

GROWTHguide

Starting October 12, 2014
"The Lamb of God"



Day 1: Read Exodus 12:1-14

Passover was laden with messianic expectations and filled with prophetic significance, especially in Jesus' time. Just as God had saved his people when the angel of the Lord had "passed over" the homes of the Israelites and afflicted the homes of the Egyptians, it was believed that God would come again at Passover to save his people. . . . [F]or thousands of years, even up to the present, the Jewish people have believed that God would again send redemption on Passover. Redemption did arrive on the day they were looking for it, but it took a surprising shape. For God had engineered a far greater liberation than they had imagined—freedom not just for one people but for all people. And it was to be a liberation not from the earthly power of a political enemy but from the sinister power of sin and death. . . . On the first Passover, God freed his people by taking the life of the firstborn sons of Egypt. Many centuries later, God made salvation possible for all who would accept it by giving the life of his firstborn Son.

--Ann Spangler and Lois Tverberg, *Sitting at the Feet of Rabbi Jesus*

- Jesus' sacrifice is the blood surrounding the "doorposts" of our souls, covering the multitude of our sins and causing God's judgment to pass over us. Our sin condemns us to death, but through the acceptance of Jesus' sacrifice, our sins are washed away—we become unblemished and our slate is wiped clean. Have you been liberated from "the sinister power of sin and death" by accepting Jesus' sacrifice on the cross as atonement for your sins? Pray and ask God today to cover the multitude of your sins. If you have already accepted Christ as your savior, pray that God would give you opportunities to share the Good News with others. Pray that others would allow God to be the atonement for their sins.

Day 2: Read Exodus 29:38-42, Lev. 16:10 and 1 Peter 1:18-19

Among the instructions given to Moses on Mount Sinai were details for a special ceremony to be included with the burnt offering. It would be a dramatic visual presentation to Israel of God's unique work in atonement. Combined with the sin offering described in Leviticus 16, there was to be a second animal "presented alive before the Lord" which would bear away the sin of the people. . . .The first animal symbolized the atonement for sin which was needed in order for Israel to have fellowship with God; the second one represented that which the sin-bearing Lamb of God would do at Calvary: bear in his body the sins of the whole human race, taking them away, to be remembered against us no longer. . . .After the lot was cast and the one was chosen for the sacrifice, its blood was carefully brought into the innermost holy place of the tabernacle to be sprinkled on the mercy seat where God met with man. Instead of suffering for their own sins, absolution and atonement were made through the death of the lamb for the entire nation. The eternal law, the inviolate principle, that "the soul that sinneth, it shall die," had fully exonerated. In the substitute death of another, the law was satisfied and the guilty sinners set free.

--W. Phillip Keller, *A Layman Looks at the Lamb of God*

- The "empty way of life" mentioned in 1 Peter 1:18, is a life lived without Jesus. Christ is the "unblemished" atonement for our sin, giving us a life worth living! Through Christ, we are able to come to the mercy seat and stand before God "without blemish or defect." Do you feel the weight of sin, the guilt of living an "empty" life? Pray and give any guilt to God and every sin ever committed, whether they were in thought or action. Pray that God would give you the opportunity to help lead someone to Christ and the mercy seat of God.

Day 3: Read Hebrews 10:1-17

"The two kid goats," as described in yesterday's readings, "were necessary to fully describe the two aspects of the work which Christ would complete on the cross," and after the sacrifice of the first kid goat, the second was now "ready for public manifestation." W. Phillip Keller in his book, *A Layman Looks at the Lamb of God*, goes on to say:

This was to be a public demonstration to the rest of the nation, barred from entrance to the holy of holies, that their sins had in fact been forgiven. This was public assurance that their God had met them in mercy. They could now know beyond doubt that their guilt was gone and their future was free. His hands already stained with the lifeblood of the first animal, the High Priest now laid them upon the head of the second little innocent creature, symbolic of the transfer to it of all the sins of Israel. This sacrificial animal, too, would pay with its life. The sinbearer scapegoat would carry away the sins of the nation into the oblivion and obscurity of the wilderness. This was an annual rite, a symbolic and visual demonstration once each year to the nation of Israel of the two messages inherent in the atonement. Years later in Israel's history, the Spirit of God speaking through the inspired writer to the Hebrews declared categorically that the blood of goats and lambs could never take away sin . . . Christ fulfilled all the parts of this ceremony when He died on the cross—He himself is the great High Priest, the sacrificial Lamb, the "fit Man" and the Scapegoat bearing away our sins into the immensity of God's generous forgetfulness!

- When we accept Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, He washes us clean, forgiving us of our sins and forgetting them all! As humans, we find it so hard to forget our own sins and the sins of others, but if Christ has forgiven us, we must forgive ourselves and the trespasses others have committed against us. Pray and ask God to help you forgive yourself and to forgive those who have sinned against you.

