

The Passover

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[0 : 00] Okay, well a few years back I went to watch Marvel's Avengers Endgame with my two boys at the cinema. And it was billed to be the grand finale of all the Marvel Avengers movies.

Although I think there's been about one movie every three or four weeks from the Marvel franchise ever since then. So just spoiler alert here, in Avengers Endgame, Tony Stark or Iron Man basically saves the world by saying that.

He's sacrificing his own life and he does it in spectacular superhero fashion which is quite a sight to behold. Don't worry if I've lost you already, I can see some meagle, you know, my eyes glaze over. But you don't need to be a movie geek to know about the Marvel movies to know that this is a recurrent theme in quite a lot of these kinds of films. Where there's a need for deliverance, it's a deliverance from some evil power or other.

And the power is going to destroy everything and then there comes the hero and through the hero's substitutionary sacrifice, he delivers everything, saves the world, everything is fine.

[1 : 12] And we love it. We love that plot line and it is a classic plot line in most of the movies we watch, at least the adventure ones anyway. Anyway, and it always has been that plot line one that we can relate to and understand.

And the reason is, it's because of our culture. Our culture has always had the sense that we need to be delivered, rescued, set free from something to something better.

Because we're all aware that there is something wrong with our world. It is not as it should be. And if we're honest enough with ourselves, we're well aware that there's something wrong with us.

We are not as we should be. Because we're confronted with brokenness, with pain, with suffering, with wrongdoing, with injustice and death on a daily basis, wherever we go.

And we want to be delivered from what spoils our world and from what spoils our lives. And we even expect that if deliverance or if freedom is going to come, then it will involve some kind of sacrifice.

[2 : 17] And it may be costly sacrifice. And so as we come to our Bible reading this afternoon from Exodus chapter 12, it is about God delivering his people through substitutionary sacrifice.

And so that's basically the point of the Passover, which is what we heard about. And it's called the Passover because the judgment of God would pass over his people.

And it's through the Passover that God redeems his people from their slavery in Egypt. That's how they find deliverance, how they find freedom. In fact, we won't get or understand the meaning of the Exodus if we don't understand the meaning of the Passover.

And you might be thinking, well, okay, fair enough. But what's this got to do with us today? Isn't that just a story of something that happened a long time ago? Well, the Passover is not just the historical account of Israel's exodus out of Egypt.

Because through the Passover, God established a pattern to help us understand how he saves people through Jesus Christ. And so what is graphically described here in Exodus chapter 12 is in effect what will help us understand what is at the heart of the Christian faith.

[3 : 38] Because the blood of the Passover lamb enables us to grasp the significance of our redemption in Jesus Christ, our Passover lamb.

Because God saves his people through the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus. And so whether you're here this afternoon and you call yourself a Christian or not, the Passover has implications for every single one of us.

And so let's look at this now. Four points this afternoon as we work through the meaning of Exodus chapter 12. So first of all, we'll look at how it happened. Happened with a slaughtered lamb.

Why it happened. To bring salvation through substitution. What it means. Jesus is our Passover lamb. And how it impacts us. Grace through faith.

So how it happened. Why it happened. What it means. And how it impacts us. First of all, how it happened. Happened with a slaughtered lamb. And we read this in verse 1 to 11.

[4 : 38] Now the Passover is connected with the plagues. Which if you were here last week, we thought about. And it's connected with the final plague. The plague of the firstborn. So God had warned Pharaoh that this was coming.

But Pharaoh wouldn't let the Israelites go. And so the stage was set for this final and worst plague of all. When the firstborn of Egypt would be wiped out.

So God was judging the Egyptians. Who had mistreated and enslaved the Israelites for over 400 years. But God was also revealing himself to be the Lord.

Because he would save his people through the Passover. Now remember the plagues. When we looked at them last week. The Israelites didn't need to do a single thing. God protected them through the plagues.

Which struck the Egyptians. But this time, notice it's different. God's people have to follow God's instructions. So that judgment would pass over them.

[5 : 42] So verse 1 and 2. The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in Egypt. This month is to be for you the first month. The first month of your year. Tell the whole community of Israel. That on the 10th day of this month.

Each man is to take a lamb for his family. One for each household. So the Passover, we're told, would be so significant. That the people had to reset their calendars.

According to the time of the Passover. It would be a new beginning for them as a nation. They would be set free from their slavery. And they would move on to a new life.

It was so significant. Perhaps a bit like the 4th of July. Which is Independence Day for our American friends. And so what happened here at the Passover that made it so significant?

Well, verse 3 and 4. The people were to take a lamb for their family. One lamb for each household. So it would be a substitute. And they had to take the lamb from the very best in the flock.

