

## The Passover

Exodus 12:1-28, 43-51

At the outset of his ministry, John the Baptist was thought to be Jesus the Messiah. When asked if he was Elijah or the prophet who had been promised, he answered so marvelously,

John 1:23 He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as the prophet Isaiah said."

And then further,

John 1:24 "Now those who were sent were from the Pharisees. 25 And they asked him, saying, "Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?" 26 John answered them, saying, "I baptize with water, but there stands One among you whom you do not know. 27 It is He who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose."

So when he saw Jesus coming toward him, he identifies him so simply and so perfectly,

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

The Lamb of God. We have met him so often throughout the Bible, from beginning to end.

Rev. 5:11 "Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, 12 saying with a loud voice: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain To receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor and glory and blessing!" 13 And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard

saying: "Blessing and honor and glory and power Be to Him who sits on the throne, And to the Lamb, forever and ever!" 14 Then the four living creatures said, "Amen!" And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever."

Worthy is the Lamb. So there is no mystery this afternoon. No deep secret that I am going to try to uncover for you. Just the very obvious one. Jesus is the lamb. Jesus is the lamb of God. And in the context of our study in Exodus, Jesus is the Passover Lamb.

### I. THE PASSOVER LAMB.

And let me introduce this whole subject with an important New Testament cross reference, making this connection between Jesus and the passover explicit. In 1 Cor. 5, in the context of the need for the cleansing of church discipline, Paul writes,

1 Cor. 5:7 Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us."

Our passover, of course, is the passover lamb. The lamb is the passover. The passover is the lamb. And the lamb is Jesus, the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. All of that should jump out at you as you read Exodus 12.

Finally, in our study of this book, we come to this point. Finally, the people of God are delivered out of Egypt. Finally, the oppression of slavery is over. Finally, the plagues are over. And the people are free, free to form their own nation as the nation of God's people. And this deliverance unto freedom unmistakably portrays for us the salvation which has been accomplished by our Lord Jesus. The people of Israel were delivered, they were redeemed, they were saved. This Old Testament exodus out of Egypt is a profound and prominent type of that great work of

salvation which we have in Jesus. For Jesus is the passover. Jesus is the passover lamb. Jesus is the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. So let's look at that lamb. Notice that it had to be,

### **A. A perfect lamb.**

v.3-5

A lamb without blemish. A lamb without defect. A perfect lamb. Can I make some more New Testament connections for you?

Heb. 9:11 "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 sprinkling of defiled persons with the blood of goats and bulls and with the ashes of a heifer sanctifies 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. 15 Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant."

Heb.7: 26 "For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. 27 He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself. 28 For the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than

the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever."

A lamb without blemish. And Peter would write to Christians with these words,

1 Peter 1:18 "...knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot."

A perfect lamb. Why was that necessary? Because an imperfect lamb could not be a substitute sacrifice for others, a vicarious sacrifice. The only sacrifice God would accept was a perfect one. And the perfect lamb would lay down his life. What is so prominent here is,

### **B. The death of the lamb.**

v.6

Likewise, v.21

That was the focal point of this sacrifice, the shedding of blood as the means by which redemption is accomplished. So don't forget that most basic of all biblical principles of atonement, "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins." That is the blood of the covenant, the blood that represented the curse of the covenant, namely death.

And so we read more fully in,

Heb. 9:18 "Therefore not even the first covenant was inaugurated without blood. 19 For when every commandment of the law had been declared by Moses to all the people, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, 20 saying, "This is the blood of the covenant that God commanded for you." 21 And in the same way he sprinkled with the blood both

the tent and all the vessels used in worship. 22 Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins. 23 Thus it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. 24 For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. 25 Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own, 26 for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.”

The death of the lamb, necessary because the lambs pays the penalty for our sins, and the wages of sin is death. And “Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.” That’s the gospel. That’s the good news. That Christianity. That’s the message of salvation, the explanation of how you can obtain eternal life. By faith in Jesus. By trusting in what Jesus did, when he laid down his life, so that you can be forgiven your sins. So that you can receive the gift of eternal life, the gift of entrance into heaven when you die.

The lamb had to die. That’s the meaning of passover. That’s the significance of this great exodus of God’s people out of Egypt. The death of the perfect lamb. But notice something about that death. What is emphasized is blood,

## **II. THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB.**

v.7

Blood is sprinkled on the lintel and the doorposts, sprinkled with the hyssop branch, according to verse 22. And hyssop is

consistently used in Scripture to describe the process of cleansing. So the point of the reference to the blood of the lamb is cleansing. Washing. Purifying. So in the passover we see,

### **A. The cleansing of blood.**

v.22

Do you remember David’s prayer of confession of his sins? Ps. 51:7 “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.”

And back to,

Heb. 9:19 “For when every commandment of the law had been declared by Moses to all the people, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, 20 saying, “This is the blood of the covenant that God commanded for you.” 21 And in the same way he sprinkled with the blood both the tent and all the vessels used in worship. 22 Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.”

Beloved, you and I need to be cleansed. We must be sprinkled with the blood of the lamb. In the words of doctrine,

1 John 1:9 “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

With the cleansing of blood, however, comes another image, namely protection. Protection from God’s wrath and judgment.

