

Mary's Little Lamb

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[0 : 00] Well, I want you to take your Bibles this morning and open them, if you would, to the first of three passages.

And I want to read, actually, I do want to read from each of these three passages. So if you will turn to Exodus chapter 12. To begin with, and I'm going to read verses 1 through 7.

Exodus chapter 12, verses 1 through 7. Now the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt.

So you kind of get the historical context. This is while God's people Israel are in bondage in Egypt. This month shall be your beginning of months.

It shall be the first month of the year to you. 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.

[1 : 17] And if the household is too small for the lamb, let him and his neighbor next to his house take it according to the number of persons, according to each man's need. You shall make your count for the lamb.

And on the tenth of the month of the house where they eat it. And I'm going to stop there in this passage. And I will refer to some additional verses in this chapter as we go along this morning.

But the next passage is Matthew chapter 1. Matthew chapter 1, starting with verse 18.

Now, the birth of Jesus was as follows. After his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit.

Then Joseph, her husband, being a just man and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary, your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.

[3 : 09] And she shall bring forth a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins. So all this was done, that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by the Lord through the prophets, saying, Behold, the virgin shall be with child and bear a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which is translated God with us.

Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took to him his wife, and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn son.

And he called his name Jesus. And then one final verse, John, the Gospel of John, chapter 1, verses 19 through 29.

John 1, starting with verse 19. Now this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who are you?

He confessed and did not deny, but confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then? Are you Elijah?

[4 : 28] He said, I am not. Are you the prophet? And he answered, No. Then they said to him, Who are you? That we might give an answer to those who sent us.

What do you say about yourselves? And he said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness. Make straight the way of the Lord, as the prophet Isaiah said.

Now those who were sent were from the Pharisees, and they asked him, saying, Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?

And John answered them, saying, I baptize with water. But there stands one among you whom you do not know. It is he who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to lose.

These things were done in Bethbara, beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing. The next day, John saw Jesus coming toward him.

[5 : 32] And he said, Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. Okay. That's a lot of reading, I know, to begin with this morning.

And trust me, I have no intention of preaching an expository sermon from every one of those verses. Okay? So, don't get nervous about that. Now let me explain, though, how these passages are connected.

To be strictly accurate, the whole story of Christmas, I mean the full story of it, is not confined to a place, Bethlehem of Judea.

And to be strict about it, to be accurate about it, the whole story, the full story of Christmas is not confined to a point in time, a date on the calendar, a particular year, in this case approximately 4 B.C., as the calendar goes.

And I would add to that, the story of Christmas, and I mean the whole story of Christmas, is not confined to any one historical event like the birth of Jesus.

[6 : 57] Now, certainly the birth of Jesus is a significant chapter in the story. We would all agree with that. But it is not the first chapter, nor is it the last chapter. The birth of Jesus is merely part of a stream of divine revelation that runs throughout the Bible, starting way back there in Genesis and not ending until we get to Revelation.

And we could identify it as the revelation of the Lamb, or the doctrine of the Lamb. The doctrine of the Lamb, which is a glorious doctrine on the pages of Scripture, revealed in Scripture progressively throughout the Old all the way through to the End of the New.

And it's not, by the way, even confined to recorded history. Not confined just to history.

It spans all of eternity, the revelation or the doctrine of the Lamb. Eternity past, eternity future. Now, in terms of eternity past, Jesus is the Lamb of God slain before the foundation of the world.

Revelation chapter 13, verse 8. And in terms of eternity future, 10,000 times 10,000, the Bible says.

[8 : 21] 10,000 times 10,000. And thousands of thousands will stand one day at the very throne of God, around the throne of God. And they will say or sing for all eternity, worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing.

blessing and honor and glory and power be to him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb forever and ever. That's Revelation chapter 5, verses 11 and 12.

So, this time of the year, we celebrate just really just a small part of a much larger story, don't we? And we need to remember that.

We need to be reminded of that. It's a much larger story. It's a story that takes in the entire revealed Word of God. And again, even goes back in eternity and forward in eternity.

So, it's just a small part of it. What we're celebrating this time of the year. We celebrate, of course, this time of the year, the birth of the eternal Lamb of God.

[9 : 32] Mary's little Lamb. But again, this is not the first appearance of the Lamb.

In fact, you can go all the way back to Genesis chapter 3 and see that the Lamb appears there in Genesis chapter 3 where God slays a Lamb or Lambs, I believe, to provide a covering for Adam and Eve's nakedness.

It's a covering, essentially, for their sin. And then you can go up to Genesis chapter 4 where Abel slays the firstling of his flock, a Lamb, and offers it up to the Lord as a sacrifice for his sin to make atonement for his sin.

