

The Passover Lamb  
Exodus 11-13  
ABC 12/9/18

Today we continue our advent series, *By Prophet Bards Foretold*. Last week we looked at Adam & Eve & the fall of mankind into sin. How would God rescue the humanity that He created for His own glory? After Adam & Eve realized their deadly sin, they were ashamed of their nakedness, & were terrified of God's approaching voice of judgment. So they hid themselves. But God was gracious & merciful, covering their sinful nakedness with the skin of a slaughtered animal. He explained to them that there would be a Seed of the woman who would crush the head of the serpent, but in doing so, the Seed would be wounded. The bloody animal that was killed was a picture of the bloodied, wounded Seed who would cover their sin. Last Sunday we looked at the 1<sup>st</sup> mention of the gospel in the Bible in Gen 3:15 & saw that Jesus is the Seed of the woman who would crush the serpent's head. We saw that Jesus came at Christmas to **destroy the works of the devil** (1 Jn 3:8). Today we see that Jesus is the Passover Lamb, the Lamb of God who came at Christmas to **take away sins** (1 Jn 3:5). Christmas tells us how Christ came. The passages we're looking at this Advent tell us why He came. While we all have some familiarity with the Passover, if you're like me, a refresher is never a bad idea. **Ex 12:1-13** PRAY

*Blessed are You, O Lord our God, King or Ruler of the universe*, are the opening words of the Passover meal, giving thanks to God for His deliverance of the people of Israel from bondage in Egypt. To this day, observant Jews all over the world remember their deliverance from slavery by keeping the feast established by God in Ex 11-13 so many years ago. It's a tragedy that, for the most part, the Jewish people celebrating the Passover remain ignorant of & even hostile to the One to whom the meal points: The Lord Jesus Christ, **the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world** (Jn 1:29). The Passover is full of rich, clear gospel themes, the good news about Jesus. We'll touch on a few today.

Until now, the history of God's dealings with Israel in the book of Exodus has moved quickly. Even the account of the 1<sup>st</sup> 9 plagues is highly condensed. Probably 6-9 months have passed since Moses 1<sup>st</sup> returned to Egypt & told Pharaoh to let God's people go. This has been a long

process of the Lord proving that He alone is God & supreme over all the gods of Egypt. Each plague often lasted several days & their implications stretched well beyond that. The 1<sup>st</sup> 9 plagues occur over weeks & months but the narrative keeps us moving from one to the next to the next in rapid succession. It's rather quick until we come to the 10<sup>th</sup> plague, the death of the firstborn. It's as though Moses, as he writes these words, presses a button & the action slips into slow motion. Look at the attention this 10<sup>th</sup> plague is given. In 11:1-3 God tells Moses what is about to happen. In vss 4-10 Moses concludes his interview with Pharaoh & tells Pharaoh what's about to happen. Then in 12:1-13 Moses tells the Israelites what's going to happen & what they should do about it & in vss 14-20 he tells them how they should remember what's about to happen in future years. In vss 21-43 the event itself takes place. & then in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of chapter 12 & the 1<sup>st</sup> half of chapter 13 we're back to further instructions on how to remember what has happened. So suddenly everything is slowing right down. The whole thing is told in advance, then it's retold in advance, then it's told in real time, then it's told again looking back, over & over & over again. Why? Because this is a pivotal point in God's interaction with humans. This isn't simply the end of a sequence of 10 plagues. This is something else. This is a pivot point, not just in the book of Exodus but in the whole history of the people of God. It becomes the great paradigm, the model of God's salvation throughout Scripture. This is one of the great wonders of the Scriptures. & when you see a great wonder you stop & linger & drink it in. This morning I want you to notice 3 things 1<sup>st</sup> of all, we're taught here to...

**1. See the Gospel** The instructions that were given to Moses in the 1<sup>st</sup> 13 vss of chapter 12 are repeated in summary form as Moses relays them to the elders of Israel in vss 21-42. In vs 21 the Israelites are to take a lamb; vs 5 fills in some details for us. It's to be an unblemished male lamb, either a goat or a sheep, a year old, & they're to slay it. The blood of the lamb would be collected & is daubed on the doorposts & on the lintels of each Israelite house using a brush of hyssop leaves (22). Vss 8-11 tell us that a meal using the roasted meat of the Passover lamb was to be eaten in a very particular manner with belt fastened, sandals on, staff in hand, & ready to leave at a moment's notice. They were, we're told, to **eat in haste**. The message is clear. Their

departure from Egyptian bondage & slavery is about to take place & their freedom is tied to the shedding of the blood of the Passover lamb. *Get ready*, God is saying to them, *You're about to leave*. & all that night no one was allowed outside their own home because ... **12:23**.