### **B. The protection of blood.**

That is how God’s people are set apart, how they are distinguished. How God claims them to be his own special treasure. He protects them from his wrath. When he comes with

the tenth and final plague, when he comes to bring the sentence of death upon every household in Egypt, as he did with the other plagues, he passes over the houses of the children of Israel. He protects them from his curse of justice. He protects them from death.

v.12-13

A sign, of God's mercy. A sign of God's covenant faithfulness and goodness.

v.23

"I will execute judgment," God says. That is his right, as he declares, "I am the Lord." "But you, you my beloved, you my chosen people, you my treasured possession, I will pass over you when I come in that judgment. You will be protected by the blood."

And so I proclaim the gospel to you in the book of Exodus. With two very specific applications. First, to you who don't yet have eternal life, to you who don't yet believe in Jesus Christ for the salvation of your sins, I urge you to believe. As you study the exodus of Israel out of Egypt, as you study the blood of the passover lamb, understand the work of Jesus. And believe in him, that you might have eternal life. So that when the yet future day of God's judgment come at the end of the age, he will pass over you as well. When he comes with the condemnation of eternal hell to those who live and die in their unbelief, make sure that the blood of Jesus covers you as well. Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.

But a second application, to you who know that, and believe it. An application of encouragement. Because I know that you still struggle with your sin. You still struggle with the sin that is in your heart, and you need this reminder today as you do battle with that

sin. It is the blood of Jesus that washes you and makes you clean. And it is the blood of Jesus that releases you from the condemning wrath of God as well.

1 John 1:9 "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

You need that, you who believe in Jesus, because you continue to sin. You continue, therefore, to need the reminder of the forgiveness of your sins. And that is what the passover is all about. A commemoration. A memorial. A feast to be kept throughout your generations, God says.

v.14

Specifically,

v.15-16

Now, to be very accurate, the Passover was the first day of that festival, established to be on the 14th day of the first month of the Jewish calendar. And then, the Feast of Unleavened Bread would begin on the 15th day of that month, and last for seven days. Often, however, the whole those two festivals together would simply be called, "the passover." But listen to this description,

Lev. 23:4 "These are the appointed feasts of the Lord, the holy convocations, which you shall proclaim at the time appointed for them. 5 In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at twilight, is the Lord's Passover. 6 And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the Feast of Unleavened bread to the Lord; for seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. 7 On the first day you shall have a holy convocation; you shall not do any ordinary work. 8 But you shall present a food offering to the Lord for seven days. On the seventh day is a holy convocation; you shall not do any ordinary work."

Do you pick up the emphasis upon the holy convocation?

### III. THE HOLY ASSEMBLY.

On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and again on the seventh day. A holy convocation. A sabbath day, a day of no ordinary work. This, too, is a crucial point of God's covenant relationship with his people, a holy convocation in order to celebrate their redemption.

So this feast, this national festival of the passover was for the people of God to consider how it was that God saved them.

#### **A. The passover represents the deliverance of God's people.**

We read the instructions in,  
v.8-11

The haste, and therefore the unleavened bread, testifies to God's faithfulness in rescuing his people out of Egypt. It is all a testimony of how God saved them, every detail and every description. And so we read,  
v.17-18

God delivers his people out of the bondage of slavery. Or in the words of Jesus, "The truth shall set you free." Listen to what Jesus says to some Jews who had come to believe in him.

John 8:31 "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, 32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." 33 They answered him, "We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, 'You will become free'?" 34 Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. 35 The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. 36 So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."

Free, beloved, free from sin. Free from the power of sin and

from the dominion of sin. Free from the slavery of sin. And the condemnation of sin. "So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."

Do you see how Jesus uses this exodus and this passover to define himself and his own ministry? That's the point. That is our identity, we who believe in Jesus and find life in him. That's what the passover represents, and now, in the New Covenant, that's what the Lord's Supper represents. For it was the passover feast which Jesus transformed into the Lord's Supper on that Thursday night before his crucifixion. A representation, a sacrament, of the deliverance of God's people.

But then, notice something obvious. Something that needs to be emphasized even though it is obvious. This feast, this passover, was a corporate event. That is, the people of God did it together.

#### **B. The passover represents the corporate identity of God's people.**

v.19-20

You see, what mattered to the people of God was their inclusion in the congregation of Israel. What was important was their right to be included in this holy convocation. So we read further,

v.43-49

Others could be invited, but first they had to join the nation of Israel. The males had to be circumcised. So they could participate together. As a body. As a congregation. That is what it meant to be part of the people of God. You were part of the congregation. Together, you were to take part in the Passover.

So what do we read in the New Covenant?

Heb. 10:19 “Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, 20 by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, 21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, 25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”

We hold fast the confession of our hope by meeting together for public, corporate worship. And the very next verse in Hebrews 10 is striking,

Heb. 10:26 “For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins.”

The warning against the deliberate sin of forsaking the assembly is severe. Because our nature is corporate. We are a body, joined together as a holy nation. That is our identity as Christians, and the passover represents that so very clearly. And with that corporate identity, one more thing made so clear with the passover.

### **C. The passover represents the generational promise of God’s covenant.**

The children were present. And they asked questions. And fathers and mothers were to give them answers. The passover became the means by which children were first able to understand the work of God in redemption.

v.24-28

So it should be today, as our young children observe the Lord’s Supper. And when they ask, “What does that mean?”, we tell them. We explain it to them. Even as I seek to do today to all of you. And so I present Jesus to you this afternoon, and I say to you, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”

And I say to you, “Come, let us worship him.” For, “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain

To receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor and glory and blessing!” Such is the content of our worship. “Blessing and honor and glory and power Be to Him who sits on the throne, And to the Lamb, forever and ever!”