

THE SEARCH FOR THE LAMB

Revelation 5:1-14

INTRODUCTION: Almost all world religions, past and present, have or have had some type of blood-sacrifice ritual, in hopes that atonement might be made on their behalf to their god. Those who believe in a god or gods have always searched for the right sacrifice, whether first born males, virgins, babies, animals or even themselves so they might appease the gods in this life or the next.

There was even a search in the Old Testament, when bulls and goats and lambs were offered by commandment of the true and the living God, as a picture of the Perfect Lamb to come. In Gen.22:7-8 Isaac said, "Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together."

God initiated the Passover in Exodus 12 and said in verses 2-7, "This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you. Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house...Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats...and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening. And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it."

But true worshippers of God in the Old Testament knew that the offering of animals could never substitute for the real thing. They searched for and longed for and prophesied the coming of the Lamb of God. Isaiah said in chapter 53, verse 7,

"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." We know this lamb refers to Jesus for in Acts 8, when the Ethiopian eunuch was reading this passage and asked Philip who the prophet was talking about, verse 35 says, "Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus."

But even a God-instituted religion becomes perverted and empty when it turns inward and worships the symbols instead of the Savior. That's what happened to Israel. Even though they talked about a Messiah, they were too self-centered to recognize Him when He came. John the Baptist had to introduce their Messiah to them and they still would not believe it was Him. In John 1:29 John said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

Yet, even today, people cling to the shadow of man-made religion, feeling empty, still searching, when they could have the real thing. The author of Hebrews in chapter 9, verse 12 said, "Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. And in chapter 10, verse 1, "For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect." Peter summed it up in I Peter 1:18-19, "Forasmuch as ye know that 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."

But the search for the Lamb continues from Genesis to Revelation. In Rev.5 the search takes us to heaven. John's vision of the glorified Christ walking among the Churches on earth in chap.1-3, is followed by a vision of the Court of

Heaven. In chapter 4 we see God the Creator. In chapter 5 we see God the redeemer, the Lamb who has conquered through death. Notice how the search for the Lamb unfolds:

I. THE WEEPING SERVANT (vv.1-4)

When we read of a "book" in God's hand, we must not think of a volume such as we are familiar with, but rather of a roll of parchment. The ancient books of Israel were generally sheepskin rolls; and when we are told that this book was sealed with seven seals, we are to understand that the book was rolled up to a certain point, and there a seal was put upon the edge, so that it could not be opened until that seal was broken. It was rolled up a little farther and another seal put on, and so on, until there were six seals on the edge of the book and one seal closing the entire scroll. But what is this sealed book?

Jeremiah lived in a day just previous to the fall of Jerusalem under Nebuchadnezzar. He had been telling the people of Israel that they were going to be carried captives to Babylon. For seventy years they would be in captivity; but, at the end of that time, they would be restored, and would build again the waste places (chapter 29:10). Hanameel, Jeremiah's cousin, who had a piece of ground, knew well that it was soon to be absolutely worthless, and he was anxious to get it off his hands and realize what he could from it. So he decided to try to sell it to his prophet-cousin who was in prison at the time for the truth's sake. The Lord told Jeremiah, "Buy the field." He was commanded to accept it as though it were really worth having, because the time was coming when it would be worth having; for just as surely as God's people were going down into Babylon, so surely were they coming back again. The land would be worth far more in that day, and he would have it in his family.

So we are told in chapter 32:8, that Hanameel came to sell it to Jeremiah and he bought it. The title-deeds were made out and sealed and hidden away. The land was purchased by Jeremiah, but he was not going to enter into possession of it. He, too, was to be driven out - to be rejected and set to one side; but some day that sealed roll would be of great value, when the restoration took place. He gave it to his secretary to hide away with a view of making known to his heirs where the deed was which was to give them the title to the land. The sealed book was the title-deed to Jeremiah's inheritance, and when the people of Israel came back from Babylon there would be a man who could go into court and say, "This deed belongs to me. I am Jeremiah's heir. I have the right to break the seals and take the property."

