

This morning learned three basic lessons from John the Baptist—[1] a lesson on humility, [2] a lesson on preaching, and [3] a lesson on baptism—concerning his preaching we learned that John exhorted the people to—"make straight the way of the LORD"—that is—"repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand"—or perhaps better, the King Himself is at hand...

This evening I suggested that from John preaching we learned two things—[1] repentance is necessary—"make straight the way of the LORD"—remove every obstacle or hindrance that would bar Christ from finding entrance into our hearts—lay flat every mountain of pride and fill in every valley of despair—make the ground level...

[2] Repentance is preparatory—"make straight the way of the LORD"—that is—the goal is to receive the LORD—not only as KING—but also—as we learn this from v29—receive Him as—"the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world..."

- I. Its OT Roots
- II. Its Basic Meaning
- III. Its Practical Application

I. Its OT Roots

1. I mentioned this morning—John the Baptist bridges the Old and NC—bringing shadow and reality together...
2. It's obvious that in calling Jesus—"the Lamb of God"—John was referring to the OC sacrifices and scripture...
3. Now—there's some debate—what specifically John was thinking of—in using the imagery of—the Lamb of God...
4. Basically—there are four options or possibilities—I suggest that most likely—John had ALL four in mind...
5. In other words—our Savior came in fulfillment to every OT type and promise—He came full of grace and truth...
6. [1] Mount Moriah—it was here, the land of Moriah, upon one of the mountains of Moriah—that Abraham was told to sacrifice Isaac...
7. Gen.22:13-14—"Then Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there behind *him* was a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son. 14 And Abraham called the name of the place, The-LORD-Will-Provide; as it is said *to* this day, "In the Mount of The LORD it shall be provided..."
8. [a] A substitute—most of you know that a ram is a male sheep—and a sheep is simply a lamb that's one year old...
9. [b] A promise—"In the Mount of the LORD it shall be provided"—what?—what was shadowed in the ram...
10. Thus—it's important to notice that Abraham did not say—the Lord HAS provided—but—the Lord WILL provide...
11. In other words—Abraham understood that the Lord's provision of a sacrificial substitute would one day come...
12. Jn.8:56—"Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw *it* and was glad"—saw it by way of promise...
13. 2Chron.3:1—"Then Solomon began to build the house of the LORD in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah"—thus it would on this mountain that lambs would be sacrificed day after day...
14. [2] The Passover Lamb—this was offered yearly—the 14th day of the first month—in memory of redemption from Egypt...
15. Ex.12:3—"speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying: On the tenth of this month every man shall take for himself a lamb, according to the house of his father, a lamb for a household..."

16. Now—in the case of Abraham—a lamb (ram) was substituted for Isaac—here's its offered for the entire house...
17. Jn.19:14-18—"Now it was the Preparation Day of the Passover, and about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews, "Behold your King!" 15 But they cried out, "Away with *Him*, away with *Him*! Crucify Him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar!" 16 Then he delivered Him to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus and led *Him* away. 17 And He, bearing His cross, went out to a place called *the Place* of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha, 18 where they crucified Him, and two others with Him, one on either side, and Jesus in the center..."
18. Jn.19:36—"For these things were done that the Scripture should be fulfilled, "Not *one* of His bones shall be broken" (Ex.12:46)..."
19. 1Cor.5:7—"Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us..."
20. [3] The daily sacrifice—under the OC—twice every day—a lamb was slain—at 9 in the morning and 3 in the afternoon...
21. Ex.29:38-39—"Now this is what you shall offer on the altar; two lambs of the first year, day by day continually. One lamb you shall offer in the morning, and the other lamb you shall offer in the morning [Num.28:3-4]..."
22. Lk.23:44-46—"Now it was about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. 45 Then the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was torn in two. 46 And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, "Father, 'into Your hands I commit My spirit.' " Having said this, He breathed His last..."
23. Mk.15:25—"Now it was the third hour, and they crucified Him"—He was crucified at 9 in the morning and died at 3 in the evening..
24. [4] Isaiah 53, v7—"He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth..."
25. J.C. Ryle—"He as the true Lamb which Abraham told Isaac at Moriah God would provide. He was the true Lamb to which every morning and evening sacrifice in the temple had daily pointed. He was the Lamb of which Isaiah had prophesied, that He would be 'brought to the slaughter.' He was the true Lamb of which the passover lamb in Egypt had been a vivid type. In short, He was the great propitiation for sin which God had covenanted from all eternity to send into the world. He was God's Lamb..."

II. Its Basic Meaning

- 1.
2. [1] Christ is a PROMISED sacrifice—He is the "Lamb of God" who comes from God—He is God's provision...
3. This of course is true of the four examples from the OT—every single one of them—were provided by God...
4. Thus—is a sanctioned sacrifice—He's provided by God Himself—He's the Lamb that came down from heaven...
5. Melancthon Jacobus—"John therefore means to say, Behold the sacrificial Lamb – the great appointed sacrifice prepared by God, predicted and brought forward by Him, to bear the sins of the world..."
6. [2] Christ is a QUALIFIED sacrifice—that is—He is qualified to be our substitute—because He is God and man...
7. Now—as we examine the four OT imageries I've suggested—the obvious similarity between them is—substitute...
8. [a] God, v30—"This is He of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me..."
9. V15—"John bore witness of Him and cried out, saying, This was He of whom I said, He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me..."
10. V1—"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God..."
11. In other words—Christ should be preferred before John because—Christ is the eternally begotten Son of God...

