

John 1:29-37; Rev. 5:1-10; Seeing the Lamb of God I. The Need for a Lamb II. The Arrival of the Lamb III. The Work of the Lamb

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, sheep and lambs are not a common sight for us today. Although we find the word “sheep” over 500 times in the Bible, we do not normally see sheep on a daily basis today. However, during the times of the Bible, sheep were commonplace. As a nomadic group, the OT Israelites were often shepherds. In fact, most of the Patriarch and even David was a shepherd. Our reading from John 1 identifies Jesus as the Lamb of God- and from this designation Jesus was identified and followed by His disciples. So why is this one of the first designations that Jesus receives- why is the Lamb of God the chosen title to mark the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry? Well, today we see that Jesus is presented as the Lamb of God to prove His work of atonement. The image is very striking- the pure white wool coat of a Lamb contrasted by the deep scarlet blood stains. But the death of this Lamb is necessary for the pardon of our sins.

I. The Need for a Lamb

So we start in our first point by seeing how this need for a Lamb is presented throughout Scripture. Going all the way back to Gen. 22 where we find Abraham about to sacrifice his own son. Isaac is tied to the wood- and the knife is in Abraham’s hand- death is immanent! But at the last moment an angel calls to Abraham- do not harm the boy- now I know that you fear God. This stay of execution is remarkable! But still, death is deserved because of our sins. In this we see the seed of faith in Abraham. Back in 22:8 Abraham told his son, God Himself will provide the lamb. There was the hope- the acknowledgement that although death was called for, God would provide a substitute. God already provided a foretaste of this substitute in the ram that was caught by its horn- who then was sacrificed in Isaac place. The fact is, we are sinners and our sins need to be paid for- our transgression covered and our marks blotted out. For without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness as Heb. 9 puts it. So if we will be forgiven, blood must be spilt! Again the need for a lamb’s blood was evident at the Passover.

In Ex. 12, as the culmination of plagues come to their climax, the Israelites are told to go and select a lamb. Do not break its bones, but shed its blood. Take the blood and smear it on the doorframes of your homes. Then take the meat and roast it over the fire. If you do not smear the blood of the Passover lamb on your doorposts, then the destroying angel will take the life of your firstborns. Only those under the lamb's blood- who had a lamb die for them- only these would be spared the wrath of God. As the nation of Israel becomes established, there is a ritual of blood evident. For example, in Ex. 29 the LORD told His people that 2 lambs need to be sacrificed every day- one in the morning and one at night- every single day. There was a train of animals who lost their lives at the altar- but these were only shadows of the good things that were to come in Christ as Heb. 10 puts it. The fact remains, death is ugly. The shedding of blood symbolizes the loss of life. Since life is in the blood- to lose your blood is to pour out your life. Almost everything and everyone in the temple were covered by and sprinkled with blood. To purify, cleanse and make atonement for. We need to remember that God takes sin seriously! Payment for our sins must be made- someone needs to die- our impurity must be covered! So the need remains- we need a Lamb to die for us! Not just any lamb- but Thee perfect Lamb appointed and supplied by God! And praise God- God does provide a Lamb for us!

II. The Arrival of the Lamb

As we come to our second point, we will consider two main passages that prove the coming or the arrival of the Lamb! Two places where Jesus is presented as the Lamb of God! The first one is found in our reading from John 1:29. Here John the Baptist says- behold- look- Here is the Lamb of God! The word Lamb here is "Amnos" which is found 4 times in the NT- each time referring to Jesus as a pure, spotless sacrifice! As I Peter 1:19 says, we were ransomed from our futile ways with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. As a pure sacrifice- performing the work of atonement- Jesus would take away the sins of the world. To take away our sins means that He will lift our sins from us- carrying them away. He would have no guilt of His own- no debt He needed to pay-

but He would come to pay for us! He will also bear our sins- putting them on Himself! From us- and now on Him! That is what happens to our sins! Our second reading from Rev. 5 reveals another coming of the Lamb of God. This Lamb is standing between the thrones. He had 7 horns- proof of His perfect power. And was covered with 7 eyes- proof of His perfect knowledge and wisdom. He has received all power- and He sees all that takes place! Nothing escapes His attention- and no work is too hard for His hand! Note also that the angel says in 5:6- and was slain. His sacrifice and death being a past event- but now He is the one who stands triumphant- having rose again and conquered! Yes, Jesus came to suffer as the lamb as Isaiah 53 says. But He also rose victoriously! He died outside of the city walls- in the place where the carcasses of the other lambs were usually burned- having tasted the fire of God's wrath- yet not one of His bones were broken to fulfill His task of an atoning sacrifice! But He did not stay dead- He was once dead and now is no more! He laid down his life to take it up again! If we learn anything from the work of the Lamb, let us learn that our freedom comes at a great cost! The ransom price is costly- only the death of the Lamb could pay this debt! As it was at the Passover- the blood of the Lamb means life or death!

III. The Work of the Lamb

Since we looked at two specific events when the Lamb comes forth, in our final point we will simply look at the work He does when He comes. In John 1, it was the taking away of the sins of the world. His work was to lift up the burden from us and carry that burden himself. His blood so precious and so powerful that it remains sufficient enough for the sins of the entire world! Powerful enough to atone for the sins of all men! Without the Lamb of God, who would take away our sins? No one! But this identification and work leads to a response. How do those who hear this identification respond? Well, two of the disciples who heard John say this about Jesus immediately go and follow Jesus. The fact that He is the Lamb of God demands obedience- it moves His people to follow Him! No other sacrifice is needed- no other blood will do! This motivation remains today. If you know Jesus as the Lamb of God

who has paid for your sins- who has ransomed you from the grave- whose blood has covered your iniquity- you too will follow Him! You too will go where He goes! When the chief and perfect Lamb comes- so do His sheep! So the first application is that those who know Jesus as the Lamb of God will follow Him! These will be His disciples. In our second text from Rev. 5, the Lamb's coming was in the context of fulfilled Revelation. It would take the person and work of the Lamb to move history forward- to open the seals and display God works of both mercy and judgement upon this earth. We will hear more about this work on Christmas as we consider His work as Lion of Judah. But for now, we see that Jesus comes and is found worthy to take the scroll, open the scroll, and bring about the execution of God's will. As we saw last week with the Providence of God- it is Jesus Christ who is the center and purpose of all things- it is He who reveals the providence of God for the comfort of His people. His work was to die- to be slain- but also to come back to life as the conqueror! But this designation as the Lamb in Rev. 5 leads to a response as well. Look at what happens in 5:8. He is worthy- and the 24 elders and the angels fell down and sing a new song! Although the angels refuse this adoration, the Lamb stands majestic and rightly receives this song sung to His glory- Worthy are you- for you were slain and by your blood you ransomed people for God out of every tribe and people and nation! Our Lamb- Jesus is worthy of all our praise and adoration! Again in 5:12- where the thousands upon thousands say together- worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessings! And once more in v. 13 where all creatures in heaven and earth say- to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever! We cannot miss the point here! Because of the work of the Lamb- because of His person and power- everyone is called and one day all will worship the Lamb! Let our hearts and voices be among the first to sing this everlasting song! Worthy is the Lamb who was slain- to receive all glory, honor, wisdom might and blessing! Praise the Lamb for His marvelous work- that He was slain so that by His blood we might be ransomed and redeemed! Let us and all creatures praise the Lamb of God for who He is and what He has done!