

SOME TITLES OF JESUS CHRIST:



THE LAMB

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(cf. J. Comblin, Le Christ dans l'Apocalypse. Paris: Desclée, 1965, pp. 20-34)

“ ... Then I saw standing between the throne with its four animals and the circle of the elders, a Lamb that seemed to have been sacrificed... ”(Rv 5:6).

Introduction:

(1) The “Lamb” is really not the name of Jesus Christ, nor even His title, or a kind of appellation. This is really an apocalyptic figure. IT is part of the over-all “therimorphism” proper to the apocalyptic genre – which includes the effort to show, see, and to describe under the aspect of an animal, various personalities.

(2) In the 4th Gospel, John used the imagery of the “Lamb” to describe Jesus. Rv broadens this in that the Lamb is used to describe a variety of Jesus’ interventions:

- the Lamb will conquer (cf. Rv 17:14)
- invitations are sent out for the nuptial feast of the Lamb and His Spouse (Rv 19:7);

(3) Johannine students are well familiar with the fact that the “Lamb” is the first title applied to Jesus in the 4th Gospel, following the introductory LOGOS:

“... Look! there is the Lamb of God Who takes away the sins of the world...” (cf. Jn 1:29, 36).

(4) There does not seem to have been any previous indication that the word “Lamb” was used in Judaism as a title for the Messiah Who was to come. There is the fact that Lamb/Servant are the same word (TALYA) in the Semitic background – and that Servant/Son are a similar word in Greek (PAIS).

(5) The Apocalypse seems to present at least three understandings of the “Lamb” coming from the OT:

- The Lamb as Servant (cf. Is 53);
- The Lamb as Paschal Holocaust (Exodus);
- The Lamb as Shepherd/King, who was promised (Ezk 34:35).

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1. Lamb as Servant (Is 53):

a. **Led like a Lamb:** the Servant of Isaiah was led like a lamb to the slaughter (cf. Is 53:7). This is based on Jeremiah (11:19), who described himself in this way in his “Confessions.” The Christology of the Apocalypse is built on the image of the Messianic Servant. The last book of Sacred Scripture offers a kind of re-reading of the Prophecies of Isaiah, reinforced by those of Ezekiel. Since the Servant-theme has such importance in the Apocalypse, it is not surprising that the principal image – that of the Lamb – seems to have been borrowed from a text that truly spoke of him.

b. **A Vivid Oral Tradition:** the prophecies concerning the Servant are especially those of Is 53. The text from Isaiah is listed among those which perhaps made the deepest impression on the early Christians. The citations from Is 53 are relatively numerous in the NT. There is also a very vivid oral tradition from which the author of the Apocalypse seems to have borrowed.

1] **Early Liturgies:** it seems relatively clear that the early Church made wide use of the title and attributes of the Servant of God (cf. Ac 4:27, 30; Ph 2:5-11, etc.). This early liturgy surely survived until the end of the 1st century – and the Apocalypse (whenever it was written) surely would have been in contact with the themes that so inspired the first generations of Christians.

2] **Early Theology:** this seems to have constructed its Christology around the themes of the “Servant.” There are evidences (at least to the experts) that the author of the Apocalypse had been in direct contact with Is 53, and not only from the Liturgy. There are some evidences of a re-reading of the Prophet Isaiah. There is very little doubt that Is 53 was one of the better known themes for the early Church, out of which context the NT was written.

c. **Is 53:7 is special:** among the prophecies attributed to Isaiah, this verse is special, as it drew much attention from the early Church.

1] **The Ethiopian and Philip:** this is the passage that the servant of Queen Candace was pondering when St. Philip approached. It is beginning with this text that Philip announced to him the Gospel of Jesus Christ (cf. Ac 8:32-35).

2] **Peter’s Catechesis:** in St. Peter’s explanation (cf. 1 P 1:19) of the mystery of Redemption through the death of Jesus Christ, he also speaks of the pure and immaculate Lamb. There is every reason to believe that St. Peter is referring here to Is 53:7.