And God accepts that sacrifice and does not accept his brother Cain's sacrifice, remember. The Lamb appears there. This is the progressive revelation of the doctrine of the Lamb.

The Lamb also appears in Genesis chapter 22 where God provided a Lamb as a substitute sacrifice for Abraham's son Isaac.

[10 : 43] You remember that story. The Lamb appears in Exodus chapter 12 as I read a moment ago where Israel is in Egypt and God delivered Israel, ultimately delivered them from the bondage of Egypt.

He delivered them under the blood of the Lamb spread over the door, top of the door, and the doorposts of their homes.

And then the Lamb appears over and over and over again all throughout the Old Testament sacrificial system every year on the Day of Atonement. A spotless Lamb is slain and the blood is shed for the sins, to make atonement for the sins of God's people Israel, the nation Israel.

And then as we move on into the New Testament, the Lamb appears in John chapter 1 as I read a moment ago where the Lamb of God was walking on the banks of the Jordan River and John the Baptist looks up and he sees him and he declares, behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

And his name was Jesus. His name was Jesus. He is the eternal Lamb of God. But of course, he came into this world through birth.

[12:06] Physical birth, right? That's how Jesus came. And he was born of the Virgin Mary. And he was born in a stable.

And all the other parts of the story that we know so well and we're reminded of it again this time of the year. He was Mary's little lamb. And there are three things that I want us to understand about Mary's lamb.

Three things that will connect, and this is my intention, three things that will connect Mary's little lamb, Jesus, will connect Mary's little lamb with the many thousands of lambs that appear in the story throughout the Old Testament and on into the New.

Connect all of that together. Number one, Mary's lamb was a spotless lamb. Perfect.

Sinless. Spotless. Remember what I read back there in Exodus chapter 12? Not immediately per se about Jesus, but foreshadowing the coming of the Lamb of God.

[13:25] But in Exodus chapter 12, the lambs were to be used to bring about Israel's deliverance out of their bondage in Egypt. And we know that story quite well.

But what we need to remember is God's instructions concerning those first lambs that would be used to deliver Israel. God's instructions were meant to be the law that would apply to all lambs that would be sacrificed from that point on as the Passover was established there in Egypt.

So, just any lamb would not do. According to what I read there in Exodus chapter 12, you remember, not any lamb would do.

You can't just go pick a lamb and use that lamb. Not any lamb would do. It had to be a spotless lamb in a physical sense. Literally, spotless.

Now, it says it had to be a male, which is pretty important prophetically, right? It's a foreshadowing of Christ. But what I want us to notice is the lamb had to be free of any blemish, any flaw that could be observed with the eye.

[14:40] And so, therefore, it would require very careful examination. Very painstaking examination, detailed examination. They would examine every inch of that lamb, even inside as much as they could see.

Okay? I mean, they would look inside the mouth, down into the throat, the teeth. All of it had to be perfect. And I was reading this past week, to even examine the inside of the eyelids.

I mean, we're talking about a very careful examination of the lambs that would be used, first of all, to deliver Israel out of Egypt, but then would be used on the Day of Atonement all throughout the Old Testament and would be a foreshadowing of the coming of the Lamb of God.

Had to be perfect. They had to make sure in every way. And to make sure the Jewish, the Levitical priests would spend three days, three whole days, examining the Passover lambs just to make sure that they were spotless.

This was the law that they had to obey. God's law. And so only a spotless sacrifice would be accepted by God. Only a spotless lamb would atone for the sins of the people.

[16:05] And then when Mary's lamb came into the world, he too was spotless, right? Do you see the correlation how important this is? Had to be without sin.

And really almost from the beginning of his public ministry, the Jews were continually examining him, scrutinizing him. Every word that he said, he spoke.

They were examining him and testing him all throughout his adult life. Those three years when he began his ministry, they examined him very carefully.

And you know, the parallel is really quite amazing. When Jesus came into the world, Mary's lamb came into the world, at that time, the rabbinical priests had begun to breed very, very special Passover lambs.

They didn't just take this to chance. Throughout the centuries, throughout the Old Testament, they began to develop and specially breed lambs for this very purpose.

[17:08] They had to be the very best and they were the very best. And on a certain day before the Passover, they would bring these specially bred lambs from the fields of Bethlehem.

That was the area where they bred them. Interesting. Correlation there with Scripture. And they would lead them into the temple area, into Jerusalem, and they would lead them through the sheep gate to be examined by the Levitical priests.

And this was something they did just before Passover. They would do this every year. Now, on the Christian calendar, by the way, that day was Palm Sunday or would become Palm Sunday in the Christian era.

And you know what that means? That means that the same day all the Passover lambs were being brought into the city of Jerusalem. On that very same day, God's lamb, Mary's lamb, was coming into the city.

