

The Four Lambs

*A Lamb for a man ---- a Lamb for a house ----
A Lamb for a nation ---- a Lamb for the world.*

A SERMON BY CHARLES S. PRICE

LANGUAGE cannot describe the infinite immensity of God's love. The story of redemption is one that must cause the angels to wonder. The deliverance of man from sin and even from the result of his sin is a fact so stupendous that only the mind of an eternal God could conceive it and nothing but infinite love could ever work it out.

Over the teeming millions of earth, God has stretched the canopy of His grace. It is studded with a million promises that are born of His love--promises that shine in the darkness of the night like stars that stud the canopy of the skies. The story of the expiation of sin is the most marvelous story that ever fell on mortal ears.

Is it any wonder that at times in the development of this plan of life, the boundaries of heaven could not hold back the angels? They simply had to sing of a love that was so amazing and so divine, that all mankind can do is lose itself in its immensity.

Mankind cannot understand it, but mankind can appropriate it! Human vocabulary cannot contain the thoughts of God, but the Lord can incarnate them in pardon and in peace in every surrendered heart and life.

The very center of the fact of our redemption is the substitutional work of the Son of God. Christ died for you. He died for me. He died our deaths because He bore our sins. He took our place as the prisoner before the bar of eternal justice. He knew what the laws of heaven were. He knew what the courts of glory had decreed. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die."

When the clerk of the court of the ages called our names and charged us with sin, it was Jesus who made us sit back among the awestricken spectators while He took our place as the prisoner at the bar. He assumed our sin. He appropriated our guilt. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him.

We could do nothing but sit by and watch the eternal proceedings. He who knew no sin had assumed ours. Then came the carrying out of the sentence. They nailed Him to the cross of Calvary, and the debt was forever paid. Through the shedding of that blood, atonement was made for all transgression.

Through the offering up of that eternal sacrifice, the pearly gates of glory swung wide on the hinges of grace, and the saints slipped through the portals of death

into an eternal life beyond the stars. Oh, the matchless love of Jesus! Oh, the wonders of His grace!

In that collection of books which we call the Bible, there is a wonderful and dramatic development of the theme divine. The scarlet thread of the blood atonement runs unbroken from Genesis to Revelation. The imperfect gave way to the development of the perfect. Out of the root grew the flower. Hidden in the root was the fragrance and the color, needing only the kiss of the raindrop and the smile of the sun to bring it to our vision.

Out of law there came grace. Out of the Old Testament there blossomed the beauty of the better covenant. This line of divine development runs unbroken across the ages of the Inspired Word. We are now going to consider the fascinating and beautiful story of four lambs.

I. The Lamb for a Man

It was springtime in the history of the world. It was the beginning of human history. Across the brilliantly illumined corridors of Eden had been drawn the black curtains of man's transgression and sin. Hell had been prepared away back in eternal history for angelic transgressors, and into it were consigned those fallen stars who had followed Lucifer, the Son of the Morning, into disobedience. Was this place of punishment fitted to receive a fallen humanity?

One would naturally suppose that nothing would be left for human transgressors but the swift and inevitable descent into the pit of an eternal punishment; but into the garden there came God, the Creator. Man had fled from before His face. Man was not looking for God; God was looking for man.

"Where art thou?" was the cry that sounded through glen and dale. "Where art thou?" called out the Creator of all things that are. So great was the love which drove Him on His quest that He did not stop until man had emerged from his hiding place of sin. God's plan was to win him back. God's purpose was to forgive. That plan had been conceived in the heart and mind of Eternal Deity before the foundation of the world.

God Himself would take man's sin--God Himself would suffer the punishment for it. In the ultimate development of the amazing plan, the greatest miracle of the ages would be consummated. It was the Miracle of the Incarnation.

Before the flowers can bloom in the warm embrace of Mother Nature, the little seedling must be planted. One would wonder how color and fragrance, glory and beauty could be hidden away in a tiny seed. But put it in the ground, in obedience to divine law and life comes out of death and the summer sun smiles upon a floral creation of divine power.

