

THE LAMB OF GOD

The volcano rumbles and smoke pours into the sky. The priests slowly make their way up the long incline, chanting as they go. As they reach the edge, smoke billows and molten lava spews into the air. A few men come forward bringing a bound woman. Her eyes glisten with fear, but she is not resisting. The men bring her to where the priests stand offering prayers to the gods, asking for a good harvest and that the gods no longer be angry with them and accept this sacrifice as an appeasement for their sins.

When the prayer is over, the priests lift the young woman over their heads and throw her into the mouth of the burning volcano. What a terrible story! Yet all through history mankind

has felt the need to sacrifice.

Even in ancient Israel, the Bible records that lambs and other animals were regularly sacrificed as part of their religious observance.

Why Sacrificing Animals?

- It provided a graphic illustration that sin causes death.
- It gave hope to know that a substitute would die for sinners.

KEY POINTS

Why did the practice of sacrificing animals become such a central part of the worship of the true God? The Bible provides two reasons. First, God wanted the Israelites to understand that “the wages of sin is death.” (Romans 6:23) When we rebel and sin against God, we forfeit our right to life. Each time an Israelite sinned he was to bring an animal, usually a lamb, to the sanctuary

where it would be killed. It was a graphic lesson that sin causes death. Second, God wanted them (and us) to know that we do not have to die for our sins. A substitute would die in our place.

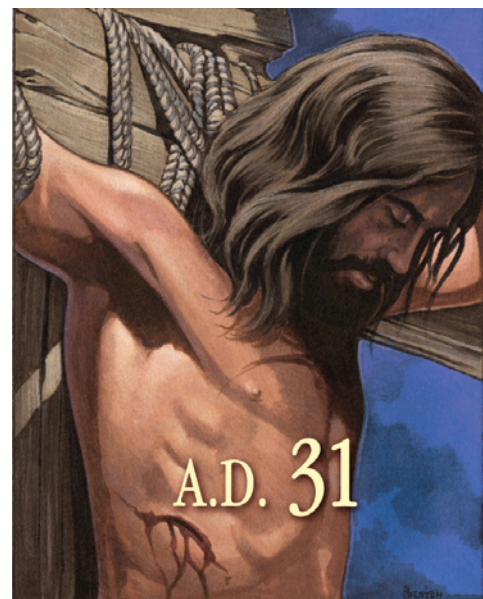
Now when Jesus started His ministry he came to the Jordan River to be baptized. When John the Baptist saw Jesus he said: “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29) John called Jesus the “Lamb of God” because Jesus would suffer and die in order to save us from the results of our sin, which is eternal death! The Bible says: “For He (God) made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” (2 Corinthians 5:21)

Every one of those sacrificial animals was a symbol of Jesus. God was showing His people that one day the real Lamb of God would die in their stead. This was God’s plan from the very beginning. The Bible says: “All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” (Revelation 13:8)

Not only does the Bible tell us that Jesus would die for our sins, but through prophecy, it also tells us when He would die!



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It all began with the prophet Daniel praying one day for Jerusalem, which had been ruined years before by the Babylonians. As Daniel was praying, the angel Gabriel appeared to him and gave him a prophecy centering on time: “Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city” Gabriel told Daniel. (Daniel 9:24)

To put it simply, Daniel is told that in 70 weeks something is to happen to the Jews and to their city, Jerusalem. Now 70 weeks is just a little over a year, 490 days. But in Bible prophecy a day represents a year. (Num. 14:34; Ez. 4:6) So God said to Daniel that something significant was going to happen in 490 years. 490 years from when? The Bible tells us that too: “Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks” or 69 weeks. (Daniel 9:25)



Jesus, the Messiah, came exactly on time to fulfill Bible prophecy.

So from the command to restore and rebuild Jerusalem unto the “Messiah the Prince,” would be a period of 69 weeks. (69 weeks equals 483 days/years.) According to Ezra 7:13, the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem was given in the year 457 B.C. If you add 483 years to 457 B.C. it takes you to 27 A.D., the very year that Jesus was anointed (the meaning of Messiah is “anointed”) by the Holy Spirit at His baptism in the Jordan! Isn’t that amazing!

Now remember, that after the 69-week period, the Messiah would be “cut off, but not for Himself.” (Daniel 9:26) This means that Jesus would be killed sometime after 27 A.D. But more importantly, He wouldn’t just be “killed,” He would be sacrificed for you and me. The Bible puts it this way: “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:8)

But the prophecy tells us even more. So far we have covered 69 of the 70 weeks. There’s still one more week to go. The prophecy continues (remember this was written more than 500 years before the events!): “Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; *But in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering.*” (Daniel 7:27) After three and a half years Christ, the real Lamb would be sacrificed, cancelling the need to continue the cycle of animal sacrifices. And that’s what happened. In the spring of A.D. 31, “Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.” (1 Corinthians 5:7)

When the apostle Stephen was killed by stoning (34 A.D.), three and a half years after the death of Jesus on the cross, the Gospel began to spread throughout the world. (Acts 8:4) This ended the amazing prophecy about Jesus and the spread of the Gospel from Jerusalem to the whole world!

TAKE-HOME MESSAGE

In this amazing prophecy, God lets us know that we can trust Him and His Word. God sent His Son Jesus Christ to die for you and me on a time schedule - and Jesus was sacrificed precisely on schedule. God told us that a substitute would come and die for our sins, and He also told us when. Jesus fulfilled that prophecy perfectly. Now we, who are living hundreds of years after these prophecies, can look back into history and see that God is, indeed, true to His words. He is a wonderful God, and we have a wonderful Savior!

BETWEEN YOU AND GOD

Regardless of who you are, regardless of what you have done, Jesus, the Lamb of God, has paid the penalty for your sins. God loves you! Jesus died for you. His sacrifice on the cross was for you. Jesus is offering you eternal life as a free gift! Why don’t you accept that gift right now?