3] Immolation: therefore, when the Apocalypse gives a particular emphasis to the Immolated Lamb (cf. 5:6, 13:8), this seems to be the fruit of this fascination with the Messiah coming as the Lamb to be offered for His people.

d. Key to understanding: it is useful to keep in mind the context in which the mention of the Lamb of God is made. Rv 5 is the most complete invocation of this figure. The Lamb is placed in the context of life/death, resurrection. The Lamb is present everywhere as “living”, and yet having been “immolated”. This life/death and death/resurrection are keys to understanding the Apocalypse. Jesus is indeed the “First-Born of the dead (cf. 1:5). He states:

“... I was dead, and now I am alive for ever and ever and I hold the keys of death and the underworld...” (cf. 1:18).

His is the message of the One Who was dead and now is “alive.” (cf. 2:8).

1] Death is transfigured: in this evident paradox, death is exalted, transfigured – it becomes the new way of life through the resurrection. Death is not only the path, but it is also the cause, the principle, the motor. It is in virtue of the sacrifice and the death of Jesus that new life has come into the world. Death becomes “fecundated” – this is the main meaning of the Immolated Lamb: new life has come, and this will be the final victory. This imagery, then, does not seem to have come from any other place, except Is 53. The immolation of the Servant becomes the pathway, then, to His exaltation – this is presented as the only “way” for the Church.

2] John’s Gospel: the closest parallel to this after Is 53 would be Jn’s Gospel, presenting the words of the Baptist (cf. Jn 1:29, 36). The full formula, “The Lamb of God”, is never used in the Apocalypse. There does not seem to be, therefore, some intimate connection between the titles of Jesus: The Lamb of God, the “Immolated Lamb” – and “the Servant”, Who offers His life in atonement.

2. PASCHAL LAMB OF EXODUS:

The “immolated Lamb” of the Apocalypse is also the Paschal Lamb – the Servant (Is 53), is the ASAM, the Holocaust offered in atonement. In his contemplative vision, the Prophet associates the Immolated Lamb with the sacrifice of the Pasch. The Book of Exodus has some of the earliest prescriptions of the Ritual of the Pasch.

“... On the 10th day of this month, each man must take an animal from the flock, one for each family: one animal for each household...” (cf. Ex 12:3).

The Hebrew word here (SEH) is the same word as found in Is 53:7 – in II-Is there is a comparison being made. In order that this Lamb become personified, and become not only a comparison, but also the figure of Jesus, it is necessary to reflect more deeply on the OT – for here the Lamb is indeed remembered most of all as a Victim Offering, a sacrificial Lamb. As an image, the Paschal Lamb is not sufficient in itself, because it is a passive offering, the material “used: for sacrifice whereas, in the Apocalypse, the Lamb is active, makes choices, offerings – performs as would a decisive person.

There are three major themes concerning the Blood of this Lamb.

a. REDEMPTION: through the Paschal Lamb, there is justifiable insistence on the “blood of the Lamb.” In the Exodus, it is rather the blood of the Lamb which is the means of salvation for Israel, and the sign of its preservation:

“... The blood shall serve to mark the doorposts of the houses you live in. When I see the blood, I will pass over you... Take a spray for hyssop, dip it in the blood that is in the basin and with the blood from the basin, touch the lintel and the door posts...” (cf. Ex 12:13, 22, ff.).

This finds a possible counter-art in the Apocalypse:

“... You are worthy to take the scroll and break the seal of it because you were sacrificed and with your blood you brought human beings for God... (cf. Rv 5:9).

b. EXPIATION: in the Apocalypse, the Blood of the Lamb is not only the sign and the means of the salvation and the redemption of the people (cf. 5:9; 7:13) – but, the Blood of the Lamb also has expiatory value for sin: it actually removes sin, makes it “non-existent”. (cf. 1:5). The Blood of the Lamb, therefore, is sacrificial. This is the fullest meaning of the expression Immolated Lamb (cf. 5:9, 12; 13:8). All of this symbolism is perfectly applicable to the theme of the Paschal Lamb.

