

## Week Forty-four: The Lamb King - Matthew 26:59-66; 27:11-26, 31-38; 28:1-6



### Overview

From the beginning of the story God pictured a provision for sin—a substitute. After Adam and Eve sinned, God promised the serpent that one would come who would crush his head (Gen. 3:15). Then the Lord provided a substitute for Adam and Eve when He slew an innocent animal and covered man's nakedness with its skin, beginning of the sacrificial system (Gen. 3:21). Those who walked with God understood substitutionary death (Abel, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, etc.). Altar scenes peppered their spiritual journey.

The exodus from Egypt was inaugurated with the Passover. Four days before their departure, they were to choose a lamb without defect for each household. It was slain, roasted, and eaten on the night of departure. The lamb's blood was smeared on the lintel and doorpost of each Hebrew home, signifying to the death angel that death had already occurred in the home (for God had promised, "When I see the blood, I will pass over"). During the first year of the forty years in the wilderness the seminal idea of substitutionary death developed into a full-blown sacrificial system that included a high priest, an altar, a tent of meeting, a mercy seat, and an annual day of atonement. The annual calendar also included a day to commensurate the Passover. The Israelites were to live in light of the promise and pictures of redemption. They were to be altar people.

Sadly, Israel failed to live in light of the promises and pictures of redemption; they divided as a nation and went into captivity. God, in His covenant faithfulness, orchestrated events to fulfill His promise of redemption through substitution.

John the Baptist recognized Jesus as the fulfillment of all of the Old Testament promises and pictures of redemption, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). John understood that Jesus must die as man's substitute, and He must rise again to verify God's acceptance Christ's death on behalf of guilty sinners.

### Lesson Objective:

At the conclusion of this lesson, students will understand that the death and resurrection of Jesus fulfill prophecy, demonstrate His deity, and provide redemption for all humanity.

### Key Truths

*Jesus' death fulfills the prophecies of the Hebrew Scriptures concerning Messiah.*

*Jesus' death satisfies the requirements for a sacrifice for sin.*

*Jesus' death is a substitutionary sacrifice for sinners.*

*Jesus' resurrection declares His deity and demonstrates the Father's acceptance of His work on the cross.*

## **Lesson Outline**

### **1. The Trials - Matthew 26:59-66; 27:11-26**

When Jesus reveals the true cost of discipleship, His key followers embrace that cost, but some become disillusioned. One such follower, Judas, betrays Jesus to the Jewish authorities for 30 pieces of silver. This betrayal price, prophesied by Zechariah (11:12), ends up condemning Judas, for he eventually goes out and hangs himself. After His arrest in the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus endures six trials, three before the Jewish authorities, and three before Roman authorities:

- Jesus' first trial occurs before Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest (apparently to give Caiaphas time to organize the Sanhedrin). John records this brief trial.
- The second trial occurs in the home of Caiaphas the Jewish high priest, where he is mocked by the soldiers and accused by false witnesses (though He does not speak at all).
- Jesus is presented to the Sanhedrin, where He is once again confronted by false witnesses, and then forced to testify against Himself under oath before the Sanhedrin. Here He confesses that He is the Son of the Blessed—the Messiah—and Israel's leaders are faced with the truth; now they must choose either to embrace Him as Messiah or reject and kill Him as a fraud. The Jews break several laws, including gathering false witnesses, trying a person at night, accepting testimonies that do not agree, and forcing the accused to testify against Himself. Having satisfied their desire, they take Jesus to the Roman authorities.

Jesus endures three further trials:

- He is accused before Pilate, who finds Him innocent.
- Pilate sends Him to Herod, who mocks Him and returns Him to Pilate
- Finally, Pilate declares that he finds no fault in Jesus, and determines to set Him free. The Jews cry out for His blood, ask (according to the custom) that Pilate release Barabbas instead of Jesus, and eventually convince the wavering governor to crucify the King. Jesus is beaten by the soldiers, a crown of thorns is placed on His head, and He is forced to carry the cross from the courtyard to Golgotha. When He falls, the Roman soldiers compel an African man, Simon of Cyrene, to carry the cross.

### **2. The Crucifixion - Matthew 27:31-38**

When Jesus and the soldiers reach the hill Golgotha, He is crucified along with two thieves, one on each side. The gospel accounts give sparse details because crucifixion was well known in the Roman world. Crucifixion was a brutal method of execution meant to send the clear message, "Break Rome's law, pay Rome's price." Victims were nailed to crosses by their hands and feet (and sometimes tied to the

cross as well) while lying down; then the cross was raised and dropped in the hole with enough force to jar bones. Victims were stripped naked to shame them, were beaten beforehand to humiliate them, and then left to die by suffocation. As they grew weaker, they were able to breathe in air, but they were unable to expel the air in their lungs; they literally drowned in a sea of air. In order to accelerate death, soldiers sometimes broke the legs of the dying to keep them from pushing up and expelling air.

