

“God, yes, But Why Jesus?” (The Passover)

// Exodus 11:1–13:16 // *Rescue: The Book of Exodus* #6¹

Exodus Bumper

Announcement

Hey, well Summit family I want to update you on something real quick... If you remember, last year we announced that everything given in the month of December we would put into our 5 legacy lanes which are **international missions, domestic church planting, local outreach, growth and expansion, and leadership multiplication.**

Well, I am happy to report to you that December capped off the largest year of generosity we have ever experienced as a church. In December alone, you invested **\$9.2 million** into the mission of God. And because of this, we were able to fully fund everything we'd budgeted not just in church ministry but in those 5 areas, and because you exceeded the goal--we were able to go beyond what we'd planned and FULLY FUND a Bible translation project for two of our strategic locations -- one in South Asia and another in Southeast Asia. Get that: two Bibles exist in languages for people who have never had a Bible in their language because of your generosity. I mean, think for a minute about the Bible's value for your life. Your

¹ Sources consulted: Mike Wilkerson, *Redemption: Freed by Jesus from the Idols We Worship and the Wounds We Carry*; Tim Keller, "[The Story of the Lamb](#)," September 29, 2002, Redeemer City Church; Jen Wilkin, "A Final Sign", Session 7 of God of

generosity, Summit provided that for somebody else. So, thank you, Summit, thank you thank you for being such a generous church. And, btw, if you want to know more about our legacy lanes or how you can join the Legacy Team, where you can help shape these initiatives and speak into them and invest more directly in them, you can visit our website (summitchurch.com) or talk with your campus pastor.

Intro

OK... if you have a Bible, and I hope you do, meet me in Exodus 11. Today I want to answer the question, “God, yes, but why Jesus?”

Several people I've talked to about Jesus over the years have said something to me like this: *“OK, I get ‘believing in God’--it just makes sense that there's a God out there, someone we're accountable to, but why do Christians make such a big fuss about Jesus? I mean, there have been lots of enlightened teachers like him throughout history. Why do Christians insist that a ‘relationship with Jesus’ is a necessary part of knowing God?”*

Great question, and it brings us to Exodus 11, which recounts (arguably) the most significant event in the Old Testament.

11:1 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...** (no more begging him to let you go, he'll push you out)

4 So Moses said (to Pharaoh), “Thus says the Lord: ‘About midnight I will go out in the midst of Egypt, and every firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne,

Deliverance Bible Study, February 28, 2022, Tyler Staton and Tim Mackie, "[Interview: Exodus and Passover](#)", July 8, 2023, Bridgetown Church; Joby Martin, "[Passover: Exodus Week 3](#)", January 18, 2015, The Church of Eleven22; Josh White, "[The Forsaken God](#)", July 9, 2023, Bridgetown Church.

to the firstborn of the slave girl who is behind the handmill, and even 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.

This was the 10th and final plague--the ultimate plague. Pastor Bryan and I have shown you over the last couple of weeks that the plagues were a systematic judgment on the gods of Egypt, a 1-by-1 takedown of their most cherished gods. Well, Egyptians regarded Pharaoh as the incarnation of their prime deity--Ra, the sun god--which would make Pharaoh's first born the next incarnation of that deity. Slaying the firstborn son was the final and ultimate demonstration that Jehovah alone sits on the throne of the universe.

Now, you might say, "Well, why is God picking on the firstborn?" (How many first born sons out there? This would have been a bad night for us.) You say, "How is it fair that the firstborn sons take the fall for all of Egypt?"

Great question. So, let me say a couple of things here: **First, realize that on the one hand, the death of the Egyptian firstborn sons was a repayment of sorts.** If you recall, Pharaoh and all of Egypt had attempted a national genocide by throwing all Hebrew infant boys into the Nile River. So, this plague was a direct response to Egypt's national sin. That's true of this final plague and the first one, where the Nile turned to blood. (I mean, do you remember where they had thrown the infant Hebrew boys in order to kill them? Into the Nile. So,

God turning the Nile into blood was basically a way of him saying, "I know what you did last summer.")

But there's **another dynamic at play here** that would have made sense to them in their culture, that doesn't make as much sense to us in ours. Firstborn sons, in those days, represented the identity of the family and embodied all the family's hopes and dreams for the future. The firstborn son was like the "soul" of the family. So, God taking the firstborn was like him saying he owned the soul of each family because there was a debt that each family owed to him. And the reason that's hard for us to understand is because we here in the West have a really individualistic culture, where everybody rises and falls entirely on their own, but these people—both the Egyptians and the Israelites—were a communal, clan-oriented culture, and so a son being held responsible for the sins of the family made sense in how they saw the world. (You gotta read the Bible in the cultural situation it was written in, and God taking the life of the first born on behalf of the family would have made total sense to them.)