1] Blood: Sign of Life: When they celebrated the Pasch, the ancient Israelites did not consider that the actual immolation of the Lamb had expiatory value, but it was the blood, the sign of life that did. In a very special way, they belonged to the first Pasch, the time when Israel was delivered from her slavery.

2] Eschatological Pasch: all this, then, was projected forward to a kind of eschatological Pasch. Jesus is, therefore, the eschatological Paschal Lamb, Whose blood has a true expiatory value.

c. COVENANT: this is a relationship of life. The Blood of the Paschal Lamb is not only the instrument of salvation, nor does it have merely expiatory value – it is also the Blood of the establishment of the New Life of the Covenant:

1] Ritual Aspersions: there is a great similarity with the ritual of aspersion with the Blood of the sacrificed victim, and the drawing up of a Covenant, as happened originally on Sinai (cf. Ex 24:8). There seems to be an allusion to this ritual in the apocalypse: there is some connection between the following texts (cf. Rv 7:14; Ex 19:4).

“... So Moses came down from the mountain to the people and bade them prepare themselves; and they washed their clothing. Then he said to the people: Be ready for the third day...” (cf. Ex 19:14).

“... These are the people who have been through the great persecution and because they have washed their robes white again in the Blood of the Lamb, they now stand in front of God’s throne and serve him night and day in his sanctuary... they will never hunger or thirst again...” (cf. Rv 7:14).

2] A Correspondence: because of its capacity to “expiate” (cf. Rv 1:5; 5:9); to “redeem: (Rv. 5:9), and to establish the Covenant – the Blood of the Lamb corresponds to all the functions of the Paschal Lamb.

3] An Early Church Typology: this indicates the life and death of Jesus, and was a typology quite common in the early Church.

a] St. Paul: uses this typology as a kind of paranesis, and presents it to the faithful of Corinth: “...Christ, our Sacrifice, has been immolated...” (cf. 1 Co 5:7, 1 P 1:9).

b] St. Peter: presupposes that this typology is well known to the Romans because he reminds the Christians that they have “been bought and paid for” by the “most precious blood” of that Lamb without blemish, namely, Jesus Christ.

c] St. John: insinuates in his Gospel that Jesus has died as the true Paschal Lamb. His death takes place at the very moment when the Lambs were being immolated in the Temple (cf. Jn 18:28; 19:14, 31). He carefully points out that they “did not break the legs of Jesus”, to fulfill the prescription of the Scriptures, that the legs of the Paschal Lamb were not to be broken. (cf. Jn 19:36+): “... nor must you break any bone of it...” (cf. Ex 12:46). The Paschal Lamb, therefore, is also a prophecy of Jesus.

4] A Paschal Meal? Perhaps it will be discussed until the end of time whether the Last Supper was indeed a Paschal Meal.

a] The Synoptics and Exodus: the Synoptics seem to have insisted on this idea – St. Luke states clearly:

“... I have longed to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; because I tell you, I shall not suffer until it is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God (cf. Lk 22:15).

The words of Luke have their weight as attesting to the existence of an early interpretation of the Last Supper as a Paschal Meal.

Furthermore, it also seems that in the words pronounced by Jesus over the cup of wine at the Last Supper, and in the calling to mind of His Blood poured out “for the many”, which is the Memorial of the Blood of the Covenant (cf. Mk 26:24; Mt 26:28; Lk 22:20). The Blood of the Covenant is a reference to the Book of Exodus:

“... Moses directed certain young Israelites to offer holocausts and to immolate bullocks to Yahweh as communion sacrifices. Half of the Blood Moses took up into basins, the other half he cast on the altar... And taking the Book of the Covenant, he read it to the listening people, and they said: “We will observe all that Yahweh has decreed; we will obey. Then Moses took the blood of the Covenant that Yahweh had made, and cast the blood toward the people. This, he said is the Blood of the Covenant... containing all these rules...” (Ex 24:4-8).

