



BEDWELL GLOBALMINISTRIES

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A LAMB! - A DISEASE! - A CURE!

Introduction.

Some years ago, I was listening to Handel's great choral master piece. It was in the stately Johannesburg city hall. The place was packed. The piece was presented by an all African choir from the famous city of Soweto. I had heard this masterpiece sung in the great Albert hall in London with the famous Sir Malcolm Sergeant conducting. But I think it was in this specific context, listening to this choir, I had an experience I shall never forget. Ironically the conductor was a Jew. If you want to hear powerful uninhibited full hearted singing, the African people will not disappoint you. They sang with deep feeling and intense emotion. The harmony was unique and beautiful. They seem to identify with every phrase of that choral piece. It was clear that it was not just a concert with them, but a time of ministry and worship and blessing. There was one piece of music that stood out that night. As I listened, every chorus and every solo faded into the background as the choir stood to sing the anthem, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." Its message thrilled me as it had never done before. That was my Savior about whom they were singing. It was as though I heard it for the first time. Its message came through to me with renewed freshness, vitality and power. It made its way into the very depths of my soul. I could not get away from it. Its vibrant message of hope clung on to me. I knew that one day I would have to prepare a message on it. In that moment was created a desire to preach on it. "And why not?" What greater message is there to proclaim than this. "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of world." This is the announcement of John the Baptist who was appointed and anointed by God to prepare the way for the Messiah. What an electrifying moment that must have been. It was a moment for which God's people had waited so long. John saw Jesus coming toward him and said "Look this is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." John and his ministry had caused a stir among the people. His clarion call to repentance and the challenge to renounce a life of sin, as well as his ardent passion for righteousness, aroused questions in the minds of the Jews and their leaders. They asked him who he was. But he was firm on it, for said to them "I am not the Christ." "Then who are you?" they asked, "Are you Elijah?" "I am not." He replied. "Are you a prophet then?" His answer

was an emphatic no. Again they asked, "Who are you then? "What do you say about yourself?" and he using the words of the Prophet Isaiah said. "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness; make straight the way of the Lord." He knew what his ministry was. He knew why God had called him to this task but he described

himself as a voice calling in the desert. "I am just a voice," he said. "Just a voice! I crave no position – I am not interested in status – wealth is not my goal – notoriety is not my ambition. His focus was mission not position – proclamation not power – exalting Christ and not exalting self. For he made it clear that, "He must increase and I must decrease." He said, in verses 26 – 27. "I baptize with water, "but among you stands one you do not know. V27. He is the one who comes after me, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie." "He is here." said John "Look the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." The scriptures tell us that in the fullness of time God sent forth His Son." This was the fullness of God's timing, and this is the history transforming moment of the ages. It is an extremely significant announcement made in the hour of God's choosing. But "What did it say to say to those listening Jews and what does it say to us?" The announcement makes quite clear that this man Jesus was no ordinary man, for He is designated as the redeemer of the world. His was the second Adam who came to undo what the first Adam had done. This proclamation indicates that Jesus is,

1. A PROVISION THAT IS DIVINE John 1:29, 36. "He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."

He is God's provision for the redemption of man. The discerning Jew would understand the meaning of that statement. It would stir within the memory of the Passover Lamb which was the means by which the Jews obtained freedom from the Egyptians. Thousands of Lambs had been sacrificed in Jewish rituals for the atonement of the sins of the people down through the ages. They understood what lambs were for when they were brought to the temple, and especially the Passover feast which was soon to take place, as you will read in John 2:13. But this Lamb was different! And John was given the task to disclose who this man Jesus was. This was the crowning climax of his marvelous message and Divinely appointed mission. These words not only disclose who Jesus is, but it also discloses what He was about in this world. John brings the thought of sacrifice to the fore at the very outset of Christ's ministry. Immediately the listener is introduced to the cross. It is at the center of John's message about Jesus. If we are to understand who Jesus is, and what He came to do, we must understand that He was destined to pay the price for our sin on Cross for us. This was no easy way, the way He took. It has the stain of blood on it. He was not materialistic messiah, not was he a powerbroker or status seeker. He was not interested in ascending to an earthly throne. He did not come for Himself. He came for others and would shed His precious blood for the souls of men and women. This was no easy road for the Lord Jesus Christ, and so He was introduced as the Lamb who would pay the supreme sacrifice for the sins of the world. "What is John saying about this provision?" First of all he is

telling us that in Jesus,

a. God is with us. John 1:29,36.

