

Fellowship with God

The aim of the Christian faith is to find fellowship with God and with one another in Christ. Genuine fellowship in Christ is an entire culture; a way of living, relating, participating and serving. If we follow the Lamb through the Gospel of John, we will find this culture of fellowship.

When John wrote his first letter, he said: we are writing these things 'that you also may have fellowship with us' and our fellowship is indeed 'with the Father and with His Son'. Let us ask ourselves, 'Do we know what fellowship is, and have we found it?' The key is in following the Lamb, which opens up the fullest possible picture of following Christ.

John's is the only Gospel that specifically refers to Christ as the Lamb. So we will examine what John found, and Peter as well, since these two disciples walked together so closely. We may recall that the Gospel of John ends with that striking encounter on the shore of the Sea of Galilee where John and Peter were among those who met Jesus after His resurrection. This was the occasion when Jesus asked Peter whether he loved Him. Then He called Peter to 'feed My sheep'.

At a simple level, finding and loving the Lamb is also about caring for His sheep. In fact, if we follow the Lamb, we will become shepherds, similar to Peter and John. We will be those who love the brethren of Christ, who find fellowship with the Father and Son and with those who are born of God.

References:

1 John 1:3-4 John 21:17
Acts 20:28 1 Pet 5:2
John 1:29, 36

Further Study

1 John 1

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 31

Finding fellowship

Finding fellowship is perhaps the most important way of stating the aim of the Christian faith. Whether we are talking personally, or as families, churches and whole movements, the question is the same. Have we found fellowship? While there are many important subjects – faith, redemption, church life, eschatology – we could rightly say that fellowship with God and others is the context in which all these are outworked. What do faith, gifts, sound doctrine and prophecy mean if they do not arise from fellowship, function in fellowship, and lead to fellowship? As Paul said in his famous chapter on love, if we have gifts without love, we are nothing.

It appears that the disciple John, the Gospel writer, was right there, on the spot, when John the Baptist cried out, ‘Behold the Lamb!’ So John began with the Lamb, in chapter one, and ended with the words to Peter about feeding the sheep.

In the book of Revelation, we read that ‘the *Lamb* ... will *shepherd* them and lead [multitudes] to living fountains of waters’. This is the theme of the book of Revelation: the Lamb in the midst of the throne, the triumph of the Lamb, the bride as the Lamb’s wife, the ultimate fellowship of the Lamb and His people, the Lamb as the light of the temple, and the water of life proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb.

Further to this, according to Peter, the Lamb was ‘foreordained *before* the foundation of the world’. Before looking further into this vast subject, we’ll just take one simple point from Peter’s words. The Lamb was ‘before’ – before the beginning! Clearly, God’s purpose for you and me began before we began. Accordingly, the Lamb is to be our beginning point.

References:

1 Cor 13:2 Rev 7:17
1 Pet 1:20
Rev 21:9, 22-23

Further Study

1 Cor 13

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 1

The Lamb predates us

Our consideration of the Lamb of God lifts us to a purpose that predates our own existence. The origin of our existence is not in ourselves. This simple truth establishes the basis for faith. The truth begins with God and with what He brought forth for us before the beginning. The truth, in relation to us, begins with an offering, with the Lamb, whereby the life of new creation was given to us. The word of God lifts us to a purpose that predates our own existence.

In the unfolding of history, we then find that the Lamb of God came and was crucified. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was that Lamb. This is the second phase in the story of the Lamb, not the first. 'The Lamb' is a much larger subject than we have realised, even though we know that Jesus Himself is the Lamb of God. The Lamb is the beginning as far back as we can go, and is the end as far into the future as we can go.

So when we say, 'Follow the Lamb', we are not just thinking of following in Jesus' footsteps. Rather, we are following Him back before the beginning and past the end as well. 'The Lamb' is the longest serving symbolic theme in the Scriptures.

We know that God predestined mankind, created the world, loved the world and sent His Son into the world as the Lamb of God. However, there is much more. We find, for example, that there is a link between the 'Passover lamb', a reference to the Old Testament Passover, and the bread and wine, of which we partake in our Christian communion. Jesus spoke about eating His flesh and drinking His blood, and Peter spoke about partaking of the 'divine nature'.

References:

Ex 12:21 Mark 14:12
1 Cor 5:7 2 Pet 1:4
John 6:53-54

Further Study

1 Pet 1

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 2

The nature of the Lamb

We may recall the verse that beseeches us to present ourselves as living sacrifices. How does this relate to the theme of the Lamb? At a basic level, we realise that just as Christ offered Himself, we are to offer ourselves to be 'of the Lamb'. Christ was led to His death without opening 'His mouth', we read in the book of Isaiah. Peter said that we are to follow the example of the Lamb, in that we are called to 'suffer wrongfully' and not to revile those who revile us. We also read that we who were lost are now to be His lambs, the sheep of His pasture. We are to be like Him, with the nature of the Lamb.

This is where the subject of the blood of the Lamb bursts upon us. The Lamb was foreordained, before, as an offering, and not as an afterthought with reference to sin. Certainly, from our perspective, the Lamb is the innocent sacrifice for sin. As John the Baptist said, He 'takes away the sin of the world'. But there is a real danger if we stop there. The Lamb 'before' was an offering without reference to sin. That's why we must follow the theme of the Lamb back before the beginning, and on beyond the end as well.

The plain truth is this. The blood of the Lamb was brought forth within God's own Eternal Covenant as an offering, to become our eternal life. He freely offered His life to us, before ever we would see Him as a sacrifice for sin. His own divine life, if we think of it that way, passed through an endpoint, a form of death by offering, to become our new creation life. This is the meaning of the blood of the Lamb, before.

References:

Rom 12:1 Isa 53:7
1 Pet 1:19-23 Heb 13:20
John 1:29, 36

Further Study

Isa 53

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 3

Our eternal life

The Lamb 'before' was not merely a provision in anticipation of sin. The blood of the Lamb was the very source, brought forth in God's own covenant, for a new creation. The Lamb is the life and light of that new creation, which explains why the Lamb is found to be the light of the new heaven and new earth in the book of Revelation.

What has misled men and women to a large extent, is the pantheistic idea that God's life is simply infused in everything and everyone. In that case, the idea of God offering, and of the Lamb, is entirely veiled. This leads to the idea that we are all basically good. Further, there is no crisis point where mankind is confronted by God's offering of new creation life. God's life is not merely present and infused into existence, and discovered through belief and right religious practice. The life given to us is something new, made available to a new creation through offering. The Lamb is the sum of that offering.

So we must find the Lamb, follow the Lamb, and become of the Lamb, in the way we ourselves participate in offering. John and the other apostles were aiming to convert us to this understanding; that eternal life is a constant, new, living, offering relationship where life is a fellowship, and this fellowship is eternal life. We are only alive when we are offering to Him and to one another within that fellowship of life. Eternal life itself is a fellowship of persons who are offering themselves, and is not a static force of some kind, infused into us through faith and righteous deeds. This is the gospel of eternal life.

References:

John 1:14 John 8:12
Rev 22:3-5 1 John 5:20
1 John 1:2
Rev 21:22-24

Further Study

1 John 5

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 4