

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 6 August 2017. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

The Passover Lamb

Exodus 12:1-13

On a fateful night twenty-four hundred years ago, God brought a horrible judgment upon the land of Egypt. For at least a hundred years, the Egyptians had cruelly oppressed God's people, the Hebrews. The Egyptians had enslaved the Hebrews, and forced them to build their cities. They had brutally beaten them, and murdered their baby boys. But now, God had raised up for them a deliverer, named Moses. Through Moses, God brought nine horrible plagues upon the land of Egypt. These plagues destroyed Egypt's water supply, their crops, their cattle, and their infrastructure, and took a great death toll. These plagues also proved their so-called "gods" to be nothing but lifeless wood and stone. Yet, in spite of these judgments, the Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let the children of Israel go.

But now, the time of reckoning had come. On this night, the LORD Himself passed over every house in the land of Egypt; and the firstborn child in every Egyptian household died. But in the homes of God's people, the Hebrews, there was deliverance. The firstborn children in the houses of the Israelites did *not* die. Was it because they were worthier than the Egyptians? No. The judgment that had befallen the Egyptians *could* have befallen them, as well. How, then, did the children of Israel escape God's wrath? Well, there were several things that God instructed them to do to avoid this judgment; but all these instructions centred on one thing: *a lamb*. Over the next five weeks, we will be learning about the Passover feast which God gave to Israel; and as we study it, we will see how the Passover Lamb points to the Lord Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.

The title of this message is *The Passover Lamb*.

I. The provision of the Lamb

Before you can fully understand what the Passover is all about, there is something that you need to understand. You must understand the promise that God made to a man named Abram. Let's go back 430 years *before* the night of Passover, and see what God promised to Abram.

Read Genesis 12:1-3.

God called Abram out of his country, and from his family in Ur of the Chaldees, to go to the land of Canaan. God promised Abram to give the land of Canaan to his descendants for an inheritance. He also promised Abram that He would make of him a "**great nation**"; and He promised to bless those who bless that nation, and to curse those who curse that nation. But the most important part of God's promise to Abram was that through him, "**all families of the earth**" would be blessed.

In what way would Abram bring blessing to the whole earth? God Himself answered that question years later. Let's fast-forward about 50 years, and see what God said to Abram.

Read Genesis 22:1-18.

Many changes had taken place in the 50 years that had passed from the time when God first spoke to Abram. For one thing, God had changed Abram's name to Abraham (which means "father of many nations"). God had given Abraham a son named Isaac when he was 100 years old; and He had promised Abraham that this son would be the father of a special nation. But then, God placed a seemingly impossible trial of faith before Abraham. God commanded Abraham to offer up this son of promise as a sacrifice!

Of course, God would not actually have allowed Abraham to go through with this; but Abraham didn't know that at the time. God was trying Abraham, to reveal whether he loved his God even more than his own son. As it turned out, Abraham *did* love his God supremely. Abraham *was* willing to offer up his son! When the trial was over, and God had provided a ram as a substitute instead of Isaac, God repeated the promise that He had made to Abraham years earlier—except that this time, he gave him a little more information. **(Read verses 17-18 again.)** God promised not only that a great *nation* would spring from Abraham, but also that a "seed" would arise from his family. God referred to this "seed" as a single person, and as a *Man*. (He said that this seed would "*possess the gate of his enemies.*") The Apostle Paul pointed out this very thing. In **Galatians 3:16** Paul wrote, "*He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.*"

Jesus Christ is that Seed of Abraham! Jesus Christ is that male Descendant of Abraham who would bring the blessing of salvation to all the families of the earth. But *how* would Christ bring the blessing of salvation? God didn't reveal this to Abraham explicitly; but He did give Abraham a really big hint. Right there on Mount Moriah, Abraham had just acted out, in picture, God's plan of salvation. Abraham was a picture of God the Father, who willingly offered up His Son, Jesus Christ, as the sacrifice for man's sins. Isaac was a picture of the Jesus Christ, who willingly got up on the "altar" of the cross, and died for our sins.

