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IN HIS IMAGE

I was badly scarred, and marred By the things I loved in life. Then I met the mas-ter
I was ugly and a lone sees, With no one to care for me, But he saw my in-ner
Now I know the one who sees, With his eyes so full of love; For he paint-ed me a
paint-er And he en-ded my strife. He paint-ed me in his im-age. He paint-ed me with-out my
beaut-y And he taught me to see. sav-ior Who would take me a-bove.
sin. And now I'm walk-ing be-side him; He al-tered me from with-in.

Each year the Riverside church of Christ in Albuquerque hosts a youth rally known as “Spiritual Explosion. The theme for 2009 is “In His Image.” I am not an artist, to help with posters or decorations. Instead, I do what I can, and in this case it was the composition of the above song.

I leave it to you to determine if I am any better a poet or composer than a painter. Just be kind, and don’t tell me if that is the case.

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LAMB OF GOD

Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house: And if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats: And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening. And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it. And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it. (Ex 12:3-8)

Thus the command for a prominent aspect of Passover. (Passover starts April 9 in 2009.) It is true that the festival is known as the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The Passover seder is noted for the “four questions.” But

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the first Passover meal, and all since, have consisted of unleavened bread, bitter herbs, and lamb. In fact, lambs are prominently featured throughout the Bible.

War and Peace

Lambs are proverbially mild, harmless. “Meek as a lamb.” “If March comes in like a lion, it will go out like a lamb.” Are there any sports teams named the Lambs? There are Rams, but not likely any Lambs.

Perhaps this is why Nathan the prophet used a lamb in his story. When David sinned with Bathsheba and had her husband, Uriah, killed, Nathan came to the king with the following tale.

And the LORD sent Nathan unto David.
And he came unto him, and said unto him,
There were two men in one city; the one

rich, and the other poor. The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds: But the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter. And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him; but took the poor man’s lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him. And David’s anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, As the LORD liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die: And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity. And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man. (1 Samuel 12:1-7)

Would the story have been as effective if the man had raised a pit bull as a family member? Or a King Cobra? No, it works because a lamb is believable. It worked because a lamb is not threatening; in fact, because a lamb is totally subservient.

Isaiah uses the lamb as an example of peace. When he wants to describe the age of Messiah he contrasts several animals. One such contrast, in Isaiah 11: 6 says, “The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb.” He says something similar about the new Jerusalem. “The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent’s meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the LORD.” (Isa 65:25)

Contrast with this a different picture of a lamb. This is not how we usually think of a lamb.

And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand? (Rev 6:15-17)

Who would ever imagine “the wrath of the Lamb?” And yet, John was shown this wrath. The Roman Empire, indeed all the kings of the earth that oppose God, would suffer this wrath. Imagine what great provocation it must have taken to bring a lamb to such an agitated state!

The Silence of the Lambs

There is a scene in the movie, *The Silence of the Lambs*, in which the main character explains the movie's title. She remembers a time when her family of sheep ranchers was slaughtering animals for market. What upset her terribly was not the noise that one would associate with the slaughter of beef. It was the utter silence of the animals being slaughtered. That silence haunted her into her adult life.

The Bible speaks about the silence of the lambs in a particular place. Isaiah wrote about a suffering servant.

Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. (Isa 53:4-7)

An Ethiopian was returning to his home country from a trip to Jerusalem. As he rode in his chariot he was reading this passage. A man named Philip caught up to his chariot and asked if he understood what he was reading. When the Ethiopian said he did not, Philip sat in the chariot. The Ethiopian asked of whom the prophet was speaking. Philip did not reply that the prophecy referred to the Jewish nation. That interpretation came centuries later. Instead, "Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus." (Acts 8:35) The suffering servant was the Messiah. In his trial, Jesus was so uncharacteristically silent that "the governor marvelled greatly." (Matt 27:14)

Just as the fictional Clarice Starling was disturbed by the silence, so should we be. The Messiah of God chose to be silent in order to ensure his own death. That death saves us from sin. We should be disturbed that our sin led to his slaughter, his silent slaughter. It should make us more sensitive to sin and its effects. We are saved by the silence of the Lamb.

