

# 義

## Righteousness... what is it?

Everybody seeks to be happy, and at the end of all the festivity and merriment of the Lunar New Year, we must finally ask ourselves if we are truly happy. True happiness is a supreme joy given by God, a joy that is independent of one's circumstances, a joy that comes about because we have trusted in the righteousness that Jesus Christ provides.

### 'Righteousness' (義)

The word 'righteousness' (義) comprises two characters, an iconographic record of the righteousness that the Lamb of God clothes us with.

義 = 羊 + 我  
righteousness    sheep    me

The character for 'sheep' covers the character for 'me,' suggesting that Jesus, whom John the Baptist called the 'Lamb of God,' clothes me with righteousness. Amazing! How did this truth come to be written into the Chinese script over two thousand years before the Lamb of God won for us our righteousness at Calvary? Why did the Chinese accept that God's remedy for sin and prescription for righteousness was a Lamb, not any other animal?

## **Temptation**

Back in the Garden of Eden, with its forked tongue, Satan in the disguise of a serpent misleads Eve into eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. A forked tongue is a tongue which has not one end, but two, pointing in different directions. With one end of the tongue, the serpent speaks the truth: '... your eyes will be opened ... knowing good and evil' (Genesis 3:5). With the other end of the tongue, he speaks error: '... Ye shall not surely die' (Genesis 3:4). In other words, he mixed truth and error. Sometimes we call this 'half-truths.'

## **Fall**

Satan's dart found its mark, and Eve '... took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat' (Genesis 3:6). Then came the moment of truth: Adam's Fall brought all mankind into an estate of sin and misery.<sup>1</sup> Man instantly fell under curse and the sentence of death. There awaits for man physical death, and in the eternity to come another death which was called the 'second death,' which is the separation of body, soul, and spirit from God forever - in a place of everlasting torture.<sup>2</sup>

## **A Promise by Word**

Then and there in the Garden, God's plan of salvation was announced. As soon as man fell, God established the plan of salvation. The promise of a Savior was made to Adam and Eve. He did it by word in Genesis 3:15, where we have the first promise of the Savior. The prohibition breached, the awful penalty of death brought upon man, God said to Satan in man's presence, 'And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.' God spoke of a seed, the seed of the woman, who would crush the head of the one responsible for bringing about the Fall and defeat him. The promised salvation for mankind was 'the seed of woman,' the virgin-born Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom John the Baptist called the 'Lamb of God,'<sup>3</sup> our perfect sacrifice.

## **A Promise by Act**

Not only was the promise of a Savior made to Adam and Eve by word, the promise of a Savior was made to Adam and Eve by act because to Adam and to his wife God made coats of skins and clothed them. Genesis 3:21 says, 'Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them.' To clothe the two meant that God had to sacrifice two sheep for their skins. The guilty pair learnt their

lesson, and learnt it well: there was only one way of salvation. God must come to fallen man's help. He must clothe him with the righteousness that the Lamb of God won for him at Calvary. Looking forward to Jesus Christ, Adam and Eve believed the good news and were saved. That is why Genesis 3:20 says, 'And Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living.'

Adam's testimony was subsequently carried to China and expressed in a precious word - the word 'righteousness' (義). What happened was that the knowledge was imparted by Adam to his children unto the ninth generation, even to Noah's father Lamech. In his turn, Noah took that knowledge, and together with his filial son Shem, transmitted the same to certain descendants in the post-Flood world. They were the progenitors of the Chinese people who would carry the knowledge overland from the plain of Shinar (modern Iraq) to their newfound homeland at the time of the dispersion.

## What 'Righteousness' (義) Teaches

The word 'righteousness' (義) teaches that the Lamb of God provides the right clothing to all believing sinners. Have you been clothed with the righteousness that the Lamb of God provides? Do you acknowledge that you are a sinner? Do you believe the good news? Do you acknowledge that your righteousness is as a filthy rag?

The Bible says that we are saved by grace and salvation cannot be earned.<sup>4</sup> The Bible teaches us that it is not by our righteousness that we are saved.<sup>5</sup> In other words, we can't be good enough or act good enough or any of those things - we just simply cannot do it and be saved. We have to trust the righteousness that the Lord Jesus Christ provides. We got to trust in the righteousness that Jesus Christ provides and by doing that, we turn loose of all the things we believe will get us saved, we turn loose of all the things we believe will save us. And we do not trust our righteousness to clothe us. We trust Jesus to clothe us. Isn't that wonderful? This is true happiness!

The question is whether you have trusted in the righteousness that Jesus Christ provides, who alone clothes you with it.

May you be a new creature, with a new life in Christ this Lunar New Year!

## Blessed Lunar New Year

### 1. *Romans 5:12*

**Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:**

### 2. *Revelation 20:13-15*

**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.

**3. *John 1:29***

The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

**4. *Ephesians 2:8-9***

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.

**5. *Titus 3:5***

Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us,

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