In fact, we see this pattern again and again in the Old Testament. Remember the story in Genesis where God told Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, his firstborn son? It's interesting that Abraham didn't object to that by saying, "But God, that's not fair." One commentator pointed out that if God had said, "Abraham, go get your wife and sacrifice her," or "go get your servant and sacrifice him," Abraham would have objected. But for God to demand the first born son made sense to Abraham because Abraham recognized that his son epitomized his very soul.²

² **Tim Keller:** "In an individualistic culture like ours, an adult's identity and sense of worth is often bound up in abilities and achievements, but in ancient times, all the hopes and dreams of a man and his family rested in the firstborn son. The call to give up the firstborn son would be analogous to a surgeon giving up the use of his hands, or of a visual artist losing the use of her eyes. Levenson argues that we can only understand God's command to Abraham against this cultural background. The Bible repeatedly states that, because of the Israelites' sinfulness, the lives of their firstborn are automatically forfeit, though they might be redeemed through regular sacrifice (Exodus 22:29, 34:20) or through service at the tabernacle among the Levites

(Numbers 3:40-41) or through a ransom payment to the tabernacle and priests (Numbers 3:46-48). When God brought judgment on Egypt for enslaving the Israelites, his ultimate punishment was taking the lives of their firstborn. Their firstborns' lives were forfeit, because of the sins of the families and the nation. Why? The firstborn son was the family. So when God told the Israelites that the firstborn's life belonged to him unless ransomed, he was saying in the most vivid way possible in those cultures that every family on earth owed a debt to eternal justice—the debt of sin." **Keller, Timothy.** Counterfeit Gods: The Empty Promises of Money, Sex, and Power, and the Only Hope that Matters (pp. 9-10). (Function). Kindle Edition.

God taking the firstborn sons of Egypt was him saying to them, “You owe a debt to me.” Egypt had sinned, and they owed their very souls to God, and that’s represented by their first born sons.

So Moses makes this announcement to Pharaoh, “This will be the final plague,” and then he leaves. And then God told Moses to tell the children of Israel this... (This was just before the plague was going to happen.) **Chapter 12, vs 3:** 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, one lamb for each household... 5 Your lamb shall be without blemish... 6 and 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... 8 They shall eat the flesh that night, roasted on the fire; with unleavened bread and bitter herbs they shall eat it....

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**. (PESACH. *Pesach* is the noun version of the Hebrew verb “pass over,” *pasach*.³)

12 For 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.

Verse 13 But The blood (that you put on your doorposts) shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will (*pasach*) pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt.

And so, vs 29 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** (or, in Hebrew you could read that as ‘something’) **was not dead**. *“There was not a single house in Egypt where someone or something was not dead: Either a lamb was dead on the table or a firstborn son was dead on the bed.*

Here’s what’s interesting: In many of the previous plagues, God had directed the plague exclusively toward the Egyptians.

- For example, in the **4th plague**, the one with the swarms of flies, Exodus 8 says the swarms of flies literally went around all the neighborhoods where the Israelites lived and only infested the Egyptian neighborhoods.⁴
- Or in the **7th plague**: the storm clouds carrying the hailstones literally went around the Jewish neighborhoods. If you’d been a weatherman back then, you would have said, “*Well, today’s an interesting forecast: If you live in a Jewish neighborhood, clear skies and sunshine. If you’re in an Egyptian neighborhood, baseball-sized hailstones. Good luck.*”
- **Same thing with the darkness in the 9th plague.**⁵
- **But with this plague**, the slaying of the firstborn, God says, “This one applies equally to everyone, and unless you put the blood of a sacrificed lamb on your doorposts, your firstborn sons will die, too.”
- Something in your house will be dead in the morning--it will either be your firstborn son or a lamb.

³ “Pasach” can also mean “defend” or “protect.”

⁴ 8:21–22

⁵ See 9:23, 26, etc.

Why? Why does this plague focus on Jew and Egyptian alike?

