

He is Risen 2022

Text

Genesis 2:15-25

Title

**"This Lamb is Your Lamb,
This Lamb is My Lamb,
This Lamb was Slain for You & Me"**

If you are my age or a fan of classic television you can finish this lyric:

A horse is a horse...

*Of course, of course,
And no one can talk to a horse, of course
That is, of course, unless the horse
is the famous Mister Ed*

The first talking animal I can remember was Cecil the seasick sea serpent, one-half of *The Beany & Cecil Show*. Crowy, Captan Horatio Hufflepuff, and Dick Dastardly rounded out the cast. Beany wore a multicolor beanie that had a propeller on it, allowing him to fly. It was marketed by Mattel as a toy called the Beany Copter. It wound up so that you could launch the propeller from your head. I'd wear it while watching.

Who is your first (or favorite) talking animal?

We are bombarded by talking animals on film, on television, in literature, on stage, in video games, etc. It makes you wonder if animals could talk to humans in the past.

There *is* a talking animal in the third chapter of the first book of the Bible.

"That's a unique situation, a one-off," you might say.

What if I reminded you that there is *another* talking animal in the Bible? It is a donkey who Uber-ed for Balaam, a sleazy Old Testament prophet-for-hire. On his way to curse God's people for money, an angel blocked the way intending to kill Balaam. "And when the donkey saw the Angel of the LORD, she lay down under Balaam; so Balaam's anger was aroused, and he struck the donkey with his staff. Then the LORD opened the mouth of the donkey, and she said to Balaam, "What have I done to you, that you have struck me these three times?"(Numbers 22:27-29).

Balaam's eyes were opened and his life saved. Perhaps Balaam ought to have taken a moment to reflect that a donkey had more supernatural sense than he did.

There is a hint that animals spoke prior to the serpent's conversation with Eve. Before God told Adam and Eve to "Be fruitful and multiply," *He told the animals to "be fruitful and multiply"* (1:22). The Bible gives no indication that they answered back, but why speak aloud to them if they could not comprehend language?

Animals played a role in the relationship between Adam and Eve:

Gen 2:18 And the LORD God said, "*It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.*"

Gen 2:19 Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought *them* to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that *was* its name.

Gen 2:20 So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him.

Naming the animals was important but secondary. The point of bringing beasts and birds to Adam was to demonstrate that he had no complement, no counterpart. God must therefore have brought *couples*, male and female, two-by-two.

There is a satanic conspiracy against God's natural order for marriage and family. Our leaders, elected and appointed, are pushing Gender Identity upon our children. It's a strong play in order to control the next generation. As he always does, God will raise up apologists to give us reasonable arguments. Overall I like the philosophy of Larry Norman, who once said, "Don't ask me for the answers, I've only got one. That a man leaves the darkness follows the Son." The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation and is always the foundational truth upon which any argument must be built.

"Whatever Adam called each living creature, that *was* its name" (2:19). You might recall Bob Dylan's musical take on this:

*Man gave names to all the animals
In the beginning, long time ago
Next animal that he did meet
Had wool on his back and hooves on his feet
Eating grass on a mountainside so steep
Oh, think I'll call it a sheep*

It isn't far-fetched that Adam would additionally give them personal names. He did exactly that when God brought Eve to him:

- Adam identified her as "woman" (2:23).
- Later Adam *named* her "Eve" (3:20).

The original sheep couple may have been Shaun and Lamb Chop.

The original human couple coexisted with animals. Adam and Eve were charter members of PETA. Fish were friends, not food. Adam never shushed Eve and said, "I'm hunting wascally wabbit." They did not kill, eat, or use any parts of animals. No animals were harmed - not at first.

Things were going swell in the Garden of Eden.

BTW I think I'm going to start using the term, the Garden of God. The prophet Ezekiel refers to Eden as the Garden of God three times. It may not seem much different, but it puts a different spin on the Garden. Less impersonal and more intimate.

God gave Adam and Eve a single, simple statute, and it was full of grace. He said,

Gen 2:16 "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat;

Gen 2:17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

They were fruitarians. I don't mean to ruin your Easter ham, but in Heaven **we** will be fruitarians.

There are currently more than two thousand varieties of fruits. For all we know there were more than that in the Garden of Eden. God supplied an over abundance of delicious food, more than enough for our parents to obey Him without feeling deprived.

