

Good Friday 2020

*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.
(Exodus 12:13 ESV)*

*At midnight the LORD struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt,
from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who was in the
dungeon, and all the firstborn of the livestock.
(Exodus 12:29 ESV)*

*For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.
(1 Corinthians 5:7 ESV)*

Christ, Our Passover Lamb

Good Friday

April 10th, 2020

Exodus 11 and 12

Rev. Paul Carter

Introduction:

Good morning church. I'd love for you to open your Bibles now to Exodus chapters 11 and 12. During the Daniel series we talked about how sometimes events in the bible are CONFLATED – that is they are brought together so as to mutually interpret one another. We talked how in the old days you used to make a telescope by rolling up a couple of magnifying glasses inside a stiff piece of leather. By looking through multiple lenses properly aligned you were able to see things in much greater depth and clarity.

That's a perfect analogy for how your Bible is put together.

There are multiple Old Testament LENSES through which we are encouraged to contemplate the life, death and resurrection of Jesus – and the PASSOVER LENS is one of the most important of those. In 1 Corinthians 5:7 the Apostle Paul says:

For Christ, **our Passover lamb**, has been sacrificed. (1 Corinthians 5:7 ESV)

So here no less an authority than the Apostle Paul encourages us to CONFLATE these two events – to bring them together – to allow them to speak to one another and mutually interpret one another – so that’s what we want to do today. I want to clean off this particular Old Testament LENS so that we can better see and appreciate the glory and the wonder of the cross.

The story of the Passover itself is told inside the story of the 10th plague in the Book of Exodus. And of course that makes sense because the story of the Passover is the story of how God saved his people FROM the danger and judgment of that plague. He PASSED OVER THEM when they hid themselves under the blood of the lamb. We’ll divide the story into its two parts and then we’ll look forward through those narratives as we consider the meaning and significance of the death of Jesus Christ upon the cross.

Hear now the Word of the Lord, beginning at verse 1 of Exodus chapter 11:

The Last Plague

The LORD said to Moses, “Yet one plague more I will bring upon Pharaoh and upon Egypt. Afterward he will let you go from here. When he lets you go, he will drive you away completely. ² Speak now in the hearing of the people, that they ask, every man of his neighbor and every woman of her neighbor, for silver and gold jewelry.” ³ And the LORD gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians. Moreover, the man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh’s servants and in the sight of the people.

⁴ So Moses said, “Thus says the LORD: ‘About midnight I will go out in the midst of Egypt, ⁵ and every firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne, even to the firstborn of the slave girl who is behind the handmill, and all the firstborn of the cattle. ⁶ There shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there has never been, nor ever will be again. ⁷ But not a dog shall growl against any of the people of Israel, either man or beast, that you may know that the LORD makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel.’ ⁸ And all these your servants shall come down to me and bow down to me, saying, ‘Get out, you and all the people who follow you.’ And after that I will go out.” And he went out from Pharaoh in hot anger. ⁹ Then the LORD said to Moses, “Pharaoh will not listen to you, that my wonders may be multiplied in the land of Egypt.”

¹⁰ Moses and Aaron did all these wonders before Pharaoh, and the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let the people of Israel go out of his land. (Exodus 11:1–10 ESV)

Now I mentioned that the story of the Passover meal is told inside the story of the 10th plague, so let's just finish out this story line by skipping forward to chapter 12:29-32 – there we see the narrative of the 10th plague, as it actually happened. The text says:

At midnight the LORD struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of the livestock. ³⁰ And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he and all his servants and all the Egyptians. And there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was not a house where someone was not dead. ³¹ Then he summoned Moses and Aaron by night and said, “Up, go out from among my people, both you and the people of Israel; and go, serve the LORD, as you have said. ³² Take your flocks and your herds, as you have said, and be gone, and bless me also!” (Exodus 12:29–32 ESV)

So that's what was happening outside while Israel celebrated the Passover meal. While they were inside eating this meal in their travelling clothes – standing around the table – they were hearing the shrieks and screams of their neighbours as they discovered sons and husbands who were no longer breathing.

Let's read that story now – the story of the Passover meal – beginning at verse 1 of chapter 12.

