

EXODUS #9 chapter 12 pt.1 11-10-13

Your Lamb or Your Life

We are in the book of Exodus once again and we pick up our reading at chapter 12:**1-11** *Now the Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, 2 “This month shall be the beginning of months for you; it is to be the first month of the year to you. 3 Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying, ‘On the tenth of this month they are each one to take a lamb for themselves, according to their fathers’ households, a lamb for each household. 4 Now if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his neighbor nearest to his house are to take one according to the number of persons in them; according to what each man should eat, you are to divide the lamb. 5 Your lamb shall be an unblemished male a year old; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats. 6 You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month, then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel is to kill it at twilight. 7 Moreover, they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. 8 They shall eat the flesh that same night, roasted with fire, and they shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. 9 Do not eat any of it raw or boiled at all with water, but rather roasted with fire, both its head and its legs along with its entrails. 10 And you shall not leave any of it over until morning, but whatever is left of it until morning, you shall burn with fire. 11 Now you shall eat it in this manner: with your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it in haste—it is the Lord’s Passover.* If you have been around Bible teaching churches very long you are probably fairly familiar with this portion of Scripture. It is, without question, a landmark chapter. But, familiarity can breed boredom. You’ve seen this before, no big deal, but put yourself in the place of those who first heard it. This congregation of God’s people had never heard of the Passover. They had never heard of the exodus. This was all new to them and I had to think it was all very bizarre to them too. Think about it. You are supposed to get this special lamb and let it hang out for a few days. Then you kill it at suppertime and keep it’s blood to smear all over your door? That’s what God said to do. He also said that when you get around to eating it, which must have been very late at night, you were to have your travelling clothes on, your sandals laced up and your staff in hand. Tell me this wasn’t strange. It took considerable faith to follow these instructions and they had to be wondering why. Why is Moses telling us this? The answer is in verse **12-13** *For I will go through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against 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 live; 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. Again in verse 23 Moses elaborates **23** For the Lord will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when He sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the Lord will pass over the door and will not allow the destroyer to come in to your houses to smite you.* You see in verses 13 and 23 where we get the term *Passover* don't you? God says, "When I see the blood I will pass over you." The Passover is a celebration of being skipped by God, of being bypassed by the Almighty; and is that a good thing? You bet it's a good thing. You want to be skipped by God when He is moving out in wrath. The context of the Passover is one of judgment and destruction. It's like when a builder is clearing land for a project and he will designate certain trees on his lot that he wants to protect. Sometimes I've seen trees with red marks on them or red ribbons tied around them. And those red marks, like the blood on the door, are the mark of safety and protection. The trees left unmarked are gonna come down, but the bull-dozer will pass over the tree marked in red. The Passover is an event framed by the context of judgment and death.

To understand it then it's important to understand the judgment. God is coming down to strike Egypt. Moses told Pharaoh in chapter 11 that if he did not release the children of Israel God was gonna come and kill every first-born child in the land of Egypt, including Pharaoh's own son. But Pharaoh, who had already witnessed nine straight miracles, amazingly refuses. Here is a guy who absolutely will not learn from history and is about to go make history as one of the greatest fools of all time. Those who fail to learn from history are -- destined to repeat it. The servants of Pharaoh were begging him to give in to Moses. They saw they were up against the hand of God. Anybody could see that, but a hard heart makes for blind eyes and very foolish decisions. Years of oppressing the children of Abraham, years of killing Hebrew babies, had drawn a bull's eye on the land of Egypt, and God was now taking aim. So, as I said, the Passover is an event framed by the holy fury of Almighty God.

Now, in the midst of that frame I want you to put a lamb. The lamb of the Passover becomes the central character in this divine drama. But, of course, the lamb itself is symbolic. The Bible contains many books but is clearly, as well, one book. The Old Testament prepares us for the new. It creates an enormous sense of anticipation as we await the coming Messiah who is to fulfill so many prophecies and so many symbols. The Old Testament is full of persons and practices that prefigure the coming of Jesus. And, of those, one of the richest in meaning is the lamb of Passover.

This is the lamb whose slaughter becomes the salvation of the people. And so the pronouncement of John the Baptist was of deep significance when he saw Christ 1,400 years later and said, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." In those words John was announcing that this is the one to whom all the other Passover lambs had pointed. This is the true lamb who will deliver us from the wrath of God. Over thirty times in the New Testament Jesus is referred to as the Lamb and the significance of that title goes back to the original Passover night. The people were delivered from death and redeemed from Egypt by the blood of a spotless male lamb sprinkled on the door. And in then new covenant, the time of fulfillment, I Peter 1:18 says we are redeemed not with perishable things like silver and gold but with the precious blood of Christ who is the unblemished and spotless lamb. So understand, when we study the Passover, when we look into the significance of the lamb's blood, we are talking about Jesus and we are learning of our own salvation.