Enter "the great dragon... that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan" (Revelation 12:9).

Adam and Eve were together, but the recorded conversation was between the serpent and Eve. He encouraged her to disobey God. She disobeyed, and Adam followed willingly.

In two shakes of a lamb's tail they learned what God meant by "you shall surely die."

The presence and prevalence of evil in the world causes mankind to question God. If He is omnipotent and loving, why so much suffering?

It is a fair question. In fact, there is a branch of theology dedicated to answering it. It is called "theodicy" dealing with *the vindication of divine goodness and providence in view of the existence of evil*.

Romans 5:12 is a good beginning for any theodicy. According to the apostle Paul, "sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, in this way death spread to all people..." (Romans 5:12).

Everything that is bad and evil springs from this initial disobedience of Adam called sin.

There was no death, no suffering, no pain, no sorrow, until Adam ate the forbidden fruit. He personally invited death into the Garden of Eden. Don't blame God. He acted immediately to resolve sin, at great personal cost.

God had warned Adam that disobedience would bring the death penalty. Adam died at 930 years young. His descendants are born dying.

We are further described as being born "dead in trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1). Pastor Don McClure used to say, "we are born physically alive, soulishly active, but spiritually dead." We are born lifeless toward God. We live as if He did not exist, or as if His existence did not matter.

We're not done describing the death penalty. There is something the Bible calls "the Second Death" (Revelation 21:8). It is "the lake which burns with fire and brimstone." It is what we commonly call Hell. It is the place of punishment *after* physical death.

Our parents invited physical, spiritual, and eternal death into the Garden of God. What could be done to evict this most unwelcome guest?

God sewed clothes for His naked prodigals.

The account in Genesis makes it clear that being naked was a major problem:

- *Before* disobeying God, “they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed” (2:25).
- *After* disobeying God, “Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they *were* naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings” (3:7).

The problem was not that Eden had become a nudist colony. It wasn't that they suddenly realized they were naked. It reads as if they lost something that had covered their nakedness.

It is widely believed that Adam and Eve were originally clothed with light. Listen to this description:

We are not to imagine that prior to the garments of skin made by God for Adam and Eve, they were utterly naked. On the contrary, their original garb consisted of light. In Hebrew the words for light and skin are homonyms, both pronounced the same but spelled differently. Adam and Eve had their garments of celestial light replaced by garments of skin, which no longer illuminated.

Another source said,

Adam and Eve wore robes of light reflecting the light of God's glory. But when they sinned their eyes “were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons” (Genesis 3:7). Sin stripped them from the connection with God.

One more:

There are traditions from both Jewish and Christian sources that teach that before the fall, the skin of Adam and Eve was luminous. In other words, they were “covered” by divine light and would “glow,” so to speak. I hope this triggers your mind to make some connections to Moses' face and the Messiah.

We often describe celebrities as “luminaries” in their various fields. Its original meaning used to describe an object or celestial body as giving off light. Jesus

was the light of the world, and we are now His lights in the world. We are His luminaries.

Do you remember Lumiere in *Beauty and the Beast*? He was the candlestick. Jesus described the gathered church on earth as His candlestick.

“For Adam and his wife the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them” (Genesis 3:21). Where do you get “skin” for tunics? *From animals.*

Best guess is that the animals slaughtered were sheep:

- Adam and Eve’s son, Able, offered a sheep in the very next acceptable sacrifice recorded in the Bible.
- Centuries later, God would specify that His people offer lambs to annually commemorate Passover.
- The priests in the wilderness Tabernacle and then Temple at Jerusalem sacrificed a lamb in the morning and evening every day.

Around eight hundred Samaritans live in Israel, mostly in Holon and on Mount Gerizim in Samaria. Each year, they conduct a traditional Passover sacrifice ceremony in the presence of most members of their community. Two days ago they sacrificed forty sheep in a ceremony that attracted tourists from around the world.

You need 3 or 4 sheep’s hides in order to make a jacket. You would need more to make “tunics” for two. Six or eight or ten sheep would have been slaughtered.

Shaun and Lamb Chop were the first to feel Death’s sting.

Adam and Eve would have had a childlike response to the slaughter. One of my earliest childhood memories was coming home to our house on 39th Street in San Bernardino and discovering my cocker spaniel was dead. It tore me up. I’m still sad.