A similar idea is also found in the Apocalypse:

“... These are the people who have been through the treat persecutions and because they have washed their robes white again in the blood of the Lamb, they now stand in front of God’s throne and serve him day and night in his sanctuary...” (cf. Rv 7:14).

b) Jesus is the Pasch: therefore, Jesus is declaring Himself to be the real Pasch. It can be concluded that the Christology of the Paschal Lamb was widely attested to in the early Church, and the author of the Apocalypse did not invent this theme.

5) Exodus was a major theme for II-Is: the fact that the theme of the Paschal Lamb should be superimposed onto the theme of the Lamb-Servant of Is 53 should not be surprising. The memory of Exodus is one of the major themes throughout all of II-Is (cf. 41:17-20; 43:18-21; 49:9, ff.; 51:10, ff; 55:12, ff.).

a) Return from Babylon: this return was hailed as a New Creation, and a New Exodus – as the great victory of Yahweh was achieved first within the hearts of Israel, before the actual coming home. This is why there is such “cosmic exultation”. This New Creation/Exodus will far surpass all that went on before.

b) An Eschatological Exodus: the Apocalypse also presents the eschatological events as a New Exodus, and this one will be far superior to the first one. This theme was also quite popular with late Judaism in the Apocalypse of St. John this insight was offered in the early Church. Irenaeus saw it as one of the “keys” for the interpretation of the Book, which is full of mystery. The Plagues which afflict

the world are but a repetition of the 20 plagues of Egypt, and the gathering of the People of Israel into the Kingdom of God is the Renewal of the Covenant and the long sojourn of the People in the desert.

6] Exodus is channeled through Isaiah: in a more particular manner, one might note that the Apocalypse sometimes looks at certain realities of the Exodus through the prophecies of the New Exodus, as presented by Isaiah.

a] Broad Use of Exodus Typology: this means that the author accords a particular attention to the prophecies of Isaiah, which make broad use of the typology of the Exodus:

“... They will never hunger or thirst again; neither the sun nor the scorching wind will ever plague them, because the Lamb who is at the throne will be their shepherd and will lead them to springs of water; and God will wipe all tears from their eyes... (cf. 7:16, ff.).

These lines seem to be deeply a part of Isaiah’s thought”

“... On this mountain, Yahweh Sabaoth will prepare for all peoples a banquet of rich food... fine wines... On this mountain, he will remove the mourning veil covering all peoples, and the shroud enwrapping the nations, he will destroy death forever. The Lord will wipe away the tears from every cheek; he will take away His people’s shame everywhere on earth... That day, it will be said: See, this is our God, in Whom we hoped for salvation...” (cf. Is 25:6, ff.).

“... They will never hunger or thirst, scorching wind and sun shall never plague them; for He Who pities them will lead them and guide them to springs of living water...” (cf. Is 49:10).

b] Renewal of Earlier Miracles: all of this is but a promise of the renewal of the past wonders of Israel’s history: the marvelous miracles of ancient Israel are here presented as prophecy. The past is always promise in the hands of God. By His wonders, the Lord God comforted His people in the desert: He led them by a pillar of smoke in the day-time, and by a pillar of fire in the dark night. He also produced water from stones!

c] The Wonder of Water: this special miracle always fascinated the later authors of Scripture:

“... The poor and needy ask for water, and there is none, their tongue is parched with thirst. I, Yahweh, will answer them, I the God of Israel, will not abandon them... I will make rivers well up on barren heights; and fountains in the midst of valleys; turn the wilderness into a lake; a dry land into a lake and dry ground into a water-spring...” (cf. Is 41:17, ff.).

“... I am putting water in the wilderness, rivers in the wild, to give My chosen people a drink. The people I have formed for myself will sing my praises...” (cf. Is 43:20).