But that's not the best part of the picture. The best part of this picture is the sacrifice of the *ram* instead of Isaac. The sacrifice of the ram in Isaac's place was a picture of how Christ would become the Substitute for *sinner*s. Christ died in our place, so that we might live! By the way, did you notice how Abraham answered Isaac when Isaac asked, "*Where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?*" Abraham's answer to Isaac was "*My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt-offering.*" Little did Abraham realise how prophetic his words were. God *would*, indeed, provide a Lamb for a sacrifice—2,000 years later! Jesus is "*the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.*"

God promised to bring blessing to the whole world through a Descendant of Abraham; and entwined with that promise was the image of a *lamb*—a lamb which would *die* as a substitute.

II. The judgment upon the Lamb

Let us now fast-forward 430 years from the time when God first spoke to Abraham. Over the next 430 years, Abraham and his descendants were constantly travelling and moving about. First, Abraham sojourned to the land of Canaan. Then, throughout the rest of his life, he sojourned *within* the land of Canaan. His son Isaac, and his grandson Jacob, were continuously sojourning within Canaan, as well. As the Apostle Paul put it years later, they were "*strangers and pilgrims on the earth*" (**Hebrews 11:14**).

But Canaan was not where their sojourning ended. God allowed the descendants of Abraham to sojourn *out* of the land of Canaan, and down to the land of Egypt. God allowed Jacob's son, Joseph, to be sold as a slave by his own brothers, and to be taken down to Egypt. However, there in Egypt, God turned his circumstances around. Joseph ended up becoming the governor of Egypt! He was equal in power to the Pharaoh himself. God used Joseph to save the people of Egypt, and of many surrounding countries, from starvation during a seven-year famine. His brothers, not realising that Joseph was still alive, much less that he was the governor of Egypt, came down to Egypt to buy food from the Egyptians; but they didn't recognise Joseph when they stood before him. In time, Joseph revealed his identity to his brothers; and he willingly forgave them of their sin against him. He then invited his father Jacob, and all his brothers and their families, to come down to Egypt to live. In fact, Joseph gave his family the best, most fertile land in Egypt—the land of Goshen. (By the way, Joseph is a beautiful type of Christ Himself! Just as Joseph was betrayed, and almost murdered by his own brothers, so Christ was betrayed, and *actually* murdered, by His own brethren, the Jews. Yet, not only is He still saving Jewish people from their sins, but He will one day save the *entire nation* of Israel, and will use them for His glory again, when He returns to earth!)

Now, at this point, everything seemed to be going well. The descendants of Abraham were prospering. They were honoured by the Egyptians because of their relationship to Joseph. They had the best land in Egypt. They were having kids like crazy, and their numbers were very rapidly increasing. But there was one problem. *They weren't in the land of Canaan.* They were no longer living in the land of promise. Had God forgotten His promise to give Abraham's descendants the land of Canaan? No, He had not forgotten. In fact, God had told Abraham hundreds of years earlier that his descendants would be strangers in a land that was not theirs, and that they would be afflicted by that nation. Let's look at that prophecy.

Read Genesis 15:12-21.

For about 400 years (430 years, to be exact), Abraham and his descendants sojourned within three lands—Canaan, Syria, and Egypt. In each of these lands, they were “afflicted” by the people of that land. For twenty years, Jacob was afflicted in Syria by his crafty uncle Laban and his sons. Isaac, Jacob, and his sons were often afflicted by the Canaanites, who hated and feared them. But the real affliction began in Egypt, after Joseph and his brothers had died.

Read Exodus 1:1-22.

At this point, things *looked* as though they were out of control. It *seemed* as though God's plan had been derailed. Not only were God's chosen people exiled from the land that He had promised them, but they were being cruelly oppressed by the king of Egypt. They were poor, helpless slaves. Their baby boys were being slaughtered.

Yet, the situation was *not* out of God's control. God knew exactly what He was doing; and He *did* hear the cry of His people. Already, God was setting a plan in motion. God spared one Israelite baby boy, named Moses, from being killed by the Pharaoh; and He arranged for this little boy to be brought up in the palace of the Pharaoh himself. He even arranged for this boy's mother to be *paid* to rear her own son until a certain age. In those short years when Moses was with his parents, Moses came to know the true God; and he never turned his back on God. (By the way, children *can* come to know the Lord at an early age. Moses did! We parents and grandparents should use every moment to share the Gospel with our little ones.)

