



## ***Jesus, the Passover Lamb***

**Exodus 12  
Advent 2022**

Well, last week began our advent series as we started to turn our attention to the birth of Jesus, but this year we are doing so by looking past the birth of Jesus into the Old Testament and seeing just a few of the different ways that the birth of Jesus was foreshadowed in the Old Testament through prophecy, types, and images.

And we said this is important to grasp because it reminds us that the coming of Jesus wasn't a last-ditch effort by God to provide salvation for us. Rather, the coming of the second person of the Trinity, Jesus, the Son of God, to take on flesh and offer it as a sacrifice on our behalf has always been the plan. And God gave us glimpses of this long before that silent night in Bethlehem.

And besides that, it is also just a good reminder that the Bible is one book that tells one story of redemption. Both the Old and New Testaments tell the same story and it is all about Jesus.

Last week we looked specifically at Genesis 3 when Adam and Eve sin and judgment comes on Satan and all of creation because of the fall of mankind. But in Genesis 3:15 in the midst of pronouncing curses, God makes a promise of hope. In what is called the "first gospel," God promises to send a Redeemer who would crush the head of the serpent.

Well, if you remember part of that promise is that enmity—or hostility—would be introduced between Satan and Eve, and between their offspring. But the result of the fall was even more devastating than that. Enmity would not only become a reality between Satan and Jesus, between Satan and God's people; enmity would become the reality between mankind and God.

Whereas there was once fellowship and relationship in the garden, the mere presence of sin in the sight of God demanded justice. So, death was introduced into the world, and Adam and Eve were cast out of the garden, out of the presence of the Lord.

And the story of Adam is the story for all of humanity. As our representative, Adam's transgression, his sin, caused this separation between us, who have inherited his sin nature and guilt, and the one, true, holy God.

Whereas there once was peace between man and God, now there is not. Now, there is enmity and hostility on the part of man toward God. Now, our sin demands God's justice. It is *the* great problem of humanity: how can sinful man be reconciled back to God? How can that enmity be removed?

Well, we get an incredible picture of the answer in many places in the Old Testament, but the main picture is found in Exodus 12. Let me invite your attention there.

## THE PASSOVER

For context, Israel is a great nation of people now, however, they are in bondage. They have been slaves in Egypt for 400 years, and the book of Exodus tells us the story of how God delivers, or redeems, Israel from slavery by way of a prophet in Moses.

You might be familiar with the story, but Moses confronts Pharaoh to tell him to let Israel go, and Pharaoh says no, many times. But each time, God sends a plague on Egypt as judgment. He turns the Nile's water into blood, and sends swarms of frogs and gnats and flies. He causes the people of Egypt to develop terrible boils on their bodies. He sends a great hail storm and a few other plagues to show his might and power over Egypt.

And as terrible as those plagues sound, it is the tenth plague that is the most serious. If you remember, God warns Pharaoh that if he will not let Israel go, he will cause every firstborn in the land of Egypt to die.

And he gives special instructions to Israel in Exodus 12 so that they might escape the judgment...

### **Exodus 12:3-7, 12-13**

**3** Tell all the congregation of Israel that on the tenth day of this month every man shall take a lamb according to their fathers' houses, a lamb for a household. **4** And if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his nearest neighbor shall take according to the number of persons; according to what each can eat you shall make your count for the lamb. **5** Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male a year old. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats, **6** and you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month, when the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill their lambs at twilight. **7** "Then they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it... **12** For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the Lord. **13** The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when

I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt.

So, again, the instructions were straightforward. Israel take a lamb without blemish kill it, eat it, and put its blood on the doorposts of your home so that when judgment arrives in Egypt, God will *pass over* your home.

We can imagine how bloody of a night that must have been. How many lambs were killed that single night, and how much blood was shed and then spread on doorposts?

Well, it comes to pass and God makes good on his promise, he brings the final plague, the faithful Israelites are spared, and then are rescued from their slavery.

And it is the shed blood of lambs that spare Israel from judgment.

## **THE SACRIFICIAL SYSTEM & DAY OF ATONEMENT**

Well, as Israel is being led to the Promised Land, God gives them instructions on how to function as his people under his rule and reign. And a necessary part of managing this relationship was how to handle their sin. And so this theme of shed blood continues as God institutes the sacrificial system.

You can read all about it in Leviticus, which I'm sure is everyone's favorite section of Scripture. Obviously, it's not the favorite or go-to book of the Bible for most people, but we should be thankful we have it. I mean, it is God's word, of course, so it is precious to us. But it continues to give us this picture of how sin must be atoned for in order to stand before a holy God.