Some people say God is being unjust here. But those who object overlook & forget the wickedness of Egypt that had itself, in the opening chapter of Exodus, murdered the males born to Hebrew families. & what's worse, it's an objection that overlooks what every sin deserves: The wrath & curse of God. What's perplexing about the story of the judgment & death of the firstborn is the restraint of God in the face of the indwelling sin festering in every human heart. What is extraordinary is why He spares some, not that He judges some. But the key point here isn't simply that God will bring a terrible judgment on Egypt for its rebellion & sin. I believe the text implies that God would do the same for Israel unless they obeyed His instructions. *Put the blood around your door. I'm passing through to destroy & when I see the blood on the doorposts & lintels I won't allow the destroyer to enter your houses to strike you*. Israel is liable to the judgment of God along with rebellious Egypt. The great difference between the Jews & the Egyptians has nothing at all to do with the righteousness of the Israelites compared to the wickedness of the Egyptians. God didn't promise to spare Israel because they were more religious or moral than their pagan oppressors. No, God promised to spare them only if the blood of the lamb marked their households. The blood was a sign for the people that they had protection by faith & it was a sign of their faith in God. Seeing that sign, God would pass over their houses & no plague of death would come crashing into their homes. But wherever a lamb wasn't sacrificed, death would come, whether the people were Egyptians or Israelites. No family was perfect & worthy of God's blessing so either a lamb or the firstborn would die in every household. Every family, no matter nationality, deserved God's punishment & needed a sacrifice for protection. Passover helped the Israelites see they were guilty sinners just like the Egyptians & all people. The Passover illustrated that salvation comes only by God's grace through His appointed means of sacrifice. Only those under the lamb's blood wouldn't face the wrath of God. There were no other grounds for hope than that everyone take refuge under the blood of the

Passover lamb. & that very night, as judgment fell, every home in the land is afflicted except those which had the blood of the lamb on their doorway. & as a great cry & wail of anguish ascends throughout the whole land, Pharaoh finally summons Moses & Aaron. **12:31**

The Egyptians were also eager to be rid of the Hebrews. In vss 33-36 the Egyptians gave the departing Israelites piles of silver & gold jewelry. As the old saying goes, *To the victor belongs the spoils*. These are the spoils of a war Israel didn't fight. The Lord fought for them & His victory is complete. God's judgment on Egypt is total. Their gods are humiliated, Pharaoh is reduced to begging, & Israel leaves the land enriched with the treasure of their former captors. & now they're free & all because of the lamb's blood. The lamb's blood was the ground of their liberty.

What a beautiful picture of the gospel this is. The Passover pointed forward to a time to when the firstborn of neither pagan Egyptians nor believing Israelites died, but God's only begotten Son Himself shed His blood so God's wrath wouldn't fall on those who placed their trust in Him. Jesus became the sacrificial Lamb that saves & frees His people & gives to us His riches (Phil 4:19).

The Passover Lamb points us to the person & work of Jesus. Christ, our Passover Lamb, who was slain for us. As Paul writes in 1 Cor 5:7, **Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed**. See how the NT interprets the OT for us? Paul calls Jesus the Passover Lamb. 1 Pt 1:18-19 says that we **were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished & spotless, the blood of Christ**.

When John saw Jesus coming towards him, remember what he exclaimed? **Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!** (Jn 1:29). All the sacrificed lambs of the OT pointed ahead to God's ultimate provision, when He would supply the true Passover Lamb in the sacrifice of His Son. In his gospel, John wants to underline what it takes for Jesus to be **the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world**. No ordinary human can **be the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world**. John warns us against thinking that any mere man can take away the sin of the world. What Jesus had to do to take away the sin of the world required that He be more than a man. He was the Lord God of Isaiah 40. He was so great that John the Baptist wasn't worthy to untie His sandals. & He was absolutely before John in time & rank. In other words, Jesus was able

