

# Maundy Thursday: Christ is the True Passover Lamb

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Date: 13 April 2017

[0:00] Amen. Amen.

And so it begins. The institution of the Lord's Supper, the betrayal of the Lord Jesus for the sake of our salvation, begins.

The church's Passover begins tonight. Now, in our liturgy come Easter Sunday, we will say this of our Lord Jesus Christ, that He is the true Paschal Lamb who was sacrificed for us and has taken away the Son of the world.

Jesus is the true Passover Lamb. And what that means is that the Passover story is our story as Christians. Think about it for a second.

We were in bondage. We cried out to God to deliver us, to save us. And what happened? Our God with a mighty hand delivered us. He came in righteous judgment that everything that held us in captivity would be destroyed.

[1:32] If He covered us with the blood of the Passover Lamb, that we might escape that judgment. Jesus, at the Last Supper, identified Himself with the Passover Lamb.

Identified Himself as the true Passover Lamb. The Lamb to which the Lamb slaughtered at the first Passover, and every Passover up to that point, pointed. We read about His body broken for us. We read about His blood shed for us. So, indeed, what we celebrate tonight is nothing less than the institution of the Church's own Passover feast.

The feast that is a sign of that Lamb slain for us, the feast that is a sign of the blood of the Lamb, covering us, sparing us from judgment.

The feast that is a sign of God's mighty judgment against anything that holds His people in bondage. And, of course, it's messy.

[2:36] It's bloody. There's betrayal. Beating. Crucifixion. Now, something of an aside here. As most of you know, I grew up in the Baptist Church, where my fellow former Baptists at.

I see you guys. Yep. If you find that I talk an awful lot about the blood of Jesus, you can probably blame my upbringing.

In some ways, I still preach like a Baptist. I can't help myself. Preach on. Now, I remember, the reason I bring this up, I remember someone once telling my Baptist grandmother that her religion was distasteful because it was a bloody religion.

Now, that person said it like it was a bad thing, but is it really? I don't think so. I hope you don't think so, because the new covenant that we remember every time we gather for worship and gather to celebrate the Eucharist was established by the blood of Jesus and the promises of the new covenant that God would forgive our iniquities, that he would remember our sin no more.

That depends on faith in the blood of Jesus. Yes, it's a bloody religion. We shouldn't be ashamed of that. So let's think for a second about our account of the instruction that Moses receives about the Passover feast.

[4:04] How does that point us forward to Christ? How does it find its fulfillment in him? And that's really what I want us to consider tonight, so let's think about that.

Now, first, let's think about the context of the first Passover. God's people, the Israelites, are in slavery in Egypt. They're held captive by the ungodly Pharaoh, who, in a candid moment, admitted that he did not know the Lord when he was asked to let God's people go.

He was someone who worshipped false gods. They were in trouble. And what happens? God hears the groanings of his people. He is filled with compassion for them.

And he is determined to save them. In Exodus chapter 6, we see God's message to his people who are in slavery.

The message given through Moses. What does God say to them? I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burden of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from your slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment.

[5 : 16] I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God. And you shall know that I am the Lord your God, who has brought you out from under the burden of the Egyptians.

He is God. He is mighty to save. He is faithful. And he will save his people from their burdens. So what happens?

He begins a series of plagues against Egypt and against their Pharaoh, who still stubbornly refuses to let God's people go. So, tonight, we read about the final play, the act of judgment that gave the forces that held God's people in bondage no choice but to release them.

Judgment from which God's people were spared, however, by the sign of the blood of the Passover lamb. Now, let's take a second and look at what happens in Exodus 12, what the people of Israel are instructed to do.

Okay, they're instructed to take a lamb without blemish and kill it at twilight. Now, the lamb without blemish, of course, we recognize as a type of our Lord Jesus, a lamb without blemish.

[6 : 36] He is a lamb without sin, as only a lamb without sin could save us from the weight of our sin. Only the sacrificial lamb without sin could offer a perfect sacrifice for sin.

So, what happens next? The people are instructed to take the blood of the lamb and put it on the doorposts and lintels of their houses. Then, they are instructed to eat the lamb and eat all of it.

The body of the lamb, the blood of the lamb, does that sound familiar to you? What does Jesus say in our gospel text for tonight?

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. Jesus is our Passover lamb.

We eat of him. We eat of the bread of life. Jesus said in John 6, I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger. Whoever believes in me shall never thirst. All that the Father gives me will come to me and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.

[7 : 48] For I have come down from heaven not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day.

For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life. I will raise him up on the last day.

We partake of his body through faith with the promise that we will not be lost, that we will have life eternal. Why? Because this is the will of the Father who is determined to save us.

