rather to endure the contradiction of sinners. Little did his enemies realize that by refusing to save himself, he was providing salvation to them, and to “all the kindreds of the earth!” (Acts 3:25) Jesus thus permitted himself to be led as “a lamb to the slaughter,” not opening his mouth in self-defense, or seeking otherwise to justify himself before his enemies. Upon his resurrection, the Heavenly Father highly exalted him. Jesus had humbled himself, and now we find the Lamb on symbolic Mount Zion.

FOLLOWING THE LAMB

Here the narrative becomes of vital interest to us. John states that on Mount Zion with the Lamb there are “an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father’s name written in their foreheads.” (Rev. 14:1) Our opening text informs us that these on

Mount Sion with the Lamb are those who follow the Lamb wherever he goes, a walk which will ultimately lead to Mount Sion. There is no other way to attain this exalted position and be with the Lamb except to follow him. Following human leadership is not the way to reach Mount Sion. Reliance on our fallen flesh will likewise not take us to Mount Sion. There is just one way to reach this exalted position, and that is to “follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.”

What is that “way” in which the Lamb so faithfully walked and thereby reached Mount Sion? It was the way of humiliation, suffering, and finally, death. It was a way in which contradiction of sinners was continually hurled against him. It was a way in which he, as a Lamb, opened not his mouth to defend himself, voluntarily allowing others to think that he was wrong—so wrong that they considered him as an enemy who should be put to death.

Can we walk in such a way as this, and are we doing so? It is unlikely that we will ever be contradicted on such major issues as was Jesus. However, the principle is the same, even if the things in which we are contradicted may often seem relatively insignificant. One of the strongest desires of the human heart and mind is to have the good will and acceptance of others. Even in the discussion of minor Scriptural details, we like to prove that we are right. Having the “last word” is usually very important to the flesh. Such, though, was not the disposition of the slain Lamb.

Let us compare ourselves with Jesus along this line. At times, we might feel like doing something dramatic to prove that we are special in God’s sight.

How much more acceptable it is, though, that we quietly keep on doing the Lord's will from day to day, unnoticed by those around us. (I Cor. 1:27-31; I Pet. 3:4) God may use little things to test us along this line. It is well, then, to scrutinize the innermost thoughts of our hearts to make sure we are humbly submitting to any contradiction of sinners that may come to us in consequence of our walk, as we "follow the Lamb."

Peter gave us the correct thought when he wrote: "What glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously."—I Pet. 2:20-23

Let us continue to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, following the Lamb in the way of sacrifice and death. By so doing, and by continuing to endure the contradiction of sinners patiently and victoriously unto death, the Heavenly Father will exalt us in due time. (I Pet. 5:6) We will then be with the Lamb, as part of the "hundred forty and four thousand" sons of God who have his name "written in their foreheads." When "the kingdom shall be the LORD'S," we will, with the Lamb, be "saviours" on Mount Sion, and rule in righteousness for the blessing of all mankind. (Obad. 21) What a glorious prospect awaits those who faithfully "follow the Lamb!" ■