We are ready now to get into the heart of our study for today. I want to make it easy for you to remember so I'll give you two key words which begin with S, two important effects which begin with C, and two final challenges which begin with T. Two Ss, two Cs, and two Ts and if you kids under 12 can get all six points and recite them to me later I have a treat for you.

Alright, the two key S-words are *sacrifice* and *substitution* ®. The sacrifice part is very clear. At twilight the lamb was to be killed. It was a sacrificial lamb. Its purpose, like that of Christ, could only be fulfilled in its death. So, I Corinthians 5:7 says, *Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us*. Now the act is sacrifice, that's clear, but it's the purpose you don't want to miss. And the purpose is in the "for us" part. The second S-word is *substitution*. Substitution is the key principle behind the sacrifice of Christ and the Passover lamb. The Old Testament says, "The soul that sins shall surely die." The New Testament says, "the wages of sin is death." There is a price to be paid for sin and somebody has to pay it. The death angel of judgment is coming to your house tonight to collect what is due, who is going to pay it? It has to be paid. Somebody must die. You see, on that fateful night in Egypt there was a death in every house. Do you see that? Every house had a death, either a dead man or a dead lamb. What made the difference? 12:23 *the Lord will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when He sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the Lord will pass over the door and will not allow the destroyer to come in to your houses to smite you*. When the destroyer, the angel or plague or whatever it was came around, and it came to every house, if it saw blood on the door it knew that death had already visited this house and it went on. It was the blood

of the lamb that made the difference and the same is true for us. Either you die or Christ dies for you, but somebody must die for your sins. Hebrews 9:**22d** *without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness*. Please, understand that principle. Your sins cry out for death. They demand death. So that *without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness*. Repeat it with me *without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness*. And without forgiveness there is eternal death. Death is called in Scripture *the last and great enemy*. How do you deal with it? How can it be defeated? The great puritan, John Owen, has written a book entitled *The Death of Death*. Isn't that a great title? *The Death of Death*, but it's not complete. The original title of Owen's great book was, "The Death of Death in the Death of Christ." The only thing that can kill death is death itself. Death, which is the punishment for sin, must be satisfied, and so it can only be neutralized for you by spending itself on another. A substitute. This principle was taught in the Passover and reinforced in many ways in the Old Testament. In Numbers 16 the children of Israel rebelled against Moses and God was furious. He said **45-48** *Get away from among this congregation, that I may consume them instantly.* Then they fell on their faces. 46 Moses said to Aaron, "Take your censer and put in it fire from the altar, and lay incense on it; then bring it quickly to the congregation and make atonement for them, for wrath has gone forth from the Lord, the plague has begun!" 47 Then Aaron took it as Moses had spoken, and ran into the midst of the assembly, for behold, the plague had begun among the people. So he put on the incense and made atonement for the people. Their sin demanded death, but God would accept animals for men. The same thing is taught in the last chapter of Job. There God grew angry with Job's foolish friends for speaking lies about his servant and he warned them to make a sacrifice before Job. His wrath was coming, but, again, He agreed to accept a substitute. So, a substitutionary sacrifice is a bloody offering to appease the wrath of a holy and sin-hating God. The substitute takes the hit, absorbs the wrath that was due to another. And that is exactly what Jesus did for his people! Don't miss this point! Too many of you know that Christ's death had something to do with forgiveness but it's all so very vague to you. I agree with Spurgeon who said, "We do not subscribe to the lax theology which teaches that the Lord Jesus did something or other which is some way or other, is in some degree or other, connected with the salvation of men." No, no. What Christ did was to bear our sins in His body on the cross. He was punished for our iniquity. I sound like I'm quoting Isaiah 53. Look at that very clear passage. Listen for the language of substitution. **4-6** *Surely our griefs He Himself bore,*

And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted. 5 But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed. 6 All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him. Later in that same chapter it says, "He will bear our iniquities, and He bore the sin of many." And the glorious truth is that because He paid for my sin I don't have to. I am free from the sentence of death. Jesus paid it all! My sin cannot be punished twice. Judgment doesn't come twice. I'm told that lightning cannot hit the same place twice. Is that true? I'm not sure but it is certainly the case that when the lightning of God's vengeance has once struck the sinner's substitute it will not strike the sinner. It is like the bee who once he has stung will never sting again. Paul exulted in I Corinthians 15:55 *O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?* And what is the answer? The sting of death for every believer was left in the flesh of a crucified Christ. Someone wrote long ago:

*If Thou hast my discharge procured,
And freely in my room endured.
The whole of wrath divine:
Payment God cannot twice demand,
First at my bleeding Surety's hand,
And then again at mine.*

*Turn then, my soul, unto thy rest;
The merits of Thy great High Priest
Have bought thy liberty:
Trust in His efficacious blood,
Nor fear thy banishment from God,
Since Jesus died for thee.*

(S-28 p.3) Thus can Romans 8:1 truly announce 1 *There is therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.* Oh, glorious truth! Those are the two Ss, the key words of *sacrifice* and *substitution*.