What else does Jesus say? Likewise, the cup after they had eaten, saying, this cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood. Through faith in his blood we receive the benefits of the new covenant that was established by his blood.

God forgives our iniquities and remembers our sin no more. So back to Exodus. The lamb is to be eaten, the doorposts and lintels are covered in blood.

[9 : 04] What happens next? We see that in verse 12. For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night. 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. So, we see God is coming. He is coming in righteous judgment, coming to crush the forces that are holding his people in bondage.

Whether they be earthly forces like Egypt and its pharaoh, or the spiritual forces of darkness that are represented by the false gods of Egypt.

He is coming to strike the firstborn of Egypt and coming to show the false gods of Egypt for what they really are. The question then arises, so if he is going to strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, how will God's people, how will the Israelites, how will their firstborn escape the judgment that is coming?

We see the answer in verse 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.

[10 : 27] No plague will befall you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt. The answer is found in the blood of the Lamb.

The dwellings of God's people are covered in the blood and when God comes in judgment, he sees the blood and he passes over the ones who have that covering. So in verses 12 and 13, we see two

ways in which God is saving his people Israel.

First, he comes in judgment against the forces that keep them captive, the forces that stand in their way, the forces that keep them in slavery. And then, secondly, we see that his judgment passes over them when he sees the blood of the Lamb.

they are saved both from their enemies and saved from judgment. And isn't that precisely what we find in Jesus?

Because his death and resurrection, even if we don't always think about them this way, are nothing short of an act of judgment and a mighty act of victory. What did Jesus do?

[11:43] He took on all the forces of evil. He took on all the false gods. He took on the devil. He took on everything that keeps God's people in slavery and stands in opposition to the righteous reign of the one true God.

He takes it all on. He took all of them on for us and he won the battle. All that keeps us in bondage is already defeated.

It's fighting a losing battle. And when he comes again in glory, that victory will be fully inaugurated and confirmed forever. Now that reality really struck me this week.

I was thinking of the murder of, at the last count, I saw 49 of our fellow Christians in Egypt as they gathered for worship on Palm Sunday. I'm assuming you saw that in the news.

the murderers who plotted these attacks and carried them out, they just don't get it.

[12:48] Their cause is already lost. The Christians that they murdered are already victorious because Jesus died and rose again. And it is only a matter of time before one way or another, their knees will bow and their tongues will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord because the crucified and risen Jesus stands in victory over their false God.

But that said, judgment is coming. How can we possibly hope to withstand it? Well, that points us to the second way in which God saved his people Israel, right?

He saved them from the judgment that was coming because the blood of the Passover lamb was the sign that marked the difference between them and everyone else in Egypt.

When God came in judgment, he saw the blood of the lamb and he passed over them. Now, aren't we in need of salvation from the judgment that is coming?

We have all sinned and all fallen short of the glory of God, haven't we? As Psalm 130 tells us, if you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?

[14:14] In the blood of the true Passover lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ is the only answer. By faith in his blood, we are covered in his blood and washed in his blood. And when the Lord comes in judgment, he will see the blood of Jesus and he will remember our sins no more.

When he sees the blood, he will pass over us. So tonight, remember, if your faith is in Jesus, the enemies of your soul are defeated and your sins are forgiven.

This is the reality, of course, that we affirm and celebrate every time we come forward to receive the Eucharist, the Passover meal of the new covenant. We are affirming that we believe these promises, that we are victorious in Jesus and that our sins are forgiven in him and that God remembers our iniquities no more.

So we eat of his flesh and we drink of his blood in our hearts by faith and our faith is increased as we are given the full assurance that Jesus, our Passover lamb, has accomplished all that we could ever need and that we belong to him.

I want to close with a reminder that the next few days, of course, will be solemn. We'll remember the betrayal of the Lord.

[15:41] We'll remember the beatings that he took for us. We'll remember his death and what will we see? We'll see the altar stripped tonight. We'll have the silence and starkness of our Good Friday liturgy tomorrow.

But in all of that, I don't want us to lose sight of hope and victory. Now, there's no, make no mistake, it's not cheap hope and cheap victory.

It is costly hope and costly victory. Its cost is the blood of the righteous Son of God. But it is certain hope and victory. Hope and victory doesn't hide from the reality of sin, doesn't hide from the powers of hell, doesn't hide from the reality of death and suffering, but looks all of those things right in the face, tramples them underfoot, and emerges triumphant.

So as we say at every Eucharist, Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed once for all upon the cross.

And that makes all the difference. Thanks be to God. In the name of the Father, of the Son, of the Holy Spirit. Amen.