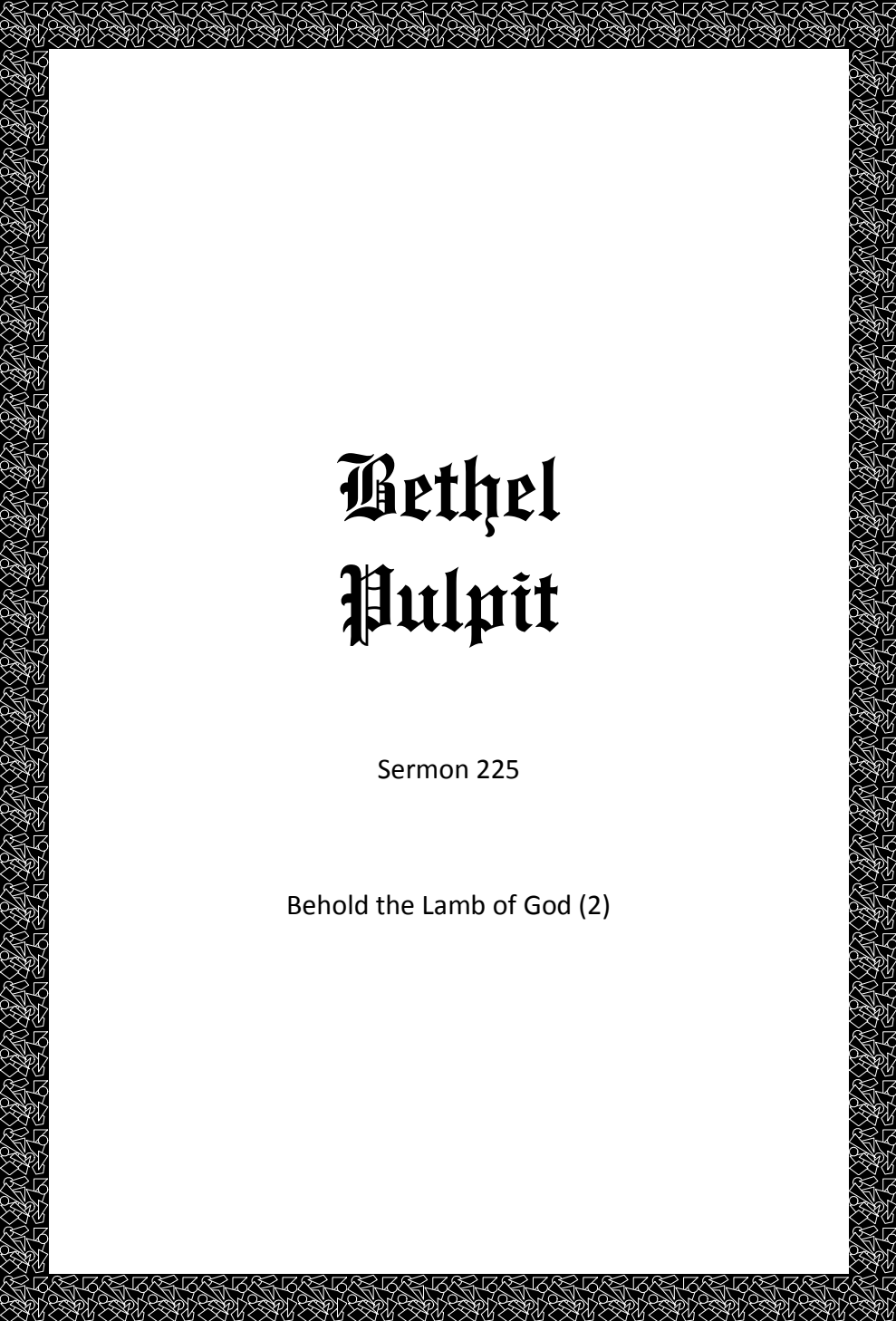




Bethel Pulpit

Sermon 225

Behold the Lamb of God (2)

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Lord's day evening, 22nd February, 2004**

Text: *"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world"*
(John 1. 29).