12. [b] Man, v31—"I did not know Him; but that He should be revealed to Israel, therefore I came baptizing with water..."
13. John here testifies—that he did not know who the Messiah was—until He was publically identified at His baptism...
14. We learn from v33—that God had revealed to John—that the Messiah would be made known in His baptism...
15. V33—"I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit..."
16. My point is this—John didn't know Him prior to His baptism—because there wasn't anything extraordinary about Him...
17. V10—"He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him"—because He was an ordinary man...
18. Isa.53:1-2—"who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground. He has no form of comeliness; and when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him..."
19. Dear brethren—our Savior was a true man—with nothing physically to separate Him from those around Him...
20. Now—this of course doesn't deny that there were several VERY important differences between Him and others...
21. [3] Christ is a BETTER sacrifice—that is—the NC Lamb—is far superior to the entire OC sacrificial system...
22. [a] He effectually took away sin—"John saw Jesus, and said, Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world..."
23. Literally—"The Lamb of God who is taking away the sin of the world—the verb is a present active—is taking away..."
24. In other words—John understands that Christ's sacrifice includes the whole of His life and not merely His death...
25. When John says that Christ—"takes away sin"—he means—He takes away the guilt and punishment due sin...
26. Thus—the contrast is between the sacrifices of the OC and Christ—OC sacrifices could never take away sin...
27. Heb.10:4—"For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins [Rom.11:27; 1Km.3:5]..."
28. The Greek word rendered "take away" literally means—"to lift up or bear"—He took away sin by bearing it...
29. Thus—essential to this phrase "takes away" are the concepts of "removal by bearing" or substitutionary atonement...
30. J.C. Ryle—"The Lamb of God bears the sin of the world by taking it upon Himself. He allowed our guilt to be laid upon Him, and carried it away like the scapegoat, so that there was none left. It is one of the many expressions which describe the great Scripture truth, that Christ's death was a vicarious sacrifice for sin. He became our substitute. He took upon Him our sin. He was made sin for us. Our sins were imputed to Him. He was made a curse for us..."
31. Lev.16:20-22—"And when he has made an end of atoning for the Holy Place, the tabernacle of meeting, and the altar, he shall bring the live goat. 21 "Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, confess over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, concerning all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat, and shall send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a suitable man. 22 The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to an uninhabited land; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness..."
32. [b] He took away the sins of the world—that is—in contrast to the OC sacrifices that were offered for the Jews...
33. Albert Barnes—"Of the world – that is – Of all mankind, Jew and Gentile. His work was not to be confined to the Jew, but was also to benefit the Gentile; it was not confined to any one part of the world, but was designed to open the way of pardon to all men..."

34. Now—I trust that most of you know—that this statement, and others similar to it, has been the cause of much debate...
35. But—let me suggest to you something that I trust is obvious—John isn't using this phrase to start a controversy...
36. John is simply introducing our Savior to the multitudes—and He does so as they Savior of the whole world...
37. Thus—I suggest—that John uses this word "world" purposefully and intentionally for at least two reasons....
38. [i] It was a rebuke to the Jews—the Jews, just like all men by nature, we a very proud people who despised others...
39. They viewed themselves, and in some sense rightly, as God's people, and thus looked down upon all others...
40. Thu—they divided the entire human race into two categories—Jews and Gentiles—or—the Jews and the nations...
41. Perhaps we could put it like this—Jews and non-Jews—regardless who you were—you were either a Jew or Gentile...
42. Thus—John was rebuking the proud Jews—teaching that—Jewish nationality—brought no benefits with it...
43. Again—this is something that the apostle John already did, v13—"who were born not of blood [natural decent]..."
44. [ii] It was good news to Gentiles—when non-Jews or Gentiles heard John's message—they no doubt were amazed [Jn.4:39-42; Acts 13:46-48]...

III. Its Practical Application

A. The centrality of Christ's death

1. I trust it's very instructive—that John introduces our Savior as—"the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world..."
2. In other words—John introduces Him—specifically and intentionally—as a SACRIFICE to deal with our sin...
3. V29—"Behold! The Lamb of God!"—that is—behold...look...observe...consider...Him as God's provided Lamb...
4. This is what the world foremostly needs—the world needs a Savior—the world needs a Lamb—a substitute...
5. Thus—we must never forget that Christ is not first and foremostly an example of morality or of divine love...
6. He is first and foremostly a Lamb to bear the sin of the world—to satisfy or appease the wrath of Almighty God...
7. J.C. Ryle—"Let us take heed that in all our thoughts of Christ, we first think of Him as John the Baptist here represents Him. Let us serve him faithfully as our Master. Let us obey Him loyally as our King. Let us study His teaching as our Prophet. Let us walk diligently after Him as our Example. Let us look anxiously for Him as our coming Redeemer of body as well as soul. But above all, let us prize Him as our sacrifice, and rest our whole weight on His death as an atonement for sin. Let His blood be more precious in our eyes every year we live. Whatever else we glory in about Christ, let us glory above all things in His cross..."

B. The universality of Christ's death

1. Here—I want to apply this phrase, as John did, to my hearers, v29—"Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world..."
2. What was John's purpose or goal in describing Christ this way—well—simply put—He wanted them to look to Christ...

3. But—and this is very important—he wanted them to look to Christ as the Lamb—that takes away THEIR sin...
- C. The blessedness of Christ's death
1. Here I want to briefly—apply this phrase—"the Lamb of God who takes away sin"—to the conscience of Christians...
 2. For brethren—let me put this as plain as I can—Christians must look to Christ as the Lamb who took away their sin...
 3. [1] In fighting sin, Rom.6:14—"for sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace..."
 4. [2] In feeling guilt, Rom.8:1—"there is therefore now NO condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus..."
 5. [3] In questioning acceptance—that is—we must remember that in taking our sins away He gives us His righteousness...