On Palm Sunday, same day. And while the Passover lambs were being carefully examined by the priests, Mary's lamb, Jesus, the lamb of God, was being examined by everyone at the very same time.

[18 : 23] And for three days, they examined Jesus according to the biblical record. They examined the lamb of God. The Pharisees examined him. The Sadducees examined him.

The high priest, all the temple priests and leaders, they all examined Jesus. The Herodians examined him. Even the Romans examined him. And interesting, in the same courtyard, in the same courtyard that the priests were examining the Passover lambs, the lamb of God, Jesus was being examined in the same place at the same time.

And do you know what the ultimate conclusion was about the lamb of God, about Jesus? The ultimate conclusion that was made by the supreme authority of that day? He's spotless. guiltless, faultless. That's what Pontius Pilate said. In effect, he said, I find no fault in him. Mary's little lamb.

Mary's lamb was a spotless lamb. Mary had a little lamb. Its fleece was white as snow. Mary's lamb was a spotless lamb.

[19 : 36] Second, Mary's lamb was a slain lamb. It had to be. A slain lamb. It had to be killed. It had to be put to death.

Its blood had to be shed. Again, going back to that passage in Exodus chapter 12. God's instructions were, according to verse 6, Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it, kill the lambs, the spotless lambs, at twilight, and they shall take the blood.

Our soldiers didn't just kill it, they drained its blood. And that's what they did. Every household in Israel, there in bondage in Egypt, every household, would take a spotless lamb and with a sharp knife would slit its throat and then drain its blood into a basin.

Now, fast forward a few thousand years to the Lamb of God who was also slain. He was slain.

And Jesus was crucified, by the way, on Mount Moriah. Geographically, that was Mount Moriah there in Jerusalem. And the same place, by the way, that was the same place where God told Abraham centuries before that he would provide himself a lamb.

[21 : 08] And, of course, he did. And at approximately 3 p.m. that day when Jesus was crucified, at 3 p.m., the knives of the Levitical priests were cutting the throats of the Passover lambs.

And at that very moment, Jesus cries out, from the cross, it is finished. Interesting. Time correlation. You understand?

According to the Word of God, a living lamb, no matter how spotless, could not atone for sin. It could be perfect, but a living lamb would not do it.

would not bring forgiveness of sin. The lamb had to be slain. Had to be killed. Its blood had to be shed.

And when it comes to the sacrifice for our sins, it was not enough for Jesus to be sinless and surrendered to save us from our sins. He had to suffer and be slain.

[22 : 13] Had to be slain. You know, the Jews and the Romans, Jews first and ultimately the Romans, they condemned Jesus to death, right?

And the Romans performed the duty of crucifixion, but essentially, it was God who crucified his son, Jesus, who put him to death.

and as the blood of Jesus was pouring out of his body as he hung there upon that cross, and he dismissed his spirit and as his life is slipping away from him, you can almost see Romans chapter 5, verse 8, placarded across the sky, but God demonstrates his love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, still sinners, what?

Christ died for us. Christ died for us. Had to be a slain lamb. A living lamb, a living savior would not do anything for us.

did you know that there are some churches, by the way, and entire denominations over the years who have chosen to purge out of their song books, their hymn books, all of the hymns that deal with the blood, that speak about the blood of Jesus.

[23 : 40] Did you know that? They're kind of purging those out because, you know, to them, the idea of the blood atonement is barbaric and crude and uncivilized and horrible, and so they have just taken those out of their hymn books.

They would never sing them. To them, it would be absolutely repugnant to sing, there is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel's veins. They would never sing that.

Or, what can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. Or, I heard an old, old story how a Savior came from glory, how he gave his life on Calvary to save a wretch like me.

I heard about his groaning of his precious blood's atoning. Then I repented of my sin and won the victory. They don't sing that. The blood, that's gross, that's horrible, that's not even important.

So they purged them out of their hymn books. Hymns like, Would you be free from the burden of sin? There's power in the blood, power in the blood. Would you ever evil a victory win?

[24 : 52] There is wonder-working power in the blood, wonderful power of the blood. There is power, power, wonder-working power in the blood of the lamb.

There is power, power, wonder-working power in the precious blood of the lamb. That's not gross. There'd be no salvation apart from it.

Or how about this one? Have you been to Jesus for the cleansing power? Are you washed in the blood of the lamb? Are you fully trusting in his grace this hour?

Are you washed in the blood of the lamb? Are you washed in the blood, in the soul-cleansing blood of the lamb? Are your garments spotless? Are they white as snow?

Are you washed in the blood of the lamb? Those are great hymns, aren't they? And some, sadly, some churches, so-called, and entire denominations, have purged those from their hymn books.

[25 : 56] It's repugnant to them. Mary's little lamb was a slain lamb. Living lamb would not do.

