

"Why a Sacrifice?"

Genesis 3:8-24

In John 1, John the writer introduces John the Baptist right after he finishes his great introduction about the deity of Jesus who took on humanity and came to earth. John's role was to prepare people for Jesus. In John 1:29 we read, when John saw Jesus we read,

²⁹ The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" ³⁰ This is the one I meant when I said, 'A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.' ³¹ I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel."

And a few verses later in v.35

³⁵ The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. ³⁶ When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" ³⁷ When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus.

No other gospel writer mentions this. No other New Testament writer will refer to Jesus as the Lamb of God except John in Revelation and once by Paul. What strikes me here when John the Baptist announces of Jesus 'Behold the Lamb of God', no one asks 'Excuse John, what do you mean by that?' And two of John's disciples follow Jesus after he says this. It's almost like they had an understanding of what he meant concerning the Messiah as the lamb of God.

We who live in the church era and have the luxury of a completed Bible, probably don't think about this a whole lot because we already know Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. If I asked you 'How do you know?' and you answered, 'It's in the Bible' and then I responded, 'Where in the Bible?' would you know where to look? Many people in John's day didn't understand this even though the truth had been right in front of them their whole lives. Many did not understand that the Messiah would have to be the sacrificial Lamb from God in order for sins to be removed.

And many people still don't understand these things. They don't understand they have sin. They don't understand they can't just do good works to be saved. They don't understand they need a mediator between them and God. They don't understand that God is a God of grace who loves them and was willing to send Jesus to die for their sins.

The resurrected Jesus explained to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus 'what was said in all the Scriptures concerning Himself' (Luke 24:27). So during Lent we're going to explore this thread that Jesus is the Lamb of God from Genesis to Revelation so 1) we will gain a greater appreciation for the amazing plan of God to save us from our sins; and 2) we'll have greater confidence to explain to others why Jesus is the only way to God.

When John said 'The Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world' the Jewish listener understood John was talking sacrificial language. The first question we want to answer in this series is Why a sacrifice at all? Why do we need a sacrifice for our sins? To answer that we have to go back the Garden of Eden with Adam And Eve where sin entered the world. And what we see God doing with Adam and Eve we see the foundational groundwork being laid for Jesus to become that Lamb. Let's pray we have eyes to see and ears to hear what God is saying through these verses.

We'll pick up the action after Adam and Eve have sinned in v.8

⁸ Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. ⁹ But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?"

¹⁰ He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."

¹¹ And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"

¹² The man said, "The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."

¹³ Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

Prior to Eve and Adam eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, they were enjoying unhindered fellowship with God and each other. Sin is disobeying God. And right away they are hiding from God and blaming each other. This is what sin does

Sin Separates Us From God and Each Other **(3:8-19)**

So often we hear people say, 'Why can't those people just get along?' The answer is simple: they have sin in their life and sin promotes selfishness. They don't want to and don't know why themselves. This is the real problem of the world; we all have sin and we want to do our own thing. And some people, don't care who they hurt. Sin hardens our hearts; it promotes hatred and jealousy. We say things we shouldn't because we have sin in our lives and judge the world through our eyes not God's.

But here is the amazing thing about God that some people fail to see and we can forget at times,

God mercifully reaches out to us so we'll confess (vv.8-13)

We sin and need forgiveness. How did God, who knew what had happened, deal with Adam and Eve? He came looking for them. He didn't send lightning bolts and thundered into the garden yelling 'Adam and Eve, how could you?' No, in His mercy He does not judge right away but reaches out to them asking them 'Where are you?' as if to say, how come you're not meeting with me today as usual? I came waiting for you and you weren't here?

When we sin we don't want to be with God. We avoid Him too but He's waiting patiently for us to return to Him. 'Return to Me, declares the lord Almighty, 'And I will return to you' declares the Lord Almighty (Zech. 1:3). God asks, 'Where are you?' to draw out a confession from Adam. God approaches Adam first because as the husband and first created it was his responsibility to watch over Eve and make God's Word known to her. While he did that – since she knew the command – he also did not rebuke her for listening to the lies of the serpent and when she offered the fruit he accepted it rather than rejected it.

Instead of confessing his sin, Adam responds that he was afraid to face God because he was naked. God asks another question, 'Who told you, you were naked?' And then of course he asks him if he ate the fruit. Adam blames God and Eve at this point. God then confronts Eve asking her, 'What

is this you have done?' again, not condemning them but asking them questions designed so they will confess their sin. Eve blames the serpent.

At this point God turns to the serpent and rebukes him, pronouncing curses as a consequence of sin. Yet at the same time, God continues to show mercy and grace. In these curses we also see

God offers hope through the woman's seed (vv.14-19)

The serpent is cursed and forced to crawl on its belly. However, Satan is behind the serpent and God pronounces a judgment on him when He says

¹⁵ *And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel*

Satan's seed are people who reject God. Yet Eve's seed – even more defined as a singular 'he' – will crush Satan's head (a fatal blow) while Satan will only have a crippling blow on this 'him' one day. And here we have the first and very general announcement that there is hope for the human race. One day a male descendent of the woman will deal once and for all with Satan.

Other consequences of sin will be pain in childbirth, a battle for authority between men and women and pain and toil in work. But lest you think these are all negative consequences, remember, what did God say if they ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? They would die. But they didn't die right here, did they? Instead of punishing them with death

God Graciously Provides the Covering for Sin **(3:20-21)**

I think we often fail to see God's grace here. While there are negative consequences as a result of sin,

God gives life and delays death (v.20)

God commanded Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply before sin. Has their sin now negated the existence of the human race? No. God says have kids, lots of kids but I will remind you every time you give birth you are reminded of the pain of sin in the world. Another sinner is coming into the world. Cute and beautiful, but as you'll see over time they too will show their sin nature by focusing on themselves and not getting along with people at times.

