

A Question, An Answer

A study about Israel and Christ's Crucifixion

(More often than not, *the central message of the N.T.* — beginning in the four gospels, continuing into Acts, then the twenty-one epistles, and concluding in the Book of Revelation — *is misunderstood.*

This central message *is NOT about salvation by grace*, though, as in the O.T., that message can be seen different places throughout. The central message seen beginning and continuing throughout the N.T. is, in reality, a continuation of the central message seen throughout the O.T. The foundations are laid in the opening part of the O.T., in Moses; and matters continue from that point throughout the O.T. into and throughout the N.T.

With that in mind, let's pick up with a question. Then, a number of things stated in the preceding will, of necessity, be dealt with, laying the necessary groundwork to properly understand the answer.)

The Question

Since God had commanded His people to slay the paschal lambs in Egypt (Ex. 12:6) and Moses to subsequently strike the rock in the wilderness (Ex. 17:6), *WHY were they so spoken against some fifteen hundred years later when they slew the Paschal Lamb, struck the Rock, in the antitype?*

(The paschal lamb was given to *Israel*, and it was given to Israel to be slain, for a purpose, having to do with a vicarious death of the firstborn.

Then, existing controversy in the world today over who slew Christ is easily settled from Scripture.

Christ was *the Paschal Lamb*, and, with the paschal lamb having previously been given to Israel, *Israel ALONE could slay this Lamb*. Further, Scripture plainly attributes this act to Israel [Acts 2:23, 36; 3:13-15; 7:52].)

AGAIN though, the Paschal Lamb was to be SLAIN, the Rock was to be STRUCK. God had commanded that this be done in the two types.

THIS is why the paschal lamb was given to Israel! It was given to the Jewish people TO BE SLAIN, PROVIDING SALVATION!

Thus, when Israel slew the Lamb, struck the Rock in the antitype — even though they were slaying *a Man* (which would be immaterial, for the O.T. plainly taught that *a Man* would die in this capacity [cf. Gen. 3:6; 4:8; 22:2; Isa. 53:1ff; John 1:29, 36]) — *AGAIN, WHY were they so spoken against?*

Note Peter's and Stephen's words to the Jewish people following their slaying the Lamb, following their striking the Rock:

"Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain" (Acts 2:23).

"Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? And they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers" (Acts 7:52).

Israel slew the Lamb, struck the Rock, *in accordance with God's command. YET, they are spoken against for this act!*

HOW can this be? HOW can Israel be guilty of doing this "by wicked hands"? Or, HOW can the Israelites be called "murderers" for this act?

And, beyond that, the nation is presently *UNCLEAN* in God's sight because of this act (Num. 19:1ff; 35:1ff)!

HOW could God look upon the Jewish people in this manner IF they did that which He had commanded them to do?

The Answer

When John the Baptist, the forerunner of the Messiah, looked upon and called attention to Christ at one point in his ministry, he referred to Him as "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29, 36).

This, of course, was an allusion back to Ex. 11, 12, and behind that to Gen. 1, 3, 4, 22, 37, sections of Scripture from which Ex. 11, 12 drew.

However, *this was NOT John's message to Israel*, though he called attention to this facet of Christ's person and work.

And, accordingly, this was NOT Christ's message when He subsequently took up the SAME message which John had been proclaiming, calling attention to this facet of His person and work centrally in

connection with Israel's rejection of Him and His message.

John the Baptist appeared on the scene proclaiming:

“Repent ye [a plural pronoun, *ALL Israel*], for the kingdom of the heavens is at hand” (Matt. 3:1b).

And this is the message which Christ subsequently took up (Matt. 4:17ff), later calling out twelve disciples to carry this message to Israel (Matt. 10:1ff), then later seventy more to carry the message to Israel in a final, climactic thrust (Luke 10:1ff).

The message proclaimed to Israel was *NOT the message of salvation by grace*, proclaiming Christ as the Lamb of God. Rather, the message seen throughout the gospel accounts was *a continuing message from the Old Testament having to do with a kingdom*.

THIS kingdom, having to do with the heavens and the earth — the kingdom of the heavens — was the world kingdom ruled by Satan and his angels, in both pre- and post-Adamic times, extending into today; *THIS* is the kingdom which man, in the beginning, was created to take and rule, accounting for Satan's action in Gen. 3:1ff; and *THIS* is the kingdom which redeemed man will one day take and rule (*cf.* Gen. 1:26-28; Dan. 7:13, 14; Rev. 11:15).