Because, get this: the debt of sin was not something only the Egyptians owed to God. Israelites were guilty of the same sins as the Egyptians. The Bible makes clear, you see, in Romans 3:23, that, **"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."** *All*. "All" means those born in Jewish households and those born in Egyptian households. Those born in Christian families and those born in non-Christian families. All. There's only one kind of person: sinner. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. And anyone without a substitute sacrifice to die in his place will perish under the curse of death.

I remember years ago watching an old Southern Baptist pastor named **Adrian Rogers** on Larry King Live, and Larry was pushing Pastor Rogers on his belief that all people needed to accept Jesus to go to heaven. He said, "Pastor Rogers, are you really saying that good Muslims and Jews won't go to heaven if they don't accept your Jesus?" And Adrian Rogers said, "Larry, I believe my own children won't go to heaven if they don't accept Jesus."

All have sinned and come short of the glory of God, and only the blood of a substitute sacrifice can save us.

But I know that raises a question for many people, and it goes back to our question at the very beginning, "Why Jesus?" People say, "Well, why would a blood payment make any difference to God? It makes God sound like an old Viking warlord." I once had a Muslim say to me, "What you Christians believe about God makes no sense, saying that God requires a blood sacrifice to forgive us because," he said, "if you sinned against me and you asked me for forgiveness, I wouldn't say, 'Well, OK, I'll forgive you, but only if you sacrifice your cat as an atonement for your sin.'" I said, "Well, first of all, that cat is guiltier of sin and more deserving of death than any of us, but I don't think that's the point here. But it's true--I don't require a blood sacrifice to offer forgiveness, so why would God?"

But see, you're not thinking about it in the right way. Come with me for a minute: Forgiveness always involves the absorption of a debt, right?

- A few years ago my daughter was driving my black Chevy Silverado truck and she put a \$7000 dent down the right side of it (hit a pole in a parking garage and instead of stopping, pressed the grass and crushed all 3 panels). Well, to get insurance to pay for it would ultimately cost me twice that amount. She was absolutely torn up about it but didn't have \$7000 to fix it. So, and I know some of you will judge me and tell me I should have made her pay it, but in a moment of total fatherly weakness I said, "I forgive you." When I said those words, what happened to the \$7000 damage to my truck? It didn't magically go away. I wish it had! No, in saying, "I forgive you," I agreed to absorb the cost for her mistake. And so, for the next couple of years I drove around a dented truck, and then I sold it, and when I did, the value of the truck I sold was considerably less than it would have been without the big massive dent, which means I absorbed the financial cost for her mistake. That's what forgiveness is, you absorb the cost for someone else's sin.

You say, "Well, ok, I guess that's true in the case of a mistake with financial ramification, but a lot of sins don't have financial ramifications, so the analogy breaks down." Like, say someone treats me rudely. Or, say that you get jealous of me and start slandering me and really hurt my reputation in the eyes of others. And I'm really angry about it, because you really shamed me and caused me problems, but then you come and say you're sorry and I decide to forgive you. In forgiving you, I am saying, "I'm not going to punish you or pay you back for what you did. I'm not going to take vengeance on you or seek retaliation: I'm not going to go out and ruin your reputation. I'm not gonna create a fake Twitter account and talk about you the way you did about me. I may or may not be thinking about a real situation. I'm not even going to stay mad at you for the

hurt you caused me. I am going to absorb the consequences of your sin.”

Forgiveness always involves the absorption of a debt. The sacrifice of a lamb pictures how God would himself absorb the cost for our sin--but, catch this, **that only makes sense if God himself is somehow pictured in the lamb**--otherwise, killing a lamb in our place is random and cruel.

When **Jehovah’s Witnesses** or **Mormons** say to me that Jesus and God are two separate beings, and that God created Jesus, I say, “Well, that makes God cruel, because it means God punished someone random and innocent for my sin. BUT... Jesus and God are not different; they are the same; so salvation is God himself absorbing the penalty for my sin--just like I DO when I forgive somebody. The cross is the ultimate picture of forgiveness, because it is God absorbing the consequences of our sin instead of pouring them out on us.”

This, in many ways, is the whole point of the Bible. God himself absorbed the wrath and penalty for our sin. You see, this Passover feast is going to be followed by an elaborate sacrificial system centered around a lamb. Moses will instruct them to set up a tabernacle, the centerpiece of which will be an altar on which each family each year will offer a sacrificial PESACH lamb.