Jesus' crucifixion accounts record several critical details:

- He remands the care of His mother to John (Jn. 19:26-27)
- He forgives one of the two thieves dying beside Him (Lk. 23:40-43; someone stated, "One is forgiven, that none should despair; only one, that none should presume")
- He utters a cry of dereliction—"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Mt. 27:46)
- He utters the cry of triumph, "It is finished" (Jn. 19:30)

When Jesus dies, the Roman centurion—a soldier charged with executing prisoners—declares to Pilate that Jesus is indeed dead. The soldier's very life hangs on knowing if his charges are indeed dead, which is why John's Gospel records the pouring out of the blood and the water as the soldier's spear pierces the sac surrounding Jesus' heart. When He dies, however, this same centurion declares, "Truly this was the Son of God" (Mt. 27:54). Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the Sanhedrin who did not consent to Jesus' death, requests the body and buries it in a new tomb hewn out of a rock after he has wrapped it in linen sheets. He rolls a stone over the tomb to seal it, and the Jews ask Pilate to assign a Roman quaternion, a guard of 16 soldiers who stand guard (4 every six hours) watching the grave to ensure that the body is not stolen.

### **3. The Resurrection - Matthew 28:1-6**

Jesus' death and burial occur before Sabbath begins on Friday evening, so He is in the tomb the day before the Sabbath, the day of the Sabbath, and then until the morning after the end of the Sabbath (Jewish days are counted evening and morning as in the story of Creation). When the women go to the tomb to anoint the body after the Sabbath, they find the stone rolled away, the guards having fled in terror, and two men in shining garments at the tomb. These angels utter history's sublimest words, "Why do you seek the living among the dead?" (Lk. 24:5); "He is not here; for He is risen, as He said . . . . Go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead" (Mt. 28:6-7).

Jesus' resurrection confirms all of His teaching, fulfills His promises, and transforms His disciples. They testify, "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20). His resurrection sets Him apart from every other religious leader, and the truth of Christianity hinges on the resurrection.

### **4. The Significance**

Five truths reveal the significance of Jesus' death and resurrection:

*Jesus' death and resurrection fulfill the promises of Scripture.* David spoke of a descendant whose soul God would not leave in Sheol, nor would He allow Him to see corruption (Ps. 16:10). Jesus fulfills this prophecy. Isaiah spoke of the Suffering Servant who would die in the place of sinners, "But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD has laid upon Him the iniquity of us all" (Is. 53:5-6).

*Jesus' death is the final sacrifice for sin and sinners.* Every sacrifice of the Hebrew Scriptures points to one final sacrifice for sin, a sacrifice that would not merely cover sin as for a year in the day of Atonement, but rather would take it away once for all.

Jeremiah speaks God's promise, "I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more" (Jer. 31:34b). No more will men need to offer goats; never again will the High Priest have to go behind the veil of the Temple to offer blood on the mercy seat—in fact, the veil is torn in two from top to bottom at the moment when Jesus dies (Mt. 27:51), signifying that the way into the Holy of Holies is now complete.

*Jesus' death and resurrection reveal the love of God.* The cross reveals God's heart of love for a sinful world fully and finally. Henry Blackaby says, "No matter what your circumstances are, God's love never changes. The cross, the death of Jesus Christ, and His resurrection are God's final, total, and complete expression that He loves you. Never allow your heart to question God's love."<sup>1</sup>

*Jesus' death is substitutionary;* the prophecies already quoted speak of His death for us. When God gave Israel the Passover, He said, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you" (Ex. 12:13). Why? Because the blood said, "Death has already come to this house." Jesus' death pays the sin price for every person on earth; as believers put their trust in Him, His blood is applied to their hearts to grant forgiveness of sin.

*Jesus' resurrection is pivotal.* Apart from the resurrection, Jesus is no different from any other Roman criminal. Paul says that His resurrection declares Him to be the Son of God with power (Rom. 1:4). The resurrection is the Father's seal of approval on all that the Son does; in the Old Testament, fire fell from heaven to consume the sacrifices, indicating God's pleasure in the sacrifice. The resurrection is the Father's affirmation of the Son's ministry on earth and death on the cross. The Father accepts the Son's payment and demonstrates that acceptance by raising Him from the dead. Those who wish to be saved must also accept that final payment for sin in their place. Thus the resurrection is central to the gospel; apostles never preach the gospel of the death of Christ alone; they always couple His death to His resurrection (1 Cor. 15:3-4). Further, Jesus commands them to proclaim this death and resurrection as the means for forgiving sins to all the nations (Lk. 24:46-48).

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<sup>1</sup> Henry Blackaby, Richard Blackaby, and Claude King, *Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God*, Rev. Ed. (Nashville: LifeWay, 2007), 51.

**Application** - What does this lesson teach us about God? Man? Sin? Redemption?  
*The redemption of humanity comes at great cost to God Himself.*

*The death of Christ as the Lamb of God actualizes the perfect lamb slain on behalf of man's sin in the Old Testament.*

*Jesus experiences a real death and a real resurrection, just as Adam experienced a real death without resurrection.*

### **Summary**

*God speaks* by declaring the resurrection of Jesus and interpreting all of the Scriptures in the light of Jesus (Lk. 24:27, 44). *God acts* by raising Christ from the dead.

*God reveals* that Jesus is Lord by raising Him from the dead and sending His disciples to proclaim that message to all the nations.

### **Discussion Questions**

In what ways is the death of Christ like the Passover death? In what ways is it like the Day of Atonement?

What differentiates Jesus' death from every other death?