

Death of the Lamb

Have you ever seen a lamb slaughtered?

For those of you who have, I am sure that, unless you had been previously callused by working on a farm or in a slaughterhouse, that shocking experience has stayed vividly in your mind.

During the Passover season, the members of God's church often ponder – in addition to the New Testament symbols of unleavened bread and wine – the symbolism of the slaughter of lambs.

In this article I would like to examine, with you, the sacrifice of the Passover lamb.

The death of a lamb

Some years ago, Rick, a work friend of mine who was also a sheep farmer, sold me two ewes – adult, female sheep. He sold them to me at a really low price, their value having been diminished because they were unable to bear lambs. Rick, who has many years' experience at sheep farming, told me that if we enjoyed lamb meat we would also probably enjoy the milder-tasting mutton meat that we would obtain from this pair.

But we soon put all thoughts of the taste of their meat out of our minds. My wife gave the sheep the pet names *Cassa* and *Roll*, and our family really enjoyed having them around. It was so calming for us to watch these good-natured animals feeding, chewing the cud, wandering tranquilly around our property, and relaxing.

The months sped by and, eventually, the sad day came that seemed to be the optimum time to have the ewes slaughtered and butchered. The Feast of Tabernacles was approaching, all the brethren would be away or otherwise busy, and my father-in-law was away on a long vacation. Therefore, the sheep would not have anyone around to feed them their hay and water.

Another friend – Wayne – who had raised many cattle and was, like Rick, skilled at this kind of activity, volunteered to do "the dirty deed" and the butchering if I would help him with the heavy lifting that was necessary. So one Sunday afternoon, Wayne arrived at our home with his rifle and I sent my wife and our four daughters out shopping for the remainder of the day.

As our family had become so used to having the two peaceful animals around the place, the slaughter of Cassa and Roll was very, very unpleasant for me to watch. Wayne, in his long experience, was understandably thick-skinned about the whole procedure. Without any "goodbye," he simply loaded his rifle, picked out one of the ewes, and shot her in the head at very close range. Her legs immediately became rubbery, her eyes glazed over, she tottered for a few seconds, then fell and tumbled down a small hill. A look of horror and fear immediately appeared in the eyes of the other ewe as she saw her old companion fall. If I had looked in a mirror at that moment, I would have probably seen a similar look on my own face.

Wayne told me that, although, her brain was now dead, the sheep's heart and lungs would continue to operate for a few more minutes, and that, to bleed her, he must cut her throat immediately and we must hang her by her hind legs. As I was attaching a rope around her hind legs, I heard some strange, wheezing and gurgling sounds from the front end of the animal. After I had finished my little job, I returned to Wayne who was just completing the cutting of the animal's throat. Remember that this was an adult sheep, not a tender, one-year-old lamb. My eyes fell on the awful spectacle of the severed windpipe still puffing in time with the irregular, strained and waning inflation and deflation of the lungs. We hung the sheep's carcass from the edge of the roof of our wood-shed and then went to repeat the gruesome procedure with the other poor victim.

Every year when Passover season comes around, I think of the grisly demise of Cassa and Roll – even though they were comparatively tough, adult, mutton-producing ewes and not tender, young lambs like those that once pictured the sacrifice of our Saviour.

Prime time

When *is* the meat of a sheep (or goat) at its very best, and in its prime for butchering? I asked Rick this question recently, and he told me that, although it can vary slightly from breed to breed between eight and twelve months, the prime age for butchering never exceeds a year. The Encyclopædia Britannica article entitled "Lamb" agrees:

Lamb: Live sheep before the age of one year, and the flesh of such animals. Mutton refers to the flesh of the mature ram or ewe at least one year old; the meat of sheep between 12 and 20 months old may be called yearling mutton.

