

My Savior!

by Paul W. Humphreys

A sixteenth century Renaissance painting by Italian artist, Lorenzo Lotto, hangs in a museum in Brescia, Italy.



The Adoration of the Shepherds, portrays a mind-bending event described in the Holy Bible.

One dark night, herdsmen in the Judean hills outside Bethlehem experienced the shock of a lifetime when an angel of God suddenly appeared! The divine messenger announced,

"...there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." Luke 2:11

Once they got over their initial shock,

"...the shepherds said to one another, 'Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us.' And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger." Luke 2:15

While Lotto's masterpiece is familiar to many in our Western world, the significance of its focal point is seldom understood—those tiny hands cradling the lamb's head.

A gift from the admiring visitors, sheep were raised for temple sacrifice. In biblical times such sacrifices were mercifully ordained by the Creator God. Innocent animals died in the place of the guilty thus making peace with God. It had been this way since the beginning.

Perhaps the artist recalled God's instructions in Ezekiel's day,

"And one lamb shall be given from a flock of two hundred, from the rich pastures of Israel. These shall be for... peace offerings, to make atonement for them," says the Lord God." Ezekiel 45:15

Abraham, the ancestral patriarch of the Jewish people, explained,

"...God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering." Genesis 22:8

Prior to the birth of Jesus an angel had appeared in a dream to Joseph, Mary's perplexed fiancé. Joseph was instructed,

"...do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. ²¹ And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins." Matthew 1:22,21

Jesus was sent by God on a *saving* mission. When grown, John the Baptist would see Jesus walking towards him and announce,

"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" John 1:29

Thus, Lotto's painting is bittersweet; sweet, because it celebrates the birth of Jesus; bitter because it anticipates his death. The infant's hands, soon to be pierced by cruel nails, embrace the *saving* purpose for which they were sent. On the cross, Jesus would indeed *"save His people from their sins."* His was the *final* sacrifice, the *last* offering. Peace with God was made for us by,

"...the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." 1 Peter 1:19

Now, like the shepherds long ago, I too have every reason to adore the Lamb of God—**My Savior!**



My Savior!

