

Christ Expected

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[0 : 0 0] I would like to look back this evening at Exodus 12, but bearing in mind that John speaks of Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, and also words that we find in 1 Corinthians 5 where Paul says, even more specifically, for Christ, our Passover Lamb has been sacrificed. It is really looking at the aspect of expectation that the Old Testament prepared for and was expecting Jesus to come, very specifically, not just in vague messianic terms, that yes, a Saviour would come. But we have the Passover meal itself, and so much of the symbolism in that you can almost directly apply to Jesus. It is a very thrilling passage to read. I preached from it before hearing you. I have heard many sermons on it, but coming back to it, I never cease to be thrilled and excited and challenged by it, because it reminds us just of the great purpose of God and the great plan of God in preparing us for the coming of Jesus in the Old Testament. There is so much good in the Old Testament, so much that is a paradigm of salvation and of God's work, and you can just see God in it working and preparing and getting ready for the coming of Jesus in ways that we can't really, we just can't grasp how intimately God knew what Jesus would come to do, and was, even with all the clear teaching of the Old Testament, a surprise, even to the angels in the way that Jesus did come. But I think just by way of a brief introduction, a couple of things that I just want to mention, one being the reality of divine judgment and something we can never get away from, because Exodus very much is real, obviously, but the truth in it is symbolic of the reality of divine judgment, and God judges sin, God judges rebellion and God judges an attitude of pride and arrogance against Himself. That comes very clearly through in the whole teaching of the plagues that were afflicting the people of Israel, and how there was a kind of progressive judgment there that finally ended with death, the death of the firstborn. And interestingly, a judgment which God makes clear to the people of Israel is universal in its effect, and that they themselves, although different because they're the chosen people of God, the covenantal people of God, need also to be covered in the saving work of God. They need to be redeemed by God and saved by that covering of the Passover lamb and the shed blood and the blood being in the lintels. That all needs to be something they recognise and see, and that that is a picture for them, that they come under God's provision and God's safety, and that outwith of that there is no hope and there is no life.

So that's a reminder, I think just by way of introduction, it's a reminder to ourselves, I hope that we don't, but it's very easy I guess for us to drift into some kind of pride that we're better than other people, and that we don't deserve what other people deserve from God, and that somehow we are special at that level because there's something about us that's special, whereas God's making clear then and makes clear now that death is really the instinctive reality that comes to all humanity, and that our only hope is to be covered in the rescuing work of God through the Lord Jesus Christ.

And the kind of unbelief and the arrogance of Pharaoh is again symptomatic of so often the kind of arrogance and rebellion that we battle against, against God, you know, and the independence and the self-centredness and all of these exacerbated sins in the life of Pharaoh and focused in a very real way are nonetheless issues that we battle with and we struggle with in our own lives that remind us that our trust needs to be in God to cleanse us from them and to break the power of these things in our own lives.

So I think the reality of judgment against sins, a very significant introductory statement before we look at the Passover Lamb, and it remains a really important introductory statement when we're talking about Jesus and the cross.

You know, we don't want to speak about that. We don't want to speak about God's judgment. We don't want to speak about the wrath of God. These are all unpopular and unpalatable truths for humanity, particularly society in which we live, which is kind of quite an independent, quite arrogant society that's done away with all these concepts of God and no need for that.

[5 : 34] But the next one we're going to talk about the cross, we have to be people who are willing to recognise justice and judgment. And I think a good thing to do is to learn to stand in front of a mirror and learn how to speak about the judgment and justice of God in practical and in real ways that people will at least grab a handle of, not in a kind of careless way where they can throw it aside and say, well, that's just you talking about the kind of God you've got.

But where we wrestle with the issues of justice and the feelings that people know within themselves between right and wrong, and that we can point them to a God who ultimately has that ability and that right to judge between right and wrong, and to whom we must give account.

Otherwise everything begins to collapse and fall apart. So the importance of judgment is very real as we come into the Passover lamb. But also it's just the importance of what is stated here about a new beginning and how important a new beginning is in the story.

This is really, that means a great story. It's a great account and there's some wonderfully clear parallels between what happens here and kind of between the Christian life.

And this is a story about newness and about a new life. And the Passover, the Passover which was instituted here by God is very much in the context of giving and to be remembered in the terms of newness.

[7 : 02] So much so that the initial month of the Passover celebration was to become their January. It was to become their first month of the year. It was to be marked that much because it was significant.

So this month verse 2 is to be for you the first month, the first month of the year. It's a new start, a new beginning. And in verse 15 it says again, for seven days your teat bread and made without yeast.

And the first day remove the yeast from your houses. Start something fresh, because you know what it was with the yeast. The yeast was used from the bread and it was taken from a loaf of bread and it was taken out of the loaf of bread and it was stuck into the new batch because the yeast within it was enough to make the new batch rise.

And so there was this continuity, don't look at me if you're bakers and know something better than that. I'm sure that's very roughly what happened. But what happened with the reason for it being unleavened bread was because there was no yeast in it and they didn't take anything from the old loaf and put it in the new loaf to make it rise.

