

Jesus - The Lamb

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[0:00] Before Richard comes to preach, it's taken from Revelation chapter 5, and I'll read the whole chapter.! Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne, a scroll with writing on both sides, and sealed with seven seals.

And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, who is worthy to break the seals and open the seals. I saw a lamb looking at the scroll, and I saw a lamb looking at the scroll, and I saw a lamb looking at the scroll.

It was looking as if it had been slain, standing at the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. The lamb had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

He went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne. And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the lamb.

Each one had a harp, and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of God's people. And they sang a new song, saying, You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain.

[1:43] And with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.

When I looked and heard the voice of many angels numbering thousands upon thousands and ten thousand times ten thousand, they encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders.

In a loud voice they were saying, Worthy is the lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise.

Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea and all that is in them saying, To him who sits on the throne and to the lamb be praise and honor and glory and power forever and ever.

The four living creatures said, Amen, and the elders fell down and worshipped. Amen. Good morning everybody.

[2:51] And happy new year. Happy new year to you all. Last Sunday, I began with the story of the shepherds to whom the angels appeared to announce the Savior's birth.

And I used it as a springboard to then talk about the prominent part that shepherds and sheep play in the Bible, before focusing our attention on Jesus as the good shepherd.

Finishing finally by briefly mentioning how at Calvary, the shepherd became the lamb who was sacrificed for us. Before concluding with some verses from Revelation that portrayed Jesus as the lamb from that passage.

Now I know that this is the first Sunday of a new year when the message would typically be focused on the year ahead. But that is for the pastor and the elders to address, not me.

Thankfully. So as Craig has already suggested, I'm going to follow on from last week's message. So having considered Jesus as the good shepherd last Sunday, this morning we're going to look at him as the lamb.

[4 : 04] In the reading this morning, Jesus is depicted as a lamb looking as if it had been slain, standing at the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders.

In Revelation 13 verse 8, he is called the lamb who was slain from the creation of the world. Jesus' suffering and sacrifice were planned before the world began.

Foreshadowed in the Old Testament and predicted by the prophets in advance of their fulfillment. One example of that foreshadowing is found in Genesis 22, where God said to Abraham one day, Take your son, your only son whom you love.

God has an only begotten son who he loves. And go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain that I will show you.

You can hardly imagine what Abraham must have felt in that moment. But without a word of complaint, he set off early the next morning with Isaac.

[5 : 17] When he reached the place, Isaac said to his father, The fire and the wood are here, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering? And Abraham answered, God will provide a lamb.

That's curious, because the onus is on the worshipper to provide the sacrifice. But in Jesus too, in Jesus, God too provided a sacrifice for us.

And just as Abraham was willing to sacrifice the son he loved, God too was willing, even before the creation of the world, to sacrifice his beloved son.

God told Abraham, Now I know that you fear God because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son. And neither did God withhold his only begotten son from us.

And he did not stay his hand for Jesus as he stayed Abraham's for Isaac. For Jesus was not spared, but was crucified.

[6 : 23] Abraham was prevented from plunging his knife into Isaac. But God did not prevent the Roman soldier from plunging the spear into Jesus' side.

Jesus' suffering at the hands of his own people, which nevertheless brought about salvation for all, is also foreshadowed in the story of Joseph. Resented by his brothers, they sold him as a slave.

And although he suffered much, he eventually rose to be second to Pharaoh and was able to save all his father's family when a great famine devastated the Middle East.

He forgave his brothers, telling them, You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good. Peter told the crowd on the day of Pentecost, God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.

But calling on them to repent, he promised that God would forgive them. And Jesus' sacrifice is also foreshadowed in the Passover. For just as the blood of the Lamb applied to the doorposts and lintels of the Israelites' home protected him from God's judgment the night that God slew the firstborn sons of Egypt.

[7 : 39] So too, Christ's sacrifice is sufficient for all who believe to deliver them from the just judgment of God against sinners. Which is why Paul, in 1 Corinthians 5-7, calls Jesus our Passover Lamb.