We can be sure then that lamb meat will be at its best when the lamb is less than a year old because a lamb is *not* a lamb if it is over a year old. At a year, it becomes an adult sheep – a ram or a ewe – and its meat becomes mutton. This is interesting and significant because, for the annual Passover sacrifice, here is what God commanded:

Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats: (Exodus 12:5)

God commanded the Israelites to choose an unblemished, male lamb of the first year. The lamb was to be of the highest quality and no older than one year. This is the time that it would be at its very best meat quality and at its highest saleable value.

Although I have never seen the slaughter of a young lamb in its first year of life, I would expect that it is probably even more unpleasant to watch than it is to watch the slaughter of an older sheep. I do not wish to be morbid when I suggest this, nor am I criticizing God's perfect timing, but the members of the New Testament church really do miss a lot by not experiencing this annual, physical ritual of the Passover sacrifice, which might give so much more rich meaning to us than it did to God's Old Testament people. It would be a very unpleasant sight to most church members today, but it would be a very significant annual "jolt" which would help remind us of the horrible suffering Jesus Christ went through for us. It may be that God's Old Testament people took the annual Passover sacrifice for granted because they witnessed so many offerings in the course of a year and, perhaps, because they did not understand the spiritual symbolism of those offerings. Conversely, it may be that they did not understand the meaning of the offerings because they took them for granted.

Many – myself included – have asked why Jesus Christ will reinstitute animal sacrifices after His return (see Ezekiel 40:41-42, 44:11, 46:24, Zechariah 14:21). One of the reasons may be to help the resurrected members of the Old Testament congregation of Israel to learn to pay better attention to the deeper spiritual meanings of the physical sacrifices. A second reason might be to introduce the resurrected and glorified members of the New Testament church to the rich symbolism and significance of the sacrifices.

The death of a human

For most people in our *civilized* western society today, the slaughter of a young lamb would be shocking and very unpleasant to watch. To witness the slaughter or execution of a human being would, of course, be very much more disturbing. Other than those who have served in the military, and except for the occasional news videos or photographs of executions or assassinations, most of us have not seen real, violent human death at first hand. It is unpleasant enough to watch the relatively peaceful death of an elderly family member.

Have you ever seen a human being die? One of your close relatives, perhaps? I have not. Although I was with some of my loved ones during their last hours of life, for some reason, God did not allow me to be present at the actual moment when my baby son died, when my mother and father died, or when my wife's mother and father died.

Think for a moment about your experiences at the times of the deaths of some of your close family members, friends, and relatives. Somehow, human death does not seem *quite* as unacceptable when the person is very old and has enjoyed a good, long life, and when the person's death is peaceful and non-violent. Nor is it quite so unacceptable – on the negative side – when the person has flagrantly and voluntarily abused his health, or is guilty of a violent crime. Human death seems so much worse when the person is young: a child, a youth, or a young man or woman in his or her prime of life, or when the person is (either relatively or totally) innocent, or when the death is painful, traumatic, or violent.

Considering these factors, the Lamb of God, whose life was of an infinitely higher value than the sum-total of every human that ever lived, was just thirty-three years old when He was sacrificed. He was in the very prime of His physical life and, like no other adult human before or since, He was one hundred percent innocent of sin. Yet He suffered the most painful, traumatic, violent and shameful death that the human mind could invent.

Liebstod

As we consider the supreme and selfless love of Jesus Christ and God the Father for humankind (John 15:13), let me ask you three questions:

1. Is death really an enemy?
2. Or should we look forward to death?
3. Did Jesus look forward to death?

In the arts, love and death are frequently linked. A few familiar examples that immediately come to mind are Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet," Leonard Bernstein's "West Side Story," Tolstoy's "War and Peace," and the beautiful "Liebstod" ("Love-death") sequence in Wagner's opera, "Tristan und Isolde." In former times, it was considered very fashionable and suave for the very rich and famous to appear melancholy and doleful in the presence of their friends, to favour poetry, literature and music dealing with the subject of death, and even to feign a yearning for death. Here is a brief quote from Tolstoy's historical novel, "War and Peace" in which the financially challenged Boris is making an attempt at attracting the attentions of Julia, a rich, young heiress:

Boris sketched two trees in the album and wrote, "Rustic trees, your dark branches shed gloom and melancholy upon me." On another page he drew a tomb, and wrote, "La mort est secourable et la mort est tranquille. Ah! Contre les douleurs il n'y a pas d'autre asile." Julia said this was charming.

Here is a translation of the French verse that Julia found so charming:

"Death gives relief and death is peaceful. Ah! From suffering there is no other refuge."

I'm sure that my wife would have thrown me out of her parents' house thirty-five years ago if I would have tried to attract her by quoting this kind of morbid verse. In 1970, the verse and music of *The Moody Blues* was about as deep and serious as we were willing to go!

Some late nineteenth and early twentieth century novelists, poets and composers took this melancholy subject matter another step further, their works describing the praise of death and, in some circles, even to the extent of the love *of* death... the yearning for death. Another scene from Tolstoy's "War and Peace" tells of Pierre Bezukhov who, upon joining the Russian Freemasons, discovers that the highest virtue a member of that secret society can strive for is listed as "the love of death."

With various objectives for the teaching, motivation, and encouragement of His children, God also inspired the concepts of love and death to be linked in the scriptures. Here is one example:

Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame. (Song of Solomon 8:6)

Uncontrolled or immature love, lust, passion and jealousy can be forces as strong as death, and can lead to death. How many "crimes of passion" are committed around the world each year? How many teenagers in recent years have committed suicide or murder because a girlfriend or boyfriend had rejected them for another, or because their parents had disapproved of their youthful relationships? Here is a second biblical example of love linked with death:

We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. (I John 3:14)

Here we see that, contrary to man's Satan-inspired ideas, love should be linked to life – not death. Life is, under normal circumstances, to be considered a good thing and death a comparatively bad thing. God tells us here through the apostle John that love of our physical and spiritual brothers and sisters is consistent with life and that the lack of love for them is consistent with death. We return to Solomon for a third example:

But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death. (Proverbs 8:36)

Through this wise king, God tells us that those who hate Him and sin against Him are (probably without realizing it) lovers of death. If the hatred of God is proportional to the love of death, then the love of God must likewise be proportional to the love of life.

The death of the Lamb of God

But was it not also Solomon who wrote that: "the day of death is better than the day of one's birth" and that "it is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting" (Ecclesiastes 7:1-4)? Was Solomon just having a bad day when he wrote this? Or can there really be positive aspects to death as well as the obvious and well known, negative ones? Let us return to that question later but, for now, let us ask another:

Did Jesus "love death"? Did He look forward to it? Did He look upon death generally – and upon His own death specifically – as positive upcoming events? Some scriptures almost give the impression that He did. Jesus sternly warned Satan off when Peter, deceived into thinking that he was responding encouragingly to Jesus' words, contradicted Him and protested that He would not suffer and die as He had just told the disciples that He would:

From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men. (Matthew 16:21-23)

Poor Peter was looking through a glass darkly – very darkly. He was suffering from the common human malady of selective hearing and understanding. He was not taking in everything that Jesus was saying to him. All Peter seemed to hear and understand were those horrifying words about the suffering, the rejection, and the killing. Did he not hear Jesus telling them all that His resurrection from the dead – one of the greatest turning points in the whole of eternity – was soon to occur?

"Well, yes, I might have heard something about Jesus rising after three days. But He said it so openly... and we could all get into very serious trouble if we get to be associated with that kind of talk!"

Poor Peter had the powerful Satan whispering some similar words of fear as these into his mind. It is so easy for us to criticize Peter in our twenty-twenty hindsight; but would any of us have fared any better in this than he did? Satan was up to his old tricks. He knew as well as Jesus did that one of history's most pivotal days was approaching and that they were at that time nearing the home stretch. Satan knew what the glorious end product of Jesus' suffering and death would be and he wanted to make a concerted, eleventh-hour effort at preventing it from taking place. How? Through the use of human fear and reason. By frightening and tempting Peter into trying to talk his beloved friend Jesus out of even mentioning these twin epics: the greatest sacrifice and the greatest miracle in human history.

Jesus was no coward, of course, but He certainly did not look forward to the impending physical torture that He knew, in advance, He must go through. He had the ability to foresee it all in as much detail as He wanted to. Paul gives an indication that, even before His human sojourn began, Jesus frequently thought about what He would have to go through:

**For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world.
(Hebrews 9:26)**

But now, a change of scene, from Caesarea Philippi to Gethsemane, just outside the eastern gates of Jerusalem; and a short step forward in time to our Saviour's last night on earth as a human being. In deep and fervent prayer, He asked His Father if it were at all possible that it might not be necessary for Him to drink from that awful cup that He had thought about for so long:

And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt... He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done... And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words. (Matthew 26:39, 42, 44)

Perhaps it was not only the approaching hours of physical torture that Jesus dreaded as He made this plea to His Father. For every microsecond of eternity (with the possible two exceptions of His time in Mary's womb and His human babyhood), He had enjoyed a level of consciousness, involvement, control and communication with God the Father that no other man could even begin to comprehend. It must have been almost intolerable for the Son of God – the great YHWH of the Old Testament – to contemplate being totally unconscious and "out of the picture," even for a mere seventy-two hours. As Jesus, while He prayed in the garden, shrank from the idea of that imminent separation from His Father, it is hardly surprising that His living creation later reacted violently to the dying and to the death of its Creator. The sun was darkened as Jesus' consciousness waned, and a tremendous earthquake shook the world as He was cut off from out of the land of the living (Matthew 27:45-54; Luke 23:44-45; Isaiah 53:8).

Also, Jesus knew that Satan was poised to strike, gleefully waiting for Him to be put to sleep. For the Son of God to be removed from the world scene at such a critical time might be compared with the leader of a great country being sent to a remote resort for a three day break just at the point when a major war is ready to break out with his nation's arch-enemy. One day, we will know what forces may have been deployed in order to prevent Satan from destroying the whole universe during those seventy-two hours.

Jesus' agony no doubt included the foreknowledge of the spiritual torture of experiencing the effect of the billions of sins committed throughout the seven thousand years of human history (four thousand in the past, three thousand in the future), as they would soon be laid on His innocent head. Perhaps the transfer of those sins was already then in progress as He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane during that Passover night. Just a short time before He uttered these agonized prayers, Jesus had shared a cup of wine with His disciples. This wine symbolized His pure and innocent blood. But Jesus knew that His blood – and perhaps even His mind – would soon become besmirched, infected and injected with every filthy sin that man had ever committed in the past and would commit from that time on.

God tells us in I Corinthians 15:56 that "the sting of death is sin." Most of us, at one time or another in our lives, have been stung by a bee, a wasp, or a hornet. Some years ago a friend of mine, during a visit to Afghanistan, was stung by a scorpion that had crawled into his hotel room. The pain of an insect sting increases rapidly as its poison spreads through the blood vessels, deep into the body part that has been stung,

and can sometimes be so intense that it is almost unbearable. Although the spiritual pain that Jesus was suffering was of a different kind than that inflicted by physical insect stings, it is impossible for us even to imagine a fraction of the level of the spiritual agony that those billions of *stings of death* injected into our Saviour as all the world's sins were laid upon Him.

With all of His might, He strove to project His mind elsewhere. He struggled to look beyond those hours of torture, despite His foreknowledge of their severity. Jesus knew what lay beyond this day of agony and shame that was just beginning. More than any other human being who ever lived, He knew what lay beyond the split second of death and His short sleep in the tomb. Just hours before this prayer in Gethsemane, He had spoken rapturously to His Father about their approaching reunification and about the regaining of His former glory:

And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was... And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee... And now come I to thee; (John 17:5, 11, 13).