to be the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world because He was the God-man. The Word became flesh (1:14). That's what we celebrate this time of year. The *infleshment* of God. & now we see the central reason why: **to take away the sin of the world**. When John wrote his 1<sup>st</sup> letter, he put it like this, **You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; & in Him there is no sin** (3:5). The reason why the Son of God appeared, the reason the Word became flesh, the reason of Christmas was to take away sin. John is pointing us to the central reason for the incarnation. Why did John add in 1 Jn 3:5, **& in Him there is no sin**? Because the lambs that were offered in sacrifice to cover sin in the OT had to be spotless, without blemish (Lev 4). As we just saw, Peter said we **were not redeemed with perishable things ... but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished & spotless, the blood of Christ** (1 Pt 1:18–20). How could Jesus be without sin? Every person born in the ordinary way inherited Adam's sin. That's why Paul said, **Just as sin entered into the world through one man, & death through sin, so also death passed to all men, because all sinned** (Rom 5:12). Every man born in the ordinary way is a sinner. & sinners can't take away the sins of sinners. Then how could Jesus? Because He wasn't born in the ordinary way. He wasn't born of 2 humans. Remember? He was the Seed of woman. He was the God-man because God ordained that the way the Word would become flesh was through a virgin birth (Lk 1:30-35). Jesus was holy. He was without sin. No original sin. & no active sin in his own behavior. Jesus asks in Jn 8:46, **Which one of you convicts Me of sin?** The answer was, *No one has ever been able to convict Jesus of sin. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth* (1 Pt 2:22; cf. Heb 4:15; Rom 8:3). The reason He was without sin, although 100% God, is that He was also 100% God. **In the beginning was the Word & the Word was with God & the Word was God ... & the Word became flesh** (Jn 1:1, 14). Everything about Jesus shows how He could be **the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world**. What does it mean when John the Baptist said that? At least 2 shocking things for the Jews & both of them are relevant for us today. 1<sup>st</sup>, it meant that the God-man would die. & not just die, but die like a lamb dies, by being slaughtered (Rev 5:6, 9, 12; 13:8). 2<sup>nd</sup>, it meant the whole world would benefit from this & not just Jews. This God-man was the Jewish Messiah (Jn 1:41). But His death would take away **the sin of the world**, not just the sin

of Israel. He was called the Lamb of God, because He would die. That's why God sent Him. & that's why He came. That's why the Word became flesh. Otherwise, He couldn't die. & He was God's Lamb for the world, not just a Jewish lamb for Israel. Those 2 truths, death & worldwide sin-bearing, are summed up together in Jn 11:50-52 where the high priest Caiaphas spoke prophetically & said:

**"Nor do you take into account that it is expedient for you that one man die for the people, & that the whole nation not perish." Now he did not say this on his own initiative, but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation, & not for the nation only, but in order that He might also gather together into one the children of God who are scattered abroad.**

Jesus will die for Jews. But not just for Jews, but for people scattered all over the world. John put it like this in his 1<sup>st</sup> letter: **He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; & not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world (2:2).** Propitiation means that His death removes the wrath of God because it takes away sin. The Lamb takes away sin & removes God's wrath, not just for Jews but for Gentiles scattered among all nations. In Revelation we read of Jesus, **You were slain, & purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe & tongue & people & nation (5:9).** We see this wrath-removal in John's gospel as well. **He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him (3:36).** This means that when John the Baptist says, **Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world,** he doesn't mean that every person in the world is saved. He means every person in the world, Jew or Gentile, will be saved ***IF*** they believe in Jesus & follow Him. If they believe, their sin has been taken away by the Lamb. If they believe, God's wrath has been removed by the Lamb. There is no race, no nationality, no ethnicity, no socio-economic, & no intellectual status excluded. **As many as receive Him ... those who believe in His name (Jn 1:12),** their sins are taken away (Jn 1:29; 1 Jn 3:5) & the wrath of God is removed (Jn 3:36; 1 Jn 2:2) & they are made the children of God (Jn 1:12) & given eternal life (Jn 3:16).

What are the differences between Christians & non-Christians when faced with the fury of divine justice burning against our sin? Will the Christian appear at the court of heaven & point to his prayers, his service in the church, the Bible studies he's attended, or the money he's given to the poor? Will he point to his baptism or certificate of church membership as the basis for his

security before the heavenly Judge? Will he say to the Lord, *I made a decision & signed a card & walked an aisle & my hope is in that to escape from hell's fury?* Is that the best we can offer? No.