With this illustration from the Old Testament, we have no problem in seeing what the seven-sealed book in Revelation means. The book that John saw in the hand of God the Father is the title-deed to this world; and when the angel says, "Who is worthy to take the book and to loose the seals thereof?", it is just another way of saying, Who is the rightful heir? Who can say, "I have title to break those seals, to claim that world, it belongs to me?" Who is worthy to take possession of that world and subject it to himself?

The apostle John wept much, because no one in the whole universe is found who is worthy to open the seals, not even Adam, the father of mankind, who forfeited his claim due to sin against God.

II. THE WORTHY SAVIOR (vv.5-7)

But as John was weeping, one of the elders said, "Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof." And John looked for the Lion of the tribe of Judah,

the majestic roaring King of Beasts, ready to spring upon the prey; but instead he saw a "Lamb".

A. HIS MANNER

The idea in "Lamb" is a "dear little lamb." Perhaps our best thought would be that of Peter's when he said, "Unto you that believe He is precious." Here we see his innocence, meekness, gentleness, and sacrifice, combined with His omnipotence (horns) and omniscience (eyes).

B. HIS MARKS

"As it had been slain," shows us that even in heaven Jesus will retain the marks of His slaughter and we will not mistakenly worship anyone else. We can rightfully sing:

"I shall know Him, I shall know Him,
As redeemed by His side I shall stand;
I shall know Him, I shall know Him,
By the print of the nails in His hand."

C. HIS MEDIATION

"Stood", not lying down, slaughtered, and dead, but standing, raised again. "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God...Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

D. HIS MAJESTY

"In the midst" shows that Jesus is the center of attention in Heaven. All nature is figured as present before the throne of God, surrounding the Lamb. The four beasts or living creatures represent all animated nature. The 24 elders represent Israel and the Church. But in the very middle, in the central leader's place, is "Jesus," standing for them all, Head and Representative of all. And that is His rightful place in the universe and in our heart. (Phil.2:5-11)

III.THE WORSHIPPING SAINTS (vv.8-14)

A. PRAYING (v.8)

Here in heaven the importance of prayer on earth is inferred. It is now the time for all the prayers of all the saints of all ages to come into remembrance, that which has ever been their chief burden may now be answered and fulfilled, "Thy kingdom come thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." And who can count the volumes and oceans of such entreaties, which remain to this day unanswered? But, not one of them is lost. They are as sweet incenses to the Lamb.

B. SINGING (vv.9-10)

The song of redemption recorded in this chapter would be natural for saints but not for angels. You often hear of angels singing. In Job 38:7 the morning stars are angels singing and

rejoicing at God's creation, but nowhere in the Bible are angels found singing since sin entered the world. Even on the occasion of Christ's birth they praised God, saying, "Glory to God in the Highest," but no singing. It is the redeemed that sing, and they sing "a new song." It is the song of redemption. Can you sing it?

C. TESTIFYING (vv.11-13)

He is the Lamb risen to die no more, exalted to heaven's first place, crowned with the Name above every name. He is our strength, our triumph, and our hope. Let us join beasts, elders, angels, and the redeemed as they raise their voice before all and testify, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."

D. PRAISING (v.14)

To this mighty throng in heaven, who is singing and testifying, is added the praise of every creature on earth and under the earth and in the sea. John hears them all joining in blessing and praise to the One on the throne and to the Lamb. The four living creatures add a hearty "Amen." And the twenty-four elders once again fall down and worship the ever-living Lamb of God, who has lifted the title-deeds of our alienated inheritance, the legal act of repossession of all that was lost in Adam, and paid for it by His own blood and tears.

CONCLUSION: Old John Bunyun said, "Oh, this Lamb of God! He had a whole heaven to Himself, myriads of angels to do His pleasure, but this could not satisfy Him. He must have sinners to share it with Him!" If you are ever going to sing up there you will have to start in down here. Can you say, "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed me by Thy blood"? Can you answer "yes" to the old song:

"Are You Washed in the Blood?"

Have you been to Jesus for the cleansing power?

Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?

Are you fully trusting in His grace this hour?

Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?

Lay aside the garments that are stained with sin,

And be washed in the blood of the Lamb;

There's a fountain flowing for the soul unclean,

O, be washed in the blood of the Lamb.

Are you washed - in the blood,

In the soul-cleansing blood of the Lamb?

Are your garments spotless?

Are they white as snow?

Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?