The Lamb of God

Of the more than one hundred mentions of a lamb in scriptures, most come in the books of Leviticus and Numbers. Lambs were frequently the required or optional offerings and sacrifices. They could be burned as dedicatory offerings, sin offerings, and peace offerings. A woman who had borne a child was to offer a lamb after the appropriate time lapse.

Outside of those books, and the Psalms, perhaps the most frequent references to a lamb are metaphorical. When John the Baptizer first saw Jesus, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God." (Jn 1:29, 36) If, as most people think, the Revelation was written by the apostle John, then that person's writings, along with Moses and David, constitute the bulk of references to a lamb in the Bible. It is probably no mistake, since John emphasizes the sacrificial nature of Jesus.

Particularly in the Revelation, Jesus is called a lamb. That is probably because that book was looking back after his death, burial, and resurrection. "And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain." (Rev 5:6) Later in that chapter the angels say, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." (Rev 5:12) And all people on earth repeat the blessing.

Jesus died as a sin offering. Lambs, however, were used as more than just sin offerings. Lambs were eaten at the Passover meal as part of a remembrance of

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deliverance. Lambs used as varying offerings were to be without blemish. Nevertheless, it is possible that Peter was thinking of the passage from Exodus 12 when he said:

Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. (1 Pet 1:18-19)

Whether or not Peter was thinking of Passover, Paul certainly thought of Jesus in connection with this month's holiday. "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." (1 Cor 5:7-8) It is in this capacity that Jesus is certainly the lamb of God.

YARD SALE

It's springtime! You can tell it's spring because the crocus and the daffodils are pushing their colorful little heads up through the soil. On the corner up the street is another reminder that it is spring. The yard sale signs begin to appear. When my wife Chris and I travel to visit our daughter in Clovis, New Mexico, we spend most of Saturday morning visiting these sales. I don't really mind because it gives me a chance to add to my library. I like to collect Bibles and cook books. I have several different Bible translations on my shelves that I have found at these sales. I also look for cookbooks that are put together by women's clubs and other organizations. If you're interested, my latest cookbook has recipes for bear stew and moose burgers!

On one of these occasions, as I was sifting through the books and other objects, it struck me how sad this really was. At one time, these items were very valuable to the seller. When they were purchased it was because they were either needed or much desired. Now here they are, thrown across a table and perhaps labeled at a fraction of their original cost. How can one decide how much a treasure is worth?

In Luke 15, Jesus tells of lost objects and the value that was placed on them by their owners. A Shepherd left the 99 to search for the one which was lost! A woman spent a large part of her busy day searching for one lost coin! The father continually waited for his lost son.

In Matthew 13:44-46, Jesus tells of great treasures that are found and what the finders were willing to sacrifice for them. The common thread with all of these is that they gave all that they owned for that one thing.

Jesus asked a difficult question in Matthew 16:26. "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"

What sort of value can you place on something that was purchased with the life of another? When this was written, human life was not regarded as very valuable. That is unless you were rich or a man. Slavery was common and women were regarded as property. As we read the newspaper today or watch the evening newscast it doesn't seem that much has changed.

The question that Jesus asked is still valid. Judas received thirty pieces of silver in exchange for his soul. Thirty pieces of silver; the price of a slave! That comes to about \$10! Is your soul only worth \$10?

One day, Satan had a yard sale and Jesus came to look at what he had to offer. As Jesus browsed among the tables He saw you. There you were, broken, dirty, and in need of repair.

"I want this one," He said.

"Why would you want such a worthless thing when there are so many other things that I have? Here are stones, for making bread; here are all the kingdoms of the worlds for you to command!"

"No, I want this precious soul," Jesus said. "How much?"

Satan smiled and said, "I don't know. Now that I see it, I may want to keep it for myself."

Jesus looked at your poor and tattered soul and said again, "How much?"

Satan grinned and said, "Your life for his!"

Jesus said, "Sold!"

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