What's the only argument that will stand before God on that day? Horatius Bonar put it this way:

*Not what my hands have done can save my guilty soul. Not what my toiling flesh has borne can make my spirit whole. Not what I feel or do can give me peace with God. Not all my prayers & sighs & tears can bear my awful load. Thy work alone, O Christ, can ease this weight of sin. Thy blood alone, O Lamb of God, can give me peace within. Thy love to me, O God, not mine O Lord to Thee, can rid me of this dark unrest & set my spirit free.*<sup>1</sup>

What must our argument be? That we've come to hide under the blood of the Lamb. Like Israel in Egypt painting blood on their doorposts, we must take for ourselves the blood of Christ offered at Calvary for sinners. The Passover is the gospel in picture form. God tells them this in vs 13. *The blood is a sign of My sparing you, passing over you in judgment. It's a sign I have not visited you with judgment, but spared you of that.* That's vitally important because there is absolutely nothing about Israel which wants or earns or deserves that sparing. That sparing is rooted in God's love which is manifested in His electing choice of Israel. & this is grounded in His provision of this Passover lamb which points forward to the ultimate provision of His love, His son. & so when He says **the blood shall be a sign for you ... & when I see the blood I will pass over you, & no plague will befall you to destroy you,** He's reminding them of His mercy & grace to them, in sparing them judgment that they are just as deserving of as the Egyptians are. & so the ultimate difference between Egypt & Israel isn't the righteousness of Israel, but the grace & the mercy of God. God's grace & His protective providence are clearly set forth in the blood of the Passover lamb. There's no work you can perform, there's no effort you can expend to secure for yourself acceptance with God. Absolutely none! All there is to do, all you need do, all you can do is hide beneath the shed blood of the Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ. He has done it all & His sacrifice is a refuge for any & all from the wrath of God on our sin. Are you living today under the blood of the Lamb? There is no hope anywhere else.

**2. Heed The Warning** This whole section begins back in chapter 11 with the interview between Moses & Pharaoh at the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> plague. It's actually a continuation from the interview in

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<sup>1</sup> Hymn, *Not What These Hands Have Done*

chapter 10 but it's interrupted in the opening 3 vss of chapter 11 to inform the reader that God had told Moses what's coming. Vss 1 to 3 are a little aside to the reader showing us that God has already informed Moses that the 10<sup>th</sup> plague would be the decisive blow, that after it Israel would be free & the Egyptians would gladly give them whatever they wanted. Then vss 4 to 10 the interview with Pharaoh resumes. Moses reports God's words to the king. 4-5

Now look at vs 7.

Egypt will be judged & Israel will be spared. Why did God have Moses tell Pharaoh all of that in advance? It was a warning that Pharaoh utterly rejected & so judgment fell. But it wasn't that way with everyone living in Egypt. Turn over to chapter 12:37-38. This is the aftermath of the death of the firstborn. Pharaoh has refused the warning & judgment has fallen. The Hebrews have been spared hiding beneath the blood of the lamb & they are at last free. 12:37-38

**A mixed multitude also went up with them.** What's that mean? Although Pharaoh didn't listen to the warnings of God, apparently some Egyptians did. They saw God's mighty works in judging Egypt & saving Israel. While the rest of the country couldn't wait to be rid of the Jews, it seems some had recognized that Israel's God is the true God & the idols of Egypt were not. They came to recognize that safety & hope can be found only among the people of God under the rule of God & so they choose to leave their homeland with Israel rather than stay in Egypt under God's curse. Some people listened to the warning & were included in Israel's salvation. What does this tell us? There's mercy for all nations, peoples, tongues, & tribes under the blood of the Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ. But also that judgment is coming. So will you heed the warning & flee the wrath to come, as some did in Egypt, & find refuge under the blood of the Lamb? Isaiah revealed that the Messiah, whom he calls **the Servant of the Lord**, would come as **a man of sorrows**. He would be **like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, & like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth** (Is 53:7). The Seed of the woman, the substitute Lamb on Mt Moriah (Gen 22), & the Passover Lamb, has become the suffering **Servant of the Lord** that would be led to slaughter. Are you going to heed the warning & find your only hope under the Lamb's blood? See the gospel, heed the warning, & then finally & briefly ...



**3. Remember The Cross** In chapters 12-13 God institutes Passover & the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Why Unleavened Bread? Because the Israelites had no time for their bread to be leavened before they left the land (39). The barbecued Passover lamb & unleavened bread became an ongoing memorial used yearly by Jews to remember God's great redeeming grace. More than 1,500 years after God delivered the Israelites from Egypt, Jesus prepared to celebrate the Passover with His disciples. Jesus said, **I earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer** (Lk 22:15). He was eager because it was a pivotal point in His ministry. He would celebrate the Passover one night & be the Passover Lamb the next day. It was this special meal that Jesus took & transformed on that Passover evening, the night in which He was betrayed. He took some of the unleavened bread & He took one of the cups of wine & He showed His disciples how it all points to Him; it all finds its ultimate significance in His person & in the work He was about to accomplish at the cross. **This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me. This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me** (1 Cor 11:24-25). Now the Lord's Supper, communion, does duty for Passover in the life of the people of God. It speaks to us clearly about God's final redemption from the deepest slavery of them all, from the slavery of sin, by means of the blood of the true Passover Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ. But both meals, the Passover & the Lord's Supper teach the same thing. Their message is the same. Both were given to teach the people of God, then & now, we must never stray from the blood of the Lamb. God punctuates His people's calendar & builds into the rhythm of their lives, in Moses' day & in our day, a simple meal to ensure we come back again & again to the Lamb who was slain. This is God's way of keeping us from straying from Golgotha. We must always come back to Christ crucified. As the hymn *Rock of Ages* puts it,