The heart of God is being laid bare before us. In verse 36 He says it again, "Look the Lamb of God." In verse 34, John draws aback the curtain a little in order to make sure that they understood and that they knew who the Lamb of God was, for he makes a startling statement, "I have seen and testify that this is the Son of God," which means that this man on the banks of the River Jordan, is God with us, in the person of Jesus Christ. This is an incredible awe-inspiring moment in the history of mankind. Here was God in Christ moving into time and history to be with us. It does tell us what kind of God we have. It is true that He is awe-some in His majesty – He is glorious in His Holiness - Almighty in His Sovereignty – He is all of this. But all of this suggests that He is detached from us. It really means that He is untouchable and unapproachable, and that there is no direct access into His presence. The scriptures make quite clear that we would not live if we saw God in His radiant purity and dazzling holiness. We could not reach Him in our sinful condition and so He came to us in Jesus. "Look" said John, "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Here and the on banks of the River Jordan, stands God in Christ in the presence of men. He devised and designed a way for us to reach Him. It is the way of the Cross, because through the shedding of the Blood of Jesus on the Cross we are reconciled to God. He is the Lamb of God the perfect sacrifice. The shedding of the precious Blood of Jesus gives us access into the Holy of Holies. He came as a man and paved blood sprinkled way for us to reach God. He is the way and no man comes to the Father except through Him. God in the person of Jesus is telling us that He is with us. But God in the person of Jesus is also telling us that,

b. God is for us. John 1:29.

He has come to take "away the sin of the world." With the condemnation of sin hanging over mankind, and the sentence of eternal death hovering over humanity, and the impending judgment of God facing the human race, the presence of Jesus who came to take away the sin of the world tells us, that God is for us. He is on our side. The scriptures make clear that He "who being the very nature of God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made Himself nothing taking the very nature of a servant.....became obedient to death, even death on a Cross." Philippians 2:6-8. God is for us. **John in this announcement not only reveals a provision that is Divine but underlines,**

2. A DEPRAVITY WHICH IS UNIVERSAL. John1:29

"Look at the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." John makes two assumptions here. Firstly he assumes,

a. The Reality of Sin. John 1:29.

John does not debate this issue. He knows the reality of the human condition without God. He himself had strong message of repentance from sin warning them that they should flee from the approaching wrath of God, and they should produce fruit in keeping with repentance. In other words their lives should be transformed, made anew and produce good fruit which was compatible with repentance. John does not debate the reality of sin. He accepts it as a fact. If it

were not so there would be no reason for Jesus to become the Lamb of God to deal with the fatal and malignant disease of sin. Sin is an unquestionable fact and force of the human dilemma. It has infected the whole race, of that fact there is no doubt. The Apostle Paul made no bones about it, for he said, "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." I realize that it is neither fashionable nor popular to touch on the subject of sin. There is a lot of talk from the pulpits these days on subjects which stroke the ego's and pamper the self, as well as build up self-esteem beyond the boundaries of reason. It is thought that it is fatal and offensive to challenge people to face up the fact of sin in their lives. But the Bible brings us face to face with awful fact of man's sinfulness even though it is not palatable to our modern church diet. Many tone it down so as not to disturb the self-indulgent lifestyles. But John said the Lamb of God laid aside His Glory to come to this earth to provide a way out of sin. It was a costly business. There was high price to pay for our redemption. To put mild labels on this deadly spiritual disease is fatal. Dr. J. Wilbur Chapman told of a distinguished minister, Dr. Howard, from Australia who preached very strongly on the subject of sin. After the service, one of the church officers came to counsel with him in the study. "Dr Howard," he said, "we don't want you to talk as openly as you do about man's guilt and corruption, because if our boys and girls hear you discussing that subject, they will more easily become sinners. Call it a mistake if you will, but do not speak so plainly about sin." The minister took a small bottle and showing it to the visitor said, "You see that label? It says strychnine – and underneath in bold red letters the word 'Poison.' Do you know what you are asking me to do? You are suggesting that I change the label. Suppose I do, and paste over the words, 'Essence of Peppermint'; don't you see what might happen? Someone would use it; not knowing the danger involved, and would certainly die. So it is too, with the matter of sin. The milder you make your label, the more dangerous you make your poison. Malcolm Nygren wrote, "Denying my sin has not freed me from it any more than death has kept us alive, it has only made me be unable to deal with it." Putting soft labels on it only increases its deadliness. The Bible never regards the human race as merely unfortunate, misguided or is misinformed. It is regarded as exceedingly wicked and its own righteousness is as filthy rags in sight of a Holy God. We would rather believe that there are simply benign defects in the human race, but "the one who has alight view of sin, never has great thoughts about God." M.C Richards asks "why is it if we are so well educated and brilliant and gifted and artistic and idealistic and distinguished in scholarship, that we are so selfish and scheming and begrudging and impatient and arrogant and disrespectful of others?" This is a reasonable question because that is the way it is. We have an entanglement of horrendous proportions in our society. We grope hopelessly in the darkness looking for solutions and not finding them. The world system does not have the answer to its fundamental problem which is sinful self. It does not have the power to deal with it. It can only suggest band-aid solutions. And they are failing. One has said that "the biggest trouble with sin is that self is in the middle of it." When sinful self promotes its agenda trying to dominate, the result is chaos and confusion. The human race is sinful and we would rather not dwell on

