

THE LAMB OF GOD



THE Bible tells us that the Prophet John, who baptized Jesus in the river Jordan, was the forerunner of Jesus. This means that John was the one to tell the people of Israel that the great King whom God had promised was now with them. John did what God wanted him to do, and so he told the people that Jesus was a “lamb.” Isn’t that strange? Yes, he said that Jesus was the “Lamb of God,” and that he would take away “the sin of the world.”

Sin means doing what God does not want us to do. It was because Adam and Eve did not do what God wanted them to do that they lost their beautiful home in the Garden of Eden, and later died. Yes, and that is why everybody else dies, too. So you see, if Jesus takes away the sin of the world it will be very wonderful, for it means that after awhile people won’t die any more.

But why did John say that Jesus was a lamb? I just hope you have read my stories about Adam and Eve; Cain and Abel; Abraham and Isaac; the death of the firstborn of Egypt; and the one which tells about the priests of Israel and how they served God in the tabernacle. If you have, you will remember that lambs were sacrificed.

Well, Jesus was sacrificed just like all those lambs. Jesus always wanted to do what pleased God, so he was very willing to be sacrificed in order that some day everybody in the whole world could please God, and not have to die any more.

Jesus was a most wonderful man!

He was kind to everybody. He loved children very much. One day his friends thought some children were annoying him and tried to make them stay away. But Jesus told his friends to let the children alone, that he loved them, and that grown-up folks would all have to become humble and sweet like little children before they could enjoy themselves in his kingdom. Yes, Jesus was kind! He made sick people well. Those who were sad, he made happy by telling them about the good time which is coming for everybody in the world when he will be King over all nations.



Now, you would think that all the people of Israel should have loved Jesus just as he loved them, but they didn't. The Bible tells us that the religious rulers of the Jews—they were called scribes and Pharisees—didn't like Jesus at all. They were jealous of him. They were afraid that Jesus would be loved more than they so they decided to kill him. Jealousy is a terrible thing!

The city of Jerusalem was the chief city of the land of Israel, just as Washington is the capital of the United States. The rulers who were most jealous of Jesus were in Jerusalem. Jesus knew that they wanted to kill him but he made plans to go to Jerusalem just the same.

Isn't that strange? Among the twelve special friends Jesus selected to be his helpers was one called Peter. Peter was a very dear friend of Jesus and did not want his Master to be killed, so he told Jesus it would be very unwise to visit the city of Jerusalem.

But Jesus did not take Peter's advice, because he wanted to do what God wanted him to do. He knew that God would take care of him. We know how powerful God is, don't we? And Jesus knew that God would use all his strength to take care of him. No, Jesus was not afraid, so he went to Jerusalem.

And then one night he and his apostles had a very special supper together. It was called the "passover supper." Do you know what the word passover means? If you have read the story of the Israelites leaving Egypt you will remember that it means the passing over of those houses where the blood of the lamb was sprinkled.

God told the Israelites to remember this wonderful event every year by eating the passover supper. Well, that's what Jesus and his apostles were doing.

While they were eating together Jesus told the apostles that one of them would betray him into the hands of his enemies. Jesus' enemies were looking for an opportunity to seize him but they wanted to do it when there were not many people around.

Besides, they didn't know very well what Jesus looked like. There were no photographs in those days, and there were a great many people who had heard about Jesus, but had never seen him. So one of Jesus' apostles had agreed to show his enemies where they could find the Master. He was to let them know which one was Jesus by going up to him and kissing him.

The name of this apostle was Judas Iscariot.

Have you ever heard anybody say, "Don't be a Judas"? Well, if you ever do, you will know what it means, won't you? It means not to be a traitor by turning against your friends and trying to do them harm. God doesn't want any of us to do that.

Hundreds and hundreds of years before this, one of God's prophets had said that when King Jesus came to the people one of his friends would betray him. Of course it was God who told the prophet to say

this. God knows everything. The worst thing was that Judas took money for betraying Jesus. He loved money more than he loved Jesus. Let us never love money more than we love our friends. After they had finished eating the passover supper, Jesus and eleven of his disciples left the city of Jerusalem and walked outside to a beautiful garden, called the Garden of Gethsemane. Judas left the room before the others, and had gone to meet the enemies of Jesus to tell them where they could find him. It was late in the evening, but a nice clear night, and it would have been grand to visit with Jesus in the moonlight of that garden had it not been that such terrible things were about to occur.

Jesus knew that his enemies wanted to kill him, and the eleven apostles were very much worried. After they arrived in the garden, Jesus prayed to God. He knew that the time had come for him to die as a lamb, to do just what God wanted him to do. He said to God, “Not my will, but Thine be done.”

As they were leaving the garden, Jesus and the apostles saw that a crowd of people had come out from the city to find them. These were Jesus’ enemies, and Judas was with them. He had shown them where to find Jesus, and now they had come to capture him and put him to death. Jesus asked them, “Whom seek ye?” and they answered, “Jesus.” Then Jesus replied, “I am he.”