*Nothing in my hand I bring,  
Simply to Thy cross I cling;  
Naked, come to Thee for dress,  
Helpless, look to Thee for grace;  
Foul, I to the Fountain fly;  
Wash me, Savior, or I die.<sup>2</sup>*

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<sup>2</sup> Augustus Toplady, hymn #209 in our hymnals

Over the centuries, millions of Passover lambs had been slaughtered, each of them foreshadowing the sacrifice Jesus was to make to free God's people from the bondage of their sins. The symbols & shadows of the Passover were about to cease because the true Lamb had arrived. At exactly the hour of slaughter on Friday afternoon, Jesus would die, the veil in the temple would be ripped from top to bottom, & the system of sacrifice would come to an end.

See the Gospel, come & find refuge under the blood of the Lamb. Heed the warning & join with the people of God. Flee the wrath to come & join in the great salvation God has given. & remember the cross. Never stray from the Christ of Calvary & learn to live your Christian life always within sight of Christ crucified, depending on Him, clinging to Him, drinking Him in, feasting by faith upon Him to help & strengthen & nourish your soul. See the Gospel, heed the warning, & remember the cross.

Everyone in this room is a sinner deserving of God's wrath. There's only one way to have your sins taken away & find favor with God. Not by cleaning up your life 1<sup>st</sup>. That comes later. That's fruit, not root. The one & only way is by believing in Jesus as the glorious Lamb of God. Jesus said in Jn 8:24, **Unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins** (Jn 8:24). Therefore, believe in Jesus as your Lamb & your Lord. & you will say with the apostles, **The blood of Jesus God's Son cleanses us from all sin** (1 Jn 1:7). When Christ finished His saving work for you, God fulfilled His promise to give you the Seed of the woman who would crush the serpent who enslaved you to sin. Instead of you suffering eternal wrath, God provided His substitute Lamb in your place. He covered your sin with His precious blood so that judgment would pass over you. His blood overshadows you to protect you from death & hell. & He has sent His suffering Servant as a silent, innocent Lamb of sacrifice.

Jesus said, **Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man & drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves. He who eats My flesh & drinks My blood has eternal life, & I will raise him up on the last day** (Jn 6:53-54). Jesus didn't mean we must eat & drink His body & blood to be saved or that partaking of communion saves anyone. He meant that just as each Israelite household had to personally trust God's Word & slay & eat their lamb & put the blood on their

doorposts & lintel, so we each must act in faith. We must respond to the Lamb of God that has been sacrificed, once for all, to protect sinners from eternal punishment. We must receive Jesus as the Substitute that frees us & gives us new life. We must say we want Jesus to be our sacrificial Lamb. We must say, *Yes, I need forgiveness from God & I need to be rescued from slavery to sin so that I can live a new life for God.* That's the NT application of the OT Passover. So I ask you today, is Jesus your Passover Lamb? If He is not, then I urge you to trust Him today. I urge you to cover the doorway of your life with the merits of His blood so you may be protected when God comes in judgment. Ask God to open your heart to receive Jesus as your Lord & Savior. & for those of you who do have Jesus as your Passover Lamb, let me urge you to treasure Him this day more than ever. Cultivate in your heart a great appreciation for His gracious self-sacrifice for your soul. Think of His death in your place & praise Him as we remember & worship Him. Let us remember all this this Advent season, knowing that Babe in the manger was born to die as **the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.** Let's close with the words of JC Ryle:

*Let us serve Him faithfully as our Master. Let us obey Him loyally as our King. Let us study His teaching as our Prophet. Let us walk diligently after Him as our Example. Let us look anxiously for Him as our coming Redeemer of body as well as soul. But above all, let us prize Him as our Sacrifice, & rest our whole weight on His death as an atonement for sin. Let His blood be more precious in our eyes every year we live. Whatever else we glory in about Christ, let us glory above all things in His cross.<sup>3</sup>*

PRAY

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<sup>3</sup> *Expository Thoughts on John*, vol 1, pp 56-57