Now, when Moses was 40 years old, God sent him to the land of Midian, and trained him in the school of humility until he was 80 years old. For 40 years, Moses was a shepherd of sheep. But then, God called him to be the shepherd of His people, Israel. At the base of Mount Sinai, God appeared to Moses in a burning bush and said, ***“Behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt”*** (Exodus 3:9-10).

The time had finally come for the children of Israel to be delivered. *But*, before there could be deliverance, there had to be judgment. Judgment had to come upon the land of Egypt. God had been promising this judgment for 430 years. Remember what God told Abraham? He said, ***“And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge.”*** God *always* keeps His promises! Through Moses, God sent nine horrible plagues on the land of Egypt; and each time, the Pharaoh hardened his heart, and refused to let Israel go. But when the *tenth* judgment came, the children of Israel were finally freed from their captivity.

Read Exodus 12:1-13, 29-31.

Now, think about what was happening, here. On that first Passover night, God judged the people of Egypt, and all their false gods. Egypt *had* to be judged before Israel could be freed from their bondage. But the Egyptians were not the only recipients of judgment. Not only did thousands of *Egyptians* die that night, but thousands of *innocent lambs* died. In hundreds of thousands of Jewish households that night, a lamb was slain, and its blood was shed. The lamb in each household had to have God’s *judgment* poured upon it in order that the Israelites within that house might be spared from God’s judgment.

This was the reason for the lamb. The lamb in each Israelite house received the judgment that God was pouring upon the land of Egypt, so that the people in that house might live. In the same way, God’s judgment had to be passed upon sin before *we* could be made free from sin. Fourteen hundred years after that first Passover night, God passed the judgment of our sin upon His Son Jesus, so that we might go free.

In **John 12**, Jesus foretold His death on the cross, which was coming in the very near future; but then, He made a very interesting statement. He said, ***“Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.”*** What did Jesus mean when He said that ***“now”*** was the judgment of this world? Was He saying that the whole world was just about to stand before God to be judged? Obviously not. The Judgment Day still has not happened. What *did* He mean, then? He was saying that *He* was about to take the world’s judgment upon Himself! Very soon, He would be ***“lifted up”*** on the cross; and on that cross, He would take all our vile, wicked sins upon Himself, and pay the penalty for them! God the Father poured the judgment for your sins and mine upon His own beloved Son, so that we might have eternal life.

We’ve seen the judgment upon the lamb. The Son of God came into our world to be the Lamb of God, so that He might pay the price for our sins. This brings me to our last point.

III. Salvation through the Lamb

God had made it clear that judgment was coming upon the whole land of Egypt. But the Egyptians were not the only ones who were in danger. God told Moses that in order for the *Israelites* not to have *their* firstborn killed, they had to do exactly what He commanded.

Now, if you knew that God Himself were going to pass over every house in this country, and kill the oldest child in every house, would you be interested in knowing what you had to do to keep that from happening to your family? If you had any sanity at all, you would—especially if you had already seen God pour out nine horrific judgments upon the land! The Jews had witnessed God's terrible judgments upon the land of Egypt; and they knew that God was not making an idle threat. They followed God's instructions to the letter.

What were His instructions? Well, we saw the instructions back in **Exodus 12**. God told them that on the 10th day of the month Nisan (in our month of April), every Israelite family was to set aside a lamb from the flock. It had to be a male lamb; and it had to be less than one year old. It had to be perfect and healthy, with no blemishes on its body, and with no disease. Then, on the evening of the 14th of Nisan, each family was to take that lamb, and slay it; and they were to take the blood of that lamb, and smear it on the top and two side posts of their door.

But that's not all they were to do. That evening, each Israelite family was to make a special meal, called the Passover meal. It was called "Passover" because that night, the Lord promised that He would "pass over" their houses, and would not destroy their firstborn children. When God saw the blood over their doors, He spared them from death.

That is what the Passover was all about. It was about how God delivered Israel's firstborn children from destruction. It was a night which God intended for the children of Israel to remember forever. (And they *have* remembered it. Thirty-four hundred years later, they are still celebrating Passover.) Yet, the Passover is far more than a memorial of a past event. It is a prophecy. Every part of the Passover meal pointed forward in history, and painted a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. The things that God commanded the children of Israel to do on Passover night were all pictures of how Jesus Christ would one day come down into our world so that He could become **the Lamb of God**.

Read John 1:14-29.