it. It embarrasses us or it should. Someone asked Charles Darwin, "is there any way in which man differs from animals?" He thought and said, "Man is the only creature that blushes." When Mark Twain heard that he said, "Yes, and man is the only creature with reason to blush." Tozer was right when he said, "Sin is still the world's first problem.....in spite of all of our smooth talk sin still continues to ride the race of man." The sin of the world is a reality. But John not only refers to the reality of sin but the,

b. The Universality of Sin. John 1:29. Jesus came to take away the sin of the world.

Sin has infected the whole world. Paul confirmed this reality when he said "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." The reality of sin is attributed to the fall of Adam, and the effect of that fall is regarded as extending to the entire race. Moses declared that, "The Lord saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time." Genesis 6:5. John in his announcement made abundantly clear that depravity is universal, and Jesus is the answer to it. But this leads us to the final truth that we are highlighting in this announcement. It is a redemptive truth that lights the flame of hope for the mankind. For John tell us that though sin is a reality in its universality, there is,

3. A CURE THAT IS COMPLETE. John 1 29.

"Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" John's message here is unmistakably clear. It is a redemptive message. It is profound and mysterious its ramifications but it is simple in its' intent. Jesus came to take away the sin of the world. That was the focus of His mission on earth. He, Himself said, that "He came to seek and to save that which was lost." He "came to take away the sin of the world." He did not come to suppress it, counteract it, cover it or make excuses for it. He certainly did not come to sympathize with man in his sinful condition. He came to confront sin, defeat it and to take it away. John said it with deep conviction, Jesus the Lamb of God is the sacrifice which provides the complete cure for the disease of sin in the heart of man. A.W. Tozer maintained that the **"the will of God is that sin should not merely be refined, for sin is so frightfully destructive to the soul, that no human thought or act can in any degree diminish its lethal effects. Only God can deal with it successfully, only the Blood of Christ can cleanse it from the pores of the spirit of man, the problem of sin demands an answer, it won't just go away. It must be carried away with redeeming Blood and redeeming Blood was never shed by any other Lamb than the Lamb of God."** The question this morning is **"If sin is not lethal. If it is not damning or eternally destructive why did the Lamb of God come to save us from it?** Why did the God of the universe step out of heaven in person of Jesus Christ to free us from its bondage? Benjamin Franklin was right when he wrote that "Sin is not hurtful because it is forbidden. But it is forbidden because it is hurtful." Kenneth Barney was so right when he declared, "The question is not how sin looks to us, or to worldly people, or to liberal theologians. The question is "How does sin appear to a Holy God." This question gets down to the heart of the problem. The mind of man tends to play down the serious nature of sin and

minimize the deadliness of its effect on their lives. So the only correct view of sin is, how it appears to Holy God. And it is so destructive and deadly; that is why God's one and only Son was willing to go to a cross and became sin for us, so that we might be made righteous. He came to take away the sin of the world. Here is