So it was with God in the growth of the plan of grace. One day an offering was made unto the Lord. *It was a lamb* that was brought to the altar of sacrifice by

Abel. It was to give its life in substitution for *one man*. *It was a lamb for a man*. As God looked over the battlements of glory, He saw in that lamb the Babe of Bethlehem. In every drop of blood that was spilled upon the crude altar, He saw the shed blood of Heaven's Atoning Sacrifice staining the ground of Mount Calvary. In the cry of the dying lamb, He heard the significant words of the cross. The seed had been dropped into the ground. Law was to develop through the stem until the full function of God's grace brought the Flower Divine as a love gift to the world.

The sacrifice of Cain was an abomination unto the Lord, for it was a result of his own service. It was the fruit of his own toil. But the blood of the Lamb was acceptable in the sight of God. The lamb gave its blood and Abel was saved. *It was a lamb for a man*.

The courts of heaven rang with praise. The angels looked on in wonderment as God prepared a table of incarnate blessing at which the whole world would be invited to sit and feast. The sacrifice was acceptable unto the Lord. The first offering was a lamb for a man!

II. The Lamb for the House

Impending tragedy hung like a funeral pall over ancient Egypt. The contest between light and darkness was assuming major proportions. Against the declared will of God, a wicked king had raised the arm of rebellion. The plagues had descended upon Egypt. God was determined that the children of Israel should go. Pharaoh was determined that they stay. A longsuffering and patient God had waited for many weeks before He struck the final blow against a rebellious people.

The angel of death--the avenging angel--was to walk down Egypt's dark street and carry in his hand the sword which would sever the threads of life. Death and destruction were to make the entire nation stagger under the immensity of a blow of retribution, but the people whom God had chosen were that night to find salvation. They were told to take a lamb. It was to be slain, and the blood was to be sprinkled upon the doorposts and the lintels of their houses.

Sweeter by far than any symphony of earth was the message God breathed to His people: "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." The saints of the ages were to sing that song. The redeemed of the centuries were to rise up and give God the glory for that wonderful night of deliverance!

A marching people were to cross the desert from Egypt to the Promised Land. They were to escape death and destruction and discover life and deliverance because of the blood which had been shed. Hallelujah! Even so the saints of our day were to march from the Egypt of their sin through the Pearly Gates to the vales of Eden where God Himself wipes the tears from every eye. In chapel and cathedral, in store and in home they were to give the testimony of emancipation: "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." The plan was developing. There had been the lamb for the

man and now there was *the lamb for the house*.

The shades of night stole over the countryside. The moon hung low in the heavens. The hour of retribution and punishment had come. The Angel of Death struck swiftly and surely. Loud and long ascended the wails of grief from a people who were stricken because of their disobedience before the Lord.

The sun rose, as was its custom, over the sandy wastes of the eastern hills of Goshen. Out of the slave huts poured the redeemed families of Israel. They were preparing for the journey. God's word and promises had been vindicated. The lamb was slain--*the lamb for the house*. The lamb was slain, and the household lived. "When I see the blood," chanted the liberated hosts. "The blood saves," sang the little children. "The covering of the blood kept us from destruction," echoed a thousand throats.

Thank God, the blood had atoned; and ere the strains had died away, Israel was on the march; and from the least to the greatest, every heart rejoiced in the glory of the story of the lamb for the house.

III. The Lamb for the Nation

A strange and peculiar building--made mostly of cloth--was known as the tabernacle. It was built in order that God might dwell among His people and that it might be an earthly habitation for the Most High. It was not God's permanent or ultimate plan. It was but another phase in the development of the Oratorio of Grace. It was a divine movement in the Symphony of Redeeming Love.

The seed had germinated, the stem of law was growing. Hidden in it was the mystery which was to be revealed in later years. In that strange building, known as the tabernacle, was a small compartment, spoken of by the people in whispers, and known as the place where the glory of the Lord rested upon the holy ark.

In spite of redemption, the children of Israel were human and always prone to sin. The God, who told His disciples to forgive seventy times seven, was putting an eternal forgiveness into practice. Continually, sins had to be atoned for. Continually, sacrificial offerings had to be brought before the Lord. The plan of atonement, as typified in the lamb for a man, was also faithful to type in this later development of God's program.