Now, we go deeper to look at two effects of this substitutionary sacrifice. The two effects are covering and cleansing. First the covering. 12:21-23 *Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel and said to them, "Go and take for yourselves lambs according to your families, and slay the Passover lamb. 22 You shall take a bunch of hyssop and dip it in the blood which is in the basin,*

and apply some of the blood that is in the basin to the lintel and the two doorposts; and none of you shall go outside the door of his house until morning. 23 For the Lord will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when He sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the Lord will pass over the door and will not allow the destroyer to come in to your houses to smite you. The passage mentions hyssop, which is a type of branch that was used in ceremonial cleansings because it had an absorbent quality to it. You could dip it in the blood and then use it to apply the blood on the doorpost. And when the Hebrews did that, we read that God would not allow the destroyer in. God will stand guard. And when will the Lord do this? What's the verse say? "When He sees the blood." ® When God or his angel came to a house on that fateful night He didn't look to see if the house was lofty or strong or attractive. Those things made no difference whatsoever. The only thing that made the difference between life and death was the blood. If it was there you had peace, if not you had death. God didn't look at the house itself, nor did He look at the inhabitants of the house. God only punishes sinners; but that was no problem in Egypt because then and now everybody was a sinner. So it didn't matter really who was in the house. They might have been circumcised on the eighth day, they may have lived life as an exemplary Hebrew, they may have been a scoundrel and a shame to family but none of those things mattered on this night. Genealogy doesn't matter, ceremonies don't matter, good works don't matter, all that counts is the blood. Are you with me here? The same is true in our age, that if God sees a man under the blood of His son, He will save and protect no matter what that man is or has done, but if the blood is missing there is no hope. Let me speak to two groups of you who sit here today. Some of you have lived a life of utter shame. You know you are a sinner; you know you deserve hell, but I stand here to tell you that God's judgment will pass over you if, if you come under the blood of His Son. When He looks at you He will not see all your sin, all He will see is the payment made for you. Others of you here have lived morally upstanding lives; you are proud of what you have become and how you have lived and I stand to tell you it's all rubbish. You have no merit before a holy God. Quit your vain pretense. All of us will either stand before God as naked sinners trying in vain to cover-up with the fig leaves of self-righteousness or we stand before Him covered in the blood of the Lamb. When God looks at you, what will He see? The great Zinzendorf wrote this in his hymn, "Jesus, thy blood and righteousness, my beauty are, my glorious dress. Midst flaming worlds (that is, in the day of judgment), Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed, with joy shall I lift up my head." The blood then serves as a powerful covering for sin.

Secondly then, the blood serves as a cleansing from sin. At least this is true for the blood of Christ. The blood of the Old Testament lambs could cover sin. It was a token of cleansing but the blood was still there reminding of sin. Hebrews 10:**3-4** *But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins year by year. 4 For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.* But whose blood can take it away? That's what the old hymn asked. What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. If some of you ladies are serving lunch today and you put a nice white linen cloth on the table and you would have some guests over with little children, chances are something would be spilled. And if you are concerned about the appearance of your table you might try to tidy up by putting something over the spill, maybe a linen napkin to cover the stain. If you put a napkin over it the stain would be out of sight, it wouldn't ruin the view at the table, but the presence of the napkin would still remind you of the stain wouldn't it? The next day though you would take that tablecloth and wash the stain out of it. You see the difference? The Old Testament sacrifices, the blood of lambs and bulls and goats would serve as a covering, but you would still see the covering. In the Old Testament there was blood everywhere. When you circumcised your boys there was blood. When you took the Passover there was blood. Look at Hebrews 9. Get a load of this **18-21** *Therefore even the first covenant was not inaugurated without blood. 19 For when every commandment had been spoken by Moses to all the people according to the Law, he took the blood of the calves and the 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 which God commanded you." 21 And in the same way he sprinkled both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry with the blood.* Man, you would have blood everywhere - not very pleasant but a reminder of sin. With the coming of Christ you have the last and final sacrifice because Jesus didn't just cover sin He washed it away. I John 1:7 says that if you walk in the light the blood of Jesus Christ God's son cleanses us from all sin. Look with me at Revelation 7. This is a strange concept, that blood would cleanse anything, but it is the plain teaching of God's word. **13-14** *Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "These who are clothed in the white robes, who are they, and where have they come from?" 14 I said to him, "My lord, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.* The hymn says: "For my pardon this I see - nothing but the blood of Jesus. For my cleansing this my plea - nothing but the blood of Jesus." Confessing sin won't do it. Talking to your priest won't do it. Getting baptized won't do it. Community service

won't do it. There is a stain on your soul that will only come out by applying the powerful blood of Jesus.