You see, Jesus wasn’t afraid. But perhaps his enemies thought he was not telling the truth, and that someone else was Jesus; so Judas stepped out from the crowd, walked up to Jesus and kissed him. That was Judas’ way of saying, “Here he is—this is the man you are looking for!” Wasn’t that awful?

Then Jesus’ enemies took hold of him, but Peter, who loved Jesus very much and was not afraid, struck one of the men with a sword and cut off his ear. So you see, Jesus had friends who were willing to fight for him and to save him from being captured and killed.

But then a very strange thing occurred!

Jesus told Peter to put down the sword, and not to use it any more. And besides, Jesus, using the power of God which was upon him, healed the man’s ear—in fact, he put it right back on again! It was

just as easy for Jesus to do that as it was for him to give sight to the blind and to bring the dead back to life.

I suppose Peter thought that Jesus did not appreciate what he had tried to do for him, but of course Jesus really did appreciate it. Jesus wanted Peter and the other apostles, and his enemies and us, to know that there is a better way of doing things than to fight our enemies in the way they fight us.

Jesus loved his enemies, and you don't fight and kill those you love, do you?

Besides, Jesus was doing everything that God wanted him to do, and God wanted him to leave himself in the hands of his enemies, even though they should kill him. Jesus was God's Lamb, we must remember, and one of God's prophets had said that God's Lamb would be slain, or killed, just like the passover lamb was killed, and just like the lamb that Abel offered to God in sacrifice.

After capturing Jesus, they took him back into Jerusalem and brought him before the Jewish high priest. This high priest asked Jesus if he was the Son of God. The Jews thought it was a most terrible thing for anyone to claim to be the Son of God. They called it "blasphemy," which means to be disrespectful toward God. We would never want to be disrespectful to God, would we? But the Jews didn't know that Jesus was truly the Son of God, and that it really wasn't blasphemy for him to say so.

When Jesus told the high priest that he was the Son of God, it was decided he was so very wicked that he should be put to death. But the Israelites didn't have any right to put Jesus to death. Only the Romans could do that.

The people of Israel did not have a government of their own. They lost their government hundreds of years before, when their wicked king Zedekiah was captured by King Nebuchadnezzar.

So they took Jesus to a Roman governor named Pilate. He had the right to decide whether or not people had done wrong, and to punish wrongdoers. Pilate worked for Caesar, who was king of the whole Roman Empire, and one of the things he had to watch was that no one else should become king. If anyone else was really

trying to be king, then it was Pilate's duty to make sure that he was put to death.

The people of Israel knew this, so they told Pilate that Jesus wanted to be a great king. Pilate didn't believe this just because the people of Israel said it was so. Instead, he asked Jesus if it were really true. "Art thou a king?" he asked Jesus.

To Pilate's great surprise Jesus explained to him that this was the very reason for which he had come into the world. But Pilate seemed to understand that even though Jesus might say that he expected to be a king, he wasn't really doing anything wrong, so he didn't see any reason for putting Jesus to death. Pilate evidently thought there was no danger that Jesus would ever take the place of Caesar.

Jesus, of course, will be a king, the most wonderful king who has ever lived! King Jesus is to be the Ruler over this whole wide world. He won't have armies with swords and tanks and guns, but everybody will do what he wants done just the same. And because the people will do what King Jesus asks them to do, there will be no more wars, and everybody will be happy.

Then the people will all learn to love and to help one another. If everybody in the whole wide world wanted to help others instead of fighting against them, there just couldn't be any wars, could there? Well, that's the way it will be when Jesus is King.

But the people of Israel insisted that Pilate should condemn Jesus to death. Jesus had admitted that he expected to be a king, so according to the Roman law, Pilate was not allowed to set him free. They were very cruel to Jesus.

They took the clothes from his back and beat him.

A crown of thorns was placed upon his head.

Then he was taken outside the city to a hill called Golgotha, nailed to a cross, and allowed to hang there until he died.

Yes, Jesus, who was born in a manger, was now dead. The angels told about his birth, but now he had died, and the angels did nothing about it. Jesus, who had made blind people see and deaf people hear and dead people alive, was now dead! He had done

many wonderful things for other people, and hadn't harmed anybody, but his enemies put him to death by hanging him upon a cross.

Peter was willing to help Jesus, but Jesus wouldn't let him help. Jesus said that God would send angels to help him if he asked God to do so, but he did not ask, so the angels didn't come to his aid. Yes, Jesus, that great One whom God had promised would be King of the whole earth, was dead!

QUESTIONS

- Why did John the Baptist say that Jesus was the Lamb of God?
- Why did God allow Jesus to be put to death by his enemies?
- When will Jesus be King over all the earth, and will he have armies with swords, and tanks, and guns?

Dawn Bible Students Association