

## Metaphors of Christ #4: Christ as the Lamb of God

Previously we studied Christ as the Word of God, the Life, and the Light. Now we will look at Christ as the Lamb of God. This is a metaphor, because he is not a literal sheep, but all the OT references to lambs in sacrificial worship point to various aspects of his vicarious sufferings and sacrificial death. (“Vicarious” means that what he suffered was not for himself, but was on our behalf and for our benefit.)

Isa. 53 shows very explicitly that “the arm of the Lord” (the Messiah) would be the one who bears the transgressions of men, being “wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities”. He would be the perfect, the ultimate Lamb of God, dying in our place to “justify the many”.

### Usages of “Lamb” in the OT

Why so many kinds of references? Because all that Christ is and what he accomplished for us can not be shown, even figuratively, in a single sense.

1. Gen. 3:21 – God gave Adam and Eve skins **to cover their nakedness**. It doesn’t say what kind of animal, but from the rest of OT history, it would be reasonable to expect it was a lamb or a bullock. Their own works (fig leaves for clothing) were not satisfactory. God was showing them in a very graphic way that the penalty of sin is death, and that the remedy is in the life of a substitute.
2. Gen. 22:7-8, 13-14 – Abraham and Isaac, ram caught in thicket – **“God will provide”** a substitute.
3. Ex. 12:1-17 – the Passover lamb was killed and eaten, and its blood smeared on door frames for **protection from the destroyer** in Egypt. It was then instituted as an annual feast.
4. Lev. – burnt offerings, sin offerings, peace offerings, consecrations, daily and monthly offerings for individuals, priests, and the nation from the flock or herd, Offered for **forgiveness, atonement, thanks, and consecrations**.
5. Ex. 13:2, 12-15 – Redemption of firstborn. Also a more general **redemption**, closely linked with forgiveness, as 1 Cor. 6:19-20, Eph. 1:7, 1 P. 1:18-19, Rev. 5:9.
6. Lev. 16:3-10, 20-22 – a bullock and a ram for a burnt offering, two goats for a sin offering on the day of atonement – one goat was killed as a sin offering, the other was taken into the wilderness and released, after confessing their sins upon its head. 16:22 – “And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited.” The one showed the necessity of Christ’s death as a substitute, but the other showed how he **“takes away” our sins** (Jn. 1:29, 36).
7. Lev. 16:16 – **Cleansing** from the uncleanness of sin

So in summary, **Christ is the divine substitute whom God Himself provided for our sins, to provide forgiveness, cleansing, and reconciliation to God, taking away our sins and covering our spiritual nakedness, to redeem us unto Himself, and to preserve us from the destructions of Satan.** All of these can be seen from the OT sacrificial uses of lambs.

But in the book of Revelation there are references to Christ the “Lamb” that are very “un-lambly”. That is, they are descriptions of Christ that have little if anything to do with the behavior of sheep, even in a figurative sense. For example, Rev. 6:15-16 has all men saying 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.” Wrath is not a characteristic of a lamb, nor any of the sacrificial uses of lambs. It would seem more fitting in that context to refer to him as the “Lion of Judah”, but no, it still says the “Lamb”. Why?

In the book of Revelation, Christ is referred to as “the Lamb”, probably more than in any other way. Why? Because in heaven the angels and the yet-unresurrected saints look upon him first and foremost as the one who became flesh in order to make his substitutionary death possible. God Himself became a man for that one purpose, and now he is still and forever man – both God and man in one nature. The only reason He became a man was to be the perfect sacrifice for all the called – the Lamb. All of heaven’s citizens see him in that light, and so consistently refer to him as the Lamb. As such, all of his actions and purposes, even the ones that are not lamb-like, are recognized as being done by Him who is “the Lamb”.

**Usages of “Lamb” that are particular to Christ even though not typically true of regular sheep**

1. Rev. 6:15-16 – speaks of “**the wrath of the Lamb**”
2. Rev. 7:9-10 – He **receives worship**.
3. Rev. 7:17 - He **Feeds his people and leads them** to living fountains of waters. This would ordinarily agree with the other metaphor of Christ as the Good Shepherd, but still He is referred to as “the Lamb”.
4. Rev. 12:11 – In spiritual warfare, **we overcome the devil** “by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of our testimony”.
5. Rev. 13:8 – **the book of life** is referred to as “of the Lamb” (see also 21:27). It is His book, with the names of His people, whom He died for. His death and its effects were written from the foundations of the world. This was so much in God’s eternal decrees and purpose, that **His death as the Lamb of God is seen as having been accomplished “from the foundation of the world”**. It was “as good as done” even before the single point in history when it happened.
6. Rev. 14:1, 4 – the Lamb stands on the heavenly Mt. Zion, and the 144,000 are said to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. Again, this sounds more like the Good Shepherd, yet here **He is the leader**.
7. Rev. 17:11-14 – all the powers aligned with the Antichrist “make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them, for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings”. He is **the invincible Warrior**.
8. Rev. 19:7-8 – “for the **marriage of the Lamb** is come, and his wife hath made herself ready” – Obviously sheep don’t get married, but He who is “the Lamb” will be married to his bride, the redeemed of the earth. Also 21:9.
9. Rev. 21:22-23 – the Lamb is **the temple and the light** in the new Jerusalem, the heavenly city of God.
10. Rev. 22:1, 3 – the Lamb is said to be on the throne as **the source of the river of the water of life**, and that all His servants shall serve Him.

So in all the ways that we view Christ, He is primarily “the Lamb of God” and He will be so served and worshipped for ever.