



Jesus:

Good Shepherd **and** Lamb of God

For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

— REVELATION 7:17

Jesus: Good Shepherd and Lamb of God

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JUXTAPOSED IMAGERY OF LAMBS AND SHEPHERDS is metaphorically rich. It unites two seemingly contradictory themes: that of protective power and that of vulnerable suffering. A lamb, a sheep less than one year old, is a young, helpless creature, often serving in times past as the object of ritual sacrifice. A shepherd, on the other hand, is guardian, protector and defender. Jesus came as both. He was the sacrificed and the sovereign, the good shepherd and the sacrificial lamb. Jesus: Good Shepherd and Lamb of God encourages reflection on Christ's dual role, a dual role central to the Christian message.

The roots of the lamb as a symbol of Christ's sacrificial death extend back to the Old Testament. Lambs were offered in various sacrificial rituals (Hebrews 9:22). Abel brought the firstlings of his flock (Genesis 4:4). Abraham sacrificed a ram in place of his son Isaac (Genesis 22:13). The blood of the lamb was smeared on the Israelites' doors to protect firstborn from the angel of death before the Exodus from Egypt (Exodus 12). On the night of the Passover, the night of the Jews' escape from Egypt, God killed the Egyptian firstborn, but passed over Israelite homes marked with the blood of a lamb. Each Israelite household had been instructed to kill and eat a spotless lamb, in a ceremony that would be annually commemorated by the Jewish people in the Feast of the Passover in which the "Paschal," or Passover lamb was commemorated. Thus the lamb came to be associated in Jewish religious tradition with atonement and protection.

The ancient foundation of the lamb as a Jewish sacrificial symbol came to be adopted as a Christian one. On the night before his death, Jesus celebrated the Passover meal with his disciples. He distributed and blessed the wine and bread and then explained, "This is my body given for you. This is my blood poured out for you" (Luke 22). Sacrificial blood as a mark of salvation thus became a central Christian doctrine, associated with Christ's death. Christ took on himself the world's sin, removing it by bearing it upon himself in the manner of the Messiah prophesied in Isaiah 53, "led like a lamb to the slaughter; as a sheep before her shearers is silent" (Isaiah 53: 6-7).

Such passages were most likely on the mind of John the Baptist when Christ approached while John was baptizing in the Jordan River. John called out, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). For this reason, pictorial references to John the Baptist often contain images of a symbolic lamb. The lamb continues as a symbol of the sin-bearer Christ, understood by Christians as Agnus Dei, "the Lamb of God."

The use of the possessive genitive "of" in the descriptor "Lamb of God," is of particular importance. In the Christian message of salva-

tion it holds central place. Through the works gathered in Jesus: Good Shepherd and Lamb of God it is given special illustration.

The importance of the possessive "of" in the "Lamb of God" may be explained as follows. Within the Christian doctrine of salvation, Jesus is at once the sacrificial victim presented to God and the sacrificial victim provided by God. He is at once rescuer and sacrifice; sovereign Lord and expiatory object; king and propitiatory offering.

Jesus himself explained of these seeming contradictions, "I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me, as the Father knows me and I know the Father, and I lay down my life for the sheep" (John 10:11-5).

Paired themes of victory and humility, power and suffering, and triumph and defeat are in fact central to an understanding of Christ as both shepherd and lamb. This is nowhere more strongly presented than in the book of Revelation. The lamb of the Book of Revelation has inspired numerous pictorial representations of Christ at the Second Coming, conveying images of Christ's twofold role as both shepherd and lamb. Revelation reveals the Lamb of God as a lamb that has been slain (Revelation 5:6, 12) with emphasis on the redeeming work of Christ. Revelation also reveals the lamb in apocalyptic description as a lamb victorious (Agnus Victor).

If reclining, the lamb references the wounded Christ, and Christ meek and gentle. (2 Cor. 10:1; Rev 5:6, 12; 13:8). Holding a cross, the lamb symbolizes the crucified Christ bleeding into a chalice as sin-bearer. On the other hand, shepherd-like sovereignty and eternal victory is suggested when the lamb wears a cruciform halo identifying its divinity; or when it is represented within a triumphal wreath. The standing lamb is meant to depict the Church triumphant at the return of Christ. The lamb that holds a staff with a banner often decorated with a cross represents Christ as Redeemer. This triumphal lamb of Revelation has the power to take the mysterious seven-sealed scroll and loose its seals (5:6-7). The triumphal lamb exercises powerful wrath (6:16). The triumphal lamb sits at the center of the throne of heaven (7:17) and the triumphal lamb is victorious against the wicked who wage war (17:14). In the Book of Revelation the symbol of the lamb suggests an understanding of Christ both triumphant and suffering, one who both guards, and who lays down his life, one is who both lamb, and shepherd.

Jesus: Good Shepherd and Lamb of God invites the viewer to reflect on this dual role of Christ. He is the sacrificial victim presented to God and the sacrificial victim provided by God. He is both rescuer and sacrifice; sovereign Lord and expiatory object; our king and our propitiatory offering.

