

The Lion *Is* a Lamb

The Chronicles of Christmas – Part III

Selected Scripture

Introduction

We return today to some of the great truths of the Christmas story – in its fullest version.

Thus far in our series, we have listened to the song of the Emperor’s Son; that is, the creative music of the great Lion, Aslan, who is the Son of the Emperor beyond the sea. The song that Aslan sang at the creation of Narnia would become a picture of the story of creation by means of the word of God through the creative agency of His Son, Jesus Christ.

For by Him were all things created . . .
(Colossians 1:16a)

Into fresh and innocent creation came the tempter. C. S. Lewis illustrated this temptation with Edmund being offered a future kingdom in which he could become the prince of the White Witch, and later on, the King of Narnia.

Edmund is tempted with a box of Turkish delight – the best tasting Turkish delight he had ever eaten. While eating it, he promises the evil one that he will betray his brother and sisters to her, not knowing that his act of treason will demand his own death at the hand of the Witch. He did not seem to care about his future anyway, as long as he had all the Turkish delight his heart could ever want.

By the way, there is some debate about this substance – Turkish delight – which is evidently, still being produced overseas. Some say it is not really sweet, but is flat and has a kind of meaty taste. Others describe it as sweet, firm on the outside and gooey on the inside.

A gentleman in our church told me yesterday that he has actually ordered a box of Turkish delight for me. It will be arriving in a few days from the country of Turkey. Isn’t that great? A box of genuine Turkish delight is coming. However, I am not sure I am supposed to eat it! I do not know if it is allowed! I will fill you in on all the details.

Now eventually, all four children – Peter, Lucy, Susan and Edmund – move through the magical wardrobe and find themselves in the land of Narnia together. Edmund slips off and tells the White Witch they have arrived and where they can be found. This

act is the height of pride and an act of treason. According to the law of Narnia, it will mean the death of Edmund.

In the same way, we listened as the Serpent whispered in the ear of Eve that she could have her own kingdom and rule as God. We watched Eve take the fruit and eat it, not realizing it would mean the death of her for having betrayed the word of God.

There is an unshakable, irrevocable law of both Narnia and earth,

. . . the wages of sin is death . . . (Romans 6:23a)

C. S. Lewis calls the law in Narnia, deep magic – irrevocable magic.

When all seems lost for Edmund, the hope of Narnia, Aslan, appears and privately speaks to the White Witch. In that private meeting, he tells her that he will offer himself for Edmund – that he will die in Edmunds place. The wicked Queen is ecstatic!

That night, Aslan walks up the hill toward the jeering mob of monsters, hags and ogres. He lies down on a stone table and allows his body to be bound with rope and his mane to be shaved in humility, as they taunt him, kick him, and spit on him. Susan and Lucy, who have been watching from a distance, bury their heads in their hands in sorrow as the great lion is put to death.

Eventually, the crowd disperses and the Queen calls for her army to conquer the armies of the Lion. Susan and Lucy walk up the hill and mourn the death of their Lion – their Leader – their King.

Hours later, as they are walking away, they hear a loud crack. The stone table is broken in two, and Aslan is nowhere to be found. They are filled with terror. C. S. Lewis writes of that moment,

“What now?” wailed Lucy. “Haven’t they done enough already?”

But Susan put a hand upon her shoulder, “Wait!” she said, “Do you think it could be more magic?”

“Yes!” cried a voice like morning thunder.

They wheeled around. "Aslan!" they shouted – for it was the Lion himself, bright as the sun and larger than they remembered him. "Dear Aslan! Aren't you dead?"

"Not anymore!" he answered. "This is a Magic the Witch knew nothing about. A deeper Magic! When a willing victim who had committed no treachery was killed in a traitor's stead, the Table would crack and Death itself would start working backwards. And now, dear children, death has begun to work backwards . . . come! Let us run and play!"ⁱ

Who would have ever conceived such a plan. But it was true! The law of treachery and death could be overcome by the death of an innocent sacrifice.

The Son of the Emperor is a Lion, but He solved the dilemma of sin by becoming a Lamb. His willing sacrifice on behalf of sinful mankind would render the law powerless against the lives of those redeemed by His blood.

The Lion Was a Lamb

I took a tour through the Bible and found more traces of the Lamb than we have time to uncover. They can be seen as early as in the books of Moses. Let me give seven things about the Lion of the tribe of Judah, who is also the final sacrifice for sin.

1. Number one – in Genesis chapter 4, the payment of the Lamb is symbolized.

Genesis 4:1-2 tells us that Adam and Eve had two sons – one quickly after the other, the text implies. Moses records in Genesis 4:2b,

. . . And Abel was a keeper of flocks, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.

Cain grew up to become a farmer, while his younger brother, Abel, became a shepherd. Both of their occupations were honorable; both were acceptable careers.

They had been well taught. Cain and Abel knew there was a God. They knew about atonement. They had learned the principles of sacrifice. At some point in time, they reached the age at which they were to go and personally offer to God a sacrifice.