The Passover Meal

The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, ²“This month shall be for you the beginning of months. It shall be the first month of the year for you. ³Tell 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. ⁴And 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. ⁵Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male a year old. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats, ⁶and 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. ⁸They shall eat the flesh that night, roasted on the fire; with unleavened bread and bitter herbs they shall eat it. ⁹Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted, its head with its legs and its inner parts. ¹⁰And you shall let none of it remain until the morning; anything that remains until the morning you shall burn. ¹¹In 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. ¹²For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the LORD. ¹³The 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. (Exodus 12:1–13 ESV)

Now, just for the sake of time, let’s skip down to verses 21 to 28 for the conclusion of the story:

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. ²²Take 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. ²³For 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. ²⁴You shall observe this rite as a statute for you and for your sons forever. ²⁵And when you come to the land that the LORD will give you, as he has promised, you shall keep this service. ²⁶And when your children say to you, ‘What do you mean by this service?’ ²⁷you 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.

²⁸Then the people of Israel went and did so; as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron, so they did. (Exodus 12:21–28 ESV)

So that’s the STORY or the STORIES through which we are to consider the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. As the Apostle Paul said:

Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. (1 Corinthians 5:7 ESV)

So what does that mean?

The Death Of Christ

Well let's talk first about the Last Supper. Jesus brought these events together – before the Apostle Paul ever did. In fact, Paul only did it because Jesus had already done it. Jesus intentional SCRIPTED OUT his own death so as to PRESENT IT within the FRAME and CONTEXT of the Jewish Passover.

And by the way, I hope that phrase doesn't bother you. The Bible IS clear that Jesus SCRIPTED OUT his own death. His death was not an accident and at no point in the story did he lose control. He said that himself. He said:

“I lay down my life that I may take it up again. ¹⁸ No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.” (John 10:17–18 ESV)

So Jesus said – I have been commanded by my Father to die in a particular way. My life will not be TAKEN FROM ME – rather I will LAY IT DOWN OF MY OWN ACCORD. I am planning this. I am executing this. This is being done WHEN and HOW I have designed.

So Jesus DESIGNED for his death to occur during the celebration of Passover.

It could have happened earlier. The Jewish leaders had wanted to kill Jesus for a while – all the way back in Mark 3 the Bible says:

The Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him. (Mark 3:6 ESV)

So pretty much from the beginning of the Gospels – the Jewish leaders had wanted to kill Jesus – and yet Jesus had decided that he would die at Passover.

So let's look at that. Flip forward in your Bibles to Luke 22:7. My Bible actually gives this section the title “The Passover With The Disciples” – and then at verse 14 the title changes to

“The Institution of the Lord’s Supper”. So the ESV Bible publishers are wanting to make sure that we make this connection and see this transition.

And it is important that you see both – the connection and the transition.

To be clear - The Lord’s Supper is NOT a Christian Passover – any more than the Lord’s Day is a Christian Sabbath. You can’t pour new wine into old wineskins. And yet, it can’t be denied that this NEW INSTITUTION borrows heavily from the themes and imagery of the now fulfilled Jewish Passover. So it’s both/and here. There is a connection and there is a transition.

The Lord’s Supper is instituted during a Passover meal – and so we want to notice what elements Jesus picks up and carries forward – and we want to notice what he leaves behind.

So what do we see?

Look at verse 7:

Then came the day of Unleavened Bread, on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. (Luke 22:7 ESV)

So the focus in the Gospels is clearly on the PASSOVER LAMB. A connection is being made between the LAMBS who were being slain – and THE LAMB who was slain for the sins of the world. That’s the MAIN CONNECTION being foregrounded in this story.

Now look at verses 14-15. The text says:

And when the hour came, he reclined at table, and **the apostles with him.**¹⁵ And he said to them, “**I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you** before I suffer. (Luke 22:14–15 ESV)

This is a detail we often overlook but if you recall, according to Exodus 12:3 the Passover was originally eaten in household units. Exodus 12:3 says:

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**. (Exodus 12:3 ESV)

Hebrew scholar Nahum Sarna says here:

“The original festival was a domestic celebration.”¹

So why was Jesus so eager to EAT this meal with the APOSTLES? Why was he not eating it with Mary and with James, Jude and his sisters? And the answer would seem to be that Jesus is constituting a new family. As he said already back in Mark 3:34-35:

“Here are my mother and my brothers! ³⁵ For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother.” (Mark 3:31–35 ESV)