“... Oh, come to the water, all you who are thirsty; though you have no money, come! ... Listen, listen to me, and you will have good things to eat... Pay attention to me, listen – and your soul will live...” (cf. Is 55:1).

d] An Old Exodus Theme:

“... The whole community of the sons of Israel moved from their camp in the wilderness of Sin at Yahweh’s command, to travel further stages; and they pitched camp at Rephidim, where there was no water for the people to drink. So, they grumbled against Moses... Why do you grumble...? Why do you put Yahweh to the test...? And Moses appealed to Yahweh: How am I do deal with this people... and Yahweh responded: move on to the forefront of the people... I shall be standing before you there on the rock at Horeb. You must strike the rock, and water will flow out of it for the people to drink... and the place cam to be called Massah and Meribah...” (cf. Ex 17:1-7).

e] Living Waters and John: this natural phenomenon had a special fascination for the Johannine School:

“... I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give water from the well of life to anybody who is thirst...” (cf. Rv 21:6).

“... the Spirit and the Bride say: Come. Let everyone who listens, answer: Come. Then, let all who are thirsty, come, all who want it may have the water of life, and have it free...” (cf. Rv 22:17).

f] The DIVINE NAME: “I am the ALPHA and the OMEGA, the Beginning and the End...” (cf. Rv 1:17, 2:8; 22:13) – compare 1:8 and 22:13). This is one more indication of the dependence on Isaiah on the part of the Apocalypse (cf. Is 41:4; 44:6; 48:12). In all these cases, there is merely scripture’s attempt to explain the divine name as this was first revealed to Moses.

“... and God said to Moses: I AM WHO AM. This, He added, is what you are to say to the sons of Israel: Yahweh, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you...” (cf. Ex 3:14, ff).

1) John takes fuller sense from Isaiah: Jn, too, seems to be influenced in his thinking of the Lord’s Name according to the fuller sense as developed by Isaiah. In this case, as in the matter of the “living waters”, the Seer of the Apocalypse interprets the realities of the Exodus through the expression that these realities received in the mind and heart of the Prophets, and in the prophecies of the New Exodus. In other words, Jn seeks in II-Is all that pertains to the “New Exodus”.

2) Some Exodus themes not explicitly found in Isaiah: the author’s tendency in the Apocalypse is that some of the Exodus themes are not explicitly present in Is. It might be said that Jn reinforces the typology of the Exodus which was found in II-Is in two ways:

- by selecting in a special manner those themes among the Isaian writings which pertain to the Exodus;
- and then by adding a series of others.

3) Formation of a Priestly People: the author of the Apocalypse further reinforces this Isaiah typology based on the Exodus in still another manner, which is of particular interest in the matter of the Paschal Lamb. Isaiah sees the future Israel as a Priestly People:

'... you will be named 'Priests of Yahweh'; they will call you ministers of our god... (cf. Is 61:6).

An old promise is being fulfilled here:

"... My spirit, with which I endowed you, and my words that I have put in your mouth, will not disappear from your mouth, nor from the mouths of your children, nor from the mouths of your children's children for ever and ever, says the Lord.." (cf. Is 59:12).

"... All the flocks of Kedar will gather inside you, the rams of Nabaoth will be at your service. They will come up, for acceptance, to my altar, to adorn the Temple of my glory..." (cf. Is 60:7).

There are other texts which add royal dignity to the priestly character of this New People of God:

"... And your gates will lie continually open, shut neither by day, or by night, for men to bring you the wealth of the nations with their kings, leading them..." (cf. Is 60:10, ff.).

"... I will make you an eternal pride, a joy for ever and ever. And you shall know that I, Yahweh, am your savior, that your redeemer is the mighty one of Israel..." (cf. Is 60:15, ff.).

"... You are to be a crown of splendor in the hands of Yahweh, a princely diadem in the hand of your God..." (cf. Is 62:3).

All of these prophecies are to be situated in the same theological line which first came to light in the old Exodus traditions. The People at the foot of Sinai would come to her these awesome words of the Lord God:

"... I will count you a Kingdom of Priests, a consecrated Nation... if you will obey my voice and hold fast to my Covenant, you of all the nations shall be my very own, for all the earth is mine..." (cf. Ex 19:6).

