



<https://www.gotquestions.org/Jesus-Lamb-of-God.html>

“Behold, here is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world.” John announces to those present that Jesus is the one the people have been waiting for. The one who will offer salvation to everyone. The one who will free them from sin – even though the people don’t yet realize the terrible journey and horrible death Jesus will suffer to make that so.

Jesus is given many names along the way. We have some from the Old Testament mentioned last week from the prophet Isaiah: Wonderful Counselor, Prince of Peace, Mighty God, Everlasting Father. We get more in the New Testament, including: Christ, Messiah, Emmanuel, Logos, New or Second Adam, Son of God, Son of Man and Lamb of God.

What’s with all these names for the same person? It’s a bit more than saying someone is mother, daughter, sister, aunt. The names for Jesus reflect to a certain degree our understanding of who Jesus is – both as a human being and as divine incarnation of God. They also reflect what we believe Jesus has come to be and to do on earth.

The image of a lamb is familiar from the Old Testament. There were a variety of types of sacrifices to be made to God in the old Israelite tradition. Offering a sacrifice was one way of making right – or restoring- a relationship with God. It was a way to offer forgiveness and a way to offer thanks. Blood was seen as life itself and thus you were not to eat anything with blood still in it – sorry those of you who love very rare steaks! But the blood of the sacrificed animal was poured out over the altar to signify the life being given to God or one of the other purposes of making a sacrifice. And, the animal chosen for the sacrifice was chosen depending upon the wealth or poverty of the person offering the sacrifice or the nature of the offering. So, a poor person might be able to offer two turtledoves while a wealthy person was expected to offer a lamb, an ox or a heifer. And each of the animals must be unblemished – the offering to God could not be marred by imperfection in the offering.

And then we come to the Exodus and the creation of the Passover. On the night before the Israelites were to leave Egypt and begin the Exodus, they were to sacrifice a lamb, roast, eat and eat all of it. In addition, they were to use the blood of the sacrificed lamb to paint the lintels – the doorposts- of their home so the Angel of Death would know to “pass over” that house. Thus, the name of the feast, Passover.

Jesus is called the Passover Lamb as he was sacrificed for all of us on the night before Passover. His blood was shed for the whole world that our sins might be forgiven – that the Angel of Death would pass over us.

For John the Baptizer, then, to call Jesus the Lamb of God signals that John was aware of the special role that Jesus was called to play in the lives of the people of that time and in our lives today. We also have Jesus, himself, telling us that he is the Good Shepherd- that he is the one guarding the flock (that is us), from the devil if we will follow him. Jesus wants to be active in our lives every day – the good shepherd who helps to steer us straight, who loves us and cares for us. The one who will come after us when we go astray.

We have kinds of images for Jesus in the Bible. And, generally a lamb is seen as gentle, innocent and pure due to its youth. Any of you who have had contact with lambs know that this is not always true- but we tend to hold onto our images because they are comforting even as they may not be fully complete.

Whatever name or names for Jesus you find most comforting, never forget that he willingly gave up his life for us. That we might have eternal life. That we might have life abundantly. That we might know God's love for us, now and always. **Amen.**