You see, the cross of Jesus Christ CHANGES EVERYTHING – just like the Old Testament Passover changed everything. Do you remember what I’m talking about? In Exodus 12:1-2 it says:

The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, ²“This month shall be for you the beginning of months. It shall be the first month of the year for you.” (Exodus 12:1–2 ESV)

This Passover was so significant that it LITERALLY RESET THE CLOCK and it LITERALLY GAVE BIRTH TO A NATION – and so it is here. When you come to the CROSS OF JESUS CHRIST you are BORN AGAIN – the calendar of your life flips and you are NEW CREATION. Good Friday is DAY ONE of your eternal life. It resets your calendar – and it redraws the lines of your most intimate associations.

That’s why the Apostle Paul referred to the church as:

“the household of faith.” (Galatians 6:10 ESV)

¹ Nahum Sarna, *Exodus* in The JPS Torah Commentary, (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1991), 54.

Are you seeing that?

a lamb for a household. (Exodus 12:3 ESV)

That is EXACTLY the symbolism that is being picked up here.

Skip forward now to verse 19.

And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” (Luke 22:19 ESV)

So the bread functions actually to point people toward the BODY of JESUS CHRIST – the LAMB who was sacrificed. We see the same thing with the cup – people are always asking, which cup was it? There were 4 cups of wine at the Passover and each one had slightly different symbolism associated with it – so which cup was it? And we don’t know because the Bible says because that isn’t the point that is being made. Jesus uses the cup – the same way he used the bread – to point back to the main symbol which was his body – in this case, his body that would be slain. Look at Luke 22 verse 20. The Bible says:

And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood. (Luke 22:20 ESV)

So the emphasis again is on the body of Jesus Christ – and specifically the body that bled - the body that was slain for the sins of the world. It is through the sacrifice of his body and it is by means of the blood that he shed that we may escape the coming judgment and be incorporated into the family of God.

Hallelujah!

Let’s move forward now in the narrative and look at the account of Christ’s death upon the cross. Turn in your Bibles to John 19:28-37. John records the death of Jesus this way:

After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), “I thirst.”²⁹ A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth.³⁰ When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, “It is finished,” and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.³¹ 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.”**³⁷ And again another Scripture says, “They will look on him whom they have pierced.” (John 19:28–37 ESV)

As we’ve already said – Jesus ORCHESTRATED HIS DEATH so as to fulfil the Scriptures. John makes note of several biblical themes that come to their conclusion in the moment of Christ’s death upon the cross. In verse 28 Jesus says – I thirst and John says that he did this IN ORDER TO FULFILL the Scripture. He set in motion a chain of events that would Psalm 69:21 – a Psalm in which David lamented how he was MOCKED and VILLIFIED for investing so heavily in the building of the temple in Jerusalem. Nobody understood how important this project was – no one understood how WORTHY this project was – but I knew, David says. I knew that NO PRICE was too high if it meant that people could have access to Almighty God.”

And here in his final seconds of life on earth – Jesus steps into that story and says: “No one understood the price that would have to be paid for people to have access to God. But I knew. And like my father David – I will pay this price even while suffering the mockery and abuse of those for whom it is paid.”

But that wasn’t the only Scripture that provided context for this climactic moment in the life of Jesus – John provides two others. Look at verse 36. John comments on the fact that the soldiers did not break Jesus’ legs – because he had already given up his spirit by that point. And once again, this was no accident but was rather done intentionally so as to fulfil the Scriptures – one of which said:

“Not one of his bones will be broken.” (John 19:36 ESV)

That of course is a reference to the Passover Lamb in Exodus 12:46 which in turn was made into a prophecy about the Messiah in Psalm 34:20 which says:

“He keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken.” (Psalm 34:20 ESV)

The last Scripture that John commends to our attention is Zechariah 12:10:

“And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn.” (Zechariah 12:10 ESV)

As one weeps over a FIRST BORN – are you hearing that? That’s an echo of the Passover as well, isn’t it? That’s what the people of God were HEARING outside their DOORS while they ate the lamb whose bones had not been broken.

Are you seeing that?

John is saying here that you can look upon Jesus and weep for him or you can weep for yourselves and for your children – but one way or another friends, YOU WILL WEEP.

Because your sin will be punished – in you or in the Body of Jesus Christ upon the cross.