There never was a more blessed declaration made than this by John the Baptist on the banks of the River Jordan: "Behold the Lamb of God." This glorious Stranger appearing in the crowd, the Son of God from all eternity, and John points Him out: "Behold the Lamb of God." And as far as we can tell, there was no real effect, nothing happened. The next day John stood again and he spoke the same words. "Looking upon Jesus as He walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!" O what a glorious effect! "Two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus" – and they were two good ones. One was Andrew; one was John. They "heard him speak, and they followed Jesus." So it has ever been: the same truth preached, the mysterious sovereignty of God. "Thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good." We preach. We think *this* will prosper, but it does not. But *that* does. The mysterious sovereignty of God!

Then you see the wonderful unfolding of God's purpose. Andrew finds his brother Peter personally and he brings him to Jesus, and then the Lord Jesus Himself goes forth and finds Philip and says to him, "Follow Me." And then Philip speaks to Nathanael and the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ comes and He reveals Himself to Nathanael. You see what a gracious effect, what a cluster of blessings. But again you see the mysterious sovereignty of God. One was through John preaching; another was through personal witness; another was directly by the Lord Jesus; another was by some of each. "Thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that." But, "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good."

It seems that this was the first time that John the beloved disciple ever looked into the face of Jesus, and he never forgot it. I wonder how many of you here this evening can honestly testify that by faith you *have* beheld the Lamb of God, you *have* been brought to Him as a sinner, you

have had to look up into His sacred face, you *have* found your only hope, your only way of salvation there.

“Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” I suppose this morning I specially spoke on *the Lamb slain*.”

“Ye that pass by, behold the Man!
The Man of griefs condemned for you;
The Lamb of God for sinners slain,
Weeping to Calvary pursue.”

That is where He took away the sin of the world. O, “Behold the Lamb of God.” This evening perhaps the emphasis will be on *the Lamb exalted*. For, “The Lamb is all the glory of Immanuel’s land.” So may it not just be a looking back by faith to the cross, but may it be a looking up into heaven tonight to see that head which was once crowned with thorns, now for ever crowned with eternal glory. You see the Lamb *was* slain. The Saviour died, but the Saviour rose again and He lives to die no more, and He ascended into heaven. There, “Him hath God exalted ... to be a Prince and a Saviour.” The gospel preached today is the same as it was when John preached, to point sinners in all their need to the Lamb of God. Now John pointed them to the Lamb of God even before His sacrifice. We point to the Lamb of God who has died, laid down His life a sacrifice, but now who is risen, glorified, exalted in heaven. But it is still, “Behold the Lamb of God.”

I read to you that beautiful chapter, Revelation 5, where we see that the Lamb is the glory of heaven. No doubt, beloved friends, all of you must have noticed this, that there are so many names and titles and offices ascribed to the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, but when you come to the last Book of the Bible, the Book of the Revelation, invariably the Lord Jesus is spoken of as *the Lamb*. And really right across the pages of the Book of the Revelation you could write this: “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” Let us be clear, there are many things in the Book of Revelation which are hard to be understood, but this one thing stands out so clearly, that the Lamb of God, once crucified, now for ever exalted, is the glory of heaven.

In the fifth chapter of the Revelation that we read, there was an amazing scene in heaven, the eternal God sitting upon the eternal throne with a book in His hands, the book being the book of God’s decrees, God’s

providence, and that book was sealed, and the eternal God issued a challenge: “Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?” It is not surprising: “And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon.” Really the Apostle John was overcome by this. He wept. He says, “I wept much.” What if there be no-one worthy, able to deal with the book of God’s decrees? Then he heard a voice saying, “Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book.” This is the Lord Jesus, the Lion of the tribe of Juda. And the voice said, “Behold Him; behold the One who has prevailed, the Lion of the tribe of Juda.” And what did John do? He beheld the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. He said, “I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as It had been slain.” That was the answer to all John’s sorrow. It was the answer to all John’s tears, a view by faith of the Lamb of God once crucified, now exalted.

