

PathLights

*"Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path"
Psalm 119:104*

April 16, 2017

Pictures of Jesus' Death

by Frank Himmel

The gospel of John gives us several pictures of Jesus' death, enabling us to see it from different perspectives.

Slaying a Lamb

John the Baptist said of Jesus, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (1:29). Perhaps John was thinking about the Passover lamb; that festival was not far off (2:13).

The Passover lamb's blood was the means by which Israel escaped death during the tenth plague (Exodus 12). Jesus' blood is the means by which we escape spiritual death, and it is available to the whole world.

The day before, John had quoted Isaiah to those who inquired about his identity (v. 23; Isaiah 40:3). He may have still been thinking about Isaiah when he called Jesus the Lamb of God. Isaiah 53 is perhaps the best known prophecy of Jesus' death: "He was crushed for our iniquities... like a lamb that is led to the slaughter."

Destroying a Temple

When Jesus drove the moneychangers out of the temple, the Jewish officials questioned His right to do so:

"What sign do You show us as Your authority for doing these things?" Jesus answered them, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up'" (2:18-19).

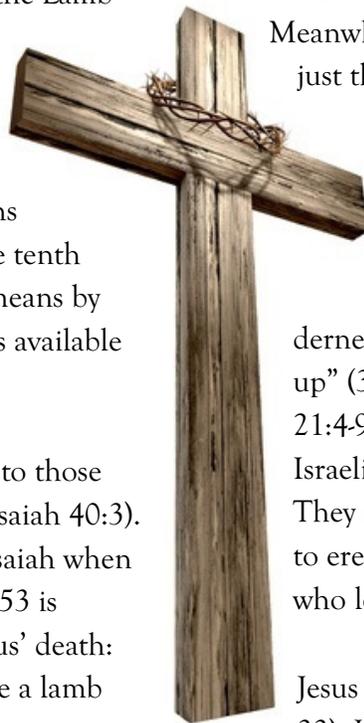
The temple was God's dwelling place. In Jesus case, His body was in a special way the dwelling place of God (1:14). The Jews were in effect destroying the Jerusalem temple by their merchandising, and soon they would destroy Jesus' bodily temple via crucifixion. Ironically, that act, that rejection of Jesus, would bring about the final destruction of the Jerusalem temple. Meanwhile, Jesus would raise up His bodily temple just three days after its "destruction" (vv. 21-22).

That resurrection was the ultimate sign of who He was and His authority.

Lifting Up a Serpent

"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up" (3:14). This picture is taken from Numbers 21:4-9. God sent poisonous snakes among the Israelites to punish them for their complaining. They appealed to Moses for relief. God told Moses to erect a bronze serpent on a standard; everyone who looked at it in faith would be healed.

Jesus was lifted up on a cross (note John 12:32-33). His death is God's means of healing the poison of our sins. We, too, must look in faith, trusting His atonement as sufficient to heal. John 3:16, the best known verse in the book, perhaps in all the Bible, is an extension of this picture. ▶



Laying Down a Shepherd's Life

Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep" (10:11). As our shepherd, Jesus cares for us so much that He is willing to give up His life for our good. (Contextually, He contrasted that to hirelings, who put their own interest above the flock's. This was a reference to the Jewish leaders of His day [see 11:47-48].)

This picture goes further than simply revealing Jesus' devotion to us. "Laying down" one's life means voluntarily giving it up. Ordinarily, if a shepherd did that it would be disastrous for his flock! Jesus, however, had the power to both lay it down and take it up again (v. 18). In fact, He laid it down so that He could take it up again (v. 17). Thus, Jesus was saying in effect, "Let no enemy think he has gained the victory, nor a friend think he has suffered defeat, when I die. I will rise again!"

Planting a Seed

"Truly I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit" (12:24). Unplanted seed has potential, but nothing is accomplished until it suffers the deterioration that results from being planted. Only then does it pass on life.

The primary application of this picture is to Jesus, who had just acknowledged that His hour had finally come (v. 23). Who can begin to measure all the good that was accomplished by the "planting" of Jesus' body on the cross? "In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men" (1:4).

It takes a wise man...

- To see faults in himself as readily as he sees them in others
- To be put in a position of headship and not let it go to his head
- To decide when to offer advice and when to leave things alone
- To balance what he would like to do with what he realistically can do
- To draw the line between patience and apathy
- To realize the difference between his own standard of right and wrong and God's standard



The Lord went on to make an application to His followers as well. "He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal" (v. 25). If we focus on this life and things pertaining to it, we will ultimately lose life. If we die to this age, we will live. In other words, we need the same spirit of self-sacrifice and devotion to the Father's will that Jesus had. Jesus concluded, "If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him" (v. 26). ■

Service Leaders for the Week

	Sunday Morning	Sunday Evening	Wednesday Evening
GREETER	Josh Baucom	Chris Brooks	Mark Clifton
SONG LEADER	Gary Hagler	Bruce Williams	John Baucom
OPENING PRAYER	Steven Turner	J B Williams	
LORD'S SUPPER			
BREAD	Mark Clifton	Mark Clifton	
CUP	Carlos Garcia	Carlos Garcia	
CONTRIBUTION PRAYER	David Gray		
SERMON/INVITATION	Frank Himmel	Frank Himmel	Steven Turner
CLOSING PRAYER	Justin Candella	Adam Wilson	Albert Harrison Sr