[6 : 44] Had to be a male without any defects. So it had to be a perfect, acceptable sacrifice. And they'd get the lamb on the 10th day of the month. And they'd take it into their home until the 14th day of the month.

And then they would slaughter it at twilight. And so, for 4 days, this little lamb became part of every Israelite family.

Just imagine the excitement of the children. It's like having a new pet in your house. A nice, fluffy lamb. And like all children with a new pet, I'm guessing they loved it.

They fed it. They played with it. They probably even named it. But after 4 days, the lamb had to die. And the death of the lamb would be a bloody mess.

And the children must have been asking, Daddy, why does Flossie the sheep have to die so soon? I mean, we just got him. And we love him.

[7 : 44] And it simply emphasizes the personal and costly sacrifice. The nature of the sacrifice was that this would be a hard thing to give up.

But then after the lamb had been slaughtered, its blood had to be painted on the door frames of the house. And this was a visible display that a life had been sacrificed in that home.

And so the people had to cook the meat in a specific way. It had to be roasted, not raw, or boiled in water. They had to accompany the meat in a specific way with bitter herbs and unleavened bread.

They had to dispose of the meal in a specific way by burning what was left. So no waste, no leftovers. And they had to eat the meal in a specific way.

Verse 11. This is how you are to eat it. With your cloak tucked into your belt, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. Eat it in haste. It is the Lord's Passover.

[8 : 44] Passover. Now this was to emphasize the urgency of the exodus and the speed with which the Israelites would leave Egypt. And everything had to be done exactly as God instructed.

So only if they followed the instructions and applied the blood of the lamb to their door frames would the people be spared God's judgment. It was God's way of redeeming Israel and bringing them out of Egypt.

Now this does seem bizarre to the average person today. And so we are going to think about why this happened. But before we do, we need to grasp something about God.

God does judge. But we also need to grasp the flip side of that, which is God does save. And if his judgment is to pass over us, you and me, if we are to be saved like the Israelites were saved out of Egypt, then we must listen to what God says and follow his instructions.

The only way to avoid his judgment and to be saved is to do what he commands. And so that's our first point, how it happened. It happened with a slaughtered lamb. Secondly, why it happened to bring salvation through substitution.

[10:09] God would accomplish his salvation, the salvation of his people, through the substitutionary sacrifice of this lamb, the Passover lamb. So verse 12 and 13, we read, On that same night I will pass through Egypt, strike down every firstborn of both people and animals, and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt.

I am the Lord. The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt.

So this final plague, God would use to redeem his people from their slavery and bring them out of Egypt.

It would also be how God would judge the false gods of Egypt, which were worthless. So God's judgment would fall on the firstborn, both people and animals.

And any firstborn back then would be the hope and the future for the family and for the nation. But not even Israel would escape God's judgment.

[11:19] Did you see that? Their firstborn could only be saved by the blood of the lamb on the door frames. And only then would God pass over that house, preventing the death of anyone inside.

And what God was doing was so significant that the Passover meal, the Passover festival, had to be celebrated every single year. And that's why the Israelites received these instructions in verse 14 to 20.

They were told how it should happen. And then we're told how it took place. Verse 22 and 23. Take a bunch of hyssop, dip it into the blood in the basin and put some of the blood on the top and on both sides of the door frame.

None of you shall go out of the door of your house until morning. When the Lord goes through the land to strike down the Egyptians, he will see the blood on the top and sides of the door frame and will pass over that doorway.

And he will not permit the destroyer to enter your houses and strike you down. So on that night, God visited every home in Egypt.

[12:29] Egyptians and Israelites, the destroyer, as he's called, unleashed divine justice and death as he went through the land. All were under the judgment of God.

And so the Israelites couldn't think that their race would save them. God would only pass over them if there was blood on the door frames.

Of their houses. Because that was a sign that a lamb had been sacrificed in place of the firstborn. And that was the only way to be safe on that night.

And so for future generations of Israelites, fathers of families would explain why the lamb had to die. It was so the household could be saved.

So look at verse 24. Obey these instructions as a lasting ordinance for you and your descendants. When you enter the land that the Lord will give you as he promised, observe this ceremony.

[13:30] And when your children ask you, what does this ceremony mean to you? Then tell them. It is the Passover sacrifice to the Lord who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and spared our homes when he struck down the Egyptians.

And the people bowed down and worshipped. So on that first Passover, can you imagine how the Israelites must have huddled together in their homes, waiting for judgment to pass over them? Because on that night, death came to every single household in Egypt. Either a dead lamb or a dead firstborn son. It was one or the other.

And that's why the Passover lamb was the substitute for the child. Verse 29 tells us, What a terrible night in Egypt.

As the future head of every family, the strength and power of the nation was wiped out, struck down in one fell swoop.