In order for the Israelite families to be spared from death, a perfect lamb had to sacrifice its life. A spotless lamb had to die. Its blood had to be shed, and put on their doorposts. That was the only way that the Israelites could be spared from God's judgment. In the same way, the righteous, holy, undefiled Son of God came into this world, and took on human flesh. Just as the lamb was perfect and spotless, so Jesus was holy and sinless. And just as the lamb shed its blood in order that Israel might be redeemed from destruction, so the Lamb of God shed His blood so that we might be redeemed from our sin.

Read 1 Peter 1:18-19.

Throughout His earthly ministry, Christ showed His sinlessness. On one occasion, Jesus asked the people, "*Which of you convinceth me of sin?*" *And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?*" This was a rhetorical question, of which they knew the answer. *No one* could point out any sin in Jesus, because He had none. But that didn't keep them from *trying!*

In fact, in the last five days before Christ's crucifixion, He was under the most intense scrutiny that He had been under in His whole ministry. The scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees all ganged up on Jesus, and did their best to trap Him. They vehemently asked Him question after question, in the attempt to catch Him in an untrue or inconsistent statement. They sent out spies, who pretended to be His followers, to ask Jesus tricky questions. But it was all to no avail. They could not catch Him in any false speech or wrongdoing.

Do you know what they were doing? They were inspecting the Lamb. By the way, **John 12:1 & 12** indicate that Jesus came into Jerusalem *five days* before Jesus' crucifixion on Passover evening. That just happened to be the 10th day of Nisan. This was the very day when the Passover lambs were being set aside for inspection! Coincidence? I think not! From the 10th of Nisan to the 14th of Nisan, the Lamb of God was "inspected"; and He was found to be without fault. Pontius Pilate himself admitted, "***I find no fault in him.***"

Now, let's talk about the Passover meal. (**Read Exodus 12:7-11.**) In a few weeks, we will be talking in detail about the blood of the lamb, which was to be put on the doorpost. But for now, we will focus on the *eating* of the lamb. God commanded each household to eat the lamb that they had slain: and they were to prepare it in a very specific way. First of all, they were not to boil it in water, but to *roast* it over the fire. Secondly, they were not to break any bones of the lamb as they were roasting it. Thirdly, they were to eat *all* the lamb. If any of the lamb meat were left over, they were to burn it with fire the next morning.

What does all that mean? First of all, it means that Jesus took the full judgment for our sin upon Himself. Throughout the Bible, fire is often used in symbolic ways to represent various truths; but quite often, fire is used as a picture of *God's judgment*. That is how it is being used here. The roasting of the lamb over the fire is a picture of God's judgment upon sin. Remember, *Christ* took the judgment of the sin of the world. That is why Jesus said, "***Now is the judgment of this world.***" Jesus took the world's judgment for sin upon Himself. The roasting of the lamb over the fire was a picture of how Christ would take the punishment for our sin, as He hung on the cross. Christian, aren't you glad that Christ did that for you? Aren't you glad that He was willing to take your judgment?

Now, what does it mean that no bone was to be broken? This was a prophecy, as well.

Read John 19:31-36.

When Jesus was whipped by the Roman soldiers, His flesh was brutally ripped and torn apart. The 39 lashes from the Roman cat-o'-nine tails was, of itself, enough to kill. (Many people who received this brutal lashing *did* die before they ever made it to the cross.) Jesus' body was "broken," in the sense that it was marred and destroyed. He was pierced with thorns, nails, spear, and bits of metal and bone in the cat-o'-nine tails. His bones were pulled out of joint as He hung on the cross. *Yet*, no bone in His body was broken. That is why God commanded the children of Israel not to break a bone of the Passover lamb. It was a picture of how one day Jesus Christ, the *true* Lamb of God, would die for us; yet none of His bones would be broken. This was God's way of saying, "This is my righteous Son; and though He is being afflicted right now, I *will* deliver Him." **Psalm 34:19-20** prophesied of Jesus, "***Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all. He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken.***"

Now, what about *eating* the flesh of the lamb? What does that mean? It means that you and I need to *believe on Jesus in order to receive eternal life* (a relationship with God). You see, eating the lamb is like believing on Jesus. How? Well, think about the reason you eat food. *Why* do you eat food every day? You eat food because you *believe* that you *need* that food, or else you will soon die. So it is with believing on Jesus. When you ask Jesus to forgive your sins and save you, you do it because you *believe* that you *need* Jesus in order to live eternally with God. Just as food gives physical life and nourishment to the body, so that we do not die physically, so Jesus Christ gives *spiritual* life and nourishment to all who believe on Him, so that we will not experience spiritual and eternal death, in the Lake of Fire.