And daily, animals were dying in order to be presented as a sacrifice before the Lord. Day after day, shed blood would be flowing in the tabernacle and later in the temple. We can only imagine the mess that the priests dealt with on a consistent basis.

But there was one day in particular that was more important than them all: the Day of Atonement. On this day each year, the high priest had special instructions so that the sins of the people of Israel would be atoned for.

The high priest on that day would follow a very particular protocol. He would offer a sacrifice for himself first, to cleanse him and make him a worthy mediator between Israel and God. He would then take two goats and taking a knife would kill the one, shedding its blood and presenting it before the Lord in the Most Holy Place. He would then take the other goat and place his hands on the goat and pray, confessing the sins

of the nation, symbolizing the transfer of the sins of Israel onto that goat, and then send the goat off into the wilderness.

While sacrifices were constantly being made every single day, that day was especially important.

Now, we need to understand that the pages of the Old Testament are filled with the blood of animals presented as sacrifices for the sins of men and women. And the question we need to ask is, **How could blood from animals atone for human sin? Well, it can't, that is the whole point.**

**Hebrews 10:1-4**

**1** For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near. **2** Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have any consciousness of sins? **3** But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. **4** For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

Animals could never truly atone for our sins, and yet blood did need to be spilled. Death is the only acceptable judgment of sin.

**Hebrews 9:22**

Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.

So blood needed to be shed, but the blood of animals could never be enough. We needed something greater, something better. We needed a better sacrificial Lamb, One that all of these other sacrifices were meant to point to. And we got that sacrificial Lamb in Jesus.

In fact, Paul would refer to Jesus in 1 Corinthians 5:7...

**1 Cor. 5:7b**

For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.

The superiority of Jesus' sacrifice over all other sacrifices is a major point in the book of Hebrews...

**Hebrew 9:11-14**

**11** But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this

creation) **12** he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. **13** For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, **14** how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

#### **Hebrews 10:11-14**

**11** And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. **12** But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, **13** waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. **14** For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

So, again, because of Jesus death, our sins are atoned for, we have been reconciled back to God, and no more sacrifice is necessary.

Paul celebrates this in Colossians 1...

#### **Col. 1:19-22**

**19** For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, **20** and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. **21** And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, **22** he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him,

#### **A BLOODY CHRISTMAS?**

Now, if you've been around church for awhile, you know that we typically talk about this truth that Jesus is a sacrificial lamb on Good Friday just before Easter, so why now in Advent at Christmas? Christmas typically invokes other images than blood, right? Images of Joseph and Mary huddled around baby Jesus in a manger. Shepherds keeping watch over their flocks by night. Wise men following the star to find Jesus. These are the images we think of, not the bloody mess of sacrificing lambs and bulls and Jesus' bloody body hanging on the cross.

However, Jesus as our sacrificial lamb has everything to do with Christmas. Think about it, we needed more than animals to die on our behalf, we needed a divine sacrifice. **Which means we needed a God who could bleed.** We needed more than just the invisible God but the invisible made visible, with flesh and bone. We needed a divine Lamb that could be bound, beaten, and nailed to a cross. We needed a better priest who not only would bring a sacrifice to the altar but would crawl onto the altar

offering himself as the sacrifice. So to do this, Jesus would be born of a woman, take on flesh, and allow that flesh to be torn for us. And in so doing, by our faith, our sins are atoned for and we have peace with God.

## **LESSONS FROM THE FIRST AND FINAL PASSOVERS**

Like last week, let me offer a couple of lessons we can glean from the truth that Jesus is our sacrificial Lamb.

### **1. Sin really must be serious.**

It is really common in our day to diminish the work of Christ on the cross, by way of diminishing the seriousness of sin. And this can happen in a number of different ways. Our culture, of course, will scoff at the idea of calling anything sin. But, progressive Christianity or liberal theology can play along, and rather than grieving over sin and repenting of sin, it would rather celebrate it. It can downplay the seriousness of sin by teaching that Jesus' death means something else other than the satisfaction of justice. So rather than us needing a substitute to satisfy the demands of the law, demands that we fail to meet, we really just needed a good example in Jesus. We can look to him and be inspired to live a moral life.

Even we can be tempted to diminish the beauty and wonder of Jesus' sacrifice by downplaying sin. We do that sometimes by lowering the bar of God's moral law while at the same time exaggerating our own righteousness so they somehow meet one another. We can begin to lean on our good works or our theological and biblical knowledge or church attendance or any other good thing and start to believe that we are accepted based on those things. We might prefer to use words like "mistakes" or "struggles," which is fine at times, but we shouldn't avoid using the word "sin." God doesn't. Scripture doesn't.