And behind that altar of sacrifice will be the Holy of Holies, which will house the **Ark of the Covenant (PIC)**, the locus of God’s very presence on earth. And the top of that ark will be called the **Mercy Seat**, **where, once a year**, on the Day of Atonement (‘Yom Kippur’), the High Priest will enter the Holy of Holies and sprinkle blood from the sacrifice on this Mercy Seat 7x.

⁶ There isn’t a precise way to know, but here’s how I got there. The priest “sprinkled” blood on four corners of the altar, and did this seven times—a total of 28 “sprinkles.” That could have been just a drop or two, but it just as well could have been a small pour. I’m imagining these 28

(BTW, I calculated how much blood would have been sprinkled on that Mercy Seat in the 373 years between the institution of the Temple and its destruction in 586 BC. Scholars say that each set of sprinklings would have used about a quarter gallon of blood, which would total 94 gallons of blood that had been sprinkled into that room. That Mercy Seat would have been drenched in 94 gallons of blood. Can you imagine what that looked like? You say, “Well, didn’t they ever clean it up?” No. There were super strict laws about going into the Holy of Holies; Indiana Jones would never have made it, I’ll tell you that. The high priest could only go in 1x a year, and only then to sprinkle the blood. That Mercy Seat and that room was drenched in blood. And that may seem gross to you. But see, **SIN** is a serious thing. **God’s glory** is a serious thing. **God’s authority** is a serious thing. **God’s justice** is a serious thing. We owe our very soul to God because of our disobedience.

The Temple was destroyed in 586 B.C., but then it was rebuilt in 516, and even though the Ark of the Covenant was never recovered (Indiana Jones never found it, it’s not in a warehouse in D.C. Nebuchadnezzar most likely melted it down and used it in his palace), the priests would still go into the Holy of Holies once a year and sprinkle the blood on the foundation stone where the Ark had once sat. That means when Jesus died, and the curtain barring entry into the Holy of Holies was torn open, the room it exposed—I just need you to get your mind around this—was coated with 230 gallons of blood.⁶ It wreaked of blood.

But no more. When John the Baptist saw Jesus, he said, “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world,” and, **Hebrews 7:27**, “(Jesus) has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily... since he did this once for all when he offered up himself.”)

“sprinkles” would use up a few cups of blood. As a rough estimate, I’ll say 4 cups, or 0.25 gallons. The temple was built in 959 BC and destroyed in 586 BC, a period of 373 years. So 0.25 gallons/year × 373 years = 93.25 gallons

Jesus, if you didn't know, died on PASSOVER day. He was the last Passover, and so from then on, *there is a fountain filled with blood, drawn from Immanuel's veins, and sinners plunged beneath that flood, lose all their guilty stains!*

As Jesus poured out his blood on that cross, Luke says that the veil that guarded entry into the Holy of Holies was suddenly torn in two, and that Holy of Holies drenched in 230 gallons of blood from sacrificed bulls and goats over 1000 years was rendered obsolete, because the presence of God could now be directly with us, ***in us***.

And so the dying thief rejoiced to see that fountain in his day, and there may I, though vile as he, wash all MY sins away!

Chapter 12:30, When they woke up in the morning, ***“...For there was not a house where someone was not dead.*** Friend, there's only two ways to pay for sins: either you pay for it yourself, by dying eternally and forfeiting your soul, or Jesus, the Lamb of God, pays it for you.

THIS WAS THE PASSOVER, the event through which God rescued them, and in these chapters **God outlined two rituals by which he wanted them to commemorate this event forever.**

The first one is in vs 24 of chapter 12: ***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 (Pesach) Passover, for he (pasach) 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.***

Ceremony #1: The Passover Meal

Yearly, Jews began to observe the Passover, something they do to this day.⁷ And, if you remember from the New Testament, Jesus really wanted to celebrate the Passover meal with his disciples on the night before he died. He knew he was going to die the next day, Passover, so the last thing he did with them was celebrate this meal with them. And he loaded it up with new meaning, which I'm going to show you as we go through.

Exodus 12 describes the several components involved in this meal: Vs 8...with unleavened bread and bitter herbs they shall eat it.... 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.

The unleavened bread was called matzah and it was to symbolize the fact that the Israelites had no time for their bread to rise (unleavened means “without yeast”—that's explained in vs 39). They were to eat it with their bags packed, their walking shoes on their feet, and their belts on. For us, it would be like saying, “Eat it with your jacket on and your backpack slung over your shoulder.” They are dressed like they're ready to just walk out the door.)