The penalty was death, but God says I will delay your deaths. I will let you live and I want you to enjoy life and have kids and work the land and enjoy its benefits. But the hardness in these areas is a reminder that sin still exists. What can we do about our sin? After Adam and Eve sinned they realized they were naked and made fig leaves to cover themselves. As if they could cover up what they had done. The fig leaves remind us

Our attempts to cover our sin fall short (v.21)

Paul writes in Romans 3:23, "*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*". That was after a summary of all the Old Testament verses he had just quoted in 3:10-18 all saying the same thing, from the Old Testament. And in 6:23 he added "*For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord.*"

God deals graciously with us as well. We are all born with a sin nature. We age every day – which is a very, very slow death process – and we can't do much about it. We can't stop it. We can't pay for our own sins. So God does. Even here, we see the foundation of God's grace in forgiving sin. He gives Adam and Eve a more permanent covering. He hides the shame of their sin by giving them animal skins. Where did those animal skins come from?

God provides the blood sacrifice to cover sin (v.22)

Here we have the first sacrifice, initiated by God's grace to cover up the first sin. God modelled this to Adam and Eve and Adam and Eve taught this to their children. Because in Gen. 4 we see Abel worshipping God with an animal sacrifice from his own flocks yet Cain brings a sacrifice of grain. God looked with favour on Abel's sacrifice but with Cain's he did not.

We see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob offering animal sacrifices to God. As the nation of Israel is formed God gives them His laws to obey and He explains to them why sacrifice is required in Leviticus. God would explain that when you bring a sacrifice you are to bring an unblemished, young healthy animal (which would have the most value) and kill it for your sin. You would place your hands on your animal, confessing your sin, acknowledging that it was dying in your place. In Lev. 17:11 God tells them through Moses,

¹¹ For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life.

Sin results in death, so the only way to have our sins forgiven is through a sacrifice. But animal sacrifices were only temporary because God says in Heb. 9:9

⁹ This is an illustration for the present time, indicating that the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper. ¹⁰ They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings—external regulations applying until the time of the new order.

The new order was ushered in by Jesus, God's unblemished Son, a human sinless sacrifice voluntarily offering His life for our sins. Paul explained it in Rom. 3:24,

There is no difference, ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. ²⁵ God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished— ²⁶ he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

We have to believe by faith that Jesus' death alone can pay for our sins. Now, instead of sacrificing an animal God in His grace says I already made salvation possible through my Son. You can't cover your own sins. Simply confess you are a sinner and ask forgiveness, believing My Son died for you and rose from the dead to show you He finished the work. When we do this God sends His Spirit into our lives and we now become the new creation in Christ, wanting to serve the One who gave His life for us. Heb. 9:13

¹⁴ How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

We can't serve God if we're not saved from our sins. Only the sacrifice of Jesus – His life for ours, as the Lamb of God – pays for our sins. Again we see the gracious hand of God in vv.23-24, even though we might think it unkind at first.

²² *And the LORD God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever."* ²³ *So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken.* ²⁴ *After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.*

God Doesn't Want Us to Remain in Our Sin **(3:22-24)**

We might not think this when we first read that God drove them out of the Garden (same word for Pharaoh driving out the Israelites from Egypt) so that wouldn't live forever. See, they had not eaten from the tree of life. The tree of life is eternal. This tree shows up in Rev. 22 in the New Jerusalem, the new Garden of Eden. When you eat of it you remain in your eternal state.

Adam and Eve had sinned. Had they eaten of the tree of life at this point they would have remained eternally in their sin. God pushed them out to save their lives, not harm them. Again, it was an act of grace. God did not want them to remain in their sin. Adam and Eve understood God was being gracious because in v.20 we read,

²⁰ *Adam named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living.*

Adam understood that they would not die, for quite some time. That Eve would have children and so she would become the mother of all the living because all of us can trace our roots back to Eve, who in her sin, was spared by God who graciously forgave them of their sin. And God hasn't changed. God is the same in the Old and New Testaments. The Old lay the groundwork for the New. Here we see why there would be a need for a human Lamb of God who can take away the sins of the world so that we can find salvation in Jesus. And so can your neighbours and friends.

Satan still spreads lies about God. He's convinced many people that 1) they don't need God. They are good people; OR 2) they can get to God on their own merits, the good outweighing the bad; OR 3) there is no god. I can do whatever I want with my life. The problem with all those excuses is it doesn't explain life's biggest question; why do we all eventually die?

Because Adam and Eve introduced sin into the world and sin is hereditary. However, right from the start God showed He had a plan to do away with sin once for all. To pay for it Himself because we can't. He lay the foundation for the need for an unblemished human sacrifice; his own Son Jesus, to die in our place and we just have to receive Him. God is not cruel; He made you and gave you life. We live in a cruel world filled with sinners and a sin-infected creation, so bad stuff can happen to us. But God still comes looking for us – and your family member and friend and neighbour who we doubt will get saved – but God is waiting for them.

² *Pet. 3:9 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.*

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Behold, Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Many people don't know God is looking for them, waiting patiently for them to repent of their sins and receive Jesus as their Saviour. Many have believed the lies of Satan that God is holding out on us or is cruel but we've just seen from Genesis this is not true. Pray God would burden our hearts for your unsaved family and friends. Help them understand God's grace and mercy and that they can find hope and peace through faith in Jesus.

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If you have any comments or questions about this message please
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