When this is understood, a person can begin to properly understand the message in the four gospels; and when the gospels are understood, a person can begin to properly understand the message in the Book of Acts (in reality, a fifth gospel, forming somewhat of a bridge between the gospels and the epistles); and when the message in the Book of Acts is understood, a person can begin to properly understand the message in the epistles, with the whole of the matter concluding in the book of Revelation when Christ, with His co-heirs, takes the kingdom seen at the beginning, in Gen. 1.

(Note that *THIS* kingdom, beginning in the opening chapter of Genesis, begins with a creation [Gen. 1:1b], then a ruined kingdom [Gen. 1:2a], then a restoration of the kingdom [Gen. 1:2b-25], and man then created to take *THIS* kingdom and rule in the stead of angels [Gen. 1:26-28].

Then, as can be seen in the N.T., *THIS* kingdom was offered to Israel in the gospels [Matt. 3:1ff], taken from Israel because of their rejection [Matt. 21:33-45], but re-offered to Israel during the Acts period [Acts 2:4ff].

And, immediately preceding the beginning of the re-offer of *THIS* kingdom to Israel, God called into existence an entirely new entity, which was neither Jew nor Gentile, but still Abraham's seed [of necessity (Gen. 12:3; 22:17, 18)], to be the recipient of *THAT* which Israel had rejected [Acts 2:1-3; II Cor. 5:17; Gal. 3:29; I Peter 2:9, 10].

Then, *THIS* kingdom is realized in the Book of Revelation when Christ, with His co-heirs, moves in and takes the kingdom [Rom. 8:14-23; Rev. 11:15].)

1) John's Question, Christ's Response

John the Baptist, recognizing two facets of the person and work of Christ — the Lamb of God, Who was to suffer and die; and Israel's King, Who was to rule and reign — *ONLY proclaimed ONE facet. He ONLY proclaimed the latter, the regal facet.*

As well, this is *the SAME message* proclaimed by Christ, the Twelve, and the Seventy.

And, carrying the message beyond the gospels, this is *the SAME message* proclaimed throughout Acts to Israel in a re-offer of the kingdom.

And, moving beyond Acts, this is *the SAME message* which is to be proclaimed to Christians today (though, except in rare instances, *this is NOT done*).

The whole of the matter is what left John in a confused state once he had been imprisoned (Matt. 11:1ff). In his eyes, things were not going well at all.

The forerunner of the Messiah had been imprisoned, and things, seemingly, were not going well even for the Messiah Himself. *There was little acceptance, ONLY rejection on every hand.*

Thus, John sent two of his disciples to Jesus with a question:

“Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?” (Matt. 11:3).

The Old Testament prophets had presented somewhat of a blended picture of both a suffering Messiah and a reigning Messiah (*e.g.*, Isa. 52-54). And the Jewish people didn't know what to make out of it. Some even looked for two Messiahs, one from the house of Joseph to suffer, and the other from the house of David to reign.

Thoughts along the preceding lines could only have formed the backdrop to John's question — "Are You the One Who has come to rule and reign? If not, then You must be the One Who has come to suffer and die. And if so, then should we look for Another?"

Or some Jews, even John, may possibly have even looked upon the matter in a more correct respect — a first coming of their Messiah to suffer and die, and a second coming to rule and reign.

Regardless of the way John might have looked at the matter, Christ's response was clear, one which John would have understood apart from any explanation.

Note Christ's response to John's question:

"Jesus answered and said unto them [to John's disciples], Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see:

The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.

And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me" (Matt. 11:4-6).

Christ's response had to do with *the signs which were being performed*.

And, through this response, *John would KNOW the answer to his question. John would KNOW that the One Whom he had heralded was the One Who would rule and reign.*

2) Signs Accompanying the Message

Signs had to do with Israel and the kingdom, with a reigning Messiah, NOT with a suffering Messiah.

This is the manner in which they were seen and established in the Old Testament (during the ministries of Moses and his successor Joshua, then during the ministries of Elijah and his successor Elisha), and they could be seen *after NO other fashion throughout the four gospels and Acts*.

(Refer to the author's article, "Signs, Wonders, Miracles," for information on a past use [O.T., Gospels, Acts period], present nonuse, and future use of signs.)

The message proclaimed to Israel by Christ, the Twelve, and the Seventy in the four gospels, and by the disciples (the 120 forming the Church on the Day of Pentecost, and other believing Jews later) in the Book of Acts, *was a message accompanied by signs, directed to Israel, having to do with the proffered kingdom.*

And this is the message which is supposed to be proclaimed to Christians by pastor-teachers of Churches today, *though apart from signs, for it is the Jew ALONE who requires a sign* (I Cor. 1:22).

