

OUR SIN-BEARER

"The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." John 1:29.

This text is one of those sublime and splendid verses so full of condensed truth that it is difficult to preach about it. In fact, it is impossible for the most eloquent man who ever lived to add anything to the beauty and strength of this magnificent utterance of John the Baptist. It is truly one of the key verses of the entire Bible. Its implications cover the whole plan of redemption, leaving nothing hidden or unsatisfied. Its importance cannot be exaggerated. There is enough in this tremendous exhortation if believed and accepted to take any soul out of sin into salvation and out of death into life.

John the Baptist was very faithful in discharging his duties as the forerunner of Christ. In doing so he never thought of his own honor or glory. He was quite content to do preparatory work. He was a voice crying in the wilderness. He called on the people to repent and declared that the Kingdom of God was at hand. Great crowds came to hear him preach, and many were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

Among those who came to John the Baptist to be baptized in the Jordan River was the Lord Jesus. The Forerunner hesitated to baptize the Saviour and said, "I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?" Christ Jesus replied, "Suffer it now; for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness." Then, John baptized Him, whereupon God said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." This was the culminating point in the ministry of John the Baptist.

I. The Greatest Sight.

After Christ had been subjected to temptations of Satan, He returned to the place where John the Baptist was preaching near and baptizing his converts in the Jordan River. John the Baptist pointed his hearers to Christ with the wonderful and rapturous words, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," which was the first public designation of Christ. John's imperative interjection "Behold!" is dramatic, pointing out Christ, riveting all eyes upon Him and opening all ears for what the speaker would say of Him. "The Lamb of God" points out Jesus as the one particular Lamb of God.

The story of the Lamb that was slain is woven into the very texture of the Scriptures. The lamb is found in the first book of the Bible, in the last book and is the theme of all the intervening books. In Genesis 4 we have a lamb for the individual; in Exodus 12 we have a lamb for the family; in Leviticus 16 we have a lamb for the nation; and in John 1 we have a lamb for the world. Here we have the first distinct revelation that the personal Lamb of God is Jesus Christ.

Every Jew was familiar with the meaning of the lamb, for it was used for the daily sacrifice in both morning and evening. Therefore, sacrifice cannot be separated from the lamb; the two words belong together.

What did those who heard John the Baptist refer to Christ as the Lamb of God understand by those words? One common idea was that they

referred to the passover lamb. The sprinkling of its blood was a sign of safety to the redeemed, but this was not the only meaning. The reference was in greater measure to the lamb of a trespass offering.

Joyfully John the Baptist acclaimed Christ as the Lamb of God. What astonishes us is that he should have introduced Him as the Lamb of God rather than as the Messiah. That certainly shows a wonderful insight into the mission of Christ. John the Baptist could have pictured the Lord Jesus in various ways. He might have pointed Him out as the great moral example, the founder of a higher form of life, and the great teacher of holiness and love, but he proclaimed Him as one who had come into the world to be the great sacrifice for sin. He said, "Behold the Lamb of God." This title intimates His faultlessness, holiness, meekness, lowliness, gentleness, harmlessness, patience and submissiveness.

II. The Greatest Substitution.

"The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." The sacrifices of the people of every land witness to the fact that humanity all over the world, through all the ages and under all varieties of culture has been conscious that its deepest need was that sin should be dealt with and forgiven. You cannot explain the universal prevalence of sacrifice unless you take into account this consciousness that things are wrong between man and the higher power and need to be set right. Let me emphasize again that Jesus Christ is far more than a social reformer, a lovely pattern of human conduct and a great religious genius. He is all of this and far more besides. He is the one who deals with the individual soul by taking away its guilt and reconciling it to God.

All men are sinners. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6). "For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not" (Ecclesiastes 7:20). "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Sin must be punished.

Even though sin is a small word, it is big with meaning. It implies the existence of law, knowledge of the law, capability of obeying it and an actual departure from it. Sin is the choice of evil instead of good, the perversion of the desires, the slavery of the will, the darkening of the understanding, the deadliest sickness of the heart, the fountain of all trouble, the cause of all disorder and wretchedness, and the curse which destroys life's harmony and beauty. Sin is a universal problem which involves God and man, life and death, time and eternity, heaven and hell.

It is truly wonderful that salvation has been provided for us. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

This Lamb of God takes away the sin of the world by bearing its penalty. "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our

iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5). "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (II Corinthians 5:21). "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed" (I Peter 2:24). "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God" (I Peter 3:18). Christ bore our sins, endured our punishment, suffered our penalty and provided for our redemption. The shedding of His precious blood is the meritorious cause of our salvation. Christ is the only Saviour of sinners. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

The word which is translated "taketh away" in this verse means to lift up, to bear and to carry away. Christ lifts up the sin from off the sinner onto Himself, bears it, carries it and takes it away. Therefore, it will never return to bring condemnation. "He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Hebrews 9:26). From God's Word we learn that God forgives sin, blots it out, forgets it, puts it behind His back and casts it into the sea. However, in various respects this is the most encouraging statement of all about it--"He takes it away." If you have received Christ as your Saviour, He has taken away your sin and it is gone forever. Only the Lamb of God can take away sin. There is no other sin-bearer.

Behold the Lamb of God and trust Him as your personal Saviour. Trust Him with your past, your present and your future. Trust Him with your heart, your mind, your soul and your life. Trust Him for the forgiveness of your sins and for the supply of your needs. He is trustworthy. He has never broken any promise He has ever spoken.

Behold the Lamb of God and love Him. He is worthy and deserving of your love. He is so loving, lovely and lovable. You cannot find anything about Him which is not inviting, attractive, appealing and inspiring. He will always be your very best friend. He will never embarrass you, injure you, impose upon you or betray you.

Behold the Lamb of God and serve Him. Surrender your all to Him and give Him your very best in faithful obedience. His service will afford you the truest joy, the greatest satisfaction and the largest usefulness. There is nothing which you can do with your life that will be as satisfying as investing it in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ.