

Ask, Father James:

Grand Introduction of Jesus to the World: The parting point of Christianity from Judaism

The visit of the wise men was one of a kind of introduction of Jesus to the world. It is called epiphany. Today's gospel text, John the Baptist did another one-of-a-kind introduction of Jesus to the world – another epiphany text. Our Gospel text today tells that when John the Baptist saw Jesus coming, he said to all: "Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" What a grand introduction! The question topmost on our mind is what is meant by "sin of the world" that he comes to take away? Plausible exegesis immediately refers us back to the sin of Adam and Eve.

The concept of Agnus Dei – Lamb of God is the parting point between Judaism Kabbalah Aqedah (Genesis 22:1-19) vs. Christianity. In Judaism, Lambs were slaughtered, and the blood was sprinkled as substitute for the blood of Israelites. In Gen. 22:1—19, Gods command that Abraham sacrifice Isaac...God accepts an animal surrogate. John the Baptist is futuristic here, that the death of Jesus on the cross will be the accepted atoning sacrifice. In the Ordinary season, we are following Jesus to the place of the Last Supper, where he would lift up the cup, and say, 'Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the everlasting covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins' (Mt. 26:27-28). The sacrificial event is apparently a fulfilment of John the Baptist's comment upon encountering Jesus publicly: 'Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!' (Jn. 1:29).

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