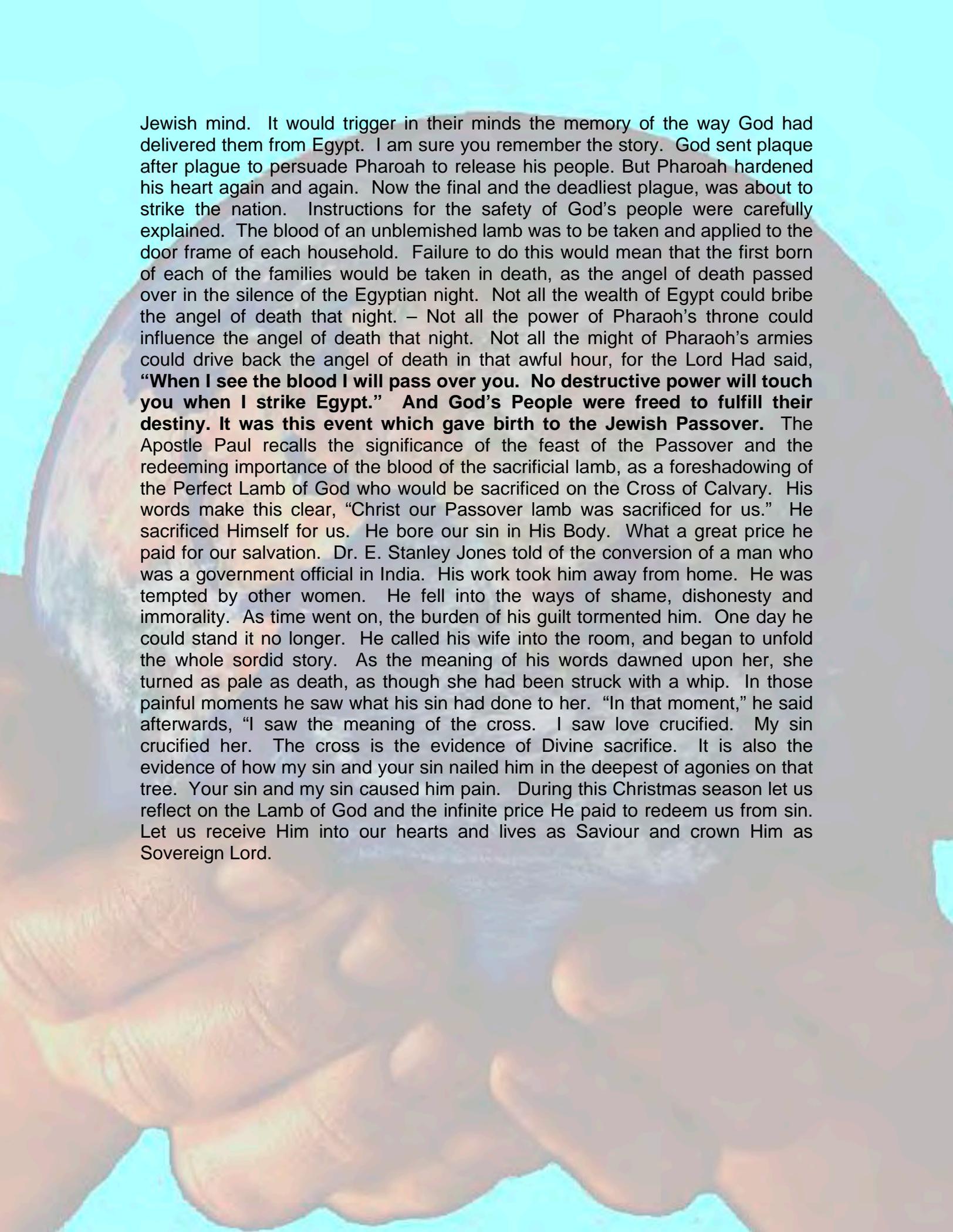
a. The Evidence of Divine Initiative. John 1:29.

