

IN MY PLACE CONDEMNED HE STOOD - The Biblical Pattern of the Atonement - Part four - Sunday, June 19th, 2022

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PASSOVER AND THE MEANING OF THE BLOOD

Exodus 12:13-28 - "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. [14] "This day shall be for you a memorial day, and you shall keep it as a feast to the Lord; throughout your generations, as a statute forever, you shall keep it as a feast. [15] Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall remove leaven out of your houses, for if anyone eats what is leavened, from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel. [16] On the first day you shall hold a holy assembly, and on the seventh day a holy assembly. No work shall be done on those days. But what everyone needs to eat, that alone may be prepared by you. [17] And you shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread, for on this very day I brought your hosts out of the land of Egypt. Therefore you shall observe this day, throughout your generations, as a statute forever. [18] In the first month, from the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread until the twenty-first day of the month at evening. [19] For seven days no leaven is to be found in your houses. If anyone eats what is leavened, that person will be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he is a sojourner or a native of the land. [20] You shall eat nothing leavened; in all your dwelling places you shall eat unleavened bread." [21] Then Moses called all the elders of Israel and said to them, "Go and select lambs for yourselves according to your clans, and kill the Passover lamb. [22] Take a bunch of hyssop and dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and touch the lintel and the two doorposts with the blood that is in the basin. None of you shall go out of the door of his house until the morning. [23] For the Lord will pass through to strike 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 enter your houses to strike you."

[24] “You shall observe this rite as a statute for you and for your sons forever. [25] And when you come to the land that the Lord will give you, as he has promised, you shall keep this service. [26] And when your children say to you, 'What do you mean by this service?' [27] you shall say, 'It is the sacrifice of the Lord's Passover, for he passed over the houses of the people of Israel in Egypt, when he struck the Egyptians but spared our houses.' " And the people bowed their heads and worshiped. [28] Then the people of Israel went and did so; as the Lord had commanded Moses and Aaron, so they did.”

If there's a single mountain peak of truth that elevates itself above the rest of the truths in this passage, it's the one we focused in on last week. There are *two deliverances* featured in this Exodus account, and the second one is the most important and prominent. ***First, Israel is delivered from the tyranny of Egypt.*** That's where the book of Exodus gets its name.

Second, Israel is delivered from the wrath of God. This is where the study of the nature of the ten plagues is highly significant. The first nine plagues were ***automatically selective*** in falling on Egypt and not on Israel. That is, Israel is spared these forms of God's judgment simply because she *is* Israel.

But the last plague - the one that finally forces Pharaoh to let the Israelites leave - isn't delivered ***selectively*** at all. At least not on the basis of ethnicity or favoritism. Not one household of Israel is spared God's wrath because it is a Jewish household. And we're meant to learn that no one can escape God's wrath by any personal claim at all. This is made abundantly and repetitively clear in today's text as well:

IPAD TEXT - Exodus 12:13 - “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 [Israel], and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt.”

IPAD TEXT - Exodus 12:23 - “For the Lord will pass through to strike 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 enter your houses [Israel’s houses] to strike you.”

No one *qualifies* for deliverance - not in Egypt, and not in Israel. O, they escape the first nine plagues simply because they are Israel. But not this one. Without the shed and applied blood *everyone* will mourn that night at the sting of God’s wrath. The point that is made by divine revelation, and the point Moses is to instruct into the next generation, is simple and direct. No one escapes divine wrath unless the blood of the Passover lamb is shed and applied. The blood of the lamb is the people’s only hope:

IPAD TEXT - Exodus 12:25-27 - “And when you come to the land that the Lord will give you, as he has promised, you shall keep this service. [26] And when your children say to you, 'What do you mean by this service?' [27] you shall say, 'It is the *sacrifice of the Lord's Passover*, for he passed over the houses of the people of Israel in Egypt, when he struck the Egyptians but spared our houses.' ”

Here are the truths we need to underscore today:

1) **THE WHOLE ACCOUNT OF THE FIRST PASSOVER IN THE BIBLE IS CRAFTED TO REINFORCE THE CONCEPT OF A SUBSTITUTE BEARING THE WRATH OF GOD**

If you think back, you will remember I said there are two concepts with substitutionary atonement that grate against the modern mind. The first was we are all ***under the wrath of God***. We'll come to this in a minute. The second offensive idea was Jesus dies on the cross, not for His ***own*** sin, but for ***ours***. He dies for sins He didn't commit.

Now we stand at the very dawn of God's unfolding revelation concerning ***passing over*** trusting people when His righteous ***wrath*** is poured out. And the central idea - the ***center that gives meaning to the whole account*** - is that a lamb must give its life if the first-born of the household is to live. I mean, there is simply no way of skirting around this grand plot in the whole account. All of the details orbit around this central truth.

You could sum up the whole account of these chapters in Exodus like this - ***judgment falls on the lamb or it falls on the household***. Period. God nowhere asks anyone to ***approve*** of this plan, or think it ***just***. God offers no other plan for escape than the blood of the lamb.