Perhaps Adam and Eve had taken trips with their sons to the east side of Eden where they could see the cherubim with his flaming sword guarding the tree of life. Furthermore, in Romans 10:17, we are told that,

. . . faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

Though the record of Moses is silent, it is obvious that Cain and Abel were not left to their own ideas in deciding how God was to be approached. They had been told the stories of the serpent and stolen fruit and the skins of sacrificed animals.ⁱⁱ

Cain approached God with an offering of fruits and vegetables. Mark this well – Cain was no atheist. He was conscientious, religious, and interested in approaching God. But he demanded that he approach God in his own way – with no bloodshed, no atoning sacrifice – with something that represented the work of his own hands.ⁱⁱⁱ

Abel, however, approached God by faith (Hebrews 11:4 tells us), and offered the first born lambs of his flock.

Cain's offering symbolized religion.

Abel's offering symbolized redemption.

Today, ladies and gentlemen, the world is divided into the same two companies: those who hope to find their way to God by the way of Cain or by the way of Calvary.

The way of Cain is a path created by the effort of human hands; the way of Calvary is a path created by the effort of God's hands, alone. So, the very first two descendants of Adam and Eve represent, to this very day, the road to hell and the road to heaven.

In Genesis chapter 4, the payment of the Lamb is illustrated as the only way to approach a holy and righteous God.

2. Number two – in Genesis chapter 22, the promise of the Lamb is prophesied.

This is the event in which Abraham's faith in the promised Messiah, through his son Isaac, is tested. The Bible says, in Genesis 22:1-2,

Now it came about after these things, that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham! . . . Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you."

Abraham was told by God to sacrifice his own son, Isaac, on Mount Moriah. Moriah means, "foreseen of God," so all of this was planned by God. God had promised Abraham a son, and through that son, the lineage of the coming Messiah.

Imagine the heart of Abraham, and the potential reasoning in his heart, "Take Isaac? Why him?"

I can imagine Abraham saying to God, “Listen, I’ll give you Ishmael. Let me put him on the altar.”

No. Ishmael represented Abraham’s past life. God wanted that which represented Abraham’s future life.

The truth is – you and I have little trouble giving God our past. We say, “Lord, all of the sins in my past – I’ll give You that. But my future – You want me to surrender . . . now?”

God does not want just our sinful past – He wants our present and our future.

Notice Genesis 22:7-8,

Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, “My father!” And he said, “Here I am, my son.” And he said, “Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?” Abraham said, “God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.” So the two of them walked on together.

God will provide a lamb! However, continue reading – you never see the lamb . . . anywhere.

Isaac mounts the altar and Abraham raises his knife. Continue to Genesis 22:11-13.

But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, “Abraham, Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.” He said, “Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God . . . Then Abraham raised his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram and offered him up for a burnt offering in the place of his son.

Now notice Genesis 22:14.

Abraham called the name of that place The Lord Will Provide, . . . “In the mount of the Lord it will be provided.”

This is future tense. There was no lamb now – but a ram. The Lamb was yet to come.

Mount Moriah is really nothing more than a ridge of hills. It would be the place where Solomon would later build his temple, which would eventually, be destroyed. Only a stone’s throw from the ridge of Moriah – the place where Isaac was offered – would be a city that would be built, called Jerusalem. By the time of Jesus Christ, that ridge of hills was no longer referred to as Moriah, but had been given a slang Aramaic expression because of the way that

one of the ridges was shaped. It was now called Golgotha, because it looked like a skull.

“God will provide a Lamb!” Abraham had prophesied. It is significant to recognize the fact that the place where Isaac was offered as a type of Christ; where this beloved son was offered as a willing burnt offering for sin, as it were, would be the very place where Jesus Christ would hang from the cross. The prophetic statement of Abraham would indeed come true, “God will provide a Lamb.”

In Genesis 4, the payment of the Lamb is illustrated. In Genesis 22, the promise of the Lamb is prophesied.

3. Number three – in Exodus chapter 12, the illustration becomes even more vivid in that the protection of the Lamb is personalized.

Exodus 12 is a tale of life or death. The people of Israel were slaves in Egypt, but God was coming to deliver them. He would deliver only those who wrote the signature of the Lamb upon the doorposts of their homes.

Only those homes with the signature of the Lamb would be spared death. Every family must decide. It was not enough to be a Jew, instead of an Egyptian.

The protection of the Lamb must be personalized. My friend, when did the gospel become personal to you?

This past week, I heard about the testimony of a young man who had only recently come to our church. He had heard our program on the radio and when he heard on the program that I pastored Colonial Baptist Church in Cary, North Carolina, he decided to find us.

This young man had been to church as a little boy, but when his parents divorced, church fell away. Some of his friends had told him he needed to find a church, but he did not know where to begin – until that radio program aired. He drove into the parking lot and walked up to the front door, but then he struggled with coming in. After a moment or two, he turned around and left.