[15:01] Tiny babies dying in their cots. But also little boys dying in their beds. And also strong teenage lads killed on the spot.

And meanwhile, amidst the screams of death, the Israelites were safe and sheltered under the blood of the lamb on their door frames. And so there would have been no doubt in the minds of the Israelites that God had brought about their salvation instead of judgment through the substitution of the lamb in the place of the firstborn.

So mothers must have looked at their tiny babies sleeping in their arms. Fathers looking at their wee boys lying in their beds safe.

And firstborn sons who were old enough to understand must have sat around the table, aware, fully aware that they were only there and alive and well because the lamb had died in their place.

Families were surely humbled at the mercy of God because death had literally passed over them. It was a night never to be forgotten.

[16:21] And that's why they had to commemorate the Passover every year to remember what God had done for them on that night. And so they were to instruct their children how the Lord had spared them and yet he had struck down the Egyptians.

The Passover was this graphic reminder of God's redemption. Because the rest of Exodus chapter 12 tells us how God delivered the Israelites out of their slavery in Egypt.

The death of the firstborn was so devastating that Pharaoh finally let the Israelites go. And so we read verse 40 to 42.

Now the length of time the Israelite people lived in Egypt was 430 years. At the end of the 430 years to the very day all the Lord's divisions left Egypt. Because the Lord kept vigil that night to bring them out of Egypt.

On this night all the Israelites are to keep vigil to honour the Lord for the generations to come. So what is all this telling us? Well it's telling us that Israel's Exodus was accomplished through the blood of the lamb.

[17:33] Through the substitutionary sacrifice of the lamb in place of the firstborn. God saved his people through substitutionary sacrifice.

And so the Passover signifies the redemption of Israel, God's firstborn son, from death. And that's why the Passover is a paradigm, a pattern, a sign of a greater act of redemption to come.

And we'll look at that now. So first, how it happened with a slaughtered lamb. Second, why it happened to bring salvation through substitution. And third, what it means.

It means that Jesus is our Passover lamb. The Passover, all of this, is preparing us for Jesus.

Because the Passover lamb and every subsequent Passover lamb throughout history was pointing to Jesus Christ.

And so the pattern of God was to bring salvation through the substitutionary sacrifice of a lamb.

That's my phone on Siri for some reason.

[18:44] Anyway, what we can do is we can trace the substitutionary sacrifice of God all the way through the Old Testament and into the new to see God's pattern, God's paradigm, God's sign of saving people is through substitutionary sacrifice.

There's a trajectory of lambs all the way through the Old Testament that leads us to Jesus, the Passover lamb. And I'm grateful to Philip Ryken for how he brings this out in his commentary on Exodus.

So just think of this. Genesis chapter 22. Remember the story of Abraham? Abraham offered the ram that God provided as a sacrifice in place of his son.

So that is one lamb for one person. Then we move on to Exodus chapter 12 here. Here at the Passover, one lamb is sacrificed for one family.

So one lamb for one family. Then we move on to Leviticus chapter 16 on the day of atonement. One animal atoned for the sins of all Israel.

[19:53] So one lamb for the whole nation. And of course, all of this anticipates the arrival of Jesus because when John the Baptist sees Jesus coming, what does he say, he says, look, the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

One lamb for the whole world. One lamb for one person. One lamb for one family. One lamb for the whole nation. And then one lamb for the whole world. So it's clear.

God was planning this all along. God sets a pattern whereby his salvation through substitution leads all the way through these lambs to the ultimate lamb, Jesus Christ and his sacrifice on the cross.

It's through his substitutionary sacrifice that we are saved. And so the whole Bible's message is if you and I, if we're ever to be acceptable to God, it's only going to be on the basis of the lamb that he

has provided to make atonement for our sins.

Because the Passover lamb and all the other lambs point to Jesus, our true and better Passover lamb. Because all the other lambs, all of these sacrifices, they could never truly atone for sin, could they?

[21 : 19] Just an animal being killed. But Jesus is the lamb of God. God's son who takes away the sin of the world.

And so we don't miss this. The Apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians chapter 5, for Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. And so the Passover at the heart of the Exodus is about the salvation of God's people, Israel and the nations through Jesus Christ.

And so Jesus is our Passover lamb. Because we all deserve God's judgment for our sin against him. But Jesus came to substitute himself in our place so that God's judgment can pass over us. And that's how we are redeemed. And that's why there are such clear parallels between what happened at the Passover in Exodus and what happened when Jesus died.

So just as the Passover was the birth of the nation of Israel, so Jesus' death gives us a new birth into the new Israel, the family of God.

[22 : 28] And just as the Passover lamb was sufficient to save everyone in the house, so the death of Jesus is sufficient to save all those who put their faith in him.