Understanding the preceding will answer a lot of questions and show the fallacy of a number of things which people believe and teach along these lines today, along with establishing a base for answering the question set forth at the beginning of this article.

The message throughout the four gospels and Acts, attended by *signs*, had to do with *a salvation message proclaimed to Israel.*

This though was NOT a message having to do with eternal salvation. Rather, this was a message having to do with salvation in relation to the proffered kingdom.

(A message directed to Israel, pertaining to eternal salvation, salvation by grace, *would have been completely out of place during time covered by the four gospels or the Book of Acts.* And that is a simple matter to illustrate.

The kingdom of the heavens *could NOT have been offered to the nation had the Jewish people been in an unsaved state.* Unsaved individuals are simply *NOT* dealt with in this respect, *i.e.*, in relation to the kingdom [the kingdom covenanted to David, or the kingdom of the heavens]. This is seen any place that the kingdom is dealt with in Scripture, O.T. and/or N.T.

Bear in Mind that salvation, as set forth in the foundational types in Genesis and Exodus, requires *death and shed blood.* And the Jewish people, at Christ's first coming, were still sacrificing the paschal lambs, year by year, placing them in *EXACTLY* the same position in this respect as the Jewish people found themselves under Moses in Ex. 12ff.

Had the Jewish people been unsaved at Christ's first coming, they would have had to be dealt with regarding this matter *BEFORE* John, Jesus, the Twelve, the Seventy, and others during the Acts period could have offered the kingdom of the heavens to the nation.

The preceding is made plain *ANY place* salvation by grace is dealt with in Scripture, beginning in the first chapter of Genesis. Spiritual

life *HAS TO BE* restored to fallen man *BEFORE* he can be dealt with relative to spiritual values.

This is how, for example, a person can know that *Abraham HAD TO HAVE previously been saved in Ur of the Chaldees BEFORE he ever departed Ur, "by faith"* [Heb. 11:8-10], obeying God relative to traveling to another land to which he had been called. And, beyond that, within his previous salvation experience, *death and shed blood HAD TO BE involved*, for this is the way salvation had previously been set forth and established [Gen. 1-4], with all of this showing why Gen. 15:6 *CANNOT* be understood as the time Abraham was saved, which many reference in this respect[)].

But look at this in the light of the dual antitype, making it easy to see and understand — Christians today, or Israel yet future [following Christ's return and Israel's application of the blood of the Lamb which they slew 2,000 years ago]. Death and shed blood are seen in connection with the salvation of both, both have a calling to another land, and both exercise / will exercise faith relative to this calling [Christians, heavenly; Israel, earthly].

Or, seeing matters in another respect, look at the oft-misunderstood account of Nicodemus coming to Jesus in John 3. The issue Nicodemus raised had to do with the miraculous signs [v. 2] Jesus was performing, and Jesus' response had to do with these signs as well. The issue had to do with signs in relation to the proffered kingdom [which had to do with *the message being proclaimed*], *NOT signs relative to eternal salvation [for THAT was NOT the message being proclaimed]*.

ANY attempt to read "eternal salvation" into the thought of "signs" in relation to Jesus ministry in John 3, or elsewhere in John [or the synoptics], can *ONLY* be seen as a mis-statement, a mis-teaching, *eisegesis* [reading into a text *something that is NOT in the text*], for *there is NO such thing in Scripture as eternal salvation being dealt with in connection with signs*.

For additional information on the opening verses of John 3, refer to the author's book, *Brought Forth from Above*.)

3) *The Four Gospels*

Commenting on the preceding and the way some view the three synoptic gospels in relation to John's gospel (not dealing with the same thing as the synoptic gospels), a person *CAN'T* somehow see the three synoptic gospels dealing with one message and the Gospel of John or the Book of Acts dealing with a different message.

The purpose statement for the recorded signs near the close of

John's gospel and the way that Acts begins, along with continuing internal evidence (signs, etc.), would illustrate this for anyone willing to accept that which Scripture *ALONE* has to say.

John's gospel is built around eight signs which Jesus performed during His earthly ministry, and the purpose for these signs is given in John 20:30, 31:

“And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book:

But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.”