That’s what Paul meant when he said: For Christ, our Passover Lamb has been slain.

It is his blood that saves us from the plague of death – it is his blood that changes the world.

Thanks be to God!

Now – what are we supposed to do with that?

Conflating those stories helps us see things that we've never seen before – but the goal is not just to SEE MORE the goal is to RESPOND appropriately – so how do we do that? Let me suggest two ways.

Responding To What We Have Seen

The first one, I hope is very obvious. We need to:

1. Tell everyone we know to take shelter under the blood of the Lamb

You know it's funny, everyone on Facebook right now has that filter on their profile picture that says: STAY INSIDE.

The government has been telling us – doctors have been telling us that to SURVIVE this PLAGUE we need to SHELTER IN PLACE! We need to go inside our HOMES as FAMILIES and STAY THERE until this evil passes by.

Is there a Gospel illustration in that for us by any chance?

Brothers and sisters you don't need to have been to seminary to make a connection between the best way to survive THIS plague and the best way to survive THE PLAGUE OF DEATH AND JUDGMENT that awaits us all.

The Bible makes that connection. The Bible speaks about the people who PASS THROUGH the Final Judgment and enter into the eternal rest and enjoyment of Almighty God. The Bible describes them as “those whose names are written in the LAMB'S BOOK OF LIFE.” – Revelation 21:27.

“those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.” (Revelation 21:27 ESV)

It was the people who took refuge under the blood of the Lamb who were saved. It was the people who sheltered in houses covered in the blood of the Lamb and who did not come out. Death passed them over and they entered in.

So get your people inside, brothers and sisters – get yourself inside and stay there.

The second response that makes sense to me, given all we've seen in this story is this – we ought to:

2. Fear God and absolutely nothing and no one else

The Old Testament Passover is an absolutely terrifying story. Pastor Levi said last week that when we read the Bible and it portrays God in a particular way, we should immediately pick that up and ADD IT TO OUR MENTAL CONCEPTION OF WHO GOD IS.

Are you doing that with this story? Let me remind you of some of what we've seen so far. In Exodus 11:4 GOD SAID:

About midnight **I will go out** in the midst of Egypt,⁵ and every firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die (Exodus 11:4–5 ESV)

Then again in Exodus 12:12 GOD SAID:

I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and **I will strike** all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt **I will execute judgments**: I am the LORD. (Exodus 12:12 ESV)

Are you seeing that? Just in case you weren't ADDING THAT to your mental conception of God – he ends the statement by saying – I AM YAHWEH. This is who I AM. I am the God who passes through. I am the God who strikes. I am the God who executes judgment.

Maybe that's why Jesus said:

And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. (Matthew 10:28 ESV)

Brothers and sisters – we need to fear the Lord!

Can I just say that we've done an AWFUL JOB at this in the evangelical church in the last several generations. Douglas Stuart in his commentary on Exodus says usefully here:

“The fear of the Lord is enjoined throughout Scripture, demanding that God’s people stand always in awe of him, appreciate his supremacy and greatness, fear the consequences of disobeying his will, and not treat lightly any aspect of their covenant relationship with him, lest the consequences be severe or even fatal. Attempts on the part of some in modern times to define fearing the Lord as merely respecting him distort the biblical evidence.”²

It certainly DISTORTS the evidence we've seen in this story.

My friends, there has been an awful lot of fearing in the wrong direction over these last several weeks. I've got news for – death was invented 4 weeks ago. The death rate in Canada before COVID19 was 100%. The death rate today in Canada is 100%. All that is changing is HOW some people die – and we mustn't be callous about that, that isn't the point I am making. I am simply saying that we should LESS concerned about WHEN and HOW we die and MORE concerned with what comes next.

In the Exodus story all those who refused the grace and mercy that God provided faced judgment and death.

How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God ... For we know him who said, “Vengeance is mine; I will repay.” And again, “The Lord will judge his people.”³¹ It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (Hebrews 10:29–31 ESV)

So let's not do that. Let's hide ourselves under the blood of the Lamb. And let's invite everyone we know and love to join us. The Spirit and the Bride say COME. The Old Testament and the New Testament say come. Come unto Jesus – our Passover Lamb – and be saved. Thanks be to God, let me pray for us.

² Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus* in Volume of 2 of The New American Commentary, (Nashville: B&H Publishers, 2006), 240.