That is the simple evidence of the text. The lamb must **die**. We know this because God **makes sure** we all know it. They can't just **wound** the lamb and draw some blood from it. We know this because they're specifically told they must **eat** the lamb after they've killed it. The blood is a symbol of the lamb's **life** offered on their behalf.

So the principle of **substitution** is stamped all over this account. **Something** (the lamb) or **someone** (the first-born) must die. And God, in His merciful plan, draws attention to the blood of the lamb. And in so doing, God knows **He Himself will come** - "**God was in Christ**" - **He will come Himself to pay the price His own holiness demands for my sin**. We are saved **from** God **by** God.

To put this in theological terms, there is nothing **expiatory** in this passage. **Expiation** is the theological terms given to the **removal of our sins in the atonement**. And, while there certainly are many, many re-affirmations of this idea in the Scriptures, this isn't one of them. This text says virtually nothing whatsoever about forgiveness. The word is never used because this isn't a text about divine forgiveness for our sins. The blood on the doorposts doesn't cleanse the human heart. It satisfies the just wrath of God.

Theologians would call this a **propitiation** passage. It deals with **God justice** more than it deals with **my forgiveness**. It's a text about the removal of wrath, not the pardoning of sin.

2) **WHILE ONLY THE FIRST-BORN IS VISIBLY STRUCK DOWN, WE ARE MADE TO SEE THE ONE-TO-ONE CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN THE LAMB SLAIN AND EACH INDIVIDUAL IN THE HOUSEHOLD**

The first-born dies because there has to be some way for God to make His judgment **visible**. His is not wrath **in theory**. And God's wrath is not just the natural unfolding laws of nature taking effect against wrong-doers - a kind of **reaping what we sow**. There is nothing in this whole account to fit in with this progressive re-interpretation of God's wrath. The first-born don't die of old age or disease or neglect.

Because people are inclined to put their own spin on God and define His nature and actions in terms **they find palatable**, God must shatter any illusions that He finds our sins as judgment-neutral as we do.

The first-born reminds the whole household that God's judgment must be taken more seriously than they are naturally inclined to take it. Perhaps above all, the death of the first-born was the graphic proof that God's **love** didn't provide **automatic** protection from His **justice**. There would be no escape looking to hide under the covers of divine sentimentality.

I bear no ill-will, but I've wondered lately what would have happened in the household that refused to bow before divine instruction regarding the substitute. What would have happened if some seemingly devout Hebrew soul had objected with words like **Greg Boyd's**, ***"How is the view that God requires a kill to have his rage placated essentially different from the pagan or magical understanding of divine appeasement found in primordial religions?"***

Would those rationalizations save the first-born? Would God change His plans and bend to that finite, fallen, dust-ridden logic? Never. That's why we need the blunt truth of this account of the first Passover.

But if the first-born was the **visible** lesson in this account, the text shows that the first-born wasn't the **only** one needing the Passover lamb. There's a reason for the inclusion of so many details about how the lamb was to be prepared and eaten in the Passover meal:

IPAD TEXT - Exodus 12:3-4 - “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.”

In a nutshell, these instructions are designed to show the relationship between the slain lamb and the ***number of individuals*** in the house. Why could this possibly matter? Because, while the first-born was the ***visible*** picture of God’s wrath on those who didn’t cling to the divinely appointed substitute, the total number of the family members was accounted for in the provision of the lamb. There is a one-to-one relationship between the substitute lamb and every individual. In the Exodus account we’re meant to see that this is a ***calculated*** number. ***All*** the members of the household are taken into account.

3) **THE PASSOVER MEAL AND THE COMING LAMB OF GOD**

Though it doesn’t get considered in detail often, there is significance in the way God instructed this Passover lamb to be consumed by His people:

IPAD TEXT - Exodus 12:5-11, 46-47 - "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. [8] They shall eat the flesh that night, roasted on the fire; with unleavened bread and bitter herbs they shall eat it. [9] Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted, its head with its legs and its inner parts. [10] And you shall let none of it remain until the morning; anything that remains until the morning you shall burn. [11] In this manner you shall eat it: with your belt fastened, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. And you shall eat it in haste. It is the Lord's Passover....46-47....It shall be eaten in one house; you shall not take any of the flesh outside the house, and you shall not break any of its bones. [47] All the congregation of Israel shall keep it."

- a) ***First, the lamb was to be roasted and presented at the table in its entire, complete form.*** While speculation abounds, the reason, in my opinion, is not complicated. This lamb was taken into the household fourteen days before it was killed. Because it was a perfect specimen it was an appealing house guest. It's not hard to imagine a family - children especially - growing attached to a very young, beautiful, flawless lamb.

And while it might offend our sensibilities, that lamb was to be ***recognized*** when presented at the table. A lamb diced up and cooked in a stew or boiled in a broth would certainly be seen as a ***meat dish*** of some sort. But the lamb roasted in one piece - complete and in tact, head and all - would be painfully remembered as that ***same*** lamb that had come along side the family in absolute perfection only shortly before. The family was made to build the mental bridge between the ***beauty and perfection*** of the lamb and the ***sacrifice*** of the lamb.