ARTWORK

1. Cain and Abel

Roger Varland, United States
Photograph, 2003
19 x 13 inches

2. Sacrifice of Isaac

Jonas Umbach (1624 – 1693), Germany
Etching from The Passion
4⁷/₈ x 3 inches

3. Abraham and Isaac

Unknown artist, Italy
Pen and ink on paper, 1800s
9⁵/₈ x 8¹/₄ inches

5. Good Shepherd

Unknown artist, Philippines
Wood, 1980s
21 x 8¹/₂ x 6 inches

6. Last Supper

Watanabe Sadao (1914–1996), Japan
Washi, 1977
20¹/₂ x 17 inches

7. Psalm XXIII

Sandra Bowden (1943–), United States
Collagraph mixed media, 1990
30 x 22 inches

8. Where is the Shepherd?

Sue Coe (1951–), England/USA
Etching, 1991
15 x 8¹/₂ inches

9. Jesus as Shepherd

Viera Hlonikova (1922–), Slovakia
Block print with hand coloring, 1987
14 x 12 inches

10. Good Shepherd

Hristo Naidenov, Bulgaria
Etching
4¹/₂ x 3 inches

11. Good Shepherd Holy Card

Unknown, Argentina
Lithograph
4³/₈ x 2³/₈ inches

12. Christ the Good Shepherd

Rudolph Bostic (1942–), United States
Enamel on cardboard
38¹/₄ x 25 inches

13. Lost Sheep

Joan Bohlig (1936 –), United States
Etching, 1990
6¹/₂ x 6¹/₂ inches

14. The Lord Is My Shepherd

Unknown United States
Wood, 1960s
5³/₈ x 14¹/₂ inches

15. I Have Other Sheep

Eric Gill (1882–1940), England
Wood Engraving, 1926
3 x 1⁵/₈ inches

16. The Good Shepherd

Dimitris Moulas (1975 –), Greece
Egg Tempera on wood, 2012
13³/₈ x 9³/₈ inches

17. The Good Shepherd (Third Century A.D.)

Sandra Bowden (1943 –), United States
Mixed-media with gold leaf 1997
21 x 16 inches

18. Sheep and Lamb

Henry Moore (1896 – 1986), England
Etching and drypoint, 1972
5³/₄ x 8¹/₈ inches

19. Pascal Lamb

Carl Buettemeier, Germany/USA
Wood Carving, 1979
12 x 13 inches

20. L'Agneau Pascal (Pascal Lamb)

Bernard Buffet (1928 – 1999), France
Lithograph, 1967
6 x 9⁷/₈ inches

21. Das Opferlamm (The Sacrificial Lamb)

Otto Dix (1891–1969), Germany
Lithograph, 1960
Matthaus Evangelium – Martin Luther New
Testament Series
11¹/₄ x 9 inches

22. Agnus Dei

Tyrus Clutter (1972–), United States
Linocut
5 x 7 inches

23. Beauty of the Lamb

Unknown artist, United States
Embroidery on chasuble, 1950
12¹/₄ x 9¹/₄ inches

24. Lambs of the San Luis Valley

Kathy Hettinga (1955 –), United States
Accordion book with Iris printing
1995/1997
5¹/₂ x 5¹/₂ inches

26. Holy Family with Lamb

Unknown engraver after Raphael painting
Wood engraving, 1888
4¹/₄ x 5¹/₂ inches

27. Good Friday

Wayne Roosa (1950 –), United States
Eraser prints, 2009
14 x 11 inches

28. Adoration of the Lamb, Ghent Altarpiece

Unknown engraver after Hubert and
Jan van Eyke, Netherlands
Engraving, 1888
4³/₄ x 15¹/₈ inches

29. Without Blemish

Leah Gregoire (1972–), United States
Lithograph, 1990s
8¹/₂ x 11 inches

30. Lamb of God Tympanum

Sandra Bowden (1943 –), United States
Color Photograph, 2103
20 x 16 inches

31. Scandalous Night

Wayne Forte (1950 –), United States
Etching, 2002
8³/₄ x 11⁷/₈ inches

32. Lamb with Seven Seals

Unknown, French
Gold/Silver appliqué, late 1800s
9¹/₄ x 9³/₈ inches

25. He Shall Feed his Flock Like a Shepherd

Sandra Bowden (1943 –), United States
Encaustic mixed media, 2013
9³/₈ x 23¹/₂ x 1³/₈ inches

26. I am the Gate for the Sheep

James Quentin Young, United States
Wood, metal, foil construction, 2011
17¹/₂ x 18 x 3 inches



JESUS: GOOD SHEPHERD AND LAMB OF GOD,

with 32 drawings, paintings, original prints, sculptures and photographs explores through the eye of the artist, how this theological concept has been visually interpreted from the 17th century to the present. This exhibition includes artists from the Philippines, Japan, Bulgaria, England, Germany, Slovakia, Italy, Netherlands, Israel, Argentina, Greece, and the United States.

Jesus: Good Shepherd and Lamb of God begins with a photograph by Roger Varland titled Cain and Abel and two pieces of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac

which portrays the Bible's foreshadowing to the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus as the Agnus Dei (Lamb of God). Jesus as the Good Shepherd has been a favorite of Christians since early Christianity and still resonates with the faithful. Jesus as the Lamb of God is a theme that runs throughout the Scriptures as is demonstrated in this show with a variety of images. This exhibition invites the viewer to look, but to more importantly, see with new insight how the rich well of Christian images can expand our theological understanding of the Bible.

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