If God did not step out of heaven to redeem us how would be saved? We are powerless to save ourselves. God came to save us in His Son Jesus. God is not only the author of eternal salvation, He is the initiator of it. The coming of Jesus was God's step towards us. It is God reaching out to us. He took the initiative to save us from our sin. If man was to be saved he needed help outside of himself. Man is totally hopelessly helpless. He cannot save himself. If you study the dealings of God with men and women, you will discover that it is always God who takes the first step towards man. It happened in the beginning of time. Adam broke his relationship God through deliberate disobedience in the Garden of Eden. From that awful moment you can almost hear the persistent, purposeful, pursuing, pounding footsteps of God in search of Adam. The awesome silence in the Garden of Eden was shattered by the anguished cry of a broken hearted God. **"Adam where are you? "What is this you have done?" But Adam is naked! - Adam is ashamed! - Adam has gone! - Adam has fled! - Adam has hidden**

himself, for Adam has sinned. But God seeks him out and moves towards him with a relentless love, until He finds him and vows that He will restore that broken relationship. The chasm will be bridged, and He gives notice to the devil and all hell. "I will put enmity between you and the women and between your offspring and him, He will crush your head and you strike His heel. And so in the moments of sin's seeming triumph, it is God who took the initiative to bring about its ultimate defeat. "He was not willing that any should that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." It was a heartbroken Churchill who moved across a war torn London after a bombing raid. His eyes roved across the wreckage and debris. He watched the mangled bodies being carted away and he uttered those remarkable words, "When I see the haggard faces of men and women. When I see the beaten forms of our youth- When I see the homeless wistful eyes of our children- I wonder what would happen to the world if God wearied of mankind? If that happened there would be chaos. Down through the years God had seen the awful wickedness of mankind and in the fullness of time He sent forth His Son. And so John was able to point to the man on the banks of the river Jordan and declare to the world "Look the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." The presence of Jesus on earth was the evidence that God was taking the initiative to save the world. But there is also,

b. The Evidence of Divine Sacrifice. John 1:29.

Immediately John refers to Jesus as the Lamb of God, we are faced with the fact of sacrifice. We tread on holy ground here. We are faced with sacred mystery when we talk about it. We do need to walk lightly, to tread carefully with humble reverence when we speak about Divine sacrifice. Jesus is a special Lamb. He is the Lamb of God. The concept of the Lamb would be familiar to the



Jewish mind. It would trigger in their minds the memory of the way God had delivered them from Egypt. I am sure you remember the story. God sent plague after plague to persuade Pharaoh to release his people. But Pharaoh hardened his heart again and again. Now the final and the deadliest plague, was about to strike the nation. Instructions for the safety of God's people were carefully explained. The blood of an unblemished lamb was to be taken and applied to the door frame of each household. Failure to do this would mean that the first born of each of the families would be taken in death, as the angel of death passed over in the silence of the Egyptian night. Not all the wealth of Egypt could bribe the angel of death that night. – Not all the power of Pharaoh's throne could influence the angel of death that night. Not all the might of Pharaoh's armies could drive back the angel of death in that awful hour, for the Lord Had said, **“When I see the blood I will pass over you. No destructive power will touch you when I strike Egypt.”** **And God's People were freed to fulfill their destiny. It was this event which gave birth to the Jewish Passover.** The Apostle Paul recalls the significance of the feast of the Passover and the redeeming importance of the blood of the sacrificial lamb, as a foreshadowing of the Perfect Lamb of God who would be sacrificed on the Cross of Calvary. His words make this clear, “Christ our Passover lamb was sacrificed for us.” He sacrificed Himself for us. He bore our sin in His Body. What a great price he paid for our salvation. Dr. E. Stanley Jones told of the conversion of a man who was a government official in India. His work took him away from home. He was tempted by other women. He fell into the ways of shame, dishonesty and immorality. As time went on, the burden of his guilt tormented him. One day he could stand it no longer. He called his wife into the room, and began to unfold the whole sordid story. As the meaning of his words dawned upon her, she turned as pale as death, as though she had been struck with a whip. In those painful moments he saw what his sin had done to her. “In that moment,” he said afterwards, “I saw the meaning of the cross. I saw love crucified. My sin crucified her. The cross is the evidence of Divine sacrifice. It is also the evidence of how my sin and your sin nailed him in the deepest of agonies on that tree. Your sin and my sin caused him pain. During this Christmas season let us reflect on the Lamb of God and the infinite price He paid to redeem us from sin. Let us receive Him into our hearts and lives as Saviour and crown Him as Sovereign Lord.