



# THE LAMB OF GOD

*The Bible's Unfolding Revelation of  
Sacrifice*

*A Devotional, Biblical/Theological  
Study in Soteriology*



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**MENTOR**





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## PREFACE

This monograph evolved over the years from a sermon series that I preached in the 1980s in the Concord Presbyterian Church in Waterloo, Illinois, to a study I prepared for my students in a hermeneutics course at Knox Theological Seminary to illustrate the unity of the Old and New Testaments that I entitled ‘The Bible’s Unfolding Revelation of Its “Lamb of God” Teaching: A Devotional Biblical-Theological Study in Soteriology,’ and finally to the form in which it appears here that I have entitled *The Lamb of God*

This is not a day to play around with or to endorse theological novelties. Most if not all new ideas today in the field of soteriology are highly suspect, if not heretical, as in the cases of the so-called ‘New Perspective on Paul’ and the Auburn Avenue Vision, each of which calls into question in its own way the Reformed doctrine of justification by faith alone that is the heart and core of the biblical gospel. So I will not take offense if scholars who read this monograph should determine that it does not break new theological ground. Indeed, I hope they will so determine. About a critic who had concluded that his view of Scripture took his readers back to the pre-critical seventeenth century, I heard Francis Schaeffer say that he was disappointed: ‘I had hoped that it took them back to the first.’ This expresses my sentiment about what I write here about Christ’s ‘Lamb work’.

I hope, in this day when Christ’s vicarious atonement and penal substitution as God’s remedy for human sin are being denied on all sides, that it will prove useful in making the biblical case once again that the death of Jesus of Nazareth, the incarnate Son of God and God’s Messiah, was ‘Lamb work’, that is, *sacrificial* work in the stead of sinners that was progressively revealed in the Old Testament and fulfilled and clarified in the New.

Robert L. Reymond  
July 2006





## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

The central theme of Holy Scripture is the unfolding revelation of its doctrinal teaching on Jesus as the 'slain Lamb of God'. If it may be said of any other doctrine that it runs like a cord through Scripture, it is not an overstatement to say that the doctrine of Jesus as God's slain Lamb runs like a thick cable from Genesis to Revelation binding the entirety of Scripture together. Indeed, Revelation 13:8 speaks of Jesus as the 'Lamb that was slain *from* [apo] the creation of the world'<sup>1</sup> while 1 Peter 1:19-20 speaks of the 'precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect [who] was chosen *before* [pro] the creation of the world'. So the 'Lamb of God' doctrine is ultimately rooted (as is every other doctrine) in the divine decree. The following verses attest to this fact:

Luke 22:12: '...the Son of Man is going [to the cross] in accordance with the decree [*kata to horismenon*].'

Acts 2:23: '[Jesus], by the determining purpose [*tē horismenē boulē*] and foreknowledge [*prognōsei*] of God, was handed over, [and] you with wicked hands put him to death by nailing him to the cross.'

Acts 4:24-28: In this passage the entire early church confessed to God that Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and leaders of Israel,

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<sup>1</sup>The Lamb was slain from the creation of the world in the sense that the death of Christ was decreed from all eternity. The RSV and the NASV under the influence of Revelation 17:8, place the phrase 'from the creation of the world' in Revelation 13:8 with the verb 'written' rather than with the verb 'slain'. But it is unlikely that this phrase that is placed immediately after the verb 'slain' in the original Greek should be detached from the verb immediately preceding it and attached to the verb 'written' that is separated from this phrase by twelve words.





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did to Jesus ‘what your hand and your will [*boulē*] predestined [*proōrisen*] should happen’.

Ephesians 3:11: Here we are informed that God’s ‘eternal purpose ... [he] accomplished in the Christ, Jesus our Lord’.

Hebrews 13:20: This verse speaks not only about the ‘eternal covenant’ but also about ‘the blood’ of the eternal covenant. Clearly the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ was a central element within the eternal covenant of redemption.