How do you think King Nebuchadnezzar felt when God gave him back his status as a real human being and a great king, after living the existence of the lowest, slinking animal in the wild (Daniel 4:29-36)? How would you or I feel if we were given the experience of living as lowly worms for a few years and then being given our human lives back (Psalm 22:6)? How much more was Jesus looking forward to the instant of waking after His short sleep to be resurrected as His former self: the YHWH, the LORD, the Eternal God?

So again, did Jesus look forward to His death? No. He looked beyond His hours of suffering and beyond the instant of His death. He looked forward to life!

Good as well as bad?

But if we believe God's Word – including our previous example of Ecclesiastes 7:1-4 – we must accept as true that, although death has its obvious bad points, it also must have its "good" points. We are all very well aware of the reasons why we would think of death as a negative thing. But how can we think of such an event and condition as possessing positive aspects?

Our Creator, the Master Craftsman who made everything "good" (Genesis 1:4-31) – that is, of the highest quality – built death into man's design. He did this for some very good reasons. Surprisingly, there really are good and positive purposes behind both the "first death" and the "second death" (Revelation 2:11, 20:6, 14; 21:8). The first death is that with which every person is familiar and knows that he must face. It is the termination of the physical life of every human being that lives during this six thousand-year period allotted to man.

Before the Flood, even though many people lived for multiple hundreds of years, they all still died. After the flood, God gradually shortened man's average life span down to an approximate average of three score and ten (Psalm 90:10). Perhaps He did this to show us the results of long lives of disobedience to God's law, as manifested by the accounts of the days leading up to the Flood, the tower of Babel, the wars of the kings, and Sodom and Gomorrah. Considering these examples, what would the world be like if it were filled with immortal, law-breaking humans?

As Herbert Armstrong told us so often, God is reproducing Himself. He wants children who will not turn to lives of sin, as Satan and his demons did, and then continue to live forever in misery. Unlike the destiny of that miserable band of fallen angels, for human beings, death is the wages of sin – the penalty for sin (Romans 6:23). And sin, of course, is the transgression of God's holy law (I John 3:4). After all, is it death – the just penalty that was created by God – which is really "the bad thing"? Is it not rather the sin, which causes the death penalty that is really "the bad thing"?

God does not want even one of us to live a miserable, sin-led existence for all eternity. He wants children who will learn to willingly obey Him, who will learn to reject sin, and who will reap the positive results throughout eternal lives of joy. He has promised to give every human an opportunity to receive His gifts of salvation and eternal life in His Family and Kingdom. But if some of His children insist on continuing in sin after they have been given adequate time to be taught and to fully weigh and understand the consequences of each alternative, their choice will include the penalty of the second death – God's loving and merciful penalty of eternal sleep. To quote Herbert Armstrong once again, he often paraphrased the apostle Paul with these words: "The wages of sin is death! Eternal death! Not eternal life in hell-fire, agony and misery!" We can see by this merciful method of final punishment that, when God tells us to love our enemies, He is not asking us to do something that He is not willing to do Himself. What a loving and merciful God we really do have!

We believe and hope that Jesus Christ will return very soon to straighten out the mess that man has made of His creation. However, if He does not come back to earth before the expiry of our allotted time, we too will take the dreamless sleep of the first death as He did. Jesus' sleep only lasted for seventy-two hours. We should not be worried or frightened that ours will, in most cases, last longer than seventy-two hours because, when we are in a deep, sound sleep, we are unaware of the passing of time (Ecclesiastes 9:5).

Friend or foe?