How wonderful must have been those first days of the exodus! With what rejoicing they must have entered into His courts, and with what praise ascended the steps that led toward the sanctuary! The great day was The Day of Atonement. It was the day on which the priest--the High Priest--took blood and sprinkled it upon the Mercy Seat. After making atonement for himself, he had to make atonement for all of the people.

Picture the scene! Through the curtains which shut off the holy place from the view of the priests, clothed in all of his symbolic regalia, went the high priest bearing

the blood. He went into the very presence of God. Every step he took breathed the Doctrine of Substitution. Every breath he breathed spoke of Grace Divine.

Outside, the people waited, wondering if the life of the High Priest would be lost in the awful presence of an eternal God. Around the hem of his robe were the golden bells and the pomegranates. As he moved, performing the functions of his office, the little bells tinkled and rang. "He is alive," they said. "He is alive," they cried. "He is alive," rang those little joy bells, as they knocked against the typical, fruitful pomegranate with its seeds of crimson in a background of spotless white.

From his sacrificial duties--yes--from the very Presence of God came the High Priest. The blood had been accepted. It was the lamb for the nation. Atonement had been made. There was rejoicing in the camp of Israel, and the angels must have tuned their harps afresh and sung His praises in the choir lofts of glory by the glassy sea.

IV. The Lamb for the World

The scene is Jerusalem. The city is crowded with visitors from near and far. One historian records that two million souls were in the City of the Hills on that great and awful day. Hypocritical Pharisees moved around with sad faces, scoffing at the tears of a few whose hearts were broken because of impending tragedy. Down one of the narrow, winding streets came a man who was bearing His cross.

"Man of Sorrows, what a name!

For the Son of God who came

Ruined sinners to reclaim--

Hallelujah! What a Saviour!"

Jesus of Nazareth was on His way to Calvary. The sun in shame hid the light of its face as louder grew the cries of the multitude. The nails were ready for the dread moment of crucifixion. Only three years before John the Baptist had pointed to The Man with the Cross and had said "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world."

It was not by chance that John called Him the Lamb. It was not an accidental term. He spoke under the anointing of the Spirit. Thank God, He was the Lamb. He was the Lamb that the Eyes of God had foreseen in the days of Abel, when the lamb was to be slain for a man. This was God's Lamb--foreordained and predestined--the keystone of the arch of salvation, through which all mankind had to pass on the way to the pearly gates.

The hours passed. Jesus hung upon the cross. His blood stained the ground of

His own creation. The words which fell from His sacred lips are engraved indelibly upon our hearts. Then came the culminating of the sacrifice! Can it be that His mind went back to the surroundings of Eden? Was He thinking of the plan which had its beginning there, and its full revelation here? Was He thinking of that wonderful grace which had come from the Heart of God like a river to water the thirsty deserts of earth? We know that ere He hung His head and died, He said: "It is finished." The Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world had given Himself as a sacrifice.

Three days passed. It was the morning of the Resurrection. From beneath the shade of the trees in the Garden, the risen Christ called to Mary of Magdala and turned her tears of sorrow into pearls of praise. He stepped back, for she would have thrown her arms around His blessed feet and caressed them with kisses of worship and of gratitude. But Jesus stepped back and said: "Touch me not, for I have not yet ascended to My Father and your Father." Why did He say that? There is only one answer.

He had to present the atoning blood of the sacrifice before the Judge of the Ages, in the Courts of Glory. Would it be acceptable? Would the demands of God be met? Would "Love Divine, All Love Excelling," meet in full the claims of an eternal God? Let all humanity sing with joy! Jesus came back from the Courts of Glory and said to His disciples: "You can handle me now."

The doors of salvation had been opened--the highways which lead from sinful earth to a holy heaven were free for access. At last the blood-sprinkled path led up to the steeps of Glory and of Grace, until it lost itself behind the curtain of the stars. Salvation had come to earth. God's Lamb had given His life; and from Jerusalem unto Judea--yea, unto the uttermost parts of the earth--went the rejoicing disciples to proclaim the glad tidings of "Whosoever Will May Come."

They went, because their crucified Lord was The *Lamb for the World*. Four lambs: A lamb for a man. A lamb for a house. A lamb for a nation. A LAMB FOR THE WORLD.