

The Blood Of The Lamb

In the beginning, the universe was a chaos of matter and energy.

The way God imposed order on the chaos was by dividing one thing from another: light from darkness, day from night, the sky from the earth, the water from the land.

He divided time into seasons and days and years.

Then God created life and divided it into three kinds: vegetable life, animal life and mankind.

Man was distinctly different from the other two forms of life because man was created in the image of God.

Then God appointed man to be caretaker, the steward of His creation.

He planted a garden for the man to live in and work in and called it the Garden of Eden.

And all creation was tuned to a perfect harmony.

Harmony between man and God, harmony between man and woman, harmony between man and nature and harmony within man himself.

Then God gave man one simple command: "You must not eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, for on the day you eat of it you will surely die."

And we know what happened next.

The man and the woman disobeyed God's command.

Wanting to know what God knew they eagerly sought and obtained the knowledge of evil.

And that changed everything.

The knowledge of evil reversed the process through which God had created the universe.

A perfect creation began to unravel.

Harmony began to dissolve into dissonance and order into disorder.

A long, slow process of "uncreation" began which would ultimately reduce creation to the chaos that had preceded God's creative word.

God had said to Adam that sin must be punished by death.

And true to His word, death began to govern creation from the moment the first two human beings acquired the knowledge of evil.

Now we live in a fallen world where every living creature--including ourselves--must die.

But God, who created harmony out of chaos, can also create life out of death.

If by God's own law, death must account for sin, then death would account for sin.

And this became the basis of God's plan to save mankind from "the wages of sin, which is death."

God, who is divine, would become mortal and die to account for sin.

He would take all the sins of mankind onto Himself and then die for them to obey his own law.

He would stand before the bar of divine justice and offer his own death as payment for all those who stood convicted of a capital crime.

He would satisfy God's justice by keeping God's promise and the guilty defendant would be declared innocent and regain the eternal life he once possessed.

A divine death would open the door to eternal life.

And once this was accomplished, the good news of it would be proclaimed to all mankind.

God first began to proclaim the good news that death could lead to life in ancient Egypt.

Egyptian Pharaoh had refused to obey God's command to let His people leave Egypt and go to a land of their own, and God had sent terrible plagues upon Egypt.

But these plagues only served to harden Pharaoh's heart and he continued to defy God.

So finally God sent the final and most terrible plague of all: the angel of death would sweep over Egypt and claim all the firstborn males.

But before God sent the angel, He explained to His people how they could be protected from the destroying angel.

He instructed them to select a male lamb without defect, slaughter it and smear its blood on the doorframes of their houses.

He promised that the angel of death would pass over all houses whose doorframes had been marked with the blood of the lamb.

“On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn--both men and animals--and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the Lord. The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt.”

The death of a lamb would save the lives of God’s people.

Life would be preserved by a death.

Later during the Exodus, God gave the Israelites a system of worship based upon this same principle: the death of certain animals would suffice to pay the penalty for the sins of Israel and preserve the lives of the Israelites.

This was called “atonement,”

Leviticus Chapter Five: “If a person sins and does what is forbidden in any of the Lord’s commands...he is guilty and will be held responsible. He is to bring to the priest as a guilt offering a ram from the flock, one without defect and of the proper value. In this way the priest will make atonement for him for the wrong he has committed...and he will be forgiven.”

The death of a lamb or bull or goat would atone for the sins of the Israelite.

The blood of a lamb for the life of men.

What was worship to the Israelites was a prophetic sign to us--a sign of how God would one day allow the death of another firstborn son and lamb without defect to atone for the sins of all mankind.

Which is why when John the Baptist saw Jesus he said, “Behold the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.”

The blood of the Lamb of God atoned for our sins and restored us to eternal life.

It also set us free from Satan’s power.

Prior to the arrival of the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, Satan’s power lay primarily in his ability to accuse us of our sins before the throne of God.

But after the Lamb of God atoned for all of our sins on the cross, there was nothing left to accuse us of.

In the *Book of Revelation*, a heavenly voice proclaims that Satan was cast out of heaven when Jesus died on the cross.

“Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down.”

Sin atoned for is no sin at all: Satan’s head has been crushed and death has led to life.

The voice continues to say that those who shed their blood for proclaiming this good news--martyrs--share in the holiness of Christ Himself.

“They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.”

The Great Commission of the church is to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all nations.

Where the Gospel is proclaimed and people believe it, Satan is cast out of heaven.

When the seventy-two disciples returned from proclaiming the kingdom of God to the towns and villages of Palestine, Jesus told them, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.”

The proclaiming of the Gospel is work which brings joy to those who do it--even though it sometimes comes at a cost.

I saw firsthand evidence of this a few years ago at a conference sponsored by a group called Voice of the Martyrs, where missionaries described their experiences in countries where Christians were routinely persecuted.

Some of them had been abused--one had even been tortured.

Yet I have never such joyful people.

It was as if, having experienced and survived something they once feared, they were set free of fear once and for all.

As I listened to them speak I tried to imagine what it would be like to be set free from all fear?

I decided that it would be the greatest joy that I could imagine.

Our church, Hope Lutheran, has decided to financially support the outreach of the Gospel in several different arenas.

Each quarter of the year, we will designate a certain group for financial support.

For the final quarter of this year we are pledging our support to Voice of the Martyrs.

Now I'd like you to see a short, five minute video which describes their work.

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