

Lamb of God

Lesson 9

John 19

Opener

The story is told of a man who was visiting a city and looked up at one of its tall buildings. He noticed a stone figure of a lamb on the wall of the building. He stopped someone passing by and asked them why there was a lamb on the building. The person replied that it marked the spot where a workman had lost his balance and fell off the building.

The man asked if the workman was hurt or killed.

“No,” said the local resident, “it was a miracle. When his friends hurried down, expecting to find the mangled body on the pavement, there he was, shaken and badly bruised, but with hardly a bone broken. It happened that several lambs were on their way to slaughter, and as the mason fell, he landed on the back of one of them. The lamb was killed, of course, but his soft body broke the mason’s fall and saved his life. The builder was so impressed with the miracle that he had the stone lamb placed there, as a lasting tribute,” (Robert Coleman in *The Book of Jesus*, edited by Calvin Miller, p. 405).

Like the lamb in the story, Jesus suffered and died to save us. But unlike the lamb, Jesus knew what he was doing. He chose to die for us because of his great love for us. In the Old Testament, God’s people would sacrifice a lamb without any defects to God to pay for their sins. When Jesus died, he became the ultimate sacrifice—the Perfect Lamb—to pay for the sins of everyone “once for all” (Hebrews 10:10).

Scripture

Key Verses: Then Pilate had Jesus flogged with a lead-tipped whip. The soldiers made a crown of long, sharp thorns and put it on his head, and they put a royal purple robe on him. “Hail! King of the Jews!” they mocked, and they hit him with their fists (vv. 1-3).

Then Pilate gave Jesus to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus and led him away. Carrying the cross by himself, Jesus went to the place called Skull Hill (in Hebrew, Golgotha). There they crucified him. There were two others crucified with him, one on either side, with Jesus between them. And Pilate posted a sign over him that read, “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews (vv. 16-19).”

Jesus knew that everything was now finished, and to fulfill the Scriptures he said, “I am thirsty.” A jar of sour wine was sitting there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put it on a hyssop branch, and held it up to his lips. When Jesus had tasted it, he said, “It is finished!” Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit (vv. 28-30).

vv. 1-3

Pilate was the Roman governor in charge of Jesus' trial. Pilate didn't find any reason to have Jesus crucified, but he gave in to the crowd. So in keeping with the typical Roman crucifixions of the day, he had Jesus whipped severely, probably causing extreme pain and loss of blood.

Physical pain was not the only kind of pain Jesus felt. He also felt the sting of rejection as the guards mocked him. His heart must have broken as they put a crown of thorns on his head and a purple robe around him. Then they punched him with their fists.

Ask: Do you think Jesus knew he would have to go through this much suffering?

God had foretold these events in Isaiah 53: "He was despised and rejected—a man of sorrows, acquainted with bitterest grief. . . . He was wounded and crushed for our sins. He was beaten that we might have peace. He was whipped, and we were healed!" As horrible as these things were, Jesus' suffering is the reason we can have eternal life. Forgiveness is free for us, but it was not cheap—it came at a high price for Jesus. God knew all it would take to cover the sins of all people for all time, and this debt was paid in full by Jesus, his Son.

vv. 4-16

Pilate was not a Jew, and he did not understand their laws. The Jewish leaders tried to explain their reason for wanting Jesus dead: to them, he was a liar because he claimed to be the Son of God. This was a very serious crime to them. Pilate then continues to question Jesus, but Jesus refuses to answer him (v. 9).

Ask: Why would Jesus not try to defend himself to Pilate?

Again, Jesus knew what he had to do. This was God's plan all along. Isaiah 53:7 says, "He was oppressed and treated harshly, yet he never said a word." There was no reason for Jesus to try to defend himself; he was born for this very purpose. He was supposed to be sentenced to death, so he remained quiet.

He does indicate to Pilate that a Higher Plan is at work when he says, "You would have no power over me at all unless it were given to you from above" (v. 11). Jesus had spoken of this in John 10:18: "No one can take my life from me. I lay down my life voluntarily."

vv. 17-22

Carrying one's own cross was the usual practice for the Roman crucifixions. The other Gospels mention that Jesus was too weak after the beatings to carry his cross all the way to Golgotha, and a man named Simon of Cyrene helped him.

Once Jesus reached the hill, he was nailed to the cross. The soldiers placed Jesus' cross between the crosses of two common criminals.

Ask: Do you see any significance in the fact that Jesus was crucified between two criminals?

Jesus wants us to understand that his death was for ALL people—regardless of social standing, past failures or nationality. Notice that the sign above Jesus' head was written in three languages "so that many people could read it" (v. 20). The saying "the ground is level at the foot of the cross" explains this idea. Jesus is no respecter of persons. His love is for everyone, and salvation is for all who would believe.

vv. 23-37

Many of the things that took place before, during and after the crucifixion had been predicted in the Old Testament. John makes us aware of many of these Scriptures. The casting of lots for Jesus' clothes is one of these John mentions as fulfilling the Scriptures. Psalm 22:18 says, "They divide my clothes among themselves and throw dice for my garments."

Jesus again fulfills Scripture by asking for a drink. His final words are "It is finished!" These words are significant; they communicate that Jesus knew with certainty he had completed his task on earth. He leaves no room for doubt that the crucifixion was an accident. No. This was supposed to happen exactly as it did.

In a final act of cruelty, the Roman soldiers would break the legs of the victims to speed up their death. But Jesus was already dead, so they did not break his legs. As John indicates, this again fulfilled God's plan as recorded in the Old Testament. Instead of breaking his legs, they pierced his side with a spear. Jesus' blood flowed down the cross. This is significant because blood is seen in the Bible as the redeeming part of any sacrifice. It is the blood of the lamb that washes away the sins of the people. Jesus was the Lamb of God, and his blood washes away the sins of all people for all time.

The fact that there was also water that flowed out indicates that it was his heart that was pierced. More than any physical pain, Jesus' heart must have been broken by what the people he loved had done to him. They did not understand who he was or what he was doing.

We continue to break Jesus' heart today when we reject him and go our own way. He wants to wash away our sins and have a relationship with us. Will we accept the free gift of salvation that cost Jesus so much?

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that whoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life." - John 3:16

Thorns on his head, Spear in his side.

Yet it was a heartache that made him cry.

He gave his life so you would understand—

Is there any way you could say no to this man?

If Christ himself were standing here

His face full of glory and eyes full of tears,

And he held out his arms and his nail-printed hands—

Is there any way you could say no to this man?

How could you look into his tear-stained eyes

Knowing that it's you he's thinking of?

Could you tell him you're not ready now to give him your life?

Could you say that you don't think you need his love?

Jesus *is* here with his arms open wide

You can see him with your heart if you'll stop looking with your eyes

He's left it up to you—he's done all that He can.

Is there any way you could say no to this man?

- Billy Sprague

Application