Do not forget the first words that the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ spoke after His glorious resurrection from the dead – to Mary Magdalene, yes, but to the whole blood-bought church of God: “Woman, why weepest thou?” No cause for tears since the Lamb slain is now risen, now exalted. I believe there are many of you here with sad hearts tonight in various ways – your bereavements, your loneliness, your disappointments, your trials, your ill-health, your concerns about those you love, your fears concerning the day of your death, your concern about your own soul and eternity, the unknown way as it lies before you – and these things fill your hearts with sorrow. “Behold the Lamb of God,” once crucified but now glorified in heaven, the answer to all the sorrows of all His people to the end of time. It is this: “Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda ... hath prevailed.” And John says, “I looked, and beheld a Lamb” – the same glorious Person, a Lamb to His people, a Lion to their enemies.

Let me just remark in passing that when this mysterious Revelation was given, the end of the first century, about the year 96 A.D., the church of God was enduring bitter sorrow, bitter persecution, and this was the Lord’s answer: “Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda ... hath prevailed.” And John said, “I looked, and beheld a Lamb as It had been slain.” Now, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” Behold Him in heaven. And this is it: behold Him on the throne. *“In the midst of the throne ... stood a Lamb as It had been slain.”* It is not

Satan in the midst of the throne. It is not wicked men, even the mightiest of men in the midst of the throne. It is not blind fate, blind chance in the midst of the throne. It is the Lamb of God in the midst of the throne. That is, He is almighty. That is, He is in control. That is, He reigns eternally. O, “Behold the Lamb of God” exalted in heaven, in the midst of the throne, all power, all dominion in His hands. And, “He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet,” which means that the great concerns of the mighty nations of the earth today are all in His hands, all in His control, and it means that your life’s minutest circumstance, your smallest sorrow and your greatest sorrow, the things which try you, the burdens you bear, that all these things, all of them, are in His hands and He is in control, and He is ordering all things according to the counsel of His will. Now, “Behold the Lamb of God,” in heaven tonight, who once took away the sin of the world and who now as the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. O, “Behold the Lamb of God.”

But, “Behold the Lamb of God” *on the throne of grace*. It is not just the eternal throne, the throne from which He rules all worlds, the throne before which all in the great day must submit, but to His beloved people it is the *throne of grace*. In that beautiful passage in Hebrews 4, the apostle so sweetly opens up that it is the Lord Jesus there, His love, His tender heart, His sympathy, the Lamb once slain. “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”

“Behold the throne of grace!
The promise calls me near;
There Jesus shows His smiling face;
And waits to answer prayer.”

“Behold the Lamb of God” on the throne.” And don’t we have to bless Him for the throne of grace and to thank Him constantly for the throne of grace! What could we do without it, if there was nowhere we could go with our burdens, sorrows and sins, nowhere we could go for help? How often I have to come back to William Cowper’s words:

“That were a grief I could not bear,
Didst Thou not hear and answer prayer;
But a prayer-hearing, answering God
Supports me under every load!”

“Behold the Lamb of God” exalted on the throne, with heaven and earth at His command waiting to answer prayer. “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” With many of you it is a time of need. “Grace to help in time of need.” You perhaps feel you are suffering. Think what the Lamb of God suffered in the Garden of Gethsemane and on the cross at Calvary, and think that He still has that loving, sympathising, affectionate heart, that He knows and He understands, that He is full of compassion. O “behold the Lamb of God” exalted on the throne. O but that tender-hearted, loving, compassionate, merciful Saviour! “A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench.” He knows your frame; He remembers you are but dust. “Let us *therefore* come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”

“Behold the Lamb of God.” There is another thing here in this glorious chapter. Really it is a glimpse into heaven itself. It is a view of the Lord Jesus in heaven. And John said that he viewed Him “a Lamb as It had been slain.” Even in heaven, risen, glorified, exalted, He still bears the marks of His sufferings and death. “A Lamb as It had been slain.” And beloved friends, I take that in all its fulness to mean this: that the preciousness of the blood of Jesus is the same tonight, has the same value, the same power, the same efficacy to take away sin as when the Lord Jesus hung bleeding, dying on the cross. “A Lamb as It had been slain.” His precious blood has lost none of its power. It has the same value, the same efficacy as when on the day of His death He “put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.”