They dipped this matzah in bitter herbs (called **“MAROR”**) to symbolize the bitterness of their time in slavery, and they would hold it up and say, *“This bread dipped in these bitter herbs represent the bitterness of our affliction,”* and then they would break it and eat it.

BTW, scholars say the **MAROR (these bitter herbs)** is most likely what Jesus dipped the matzah in when he handed the bread to Judas, signifying to him that he was the traitor, and still in bitter slavery.

Then, after Judas left, Jesus took the **MATZAH**, held it up, broke it, but instead of saying, *“This bread represents the bitterness of our*

⁷ 12:2

affliction,” he said, “This is my body, which is broken for you, broken for your true deliverance. The bitterness of your affliction is going to pass into me.

BTW, something else interesting: sometime in the Old Testament, the Jews developed this tradition that after the Presider had broken the bread, the family would eat one half, but then the father would take the other half, called the **AFIKOMEN**, and he’d go hide it somewhere in the house. And then, at the end of the meal, the kids would go do this big game of hide and seek to see who could find the *matzah*, and when they’d found it they’d bring it back for the last part of the meal and that kid would get a prize. So, get the picture here... Jesus broke the bread, and said, “*This is my body, broken for you.*” Then they ate half of it, and half of it was hidden from sight and brought back only at the very end of the meal. I mean, how much clearer could you get? The bread of life, our afikomen, was hidden from sight, and then it was found. Even now, he’s hidden from sight, but *one day he will return in robes of light, the blazing sun will pierce the night. And I will rise among the saints. My gaze transfixed on Jesus' face,*” and we will feast on the bread of life forever.

The next element in the Passover meal, after the bread and the bitter herbs, was the...

4 CUPS:

- Traditionally, there were **4 cups** on the table for the Passover meal. They correspond to the four promises of deliverance in **Ex 6:6-7:**
 - The **first one** was called “**The cup of sanctification**” = and it corresponded to the promise in Exodus 6:7, “**I will be your God.**” As we’ve seen, God was not just rescuing Israel from something (slavery), but TO something (that’s what

“sanctified” means, set apart for something). And so they drank from this first cup of wine to show that God had set them apart for himself. (DRINK cup: *I bet you want to know, is this real wine or fake wine? Wouldn’t you like to know... Just kidding. It’s just Welch’s.*)

- The **second cup** was called the “**cup of deliverance**” = And it’s based on this phrase in Exodus 6: “**I will deliver you from slavery!**” In the Passover, God delivered them from bondage to sin and death.
- The **third cup** was called the “**cup of redemption**” = and it’s arguably the most important of the 4 cups. Again, Exodus 6. “**I will redeem you...**” (They would hold up this cup and say, “**This represents our redemption from Egypt, how God brought us out with a mighty hand.**” This was the cup Jesus held at the Last Supper, except he deviated from the script. He didn’t say, “This represents our redemption from Egypt,” he said, “This cup is the new covenant of my blood, poured out for many for the forgiveness of sin.”⁸
- The fourth cup was called the “**cup of praise/consummation**” or the **cup of “final consummation,”** and it corresponds to this phrase = “**I will take you to be my people.**”
 - o **An interesting thing about this one:** When the children of Israel celebrated the Passover during the exile, after they’d been driven into Babylon and Persia because of their disobedience, they wouldn’t drink this one, but they’d hold it up and say, “*Hopefully next year, we’ll drink this one in Jerusalem.*”
 - o On the night that Jesus celebrated this Passover with his disciples, he held this cup up and said, “**I will not drink this cup with you until we drink it together in my Father’s kingdom.**” (Matthew 26:29).⁹ When we all are gathered in the New Jerusalem, and the marriage supper of the Lamb, that’s when we’ll drink this one.

⁸ Luke 22:20

⁹ Matthew 26:29

- **Now, many traditions point to a 5th cup, called “the cup of wrath,”**¹⁰ and it was a plea for God to execute judgment on the evil nations, like Egypt. They got this idea from the statements of some of the prophets, like Isaiah 51:17, which describes God’s wrath like a toxic poison contained in a cup that he will one day pour out on the nations. But the rabbis debated whether they should include this fifth cup in the Passover, because it represented, after all, judgment on *THE NATIONS*, so why should Israel drink it? So, Jews around the time of Jesus had started to say, “*When Elijah returns—because they believed he was the prophet who would come back to them, since he hadn’t died but just been taken up to heaven—he’ll tell us who should drink the cup of wrath.*” (There was a belief that Elijah the prophet was going to return before the Messiah came, which is how this 5th cup became known as “the cup of Elijah;” something it is called to this day.) BTW, Jews leave the front door of their homes open during Passover, symbolically inviting Elijah in to take this cup and inaugurate the kingdom of God.

