

Jesus is the Lamb of God

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The first article of this series discusses the primary characteristic of God: holiness. Man, though created holy and born without sin, sinned as discussed in the second article of this series. Man is now separated from God because he is no longer holy. The third installment discusses the grace and mercy offered to man that allows him to regain a relationship with his holy Creator. This article discusses how God planned to provide a perfect sacrifice to atone for sin.

Hebrews 10:4 states "it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should **take away sins**". Although the patriarchal law and the Law of Moses provided forgiveness of sins for the faithful, the sins were not forgotten. God promised to forget sins under the new covenant as seen in Jeremiah 31:31-34. Since animal sacrifice could not take away sins there had to be a better sacrifice. John 1:29 gives the testimony of John the Baptist when he saw Jesus coming to him: "Behold the Lamb of God, **which taketh away the sin of the world**". To any Jew the "Lamb of God" would indicate sacrifice. John the Baptist repeated this testimony the next day in the hearing of his disciples saying "Behold the Lamb of God!" Notice that this "Lamb" is going to take away the sins. 1 Peter 1:19-20 states that God planned before the foundation of the world that Jesus would come to be "as a lamb without spot and without blemish".

Why is this so important? Some today still look to find a messiah. Jews in Jesus' day did not see Him as the Messiah because they expected a physical ruler to crush Rome. Jews and Muslims today still look for this same type of leader. Others that profess to be Christian think that the rejection of Jesus by the Jews caused God to change His plan and set up the church as a temporary measure until the kingdom could be established on Earth. All of these religions and doctrines fail to see that the purpose of God has never been to conquer the physical. Even the wars and the judgments under the Law of Moses were about keeping God's people pure and sinless more than they were about capturing territory or punishing the wicked. God's plan has not failed nor has it changed since before the foundation of the world.

Hebrews 10:5 states that a body was prepared for Jesus. He required a body in order to have blood that could be offered as a sacrifice. The purpose of sacrifices under the prior laws (patriarchal and Moses') was to teach man about the price of sin. The cost and labor involved in a single sacrifice was significant. Due to this a faithful follower of God would strive not to sin and would be very conscious of the price for sin. It seems that today the lack of a physical sacrifice causes some to believe that sin is not as big a problem or that God has changed and is no longer angry about sin. The same is true when folk see vile persons who "get away" with horrendous sins and God does not strike them dead. The truth is that we now have the perfect word of God to tell us how God feels about sin and what He holds in store for those who do not have their sins forgiven and forgotten. Just because He is patient as stated in 2 Peter 3:9 does not mean that His patience will last forever.

Jesus is the only sacrifice that can completely remove sin from a sinner. Those faithful persons under the old laws were freed from sin by faith just as we are today. The physical actions were required but without faith they would not have provided any forgiveness. God even tired of the Jews for offering to Him vain sacrifices and sent Isaiah to tell them to stop (Isaiah 1:11-15). He tired of their offerings and sacrifices because their hearts were not in it. Paul mentions the Jews of his day that had a zeal for God but it was not according to knowledge (Romans 10:2). He completely changed his life when confronted by the truth of Jesus but many continued under the old law thinking that something better than Jesus was still to come.

God proved that Jesus was a worthy sacrifice by raising Him from the dead. Many eyewitnesses existed to testify that this occurred. The apostles, prophets, and many saints in the first century died because of belief in the resurrection. The fact of the resurrection gives us hope that we too will be raised. God also showed Jesus to be His Son by the resurrection (Romans 1:4). Who could be greater than the Son of God? How could a latter prophet claim to be greater

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than Jesus or claim to have more authority? The Lamb of God is also the Lawgiver and Testator of the New Covenant. Read Hebrews 9 and see how much better this everlasting covenant is that He has dedicated with His own blood.

The next article will discuss what faithful persons today can do to accept the sacrifice of Jesus.