Let us now return to our deferred question: Is death really an enemy? It was Paul's teaching and a part of God's Word that, yes, death is an enemy:

The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. (I Corinthians 15:26)

If death is part of God's good creation, how can it also be an enemy? Surely, God does not create enemies... Does He? Well, yes, He does! For the ultimate good of His people, God has allowed – and even raised up – many different kinds of enemy throughout history to test His people. Without wishing to make light of the seriousness of human death, we might look upon it as a "disposable test tool." When God has finished with it, it "shall be destroyed." He will throw it in the garbage!

Yes. Death *is* an enemy. Death and its inseparable and causative partner – sin – are enemies that, although they have led to so much unhappiness and misery over the years, will one day be destroyed. But these enemies will not go down without a fight! We can be reassured, however, that the first and most crucial battle in the war between humankind and the enemies, sin and death, has been fought and won already by our Saviour:

Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. (Romans 6:9)

Because Christ won this first battle through His death and resurrection, we – His fellow-soldiers (II Timothy 2:3-4; Ephesians 6:11-18) – are now given a military commission to fight in these subsequent battles, to participate in the destruction of sin and death, and to be given the gift of eternal life:

But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep... For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. (I Corinthians 15:20-22)

Is it any wonder that at Caesarea Philippi, Satan did not want Jesus to even talk about His future suffering, death, and resurrection to His disciples? Satan was – and, for a little while longer, still is – the prince of this world (John 12:31, 14:30, 16:11). He had been permitted to enjoy things his own way for so long that he had no desire whatsoever for battle to commence.

Although Jesus' death and resurrection constituted the first and most crucial battle and victory in this war against sin and death, it was certainly not to be the last. Encouraged, empowered, and strengthened by the Captain of our salvation (Hebrews 2:10) and His angelic host, His fellow soldiers are involved in an ongoing daily battle with Satan and his forces. In addition, there are more major battles to come. God will win an intermediate battle at the time of the First Resurrection:

So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. (I Corinthians 15:54)

But even after the First Resurrection, the war over sin and death will still not be totally won. Satan will stir up the massed armies of the world to join together in an unholy alliance with those of the Beast and the False Prophet. Together they will mount an insane attack upon Jesus Christ, His newborn brothers and sisters, and His vast army of angels as they descend to the earth:

And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean... And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. (Revelation 19:14, 19)

The other verses of chapter 19 of the book of Revelation provide more details of this incredible battle. The opening verses of chapter 20 describe the first imprisonment of Satan. Even with Jesus Christ reigning on the earth and without Satan's direct influence, it will still take many years to get the spirit of sin, competition, strife, conflict and death out of man's system. The victory will not be totally complete until after the Millennium when Christ wins His final battle:

And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever. And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20:7-15)

Death will then, at last, be totally swallowed up in victory. Sin, death, Hades (the very idea of the grave!), and Satan, with the billions of sins of the world firmly transferred onto his head, will be thrown into the Lake of Fire, never again to reappear. It is beyond our human mental powers to be able to fully imagine the joy and glory of that day. But let us try!

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. (Revelation 21:1-3)

Try to imagine the blinding sight of God the Father, side-by-side with His holy Son – the combined light of which no human eye has ever seen. Try to imagine God the Father – so rightly proud of Jesus and His great victories. Try to imagine Jesus' glorified brothers and sisters, along with the twenty-four elders, the four living creatures, the cherubim, the seraphim, and the millions of angels surrounding the Father and the Son in true celebration and worship.

One last question: How complete will be the joy of humankind – then the Family of God – when this day arrives at last?

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. (Revelation 21:4)

No more death. No more sorrow, crying or pain. What a day that will be! The purpose of the sacrifice of the Lamb of God will at last be fulfilled. Our Saviour will proclaim that the terrible agony, which He willingly endured for His brothers and sisters, was worth it. With His children gathered around Him, our Father will joyfully proclaim that even the risk of losing His Son was worth it.

What a day! Let us look forward to and work hard towards that very, very wonderful day!

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