Day 4: Read Isaiah 53:4-7

Much of the enormous impact of this passage from Isaiah lies in its prophetic accuracy. Not only does the prophet picture the ritualistic rites of the Passover lamb slain on ten million Israeli altars for the preceding 700 years, but also he depicts under the inspiration of God's Spirit the suffering of God's own Passover Lamb some 700 years in the future. . . . Now we see lifted up, for all men of all time, the Lamb slain, not only for His own chosen people but for the whole human race. . . . It is with the sheep who have gone astray that The Lamb of God, though spotless and having never strayed himself, is so strongly identified. . . . [M]ankind does not believe the prophet's report about the human condition; neither do we believe the prophet's report concerning God's way out of man's dilemma. That God himself should take on a body "marred more than any man," to be despised and rejected by the very ones to whom He came, takes more than human understanding to comprehend. We are still hiding our faces from Him. Is it any wonder, then, that when God came among us in human guise, He was tortured to death—offered as a human sacrifice, the final horror of our human degradation?

--W. Phillip Keller, *A Layman Looks at the Lamb of God*

- Often the guilt of our "human degradation" causes us to hide our face from God. When we are faced with the ugliness of our sin, we recognize how unworthy we are to stand before the Holy One. But God's love surpasses the multitude of our sin and reaches into the deepest, darkest pit to pull us out and sanctify us. Is something keeping you from turning to Christ, from reaching up to God from your deep, dark pit? Do not believe the lies Satan whispers in your ear, which hold you in bondage. Pray to God today and ask Him to save you and to sanctify you.

Day 5: Read John 1:29 and 1 Corinthians 5:7

We are aware—or reminded often—that we are not quite what we could be, what we might be, what we were intended to be. Something is wrong, something we yearn to see made right, but somehow find ourselves incapable of the kind of restoration we seek. For generations, the Israelites labored to follow laws that were meant to atone for their sin and restore them to the presence of God . . . [b]ut Israel's sacrifices were not the same as blood shed by those attempting to appease the many gods they feared and followed. The prophets sent throughout Israel's history were forever insisting that what God was commanding was something far more than the empty performance of sacrifice. God wanted sacrifices offered with hearts of worship, lives yearning to be in the presence of their creator, though recognizing the fear of such an act. The God of Israel wanted to be near his chosen people, and God made them a way, through the blood of a lamb. When Christians speak of Christ as the Lamb of God, it might sound like a strange allegory, a symbolic code. The lamb is Christ. The lion is Christ. As with any metaphor, the risk is minimization, instantaneous recognition of the symbol and discontinuation of all that symbol might lead us to discover. But Christ as the lamb is

not simply a metaphor. . . .The description moves well beyond symbolism. Christ is the Lamb whose blood atones my depravity, the Lamb who moves me forever into the presence of God.

--Jill Carattini, in her article, *Lamb of God*

- Pray today that God's love would permeate your words and actions, allowing you to be light in the midst of someone's dark pit and a hand that pulls them out. Serve God today with a heart full of worship and a life "yearning" to be in His presence. Help others who long to receive forgiveness and to stand whole before God.

Day 6: Read John 19:1-3, 19:16-18 and 19:28-30

The death our Lord died was one of enormous depravity and indignity. It was part of the appalling humiliation to which He had subjected himself from the time of His entry into our human form. From the crude, filthy manger to the cruel, ignominious cross, God in Christ had descended to the lowest depths to become identified with the lowest dregs of humanity. . . . His butchers came dressed in many guises. Some were the sophisticated scribes and scholars of the Sanhedrin. Others were the Pharisees, the High Priests and powerful ecclesiastical elite. Some who took part in slaying the spotless Lamb of God were ruffians...some were royalty...still others were rough Roman soldiers...the conspirators came from every strata of society; they represented every segment of the world, the wretched, wicked world He had come to save. . . .This forlorn, forsaken Being hanging in appalling agony upon the tree was bearing not the burden of His own misdeeds but the incredible calumny of their own despicable misconduct. . . .It was the terrible, terrible load of sin that stained His sinless Person. This pure One, this sacred Lamb, suspended betwixt heaven and earth as the supreme sacrifice for all men of all time, was subjected to the shame of being made utter sin in our place.

--W. Phillip Keller, *A Layman Looks at the Lamb of God*

- We are among the "conspirators" who placed Jesus on the cross, since He came to be the "sacrifice for all men of all time." And although we are deserving of God's wrath, Christ came and forgave us, taking God's wrath upon Himself. His sacrifice tore open the veil that prohibited us from entering the tabernacle, the Holy of Holies. By accepting Christ's atonement for our sin, we are now able to enter into God's presence and speak with him directly. Today, get on your knees before God and give thanks for His Son's sacrifice. Pray that He would use you to lead other "conspirators," other sinners, to Him.

Day 7

Today is your "Sabbath" and a time for reflection. How has God been speaking to you over the week? Use what the Lord has said to you to remold and reshape your life. If you are having trouble hearing God's voice, slow down or even stop what you are doing so that the busyness of life's demands do not squelch the whispers of God's language of love upon your heart.