He had to die and his blood had to be shed. And she shall bring forth a son and you shall call his name Jesus for he will save his people from their sins.

Mary's lamb was a spotless lamb and a slain lamb and then there's one more. Mary's lamb is, not was, was but also is, is a saving lamb.

There's salvation in this lamb and only in the lamb of God. Again, looking back at Exodus chapter 12 and verse 7, and they shall take some of the blood, the blood of the lamb, put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses.

I didn't read this earlier, but listen to verse 22 of that same chapter. And you shall take a bunch of hyssop, dip it in the blood that is in the basin, the blood that came from the lamb, and strike the lintel, that's the top part of the door, and the two doorposts on each side of the door.

[27 : 28] Strike these things with the blood that is in the basin, the blood of the sacrificial lamb, spotless lamb. Now, notice that they were not to apply the blood of the lamb to the threshold of the door.

Why is that? Well, because you always go under the blood of the lamb, never walk on top of it. But the most important thing here is the sacrificial blood, this special blood, the blood of a spotless lamb, that's the only thing that would work.

And with our salvation, it's the only the blood of Jesus that will work. God had said in Exodus chapter 12 and verse 23, for the Lord will pass through and strike the Egyptians and when he sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the Lord will pass over the door and not allow the destroyer to come into your houses to strike you.

And you shall observe this thing as an ordinance for you and for your sons forever. Now connect this with Jesus, with Jesus, Mary's little lamb.

In the Old Testament, God's chosen people were to apply the blood of the spotless lamb with hyssop, which is just a common plant of the day, very common, almost weedy type of plant.

[29 : 00] It was just everywhere. I mean, it was easily accessible. You just reach out and grab it anywhere. And hyssop is symbolic of faith, especially when you make the connection.

In the New Testament, God's chosen people apply the blood of the lamb of God with faith, through faith. And so the blood of the lamb saves.

He's a saving lamb. Hebrews 9, 22, according to the law, almost all things are purified with blood. And without shedding of blood, there is no remission.

That is no remitting of your sin. No cancellation of your sin debt. No forgiveness of sins.

No remission. And the key is faith. Faith. Romans 10, 9 and 10. If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

[30 : 11] For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture says whoever believes on him will not be put to shame.

Mary's little lamb is a saving lamb. The angel said to Joseph in Matthew 1, 18, you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.

The angel said to the shepherds who were out there tending their flocks at night, wonderful part of the story. The angel said to the shepherds in Luke chapter 2 verse 11, for there is born to you this day in the city of David a savior, a savior who is Christ the Lord.

Not just a good man, not just someone who by example would show the right way, but a savior, a savior.

The age of Simeon when he looked and saw the child and God allowed him to live long enough so he could see the Messiah. He said to the Lord in Luke chapter 2 verse 30, Lord my eyes have seen your salvation.

[31 : 35] Your salvation. And that savior was born to the Virgin Mary. That's what we celebrate this time of the year. But that's not the final chapter is it?

Because 30 years later as Mary's little lamb was walking along the banks of the Jordan River, again John the Baptist declared, behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Powerful words. The great Spurgeon, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the great preacher, he preached to thousands and thousands of people.

And on some occasions, not preaching in his church, which seated quite a few people, but was scheduled to preach to thousands of people in London's agricultural halls.

Apparently a huge hall there in London, England. And because, you know, they didn't have any electronic sound equipment back in that day, Spurgeon went a day before to kind of check out the acoustics as the story goes.

[32 : 51] And Spurgeon thought no one was there in the building. And so he walked up behind the podium and he shouted out these words of John the Baptist, behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

And the sound of that reverberated all throughout that huge cavernous hall. But the place was not empty as Spurgeon thought.

And as the story goes, there was a workman up in one of the rafters doing some kind of work and Spurgeon didn't know he was there.

And that workman heard those words, behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Those words began to reverberate in his mind and he couldn't get them off his mind.

He couldn't stop hearing them. And all throughout the day he kept hearing those words. And when he went home that night he kept hearing those words, behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

[33 : 52] And when he went to bed he couldn't sleep. He kept hearing those words over and over again and ultimately he confessed his sin and was saved. And we know it because this workman would later tell Spurgeon that he had heard those words on that very day when Spurgeon thought he was all alone and he spoke those words in that hall but this workman heard them and he said because of that, that scripture, God saved him, led me to salvation.

See, Mary's little lamb, Mary's little lamb was a spotless lamb. He had to be. Spotless, perfect, sinless. The only sacrifice sacrifice that would be acceptable to God the father.

And Mary the lamb was a slain lamb because a living lamb would not do. And because of that, Mary's lamb is right now, today, a saving lamb.

The one and only saving lamb if you will put all of your faith in him.

Have you?