The next Sunday, last Sunday, he drove in again and sat in his car in the parking lot. It got cold, sitting out there in his car, so he decided to come in. He came in and met a lady at the welcome desk who discerned that he needed to talk to one of our men about the gospel of Christ. The two of them sat in the connector area and the gospel was clearly shared. This young man said that he had heard it before, but he knew that on this day, he needed to personally accept it for himself – his heart was prepared and ready. He prayed and placed his trust in Jesus Christ.

The protection of the Lamb must be a personal transaction. At some point in your life, His signature, in blood-red, must be written upon your heart.

4. Number four – the fourth evidence that the Lion of Judah is a suffering Lamb is found in Isaiah chapter 53, where the purpose of the Lamb is identified.

Look at Isaiah 53:7. The prophet identifies the Lamb as the Messiah.

... Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, so He did not open His mouth.

We read in Isaiah 53:5,

But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed.

This is just as Aslan told one of the children, “Do not be cast down . . . evil will come, but I will see to it that the worst falls upon myself.”^{iv}

So the Lion of Judah will become the submissive Lamb – stripped and mocked; taunted by humans and demons alike – as He walks up the hill to die for the sons of Adam and the daughters of Eve.

Isaiah prophesied in verse 6,

... but the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.

“Evil will come, but I will see to it that the worst falls upon myself.”

This is the purpose of the Lamb.

5. Number five – in John 1:29, the Person of the Lamb is recognized.

John the baptizing prophet of God sees the young Messiah approaching him. At the time, Jesus is thirty years of age.

According to the law, in Numbers chapter 4, a man had to be thirty years of age before he could serve as a priest before God. So, in fulfillment of even the smallest demands of the law, Christ, who is now approximately thirty years of age, is about to enter the ministry. He is the One who would be the final and eternal High Priest – the only mediator between God and man.

John’s Gospel records the public introduction of Christ to the nation. When John the Baptizer saw Him walking toward him, he did not say, “Behold, the Lion of Judah who has come to take the throne of David!” but instead, as we are told in John 1:29, said,

... “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”

What an introduction.

So:

- the payment of the Lamb is illustrated;
- the promise of the Lamb is prophesied;
- the protection of the Lamb is personalized;
- the purpose of the Lamb is identified;
- the Person of the Lamb is recognized.

There is still more to come, which John the Baptist never saw and we have yet to see.

6. Number six – in the book of Revelation, chapter 5, the power of the Lamb is magnified.

The apostle John is given a tour of heaven and shown the future of earth. He is weeping in Revelation chapter 5, because there is no one worthy to open the book and to break its seals. In other words, no one is worthy, capable, or powerful enough to control the future events of the universe – the seals of power and terror. No one is worthy of that.

One of the elders says to John, in Revelation 5:5,

... “Stop weeping; behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, . . .

... is powerful enough to open the book and, as it were, control the destinies of the nations.”

However, when John looks, he does not see a Lion, he sees a Lamb. The Lamb is standing, yet bearing the marks of having been slain. This is perhaps, a reference to the wounds in His hands, feet, and side that He retained, even in His glorified body.

The power of the resurrected Lamb is magnified.

7. Number seven – in Revelation chapter 5 as well, the pre-eminence of the Lamb is glorified.

In Revelation 5:11-14, all of heaven – the living creatures, the elders, the angels – thousands times thousands of them – fall before the Lamb.

Imagine that number. One thousand times one thousand is one million. But John records that there are thousands times thousands.

Imagine five hundred million angels chanting together and singing their praise. Revelation 5:12-13 gives us the lyrics of their song.

... “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing. . . .

To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever.”

Continue to Revelation 5:14.

And the four living creatures kept saying, “Amen.” And the elders fell down and worshiped.

They kept saying, “Amen. Amen. Amen – so be it!”

Conclusion

From the book of Genesis, through the prophets, through the apostles, and ending with the book of Revelation – the message is clear. Like a crimson ribbon, the sacrifice of our Redeemer weaves its way throughout the unfolding of God’s design and plan.

We see that:

- the payment of the Lamb is illustrated;
- the promise of the Lamb is prophesied;
- the protection of the Lamb is personalized;
- the purpose of the Lamb is identified;
- the Person of the Lamb is recognized;
- the power of the Lamb is magnified;
- the pre-eminence of the Lamb is glorified.

I find it interesting that in the last chapter of the last book of the Bible, we find the Lord Jesus seated upon the throne. John writes,

Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, (Revelation 22:1)

Even at this point, as heaven and earth are newly formed for us to enjoy forever, we shall forever see Him in heaven, not so much as the Lion, but, almost as if we are to be eternally reminded of the way we got there, as the Lamb.

The Lion was and is and will always be seen as and remembered as *the* Lamb for sinners slain.

The Lion is the Lamb.

ⁱ Kurt Bruner and Jim Ware, Finding God in the Land of Narnia (Tyndale House, 2005), p. 45.

ⁱⁱ John Phillips, Exploring Genesis (Loizeaux Brothers, 1992), p. 64.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid., p. 64.

^{iv} Bruner and Ware, p. 11.