Five of these eight signs are peculiar to John's gospel, and the other three are found in the synoptic gospels. Thus, a person *CAN ONLY* relate the signs in John's gospel (not just the three found in the synoptics, but *ALL* eight) to *EXACTLY the same people and message as seen in the synoptic gospels — to Israel, relative to the proffered kingdom.*

These eight signs, recorded in John's gospel during the Acts period, were recorded for *EXACTLY the same purpose that they had originally been performed, which is clearly stated in John 20:30, 31.*

They had previously been performed during the offer of the kingdom to Israel and recorded in John's gospel some years later (evidently between 40-60 A.D.) during the re-offer of the kingdom to Israel in order that the Jewish people “might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing” they “might have life through His name [*life relative to the message being proclaimed, life in the kingdom, NOT eternal life*].”

And this is the message seen throughout John's gospel, leading into this purpose statement for these eight signs — again, *life in relation to the kingdom, NOT life in relation to eternal verities.*

This is EXACTLY the same message previously seen throughout the three synoptic gospels, in Acts relative to Israel and Christians, and in the epistles today relative to Christians, though apart from signs.

4) Answering the Question, Types, Antitypes

NOW, it should be a simple matter to understand and properly address the question asked at the beginning of this article.

The paschal lamb was given to Israel to be slain, and Israel was commanded to slay this lamb. This lamb had to do with the death of the firstborn; thus, it had to do with one's eternal salvation, via death and shed blood (Ex. 11, 12).

John the Baptist, looking upon Christ in John 1, referred to Him as "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (vv. 29, 36).

Now, again, the question:

If Christ was the Lamb of God [the paschal Lamb], which He was (I Cor. 5:7), and this Lamb was *NOT ONLY* given to Israel to be slain *BUT* the Jewish people were commanded to slay this Lamb, *WHY* were they so spoken against when they did slay this Lamb?

And the answer is quite simple:

Christ was born "King" (Matt. 2:1, 2), He proclaimed a message to Israel pertaining to a kingdom (Matt. 4:17ff), He presented Himself to Israel as their King (Matt. 22:1-9), and He was crucified as King (John 19:15), with the caption placed over His head, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews" (John 19:19).

Israel did *NOT* slay Christ as the paschal Lamb; rather, they slew Him as their King. However, in the process of slaying Him as their King, they also slew the paschal Lamb, which they had been commanded to do.

This can all be seen in Moses striking two Rocks, one in Ex. 17:6, and the other in Num. 20:8-12).

Moses was commanded to strike the Rock in Exodus, but not so with the Rock in Numbers. Moses was commanded to speak to the Rock in Numbers, though he struck it instead.

Two different words are used for "Rock" in the Hebrew text of these two passages. The word used in Numbers carries the thought of "height" or "elevation," but not so with the word used in Exodus.

When Moses struck the Rock in Exodus, which he was commanded to do, water came out (which had to be an abundant supply, for there was sufficient water for the entire nation).

Then when he, in disobedience, struck the Rock in Numbers, water also came out. And it came out "abundantly."

But, for this one act of disobedience, Moses was *NOT ONLY* denied entrance into the promised land *BUT* his leadership was taken

from him and given to Joshua. Moses, who had led the Israelites up to this point, near the end of the forty years of wandering, *was stripped of EVERYTHING because of this ONE act of disobedience.*

WHY?

Take this over into the antitype, compare type with antitype, and the entire matter is easy to see and understand. And, in the process, the gravity of Israel's act some 1,500 years later, in the antitype of striking the Rock in Numbers rather than speaking to the Rock, can be clearly seen.

Israel didn't crucify Christ in the antitype of Moses striking the Rock in Exodus; rather, they crucified Christ in the antitype of Moses striking the Rock in Numbers.

And *EXACTLY* as in the type — though Israel, in disobedience, struck the Rock having to do with "height," "elevation"; though Israel, in disobedience, crucified their King — water *STILL* came out "abundantly." That is to say, though they crucified their King, they also slew the Lamb (water *STILL* flowed out "abundantly").

As well, *EXACTLY* the same thing happened to them as happened to Moses in the type.

Moses, because of this one act, was denied entrance into the promised land, an earthly land (Deut. 34:1-8); it was *ALL* taken away from him and given to another/others (Joshua and the second generation of Israelites).

Israel, in the antitype, because of their act, was denied entrance into the promised land, a heavenly land in this case (Matt. 21:33-45); it was *ALL* taken away from them and given to another/others (*the one new man* "in Christ," Christians).

Thus, there is the answer to the question asked at the beginning of the article.

And to properly understand and deal with the answer, note the importance of referencing and dealing with the types. The types have been given to help explain the antitypes, something which can be easily seen and illustrated in this instance.

(For additional information on different parts of this article, refer to the author's books, *Message in the Gospels, Acts, Epistles* and *From Acts to the Epistles*.)