“Behold the Lamb” in heaven, “a Lamb as It had been slain.” And behold Him as the Way, the only Way to heaven. Behold Him as an almighty Saviour, an able Saviour, a willing Saviour, able to save unto the uttermost. Behold His precious blood that cleanseth from all sin. Now this is the way, the only way of salvation, the way, the only way of forgiveness, the way, the only way to heaven, and the gospel points it out and bids sinners look to it.

“Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” “A Lamb as It had been slain.” Behold Him by faith, in dependence, in humble confession, in repentance, hanging on Him, looking to Him, looking to Him alone. No sinner ever perished there. This is the

call of the gospel: “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” Behold Him as “a Lamb as It had been slain.” I used to preach at a chapel and often they used to give this hymn out. I have never heard it anywhere else. It began like this:

“Sinners, behold the Lamb of God,
Who takes away our guilt!
Look to His precious, precious blood,
That Jews and Gentiles spilt.

That is just it, the way of hope, the way of salvation, the way of forgiveness, the way to heaven, the only way to heaven, for the greatest of sinners, for the chief of sinners. For the fountain stands open for sin and for uncleanness.

“Fly, then, awakened sinners, fly;
Your case admits no stay;
The fountain’s opened now for sin;
Come, wash your guilt away.”

“Behold the Lamb of God.” “In the midst of the throne ... a Lamb as It had been slain.” There is another thing here. John beheld the Lamb of God standing *in the midst of the four beasts and the midst of the elders*. I am not going to go into all the mysteries and symbolism and meaning of the Revelation, because the most godly men have differed. But one thing is very clear, that these elders represent the church of God. There is no doubt about that. These elders represent the church of God, and John viewed the Lamb of God standing in their midst. In other words, John viewed Him with His people, right in the midst, just as Daniel viewed Him in the midst with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the midst of the burning, fiery furnace. No harm came to them and the fire did not even singe their clothing. Now, “behold the Lamb” in the midst of the throne. “Behold the Lamb” in the midst of His people. What a wonderful truth this is! Well, it was for the suffering church of God when John first wrote the Book of the Revelation. They were suffering most dreadful persecution, but this view that the Lamb of God was there in the midst. He was with them. He had not left them nor forsaken them. And as this glorious Book unfolds chapter by chapter, the conflict between the people of God and the world, between Satan and the truth, between their enemies and the Lamb of God, one thing becomes more and more abundantly clear,

that is it is the Lamb who is triumphant, not Satan, not sin, not the world. It is the people of God who are triumphant.

O “behold the Lamb of God” in the midst of His church. Perhaps in two special ways. One, in their solemn assemblies, when they meet for worship. “Unto Him shall the gathering of the people be.” And “behold the Lamb of God” as He has kindly promised to be in the midst of His people in their solemn assemblies for public worship. And then, second, in their troubles and in their sorrows. “Behold the Lamb of God” in their midst, upholding them and supporting them and helping them and comforting them.

“’Tis expressed in words like these:

‘I am with thee,
Israel, passing through the fire.’”

“Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” So John viewed Him “a Lamb as It had been slain,” the triumphant Saviour in the midst of the throne, in the midst of the elders. And he viewed Him *as the Object of worship*, all heaven worshipping, adoring. “And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood.” And then the “ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands,” all joining together: “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.” And they fell down and worshipped Him that sitteth upon the throne and the Lamb for ever and ever. “Behold the Lamb of God” as the Object of worship. When we meet on the Lord’s day it is that the Saviour might be worshipped, and we would fall at His feet and we would worship Him and we would adore Him.

“Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” So it fits every case. It is the gracious admonition of the Lord Himself. You seeking, longing souls, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” Those of you who feel your guilt and sin and are confessing it, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world,” and know that His precious blood still cleanses from all sin, and pray that He might take away your sin. “Behold the Lamb,” those of you in darkness who have no light, those of you who are held fast in bondage, those of you who seek liberty. “Behold the Lamb of God,” whatever blessing you seek, whatever blessing you need. “Behold the

Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” And to see that in Him there is that wonderful fulness of grace and love and wisdom and mercy and strength – in a word, whatever a needy sinner can ever want. “For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell.” So as you feel your need and as you feel your emptiness, “Behold the Lamb of God,” and see in Him that there is everything you can ever seek, you can ever need.