This was the cup, scholars say, that Jesus referred to in Gethsemane when he said, “Father, if there’s any other way, let this cup pass from me.” But the Father said, “**No, there is no other way.**” And on the cross, Jesus drank this 5th cup, the cup of God’s wrath, down to the dregs, and then he cried out with a loud voice, “It is finished,” and it was like he was slamming that cup down on the table, saying he had finished the work of the Passover, once and for all, forever.¹¹ Jesus had drunk the cup of God’s judgment so it would be empty for me.

- BTW, can you think of any greater insult to Jesus than to say there are multiple ways to God? As in, when Jesus asked the Father if

there was another way, the Father was like, “Actually, there are multiple ways to get to me, I’m like a mountain with many roads to the top. Whatever way you choose will get you there.” There was no other way, which is why Jesus took this cup.

One other element I’ll highlight, chapter 12 vs 8: “...They shall eat the flesh (of the lamb) that night, roasted on the fire.”

- **THE meat of the PESACH LAMB.** Interestingly, during the Passover Jesus held, the Gospel writers never mention any lamb that was eaten, and that’s because they recognized the true lamb was not being served on the table, he was standing at the table, presiding over the table.

Behold, John the Baptist said, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world.

God gave them one other ceremony in these chapters I want to highlight really quickly, and then we’re going to draw some conclusions... and then we’re going to celebrate Jesus’ version of the Passover together:

Ceremony #2: The offering of the firstborn

- **13:1: The Lord said to Moses,**² “Consecrate to me all the firstborn. Whatever is the first to open the womb among the people of Israel, either of man or animal, is mine.”
- God said that from this point on, every firstborn born in Israel belonged to him. That meant a couple of things:
 - First, **every firstborn animal** had to be brought to the temple and sacrificed. The firstborn of every flock belonged to God.
 - For **firstborn sons**, they didn’t physically sacrifice them, of course, But... the parents had to go to the Temple and redeem

¹⁰ Jeremiah 25:15–17; Psalm 69:24

¹¹ Ray Vander Laan, “The Path to the Cross: The Fifth Cup—Our Way of Hope,” video produced by The Image Group, in association with Grooters Productions. *A Focus on the Family* production, 2010.

them with a sacrifice. You see this all through the Old Testament. Hannah does this. Mary and Joseph did it with Jesus.

And so, with these two ceremonies, we establish the melody line of salvation, a melody line Jesus plays to perfection when he emerges onto the scene in a little town called Bethlehem some 1200 years later. We look at his life, and we hear in his words and action the melody of salvation, and we say, “That’s him! That’s the tune I’ve heard played all throughout these Hebrew Scriptures.”

Jesus was God’s firstborn Son, who would redeem our souls from the debt we owed to God. He was the Lamb whose blood would be applied to the doorposts of our hearts so that we could escape the looming curse of death. His blood was the blood sprinkled on the Mercy Seat in heaven one time so that we could be clean. His body was broken like bread to absorb the affliction of our sin and restore to us the presence of God; and his blood marks the new covenant, poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

It’s always, only, ever been about Jesus. All of history and all of Scripture stands on the shores of the Jordan River with John the Baptist and proclaims, ***“BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD WHO TAKES AWAY THE SIN OF THE WORLD.”***

Earlier in this message, I quoted this verse by the Apostle Paul in the New Testament: “**For all have sinned,** Paul says—all of us, no exceptions—and (all of us) **fall short of the glory of God.”** (vs. 23)

Paul goes on to describe the work of Jesus, and if you’ll let me be pretty bold here, I’m *pretty sure he was thinking about the Passover* here, because look at the words he used! **Vs. 24.** *Now we can all be...* **They are (all) justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.**

There are **3 words in there that capture** the heart of the Passover: **Justified:** Justified means the penalty has been paid. Jesus drank the full cup of God’s wrath so that there would be not a drop left for me. That doesn’t mean that we are without sin; it means that Jesus took the penalty for that sin so I wouldn’t have to. To use the words of Martin Luther, it means I’m declared **righteous** even though I’m still a **sinner**. Believer, listen to me: If you have accepted Christ, it would be unjust for God to punish you for your sin, because the full measure of God’s wrath has already been poured out on Jesus. For God to punish you for your sin would mean that God was requiring two payments for sin, and that would be unjust.