Read John 6:47-64a.

The Jews who ate the lamb ate it because they believed that they *needed* that lamb in order to live. In the same way, you and I need to “eat” the Lamb of God, so that *we* may live eternally. This does not mean *actually* eating Jesus’ flesh, as the Catholic church blasphemously teaches. Jesus made it clear that He was *not* talking about physically eating His flesh. When the people were offended by Jesus’ saying, Jesus explained His meaning. He said, **“It is the spirit that quickeneth (makes alive); the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.”** To put it another way, Jesus was saying, “I’m not talking about literally eating my flesh. *That* won’t make you spiritually alive. I’m talking about believing my words, and receiving life from the Spirit of God.” Jesus started this whole part of His sermon by saying, **“He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.”** Salvation is all about *trusting* completely in Christ and His sacrifice for us.

My friend, if you have never been saved, I am here to warn you that your sins have earned you eternal death in hell. God’s Word says, **“For the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23).** But that same Scripture ends by saying, **“But the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”** Jesus took the punishment for our sin, so that we wouldn’t have to suffer the punishment of hell. You can have eternal life (a relationship with God), and one day live with Him in heaven, if you will simply believe on the Lamb of God.

In closing, let’s look again at **John 6:64. (Read John 6:64a.)** Tragically, most Jewish people still refuse to believe that Jesus is the Lamb of God. Perhaps that is why, in the modern Passover meal, the lamb has been left out almost entirely! The rabbis have added a couple foods that God did *not* command them to eat (a boiled egg, and an apple-cinnamon dessert); yet, they *do not eat the lamb*. They place the *shank bone* of a lamb on their plate; but there is no meat on it! Needless to say, they don’t put the blood of the lamb over their doorposts, either. Why not? According to the rabbis, they do not eat the lamb because there is no Temple anymore, and they therefore cannot do sacrifices. However, the real reason is that Satan is turning their minds and hearts away from the Passover lamb. Satan doesn’t want them to think about the lamb, because the lamb points to Jesus. As the Apostle Paul said in **2 Corinthians 3**, their minds are **“blinded,”** and there is a **“vail”** over their minds and hearts as they read the Old Testament. They cannot see the clear prophecies that point to Jesus.

But the Jewish people are not the only ones whose minds are blinded. *Most* people in this world are blinded to their need of the Lamb! If *you* have not been saved from your sin through the Way that God has provided, Satan wants to turn *your* heart away from the Passover Lamb, as well. He is doing everything he can to keep you thinking that you can save yourself. He wants you to end up like the rock star, Chester Bennington, who recently committed suicide. Only a couple months ago, Bennington came out with an album called

“Nobody Can Save Me.” Throughout the song, he continually cried out in despair, “So tell me it’s all right; Tell me I’m forgiven, tonight. But *nobody* can save me now.” However, by the end of the song, he concluded, “Only *I* can save me now; I’m holding up a light, chasing out the darkness inside; and I don’t wanna let you down; but only *I* can save me.” Tragically, Bennington could *not* save himself from the sins that dragged him to hell. He died without God, and without salvation, because he would not come to Jesus, that he might have life.

Conclusion: Maybe *you* are not sure whether you are on your way to heaven. If you’re not sure, I’m here to tell you that salvation is very simple. The Bible says that you must **repent** (admit to God that you are a sinner, that you deserve hell, but that you are willing to turn from sin, and make Jesus your new Master); and, you must **believe** on Jesus. You must believe that what He did for you on the cross is all you need to be saved. Stop thinking you’re good enough to get to heaven, because you are not. (**See Titus 3:5.**) If you will turn to Christ with a heart of true repentance, and believe that what He did for you is all you need, He will save you. He will wash you in the blood of the Lamb. He will “pass over” you, and spare you from wrath when you stand before Him at the judgment. Won’t you believe on Him today? And, Christian, I would ask: Are you serving the Lamb of God with all your heart and mind? That is why He saved you! Let Him have His way in your life.