“Lamb of God, we fall before Thee,
Humbly trusting in Thy cross;
That alone be all our glory;
All things else are dung and dross.”

“Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” And this will endear Him to you. This will make Him precious to you, the one thing needful, the Object of your first desire, as you know something of His love, as your hearts are filled, as they are made soft, as you think of your unworthiness, and yet your sweet hope that the Lord has died in your place. So you behold Him, not only in faith and hope, but in love. There is none like Him, none like Jesus. It is “Jesus only,” the Lamb of God.

“Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” I read to you also from Revelation 7. Again over that chapter you might see written, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” – the Lamb as all the glory of heaven. It is not just the golden streets and the pearly gates and the harps and the palms. “The Lamb is all the glory of Immanuel’s land.” Now what a view the beloved apostle had of heaven! He saw the whole of the redeemed safely landed. What a sight! A great multitude, and they were all singing, “Salvation to our God ... and unto the Lamb.” That is, with one voice they all acknowledged that the Lamb of God was the only reason why they were delivered from a deserved hell, that they were landed safe in heaven. “Salvation to our God ... and unto the Lamb.” And that great multitude, “Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen. And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?” How often these beautiful words have been read at the funeral of a believer. “What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?” And let us be clear, the

question is not asked because there is any doubt or any uncertainty as to who they are, but to draw the apostle's attention to them in wonder, in admiration. "What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?" And John wisely said, "Sir, thou knowest." He waited for an answer. This is the whole blood-bought church of God at last safely landed in heaven. But I will tell you something, beloved friends. It will be a wonderful mercy if you and I are found amongst them. Not one of us has reached that place yet. I wonder how many of us will. Terrible thing to be left out! O but what a mercy to be numbered amongst this great number!

Now who are they? "These are they which came out of great tribulation" – they did not sink in it; they did not perish in it; they came out of it – "and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne." These white robes are the robes of their profession. The glorious robe of Christ's imputed righteousness does not need cleansing, does it? "No age can change its glorious hue; the robe of Christ is ever new." But the robes of our profession are unclean, defiled, tarnished by sin. Why did the redeemed come to heaven? How did they get there? Here is this great multitude since Adam fell to the end of time. They all came to heaven on one ground. They "have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" – that precious fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness. Every single one of them from Adam's day to the end of time all came to heaven on the same ground, on one ground alone: washed in the blood of Christ. They "have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Yes, it is still true that "sinners plunged beneath that flood, lose all their guilty stains." It is still true,

"Dear dying Lamb! Thy precious blood
Shall never lose its power,
Till all the ransomed church of God
Be saved, to sin no more."

They "have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Have you a sweet hope that *you* have washed your robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb? Because either we have or we have not. "Therefore" – on no other ground – "Therefore" – for no other reason – "Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple: and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell

among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.”

Now, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” – the Lamb slain, the Lamb exalted, the only Way to heaven, the glory of the redeemed, the Object of their adoration to all eternity. “For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.” These are the glories of the Lamb of God, what He has done for sinners, what He is to His people now, what He is to them eternally in heaven. “The Lamb is all the glory of Immanuel’s land.” So in the words of Rutherford,

“The bride eyes not her garment,
But her dear Bridegroom’s face;
I will not gaze at glory,
But on my King of grace;
Not at the crown He giveth,
But on His piercèd hand:
The Lamb is all the glory
Of Immanuel’s land.”

“Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”

(The morning sermon on the same text was published last month.)

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Sinners, “behold the Lamb of God,”
Who takes away our guilt!
Look to His precious, precious blood,
That Jews and Gentiles spilt.
Sinners to Jesus now draw near,
Invited by His Word;
The chief of sinners need not fear,
“Behold the Lamb of God.”
In every state and time and place,
Plead only Jesus’ blood;
However wretched be your case,
“Behold the Lamb of God.”

Spirit of grace to us apply,
Immanuel's precious blood;
That we may, till we dwell on high,
"Behold the Lamb of God."