That’s why, the Apostle John says, that when we confess our sins, God is **“...faithful and just to forgive us our sins.”** I love those words: faithful and **JUST**. Not “faithful and merciful.” God forgiving me now is not mercy, it’s justice, because Jesus already paid the debt. The debt’s been paid; the account’s been settled. John says that Jesus is now our advocate before the Father-- basically that means he’s our *lawyer*. And what I used to think that meant was Jesus would appear before the Father and he’d pull out a case file with my name on it and he’d say, “OK, Judge, we got Greear again. He’s not been doing too well. Quite terrible, actually, but, I’m going to ask that you go easy on him. Please? For my sake? Give him another chance. Give him some rope here.” And God the Father would be like, “OK... I’ll give him another chance.” But I was always afraid that at some point God would say, “Nope, that’s enough. No more chances for Greear. He’s blown through all of our mercy bandwidth here. He’s just not getting it. I’m gonna have to punish him.” But mercy is not what Jesus my Advocate pleads for. My Advocate says, “Father, you can’t punish J.D. for that sin. It would be unjust if you did, and you never do anything

unjust, because you've already punished me. There's nothing left in that cup for him." So it says God is faithful and JUST to forgive us our sins. You see, before the throne of God above, I have a strong and PERFECT plea, a great high priest whose name is love, who ever lives and pleads for me. And he pleads effectively for me because he's already drunk the full cup of God's wrath in my place.

The CUP OF WRATH is EMPTY. There's not a drop left for me. So why do you still feel guilty about your sin? Why do you say you can't forgive yourself? Why do you feel like the best days of your life are behind you, that you are disqualified, or damaged goods? Jesus put it away forever to make you new. He wants to lead you to his Promised Land of fruitfulness. Leave this captivity of Egypt behind and follow him to freedom, justified!

Here's the second word: **Redemption.** Paul says, "**through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus (vs 24):** Redemption refers to **when you buy something back.** Early on in my marriage, Veronica made me get rid of a bunch of my suits that she thought were out of style. I still thought double-breasted was cool. In fact, the **first picture I have of me at the Summit Church (PIC),** the suit I'm wearing, she made me get rid of. So, we boxed them all up and took them to GoodWill, and for most of them, it was the right call. But there was this one blazer I immediately regretted giving away. You ever have that happen? So, I went back to the GoodWill down there in South Durham, and asked if I could have it back, and they said, "No, sorry, once you drop it off, it's ours, and we don't even know where it is anymore." And I thought it was lost forever. Well, a few weeks later I was in that GoodWill and lo and behold there on the rack was my blazer: **\$7.** So I marched up to the counter and took out my credit

card and right there in the front of GoodWill I redeemed my blazer! Hallelujah! I had a holy moment right there in the GoodWill.

And then Veronica gave it away again.

To buy us back from true slavery--the slavery to sin and death that we had plunged ourselves in--it took more than \$7, it took the precious blood of the Lamb of God without blemish or spot. And once Jesus redeems us, he ain't ever taking us back to Egypt.

And that leads me to the 3rd word, in that verse: We are "...justified **freely** by his **grace** through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." (vs 24)

Grace. Grace simply means gift. That's why Paul uses the word "**freely**" with it. It wasn't cheap; no, it was extremely costly, but it was free for us. Like I learned in Sunday School growing up, **G-R-A-C-E: "God's Riches at Christ's Expense."** That's a pretty good definition.

And how do we get this grace? By **faith.** Faith is what takes the blood of Jesus' sacrifice and applies it to the doorposts of your heart. You say, "Well that's a poetic image—applying Jesus' blood to the doorposts of my heart—but what does that actually mean?" How do you get Jesus' blood applied to the doorposts of your heart?

Paul explains it this way in Romans 10:9: "**If you will confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord** (IOW, take him as your Lord) **and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead** (i.e. believe that he died for your sins and was raised for your sins), **you shall be saved.**" Not "might be," or "could be," or "if you go to church enough maybe

one day can hope to be,” but you *SHALL. BE.* saved. “For there is no difference in the Jew or the Greek, (he says, or the Jew and the Egyptian, or the one who grows up in the Christian household or one who grows up in the secular household), for the same Lord over all is rich to whoever calls upon him. For whoever calls about the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

If you call on the name of the Lord in surrender today, and ask him to apply his blood to the doorposts of your heart, he'll do it.