Just as the Passover lamb was required to be without defect, so Jesus had to be utterly sinless so he could die in our place.

And there's more. Remember the Passover? Passover, the blood had to be applied on the door frames with a bunch of hyssop, which is like a bushy plant. And when Jesus died on the cross, he said, I am thirsty.

And he was offered a drink on a stalk of the hyssop plant. And then at the Passover, none of the bones of the lamb were to be broken. It's an interesting detail.

But when Jesus died on the cross, not one of his bones was broken. And so it's no coincidence that the death of Jesus coincided with the celebration of the Passover.

[23 : 27] The last supper that Jesus had with his disciples was a celebration of the Passover meal, where Jesus was saying to his disciples, the Passover is all about me.

I am the Passover lamb who is about to be sacrificed. That's in essence what Jesus was saying.

And so by remembering that great deliverance of the last supper of Jesus, the Passover, Jesus was going to bring about an even greater deliverance, where his substitutionary sacrifice and shed blood would atone for the sins of his people.

And so while all these other people were sacrificing their own lambs for the Passover, the Lamb of God, God's son, was about to be sacrificed on the cross.

At the first Passover, God delivered his people from their slavery in Egypt. But at the cross, God delivered his people from their slavery to sin and its penalty of death and hell.

And so the only way the Bible is telling us for God's judgment to pass over us is if we seek shelter under the blood of Jesus Christ.

[24 : 49] And this is the message the Bible drills home constantly for us. Listen to Peter in his first letter. He says, So Jesus, our Passover lamb, was sacrificed on the cross so that we can be redeemed by his blood.

And that's why today we are celebrating the Lord's Supper. That's why we celebrate the Lord's Supper as a church, together as God's people, is to remember what Jesus has done for us in dying on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins.

And so fourthly and finally, well, how does this impact us? Well, this is a story of grace through faith. We might think it's old and it's completely alien to our lives today.

After all, blood, sacrifice, death, judgment aren't exactly the kind of subjects for polite conversation, are they? Nobody talks about these things. But what is going on here in the Exodus could not be more relevant for your life and my life right now, but also for our future and for eternity.

Because the Passover foreshadows the person and work of Jesus Christ, who is at the very center and heart of God's purposes for this world. And so all of this impacts us, whether we're aware of it or not.

[26 : 33] Because if the Lamb of God takes away the sin of the world, then we can go to the Lamb, Jesus, and have our sin taken away and avoid God's judgment.

Or we can continue in our sin and have to face God's judgment on it. We are not automatically saved.

We can't just assume we are fine as we are. We're not saved because we're a nice person. We're not saved because our good deeds outweigh our bad deeds, which is what lots of people think. What was it that saved the Israelites? Look at the very end of chapter 12, verse 50. All the Israelites did just what the Lord had commanded Moses and Aaron.

And on that very day, the Lord brought the Israelites out of Egypt by their divisions. How were they saved? They were saved because they did exactly what God commanded with the Lamb and with the blood.

[27 : 38] So by his grace, God has provided Jesus, our Passover Lamb, as a sacrifice. And Jesus, who in obedience to his Father and out of his amazing love for us, took the full force of God's wrath against sinful humanity as he died on the cross so that we could be passed over.

Apparently, there was a forest fire in Yellowstone National Park in the USA some years ago. And so the forest rangers began the trek up the mountain to assess the damage.

And the story is told of how one ranger find a dead bird at the base of a tree. And nothing was left except this carbonized, petrified shell just covered in ashes.

And so the ranger gently pushed the bird away with a stick. And then three tiny chicks scurried out, alive and well. from underneath their mother's wings.

And it was thought that the mother, aware of the impending disaster, had gathered her young under her wings to protect them. I guess she could have flown off to safety.

[28 : 53] But instead, she had been willing to die so that those under her cover could live. Jesus, through his substitutionary sacrifice, was willing to die on the cross in our place so we could live.

That's why Jesus is our only hope in life and death. At the first Passover, the Israelites, as an act of faith, had to trust in the blood in order to be saved.

And it's no different today. God's judgment will only pass over those who are trusting in the blood of Jesus shed at the cross for their sin. The Israelites were saved by grace through faith.

And so are we. Christianity tells us that we are sinners who are only saved by grace through faith in Jesus. And so the question is, as we conclude, do you have faith in Jesus and in what he has done?

Not do you go to church, not are you a nice person, not do you do good deeds, but do you trust in the death of Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins?

[30 : 06] Because only when we do do we have something to celebrate. And we'll do that now in the Lord's Supper. It is a joyful reminder for us, for those who know the weight and burden of their sins being lifted off them, covered, forgiven by the blood of Jesus.

And so let's celebrate the Lord's Supper together. And let's go and proclaim his death until he comes again.