There were many prophecies about Jesus in the Old Testament as well. But undoubtedly, the most profound prophecy of Christ's suffering is found in chapter 53 of Isaiah.

Which, if not familiar to all Christians, ought to be. It is impossible to read it and not be deeply affected by it. Who has believed our message?

And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? He grew up before him, like a tender shoot and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him.

Nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by mankind. A man of suffering and familiar with pain. Like one whom people hide their faces from, he was despised and we held him in low esteem.

[8 : 54] Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering. Yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions.

He was crushed for our iniquities. The punishment that brought us peace was on him. And by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray.

Each of us has turned to our own way. And the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth.

And as a sheep before his shearers is dumb, he was led like a lamb to the slaughter. And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. He was led like a lamb to the slaughter.

John the Baptist had called Jesus the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. Peter says in chapter 1 of his first epistle, For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver and gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life, handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

[10 : 12] But scripture doesn't just depict Jesus as a lamb that suffered. Although, for instance, it says in chapter 4 of Philippians, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death, even death on the cross.

The passage does not end there, but continues. Therefore, God exalted him to the highest place. Jesus is the lamb who was slain, but now he is the lamb that reigns.

This fact is never more evident than in the very last book of the Bible, the Revelation, where Jesus as the lamb is seen in glory. In fact, as the lamb, he is mentioned no fewer than 31 times.

For revelation is not only a revealing of things to come, it is supremely a revelation of the lamb. For instance, Revelation 5, 6 and 7, 7 reveal the centrality of the lamb, for there Jesus is described as the lamb at the center of the throne.

And verses 8 through 10 of chapter 5 reveal the worthiness of the lamb and the reason for his worthiness. For the four living creatures and the 24 elders fall down before him and sing a new song, saying, Not only was a lamb worthy to take the scroll and open its seals, he is worthy also of praise and glory.

[12 : 07] For the song of the living creatures that we heard was followed by a great company of angels saying, Worthy is the lamb who was slain to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise.

Verse 9 of chapter 5 speaks of the blood of the lamb. For the living creatures and the elders declare, With your blood you purchase for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation.

In chapter 7 we have the lamb and the multitude which no man can number. After this, says John, I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the lamb.

They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. They are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple. And he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence.

Never again will they hunger. Never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat down on them nor any scorching heat. For the lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd.

[13:30] He will lead them to springs of living water and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Again in chapter 7 and chapter 14, in contrast to the multitude that no one could count, there is the lamb and the 144,000, a specific number of redeemed from the nation of Israel.

12,000 from each of the 12 tribes. In chapter 7, when they first appear, they are sealed in their foreheads with the seal of the living God. But they reappear in chapter 14 with the lamb.

Then I looked, said John, and there before me was the lamb standing on Mount Zion and with him 144,000 who had his name and his father's name written on their foreheads before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders.

They followed the lamb wherever he goes. They were purchased from among mankind and offered as firstfruits to God and the lamb. Thinking of these two groups of Jews and Gentiles redeemed by the lamb, we have in chapter 15 the song of Moses and the lamb.

And I saw what appeared to be a sea of glass mingled with fire and also those who had conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name standing beside the sea of glass with harps given them by God in their hands.

[14:58] And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God and the song of the lamb saying, Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty. Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations.

Who will not fear you, O Lord, for you and glorify your name for you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you for your righteous acts have been revealed.

Why the song of Moses and the lamb? I'm not sure, but I'm inclined to think that it speaks of a combining of the worship of Old Testament believers with that of New Testament believers.

For surely when Jesus returns, Old Testament and New Testament believers will be resurrected together. And speaking of these Old Testament believers, the author of Hebrews says in Hebrews 11 verses 39 and 40, These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised, since God had planned something better for us so that only together would they be made perfect.

One thing all believers have in common is that their names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life. We know this because the Lamb's Book of Life is referred to in chapters 13 and 21.