So your two key words began with S. They were sacrifice and substitution. Your two important effects began with C, they were covering and cleansing. Briefly now I conclude with two final and critical challenges beginning with T. The first is addressed to you who believe, to you who know Christ, and that is to trust the promise of God. Suppose you were a Hebrew father in Egypt whose first born son had heard the news, had learned of the promise of death to the first born all over Egypt, and he was terrified. What would you say to comfort your son? Wouldn't you tell your son that his fear is groundless? Wouldn't you take him to the door and show him the blood and explain the promise of God? I think you would. And that is what I would do with some of you as well. For even though you have trusted in Jesus and become partakers of His sacrifice, some of you are full of fear. You still think of your shame and your sin instead of the blood of the Lamb. You are missing the point. Waiting for God's judgment is not like waiting for Santa Claus, just hoping that you have been nice enough to merit a gift. God doesn't look on you. He doesn't check you out to make sure you are worthy. All He looks for is the mark of blood which says, "this one is covered under my Son." This is the promise of God - trust Him, Christian.

Then I speak to you who are outside of Christ and the word to you this morning is to take God's offer. You have to take God's offer. Many years ago the warden of an Ohio prison stood before an assembly of prisoners and announced that he had in his hand five pardons from the governor for men to be released for good behavior. When he announced that, every man was as still as death. The tension was incredible and it was as though every heart had ceased to beat. The warden called the first name: *Reuben Johnson will come and get his pardon*. He held it out, but no one came. So, he said it again, "*Reuben Johnson will come and get his pardon. It is signed and sealed by the governor. He is a free man.*" Nobody moved. The chaplain, who was on stage with the warden, looked right at old Reuben who had been in prison 19 years, expecting to see him jump right to his feet but instead he was looking around to see the fortunate man who had got his pardon. Finally, the chaplain caught his eye and said, "Reuben, you are the man." Reuben turned around and looked behind to see who this lucky Reuben was. A second time the chaplain said, "Reuben it's you" but Reuben just kept looking, thinking it must be some other Reuben. Finally, the third time the chaplain said, "Reuben come and get your pardon" old Reuben got up and, trembling all the way, got his pardon, went back to his seat and wept. My friend, God is offering you a pardon in the

gospel of His Son but you have to take God's offer. And you take God's offer of salvation by putting your faith in Jesus. It is tantamount to what the Hebrew father would do when he dipped his hyssop branch in the blood of the lamb. Hyssop, as we noted earlier, is a type of wood, a branch that had a spongy quality to it. In the Passover it was used to apply the blood to the door. To be ready for the night of God's visitation the Hebrew in Egypt had to do two things, with the lamb: shed its blood and sprinkle its blood. Shedding the blood was critical but not sufficient. That blood also had to be appropriated or applied. The death of Christ will avail you nothing, will do you no good if you don't believe in Him. A Savior provided is not sufficient; He must also be received. You have to take His offer of mercy.

It is a simple thing to do, as simple as using hyssop. Let your weak and trembling faith lay asoak in the precious blood of Christ and then you may be made whole by faith in the Crucified Lamb. C.S. Lewis tells of a dialogue with a proud Englishman who was offered mercy and pardon from God but refused to take it because he saw no need. He thought himself the kind of man God should be pleased to have in his heaven and as he concluded his defense he said, "I'm only asking for my rights. I'm not asking for any bleeding charity." His Christian friend replied, "Then do ask. Ask for the Bleeding Charity." That bleeding charity is our only hope. So ask. If you humbly come to Christ, admitting your need, confessing your sin, looking to Him He will wash you clean by His powerful blood. I urge you then to make this a day you will never forget. Be free of your hellish guilt. Be from the stain of sin. Say to Jesus now, "Just as I am and waiting not, to rid my soul of one dark blot, to thee whose blood can cleanse each spot, O Lamb of God I come." Macbeth shouted in his misery, "Out, out damn spot," but what can wash away the ugly stain of sin? Say it with me, "Nothing but the blood of Jesus." Let's pray....