

Lesson 3 – The Lamb of God (Genesis 22:8)

It is interesting to note the explanations about Jewish customs and traditions that are mentioned within the Gospel of John. In John 4:9, the author adds that Jews do not associate with Samaritans. In John 4:20 the explanation is given about where Jews thought the proper place of worship was located. The Passover is identified in John 2:13 as something that is expressly Jewish. Even earlier in the book, in chapter 1:37, John defines the term “rabbi” as meaning “teacher”. These references, and the hope expressed in John 4:25, “I know that Messiah”, (called Christ) “is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.”; inform the reader about Jewish culture seemingly suggesting that the audience the apostle John is writing to are not Jews. With this thought in mind, John is explaining the claim that John the Baptist made concerning Jesus in John 1:29 throughout the book; *“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”*

John is the only gospel account from which three separate Passover feasts are mentioned (John 2:13; 6:4; 11:55). From these references we can infer that Jesus’ ministry was at least 2 years in length. Whereas, John does not attempt to record all the events of his ministry, he does detail some unique events that are not included in the three traditional gospels. The wedding at Cana, the encounter with the Samaritan woman, and the raising of Lazarus are unique to John’s account.

There are many parallels made about Jesus and the Old Testament prophecies concerning the coming Messiah. It is of interest to note that traditional rabbinical interpretation of Isaiah 53:7, prior to Jesus life time, was that it referred to the suffering of the coming Messiah. By the 2nd century Jewish interpretation had changed to the suffering servant of Isaiah 52:13 as the nation of Israel itself. John seems to go out of his way to describe Jesus as the Lamb of God which was oppressed, yet he opened not his mouth (Isaiah 53:7; John 19:8, 9). Jesus was a lamb that had no flaw or blemish (John 18:38). Jesus cried out, **“It is finished.”** According to Jewish tradition, at the temple, at 3:00 p.m., the High Priest would sacrifice the Passover lamb, and declare to the congregation, “It is finished.” [<http://www.lolministry.org/pdf/articles/JesusthePassoverLambofGod.pdf>] Moreover, Jesus was crucified on the day of Preparation, when the Passover lamb was prepared for the Passover feast (John 19:30, 31; Exodus 12:6).

To the reader familiar with the Old Testament Scriptures, the account of John’s gospel is unmistakably parallel to Abraham’s command from God to offer Isaac, his only son, as a sacrifice (Genesis 22:2). The closeness of Jesus and the Father are discussed several times in John’s account (John 10:34-38; 8:28, 29; 1:18; 3:16-18; 14:9-11). A similar closeness between father and son surely existed between Abraham and Isaac. It was therefore prophetic, when Isaac asked his father Abraham, *“The fire and the wood are here, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?”* Abraham answered, *“God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.”* (Genesis 22:6-8). Hebrews adds an additional correlation to this story by stating the motivation of Abraham in offering his only son as a sacrifice. The Hebrew writer asserts that Abraham believed so much in God’s promise of an heir through Isaac that God would raise him from the dead to fulfill his promise. (Hebrews 11:17-19).

Questions:

1. The reader of John's gospel is quickly introduced to a quest that occurs during the temporal setting of this narrative. Describe what the author includes about the nature of this quest. Who or what are they looking for? (John 1:19-28; 1:40; 1:45; 1:49; 3:2; 3:25-36; 4:25)

2. John the Baptist, early in the book, solves the mysterious quest. He announces the arrival of the anticipated Christ. Explain John's mission and the benefit of the "Lamb of God" (John 1:29-31).

3. Again, on the next day, John ascribes the title to Jesus as "The Lamb of God" where two of his disciples hear and process the statement. What is the effect of the statement made by John and the reaction of his two disciples? What does this imply about the meaning of this title? (John 1:35-39)

4. Paul identifies Jesus as the Passover Lamb (I Corinthians 5:7) that was sacrificed. John the Baptist said, "Look, the **Lamb of God** who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29) Jesus, himself, describes the universal nature of God's love for the world in his discussion with Nicodemus (John 3:14, 15). Is there a correlation between Jesus statement, "*so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.*"; and Exodus 12:7,13?