4) Prophetic-Wisdom Tradition: the Apocalypse will apply these words to the New People of God. the people now washed in the Blood of the Lamb are a Kingdom of Priests, a prophetic-wisdom tradition brought to fulfillment (cf. Rv 1:5; 5:10). While this is true, it is also quite possible that this

concept from Exodus actually came to the Author of the Apocalypse from the Prophet Isaiah (cf. 61:6).

“... you will be named priests of Yahweh... ministers to our God...”

5) Messianic Ideal: it is in Isaiah that the royal priesthood, the priestly people is presented as the result of the messianic future. As the words of the Exodus are more explicit and clear, it seems that the author of the Apocalypse wished to reinforce the typology of the Exodus – but throughout there is the perspective of Isaiah. When Is states that the New Israel will be called the priests of Yahweh, Jn is reminded of the Exodus of long before, and states: “...You will be a royal priesthood.”

6) Constant re-reading of Exodus: this constant rereading of Exodus through the eyes of Isaiah is particularly true for the theme of the Paschal Lamb. The author of the Apocalypse, as is now well known, is deeply immersed in the Exodus symbolism. In reading Is 53:7, about the Servant being led like a Lamb to the slaughter, the comparison with the Lamb that is immolated, leads one to think directly of the Paschal Lamb. The Apocalypse, in a way, “reads into” the text of the Servant the idea of the Paschal Lamb. This might be the ultimate expression of how the author of the Apocalypse united the two figures: the Paschal Lamb and the Servant.

Summary

(1) There are various attributes that the Lamb of Is 53:7 shares with the Paschal Lamb – as this is read in the Apocalypse:

- the Lamb is immolated (cf. Rv 5:6, 12; 13:8);
- His Blood has the power of redemption, expiation, and of establishment of the Covenant (cf. Rv 1:5; 5:9; 7:14; 12:11);
- the Lamb is the cause of salvation for a great number – His life is offered like the Servant’s “for the many” (cf. Is 53:12; Rv 5:9, ff.; 7:9-13; 14:1-5);
- the Lamb has resurrected to a life that will never end (cf. Is 53:10; Rv 5:6; 14:1, ff.).

(2) However, there is still another attributed: this Lamb manifests royal attributes. This aspect of the Lamb of the Apocalypse cannot be traced back to Is 53:7 – nor, to any imagery of the Paschal Lamb. So, this third aspect of the Lamb of the Apocalypse deserves a special study.

3. A Lamb with Royal Power: A Shepherd

a. **Royal Insignia**: the Lamb of God of the Apocalypse also bears the insignia of royal power: He is presented as having “Seven Horns” (cf. Rv 5:6) – He is “angry” (cf. 6:16, ff.). He wages a fierce combat and vanquishes His enemies (cf. Rv 17:14). He is at the Head of the Chosen People (cf. Rv 7:17; 14:1). He is its Good Shepherd and Guide (Rv 7:17). This Lamb is also another Moses (cf. 15:3). He is the King, the Shoot of Jesse, of David (cf. 5:3). He possesses the Spirit of the Most High (cf. 5:6, ff.). He receives the Book of the Divine Decrees (cf. 5:7, ff.). This Lamb exercises judgment (cf. 6:16, ff.; 14:10). He has the Book of Judgment (cf. 13:8, 21:27). The Lamb of God of the Apocalypse is the King of kings, and the Lord of lords (cf. 17:14; 19:16). He will celebrate His Nuptial banquet (cf. 19:6). He will reign with God in the New Jerusalem (cf. 22:1, ff.).

b. **Ever-present “Servant”**: some of these attributes become more intelligible when we keep in mind that the Lamb is a reality, for St. John, the Servant of God. The figure of the Servant in the Apocalypse is the Lamb, but the personality behind this image is the Servant – even though He is never explicitly named as such, but the Servant seems to be present always behind this image.

c. **Presence of Ezekiel**: there is a great similarity in this imagery with some texts from the Prophet Ezekiel:

“... I mean to raise up one shepherd, my servant David, and put him in charge of the flock, and he will pasture them; he will pasture them, and be their shepherd... I will make a covenant of peace with them...” (cf. Ezk 34:23, ff.).