Blackie died of natural doggie causes on his own. I didn't watch as my dad slit his throat with a knife and bled him out *for something I had done*. Even you manly men have cried when putting down a sick, dying family pet. This wasn't even that. They were perfectly healthy and innocent when slaughtered in place of Adam and Eve.

God slit the throat of those sheep. He had created them, He had given them life. They were dear to God. They were innocent.

There's something more to consider. God had just told Adam and Eve that someone He called "the Seed of the woman" would come to Earth and suffer in their place (3:15). We know that this person was God's only begotten son, God with us, Jesus Christ.

While He slit the throats of those animals, God was looking down the corridors of human history. With perfect foresight He saw the death of His beloved Son on the Cross as the ultimate and final sacrifice for the sins of the world. He wasn't killing just these few lambs, but was revealing all the animals that would take your place temporarily until His beloved Son, Jesus.

Sin requires the death penalty. You are born dying, spiritually dead, and will be sentenced after death to the Second Death. You best have a perfect, unblemished lamb when you approach God.

Fast forward to the first century AD. A bearded, long haired, locust-and-honey-eating, wilderness-living, Jewish prophet was out in the Judean wilderness claiming that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand. The Messiah God promised Israel was on Earth.

There are a bunch of Old Testament titles for Him: the Anointed One, Savior, Redeemer, the Great High Priest, the King of Kings, Wonderful, Counselor, Prince of Peace, Almighty God, Son of God, Son of Man, Lion, Lord of Lords, Alpha and Omega, Immanuel, Chief Cornerstone, Ancient of Days. We've barely scratched the surface.

John the Baptist ignored all those glorious titles. He saw Jesus, and led by the Holy Spirit he shouted something incredible:

“Behold the Lamb of God Who takes away the sins of the world.”

The lambs God sacrificed to clothe Adam and Eve, and all subsequent lambs, and all other animals sacrificed, were temporary. They were placeholders, seat fillers, as God prepared to send Jesus at just the right time to offer Himself in our place. The blood of bulls and goats and sheep could not permanently take away the sin of humans (Hebrews 10:4).

It is no coincidence that Jesus died, dismissing His spirit, on the exact day and time during the Feast of Passover when thousands of lambs were having their throats slit in the Temple.

There is little disagreement among historians that the standard procedure under Roman rule in the first century was to crucify persons **completely naked**.

- Adam was naked in the Garden of God after he sinned.
- Jesus was naked on the Cross. He who knew no sin [*was made*] sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (First Corinthians 5:22). Jesus was a second Adam capable of dying sacrificially to save others.

Augustine writes, “Jesus Christ... took on Himself the evil of death itself, wishing to free us from it.”

It’s been said, “Jesus paid the debt He did not owe for the debt I could not pay.”

Jesus was the last lamb, the Lamb of God, Who died for the sins of the whole world, “that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life.”

Let’s interact with those words:

- Are you “whoever?” Yes, you are. Whoever, whosoever, anyone, everyone, all. It doesn’t matter your status or position or wealth or ethnicity. Every human is a “whoever.”
- Do you “believe in Jesus?”

In terms of what we have been presenting today, I ask this question:

“Do you believe Jesus is your Lamb, sacrificed on the Cross as your substitute in order that you might be saved and receive everlasting life?”

By “substitute” we mean God treated Jesus on the Cross as if He lived your life so He could treat you as if you lived His.

Mark Dever writes, “Jesus didn’t die on behalf of or for the benefit of, but He literally died in our stead, or in our place. We deserved death, but because He died for us, now we will not die.”

Horatius Bonar answered this way:

*Upon a life I did not live
 Upon a death I did not die
 Upon another’s life,
 Upon another’s death
 I stake my whole eternity*

Just as through Adam sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned, as through Adam’s offense *judgment* came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through Jesus’ death on the Cross *the free gift came* to all men, resulting in justification of life. For as by Adam’s disobedience many were made sinners, so also by Jesus’ obedience many will be made righteous.

Every Bible study ends with two groups of people who have decisions to make:

Believer, "How are you doing?" Are you relying upon the enabling of the indwelling Holy Spirit to obey God and live a godly life? You *are* an overcomer; are you overcoming, walking in victory over your flesh, the world, and the devil?

Nonbeliever, you were born dying and dead. The Second Death is your current eternal destination. All of that changes immediately when you believe on the Lord, Jesus Christ.