[16:28] Think of all those authors whose names appear on the cover of their books, or the sports personalities whose names are inscribed on their medals and trophies, or the famous politicians or scientists who have streets and buildings named after them.

None of that matters if their names are not written in the Lamb's Book of Life. When Jesus addressed the church of Sardis in chapter 3, he promised In chapter 20, we read of the great white throne judgment when at the end of the ages the dead are judged according to their deeds.

And in verse 14 and 15, it says, Then death and hell were thrown into the lake of fire. Anyone whose name was not found in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.

Scary stuff. But then, unfortunately, not everyone is willing to submit to the lordship of Jesus Christ. And that is why in chapter 17, we read of war against the Lamb.

For the revelation also speaks about the dragon, who is Satan, and the beast, also known as the Antichrist, who is depicted with seven heads and ten horns. They both adamantly, vehemently, oppose the Lamb.

[17:58] In Revelation 17, verse 12 to 14, John is told concerning the beast, The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the beast.

They have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the beast. They will wage war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will triumph over them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings and with him will be his called, chosen, and faithful followers.

Revelation also tells of a counterfeit Lamb. Alongside the dragon and the beast, there is also the false prophet who is depicted as a Lamb with two horns.

But this Lamb, says John, spoke like a dragon. Jesus warns of false Christs and false prophets. Who would say if it were possible?

How do we tell a counterfeit Christ or a false prophet? They might appear like a lamb, but they speak like a dragon. But Jesus' sheep, he says, and this leads us to the wrath of the Lamb.

[19:13] In chapter 6, verse 16, of the seriousness of sin and the inevitability of divine judgment, it serves as a warning to those who reject God's grace and persist in rebellion.

The opening of the seven seals, one after the other by the Lamb, could be seen as the unfolding of the final judgment of God on this present age because of its wickedness.

the first four seals when opened release four horsemen, demonic spirits, the first going forth to conquer, the others followed behind bring war, famine, and death.

They are sent to bring divine retribution that will precede the days before Christ's return. In chapter 8, in verse 9, seven angels with seven trumpets sound and a series of plagues also afflict mankind.

But despite this, John says, the rest of mankind who were not killed by these plagues did not repent of the work of their hands. They did not stop worshipping demons and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone, and wood.

[20:31] Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality, or their thefts. It's hard to deny that we are living in times like that when crime and wickedness abound and sin, sins that were once at least carried out in secret because even unbelievers disproved of them and now practically practiced openly and even celebrated and paraded without a hint of shame.

And then in many parts of the world also Christians are being persecuted and killed in increasing numbers. But Jesus is building his church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.

when the Lamb opened the fifth seal says John I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained.

they called out in a loud voice how long sovereign Lord holy and true until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood.

Then each of them was given a white robe and they were told to wait a little longer but judgment is coming and oh what a judgment it will be.

[21:55] With the opening of the sixth seal we are told there was a great earthquake the sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat's hair the whole moon turned blood red and the stars in the sky fell to earth as figs dropped from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind.

The heavens receded like a scroll being rolled up and every mountain and island was removed from its place. Then the kings of the earth the princes the generals the rich the mighty and everyone else both slave and free hid in caves and amongst the rocks of the mountains.

They called to the mountains and the rocks fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb for the great day of their wrath has come and who can withstand it.

Jesus says in John 3:36 whoever believes in the Son has eternal life but whoever rejects the Son will not see life but God's wrath remains on them.

But here's the good news. After God finally deals with all sin and rebellion at the end of the ages Revelation concludes with a promise for God's people of a new heaven and a new earth and a new holy city the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband God's dwelling place with man.

[23:33] And John says I did not see a temple in the city because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it for the glory of God gives it light and the Lamb is its lamp.

The nations will walk by its light and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. On no day will its gates ever be shut for there will be no night there.

The glory and the honor of the nations will be brought into it. Nothing impure will ever enter it nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Amen. Our final hymn is 1109 Worthy is the Lamb.