“... My servant David shall reign over them, one shepherd for all...” (cf. Ezk 37:24, ff.).

1] **Fusion of Isaiah and Ezekiel**: it seems that the author of the Apocalypse has combined in the “Lamb” his oracles from the writings of both Isaiah and Ezekiel: for the Apocalypse, these two prophets have described one and the same person, in that in both instances, they seem to have the same function: the “Servant” of Isaiah, and the “Shepherd” of Ezekiel: that of leading the divided people of Israel back home from exile. There are some explicit indications that the Apocalypse leaned heavily also on Ezk:

“... the Lamb who is at the throne will be their shepherd and will lead them to the springs of water; and God will wipe away all tears from their eyes...” (cf. Rv 7:17).

2] **Implicit Citation**: these lines seem to come from Ezk 34:23: the verb used is a technical term reserved for a Shepherd leading his sheep. The image of the Shepherd is not found in Isaiah, but seems to be implied in these lines:

“... they will never hunger or thirst, scorching wind shall never plague them; for He Who pities them, will lead them and guide them to springs of water... (cf. Is 49:10).

d. Promises Kept: this promise found in the Apocalypse: "... they will never hunger or thirst again, for the Lamb will be their Shepherd and lead them to springs of living water..." (cf. Rv 7:16, ff). – implies that the "lamb is taking the place of God Himself. This corresponds to the traditional Johannine teaching: the image of the Shepherd is introduced as a kind of "super-imposition". It is the intention of the author of the Apocalypse that to the theme of the Servant of Isaiah there is added a deeper lesson – there is transferred to Him certain divine functions, with the addition of Ezekiel's Good Shepherd theme.

1] The Messianic King: the biblical tradition almost naturally added to the Messianic King the image of the Good Shepherd in ancient Israel, very early compared to a "flock." The image of Shepherd, then, had royal overtones: in the OT this image was reserved for Yahweh Himself. The image of the Shepherd is not only present in these texts of the Apocalypse (cf. 7:17; 14:4), but there is mention of the Shepherd's staff as a kind of symbol of divine authority.

"... To those who prove victorious, and keep working for me until the end, I will give authority (cf. Rv 2:27).

"... The woman brought a male child into the world Who was to rule the nations with an iron scepter..." (Rv 12:5).

'... From His mouth came a sharp sword... he is the one who will rule with an iron scepter...' (cf. Rv 19:15).

2] From Imagery to Allegory: this kind of imagery dominates the passages of Ezk cc. 34-37. However, the Apocalyptic tradition goes back even further: it develops this image into an allegory: the "King" is no longer represented by the Shepherd, but by the Lamb Himself – this special "Lamb" will lead the flock. Inspired by contacts with the apocalyptic traditions, the author could very well see in the future of the Shepherd of Ezekiel under the future of this special Lamb – and thus draw this image from Isaiah.

Summary:

(1) Therefore, in the Apocalypse, three profound and sublime biblical themes from the OT come together:

- the Lamb, the small animal offered on the First Pasch (Exodus);
- the figure then pertains to the Servant theme (Is 53:7);
- this Paschal Lamb-Servant then becomes the Shepherd (Ezekiel).

It would seem that the author of the Apocalypse would have known the allegorical parable of Daniel:

“... This is what I observed: a he-goat came from the west, having covered the entire earth without touching the ground, and between its eyes, the goat had one majestic horn. It advanced toward the ram with two horns (cf. Dn 7:1-14).

For Daniel, this strange story seems to have been a kind of figurative history of Alexander the Great and the Persian Empire. This style of writing seems to have been current among the apocalyptic writers.

(2) So, **the “Lamb” is a kind of synthesis** of a rich tradition – the Immolated Lamb of God is the Servant of His People, and has become their King, Who will lead the faithful ones to the eternal pasturage.

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[NB: for pages 62-74 of these notes, cf. J. Comblin, Le Christ dans l’ Apocalisse. Paris: Desclee 1965, pp. 20-34].

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