It is not my intention in this study to treat the place of God’s Lamb in God’s eternal pre-creation purpose.<sup>2</sup> Let me simply say here that God purposed to fulfill his eternal plan that governs all his ways and works in heaven and on earth in and by the person and work of Jesus Christ who is God’s Alpha and Omega, the beginning, the center, and the end of all his will, his ways, and his works. Paul states in Ephesians 1:9: ‘The mystery of [God’s] will, according to his good pleasure,’ he purposed to put into effect in Christ. And as we just saw in Ephesians 3:11 God ‘accomplished’ or ‘effected’ his eternal purpose ‘in the Christ, Jesus our Lord’. When we restrict our comments then, as we will do here, to the biblical depictions concerning the Lamb of God given *after* the creation of the world we will gain from that disclosure an appreciation of the central place that the suffering Messiah as God’s Lamb occupies in God’s eternal purpose and in earth history.

The Old Testament uses at least eighteen nouns to designate the animals used in sacrifice,<sup>3</sup> all to be viewed as types of Jesus Christ as the antitypical Lamb of God.<sup>4</sup> The New Testament employs at least five nouns for the same purpose. Jesus himself stated in John 5:39: ‘The [Old Testament] Scriptures ... testify about me.’ He also declared in John 5:46: ‘Moses wrote about me.’ And he declared in Luke 22:37: ‘It is written [in Isa. 53:12]: “And he was numbered with the transgressors”; and I tell you that this must be fulfilled

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<sup>2</sup> See my *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Second edition; Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson, 2002), 463-65 for fuller detail about the place of Christ in God’s eternal purpose.

<sup>3</sup> *tāleh*, ‘suckling lamb’; *kebhes*, ‘lamb’; *kabhsāh*, ‘ewe lamb’; *kar*, ‘young ram’; *kesebh*, ‘young ram’; *kisbhah*, ‘young lamb’; *tsōn*, ‘sheep’; *seh*, ‘young lamb or kid’; *imm<sup>e</sup>rim*, ‘lambs’; *par*, ‘bull, bullock’; *shōr*, ‘bull, ox’; *tōr*, Aramaic for ‘bull, ox’; *ēgel*, ‘bull calf’; *ēz*, ‘goat’; *attūdh*, ‘ram, he-goat’; *sa’ir*, ‘hairy goat’; *ayil*, ‘ram’; and *d<sup>e</sup>car*, ram.”

<sup>4</sup> *amnos*, ‘lamb’; *arnion*, ‘lamb’; *moskos*, ‘calf’; *taurus*, ‘bull’; and *tragos*, ‘goat’.



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in me. Yes, what is written about me is reaching its fulfillment' (see also Matt. 26:24, 31, 54, 56; Luke 18:31; Acts 8:32-35). After his resurrection he declared to Cleopas and his companion on the road to Emmaus: 'Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things [crucifixion and suffering] and then enter his glory [by his resurrection]?' Then Luke affirmed: 'And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the [Old Testament] Scriptures concerning himself' (Luke 24:26-27; see also John 13:18; 19:24, 28, 36-37; 20:9).<sup>5</sup> Later that evening to the disciples who had gathered together with others with them, Jesus stated: 'This is what I told you while I was still with you. Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms' (Luke 24:44). And what is this 'everything' about Jesus that is to be found throughout the Old Testament? It is, Jesus says, that 'the Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead' (Luke 24:46).

Peter also declared that 'all the prophets from Samuel on, as many as have spoken, have foretold these [New Testament] days' (Acts 3:22-24). And in 1 Peter 1:10-12 he affirmed that 'the Spirit of Christ [in the Old Testament prophets] predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glory that would follow'. And Paul declared that throughout his long missionary ministry of some thirty years he had never said anything 'beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen – that the Messiah would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would proclaim light to his own people and to the Gentiles' (Acts 26:22-23). So it is apparent from all these statements that Christ's Lamb work is to be found throughout the Old as well as the New Testament.

In this monograph we propose to examine the main vignettes that the Bible provides concerning the suffering Messiah as he is portrayed throughout Scripture as 'the Lamb of God [*ho amnos tou theou*] who bears away [*airōn*] the sin of the world' – the expression John the Baptist used (John 1:29, 36) to identify Jesus Christ as the New Testament's antitypical fulfillment of the Old Testament's typical sacrificial system.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Christians have often expressed the wish that they could have heard Jesus' interpretation of the Old Testament on that occasion. They can be assured, however, that both the apostles' sermons recorded in Acts and their apostolic letters reflect the major features of Christ's Emmaus road exposition by the way in which they interpret the Old Testament christologically.

<sup>6</sup>In the Old Testament, particularly in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, eighty-five out of the total of ninety-six passages that refer to a lamb speak of the lamb as a sacrifice.