VAMP

There's a beautiful little phrase tucked into the story of the children of Israel leaving, **chapter 12 verse 38**: One of my favorite parts of this story, and so many people skip right over it. It says that as Israel left, “A mixed multitude also went up with them...” “A mixed multitude” means a bunch of Egyptians, too. A lot of Egyptians heard this, saw this, and believed. Anyone who applies the blood to the doorposts of their heart and surrenders to follow Jesus can be saved.

Which brings me to the **APPLICATIONS**:

1. Have you received Jesus? We started this message asking “Why Jesus?” The short answer: Because there's no way to be forgiven of your sin without him. Jesus was God taking the penalty for your sin into himself and swallowing its consequences. He said, “The anger stops with me, if you receive this.” **There was not a household where there was not one dead.** Someone has to pay for your sins. It will either be you, eternally, or Jesus in your place. Those are the only two options. Have you applied his blood to the doorposts of your heart? It's the only way to be set free from sin

and death; the only way to have your debt before God paid. Have you ever received him? Right now... Quietly bow your head right now and in your heart say to him, “Jesus, I receive you! I say yes to you saving me! Come into my heart, apply your blood to the doorposts of my life, and lead me to freedom in you.” Say it now.

- 2. Worship.** I LOVE this phrase, ch 12:28, after Moses explained this rescue operation to people, **And the people bowed their heads and worshiped.** What else can we do? We couldn't save ourselves! We couldn't have if we wanted to. So, he rescued us. And so now, we stand in awe in the presence of Jesus the Nazarene, just wondering how he could love us, sinners, condemned unclean. And now all we can say is “How Marvelous! How Wonderful! And my song will ever be! How marvelous, how wonderful, is my Savior's love for me!” So, I'll throw up my hands, and praise you again and again... singing Hallelujah... And I know it's not much, but I've nothing else fit for King—just my gratitude and my worship. **But it's why I say that in every sermon there should come a moment** when the pen goes down and the eyes and maybe the hands go up and you stop saying, “Oh my God, look at all this stuff I have to do for you...” and say instead, “Oh, my God, look at what you've done for me.” What I preach every weekend is not, “Go be better, go do something, go be more religious.” **What I preach to you is,** “Behold what GOD has done. *“Stand amazed!... How marvelous, how wonderful, and my song will ever be! How marvelous, how wonderful, is my Savior's love for me!”*”
- 3. Remember.** God gave them a ceremony they were to do forever to remember this, every year, frequently and forever. Jesus gave us his own version of this and told us to observe it until he comes again. We call it communion, or the Lord's table. Take out the

cups... (If not a believer, not for you. Jesus said you only do this if you've already applied the blood to your hearts. This is serious. Scripture talks about those who get sick and die because they eat and drink unworthily, without being right with Jesus. So, if you've never done that, please don't do this).

On the night before he died, **Jesus took the Matzah**, but instead of saying, "This is the bread of our affliction," he said, "this is the bread of MY affliction; my body, broken for you."

- You know, when I was growing up, the only thing we were supposed to think about during communion was our sin to make sure we'd confessed it so that we didn't get sick or die after communion. That made a big impression on me as a 10-year-old. And that's important and biblical. But today, I want you to think about the other meanings, too.
 - Think about the fact that they ate it with their backpacks and coats on and their walking shoes on. It was unleavened because the yeast didn't even have time to rise.
 - Maybe you should consider: Have I gotten too comfortable in Egypt? Or maybe you've forgotten the bitterness of sin. You've started to say, "You know, Egypt wasn't so bad. It's kinda nice here."
 - Maybe right now you need to say, "*Lord, you are my home. Your presence is the bread of my soul now, and I can't wait to be with you forever.*"
 - Jesus said, "Whenever you do this, think about the sacrifice I made for you, and eat it in remembrance of me."

And the cup: the third cup, **the cup of redemption**. Jesus held up this cup and said, not, "This is your delivery from Egypt," but "*This is the new covenant in my blood, poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins.*"¹² "There is no Pharaoh that can hold you captive. No power in heaven on earth; no addiction, no regret--can turn back the power of this blood. This blood is greater than that of all enslaving Pharaoh's."

And, as we drink this cup, let's remember this 4th cup, about which Jesus said, I won't drink from again until I see you in the New Jerusalem. Until then, we wait, and we say, "Even so come Lord Jesus!"

Drink it in remembrance of him.

Worship teams, you come...

¹² Luke 22:20