Sin really is serious and it took a serious solution to forgive it.

J.C. Ryle wrote in his book on holiness, "Terribly black must that guilt be for which nothing but the blood of the Son of God could make satisfaction. Heavy must that weight of human sin be that made Jesus groan and sweat drops of blood in agony at Gethsemane, and cry at Golgotha, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?'"<sup>1</sup>

The seriousness of the solution demonstrates the seriousness of the problem.

Sin really is serious.

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<sup>1</sup> J.C. Ryle, *Holiness* (Chicago: Moody, 2010), 29.

## **2. Because sin really is serious, we are reminded that Christ really must be gracious.**

It is when we sense the massive chasm that exists between the holiness of God and the sinfulness of our hearts, it is then when we truly see the beauty of the only One who can bridge that chasm. Gospel-centered discipleship is simply growing in our understanding of holiness and sin, causing our love and wonder for the cross to grow too.

It is when you recognize that there is no reason whatsoever that God in his majesty should ever accept you, that you will rejoice that he has, in fact, loved you and accepted you and it came at such a great cost as the life of his Son.

So, see the blackness and severity of your sin, but don't wallow there. Christ has paid the penalty, He has atoned for it by the shedding of his blood. If you've put your faith in him, you will never have to answer for it, because Jesus already did. Where your sin abounded, Christ's grace has abounded more. There is not a single inch of the altar on which your sin was laid where his blood has not fully covered it.

And like our tendency to diminish the seriousness of sin, we can diminish the grace of Christ and the sufficiency of his sacrifice.

For example, do you at times still feel like God could never truly forgive you? Well, that might come from a place of taking sin seriously, but be careful that you don't elevate your sin so much that you belittle Christ's blood, seeing it as insufficient and powerless.

Do you still feel like you need to earn God's approval and acceptance? You are believing that you can atone for your own sin, and by elevating your own righteousness you are belittling Christ's sacrifice, treating it as unnecessary or merely as an accessory to your own faithfulness.

Again, Christ really must be gracious, to offer himself as the only acceptable sacrifice for your sin and mine.

## **COMMUNION**

And a great gift to the church to remember this truth is the ordinance of the Lord's Supper—or communion.

Just before his arrest, Jesus was in the upper room with his disciples where he taught them and us to eat the bread and drink the cup as a way of remembering his sacrifice.

And Jesus instituted this as he and his disciples were eating, of all things, their Passover meal. While lambs were being killed in Jerusalem, the true lamb would soon die outside the city on a cross.

So, as we partake we are reminded that Jesus took on flesh and it was torn for us. We are reminded that Jesus allowed his blood to be shed as the perfect sacrificial lamb to atone for our sins. And every time we partake of this meal we are proclaiming the gospel yet once more to ourselves and one another.

So, if you've trusted in Christ, repented of your sins, and come to him in faith, then this meal is for you. If you haven't we would encourage you to not partake until the day you will hopefully follow Christ.

## **CONFESSION**

Before we come to the table, it is always right to have a moment of silent confession and prayer, a moment we examine ourselves and look once again to Jesus. So, take a moment to yourselves in prayer, I will pray for us, and then you are welcome to take the elements anytime during our last two songs.

## **PRAYER**

## **ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

The apostle John gives us an incredible picture in Revelation 5...

### **Rev. 5:11-12**

**11** Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, **12** saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!"

Throughout eternity we will sing the praises of the Lamb who was slain and every time we gather for corporate worship it is a taste of what is to come. So, let's stand and sing to and for the Lamb who was slain for you and me.



## **VERSES**

Exodus 12:3-7, 12-13

Hebrews 10:1-4

Hebrews 9:22

1 Corinthians 5:7b

Hebrews 9:11-14

Hebrews 10:11-14

Colossians 1:19-22

Revelation 5:11-12

## **SERMON DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. Try to imagine what it must have been like the night of the original Passover in Egypt. What kind of emotions might have the Israelites felt?
2. Try to imagine what it must have been like in the tabernacle and later in the temple as sacrifices were made every day. What do you think it was like?
3. Explain what Paul means when he says that Jesus is our "Passover lamb" (1 Cor. 5:7).
4. What did Cody mean when he said, "We needed a God who could bleed"?
5. In what ways does our culture belittle sin? In what ways can we be guilty of belittling sin?
6. In what ways can we be guilty of belittling the grace of Christ?