So the meal was to be eaten in a manner that **recognized** and **remembered** the great **substitution** that had taken place. All were made to consider the innocence of that lamb as they ate. It had done nothing to **deserve** its death. So, those who partook weren't delivered by **accident** or **birthright** or by **their own achievements**. That **same** perfect lamb had to die to be the source of the removal of the just wrath of God.

The Apostle Peter connects these dots for us - **1 Peter 1:18-19**
 - "...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." - IPAD TEXT

- b) **Second, the bitter herbs reminded them of the bitterness of their slavery in Egypt and the cost of living as redeemed people.** Living as redeemed people was a **freeing** experience, but it would not always be an **easy** experience. Just as this meal reminded them of their **deliverance**, it also foreshadowed the idea that redemption and new life would almost always run against their natural acquired tastes.

- c) ***Third, the bones of the lamb were to remain unbroken - Exodus 12:46 - "It [the Passover lamb] shall be eaten in one house; you shall not take any of the flesh outside the house, and you shall not break any of its bones."* - IPAD TEXT**

Someone may be wondering if we are really handling the Scriptures correctly here? How do we know these details actually apply to Jesus Christ as our Passover Lamb? Perhaps these rituals are nothing more than the cultist practices of the Judaism of that time. Are we forcing these details - reading them into the New Testament account of the crucifixion of Jesus?

The Apostle John helps us here. He picks up this detail of none of the bones of the Passover lamb being broken and specifically applies it to our Lord:

IPAD TEXT - John 19:31-36 - "Since it was the day of Preparation, and so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away. [32] So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who had been crucified with him. [33] But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, *they did not break his legs.* [34] But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. [35] He who saw it has borne witness— his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth— *that you also may believe.* [36] For these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled: *"Not one of his bones will be broken."*

Now certainly Jesus could have redeemed us by His death even if His bones ***had*** been broken like the two who died with Him. That's not the issue here. The issue has to do with the ***time*** of Jesus death. The point John is making is Jesus died ***exactly*** the same time as that first Passover meal was eaten. The account of the bones not being broken is given so we might have another clue that Jesus really is the ***fulfillment*** of that same Passover lamb in the Exodus account.

Here's how it works. Christ died on the day of the Passover during the **very hours** when the Passover sacrifices were being offered. In fact, we know from **Exodus 12:6** that the Israelites were to kill the lamb **between the evening hours between 3 and 6 p.m.**

The gospel writers are faithful to record that it was at **3 p.m.** (that's the **ninth hour**) that Jesus uttered His cry, "**It is finished!**" So He was alive at **3 p.m.** Also, He was dead and taken down from the cross before **6 p.m.** The point being, His death coincides exactly with the death of the Passover lamb in Exodus.

This is where the importance of the unbroken bones comes in. Soldiers broke the bones because the day **following** the day Christ died was a High Sabbath day. It was considered a breach of ceremonial law to have a dead body exposed on this day. And because angry, soon to die criminals **knew** this, their last act of vengeance would be to prolong their own death. They would prop themselves up on the footpiece on the cross to keep them from suffocating (which was the actual cause of death in the case of crucifixion).

To keep them from doing this, soldiers would come and break their legs. Unable to support themselves, the victims would quickly die and be removed from the cross before the Sabbath.

But they didn't have to do that with Jesus. And the reason they didn't was He was already dead. The Apostle John's point is Jesus' death automatically mirrored the death of that Passover lamb in the Exodus account. So we are Scripturally just and accurate to do as we're doing today. Jesus is set forth *intentionally* in the New Testament Scriptures as the fulfillment of the Passover lamb.

There is one final point of practical application:

4) **EATING THE PASSOVER AT SUPPER TIME BUT BEING DRESSED FOR BREAKFAST**

IPAD TEXT - Exodus 12:11 - "In this manner you shall eat it: with your belt fastened, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. And you shall eat it in haste. It is the Lord's Passover."

Here we see the realism of the atonement. True, the Passover lamb died as the divinely appointed substitute. In **that** sense the primary action isn't located in anything I do. The principle of **replacement** shines. **My** spot under wrath is taken by **someone else**.

But these verses complete the picture of Israel's deliverance. If the lamb bears God's wrath, the people themselves must begin to move into freedom. That's the meaning of the way they are to be dressed as they eat this evening meal. This is the night of their atonement. This is the night of their deliverance.

Notice, they will spend the night where they are. They will all stay, as the text so painfully reiterates, inside the house overnight. But they are to dress in such a way that they won't have to take time to prepare in the morning. And the whole point seems to be this - **just as the Passover lamb stands at the end of one life, it stands at the beginning of another.**

O, how we need to hear this again. The faith we have in the divine wrath-bearing Lamb of God is a ***consequential*** faith. There is an ***urgency*** to the way we are atoned. We both ***feed on Christ*** and ***live for Christ***. There is both ***reception*** and ***involvement***. The meal of the Passover lamb set their feet in motion out of their previous existence. This is exactly what Paul meant when he said, “....and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace”(Ephesians 6:15).

“Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all.”