So it was unleavened flat bread, it was pita bread and it didn't have any yeast in it. And so that was to be symbolic of a new start. Don't take anything from the old life.

[8 : 14] There was nothing sinful or wrong about yeast in itself but of course it became synonymous with the sin, the yeast of sin. Allow the leaven of sin to come in and destroy your life.

And so we find that great newness that's spoken of here is like a starting all over again. You're coming from slavery, you're in Egypt from slavery, you're going to be free.

It's like moving from death to life. You have a new calendar and a new experience, a new experience of God and His grace and of His love in your life. And that obviously is very clearly paralleled with the Gospel and with the life of Christ.

And in 1 Corinthians 5, where I mentioned briefly at the beginning, it talks about dealing with the old stuff that you need to get rid of and it says, look, your boasting is not good.

Paul says to the church in Corinth, don't you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough? Maybe I was right. Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast, as you really are.

[9 : 21] For Christ our Passover lamb has been sacrificed, therefore let's keep the festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of, what is it? The yeast of, and it's a clearly a picture, it's an illustration, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth.

So we've got a lovely picture there of something very physical and tangible and real and foodie and becomes spiritual. So it takes the physical reality and makes spiritual truth of it and takes the whole idea of bread and then you could expand into the bread of life and Jesus and all these things.

So we find the Bible just, just layer upon layer of clear, beautiful pictures and illustrations and movements from reality into spiritual messages and truth for us.

And it's just a good introductory comment, isn't it, that in Christ that we have that same newness, that it is like a rebirth? It is, we're moving from darkness to light when we come to Christ, from death to life, from slavery to freedom, might not be as dramatic as it was physically for the Israelites from Egypt, it might not be as dramatic as some testimonies that we hear, people moving from darkness to light, but nonetheless these are all spiritual truths for us and as we appropriate God's grace in our lives, we carry on living in this newness.

So we might have been a Christian for 35 years, but the Holy Spirit may be saying to you tonight, get rid of that leaven of sin that has just become rather significant in your life, that's become rather old style, old hat, un-Christian living.

[11 : 07] Get rid of the wickedness, deal with it, start afresh again, become new again, deal with the greed and the pride, be sincere, be holy, and there's this ongoing newness, it's not just a once for all, it's not, this isn't really just talking about justification, it's talking about sanctification, it's talking about our ongoing living as well, that we're to keep on getting rid of the yeast of the old life, we're to keep on battling against these things, these things are not for us to allow in our lives, we're to have a spiritually unleavened life free from the leaven of sin as we come and apply to the living God for cleansing and for renewal.

Always a case of going back and it's great that the Passover is parallel to the Lord's Supper and the Lord's Supper is that reminder to us, often as you do this in remembrance of me, going back, remember, remember, remember, because you're prone to forget and I'm prone to forget these basic truths of getting rid of sin, you've got the battles and the realities of pride and arrogance and selfishness and greed and lust and impurity that needs to be worked out by the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

So newness is a great biblical theme that is introduced in many ways here, but also of course is the preparation for the Passover and the Passover lamb.

I just want to look at that for a minute in this chapter. Such a beautiful section just from the beginning of chapter 12 to verse 11, which just speaks about the preparation of the lamb and the preparation for the lamb.

So we see one or two things that we will then parallel to Christ because that is speaking of who Christ is and why He's come and the importance of that.

[13 : 13] 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, personally chosen.

This Passover lamb was to have been chosen by each family. It wasn't a hierarchical thing.

It wasn't just the priests that chose the lamb, it was the people that chose a lamb for their own household and it was one that was to be taken by each household.

And if there was a household that was too small, if your neighbours just had a wee old lady and an old man and maybe no children, then they were to come under your household and you were to take that and share it with your nearest neighbour having taken into account the number of people that were there.

So there's this sense of the Passover lamb being personally chosen and to be individually eaten within that family there was both corporateness and individuality which we'll look at in a moment as well.

[14 : 26] But there was a provision for all. All the people were to be provided for, all the people were to be involved, all the families were to be involved.

There's a beautiful kind of implicit covenantal theology coming through here about the families coming under the redemptive work of God here, nothing and no one was to be left out.

And this Passover lamb personally chosen was to be perfect. There was to be perfect verses five and six reminders of that.

The lamb you chose must be year old males without defect and you may take them from the sheep or the goats, take care of them till the fourteenth day of the month when all the people of the community of Israel must slaughter them at twilight.

So there was this already a symbolism of cost. It wasn't to be the runt of the flock, it wasn't to be the wee rubbishy one that was sick and ill and that, wow, I just get rid of anyway.

[15 : 39] It was to be the very best lamb that they had a one year old without defect, absolutely to look at and in every way possible without flaw and perfect.

Kind of fully grown, I'm not sure of the actual kind of realities of a one year old being fully grown in terms of lamb, but certainly by one year old it's no longer kind of skipping about in the daffodils.

It's almost a fully grown sheep by that stage. Highlanders here might question that, but that is kind of prime at that level.

And then it was taken and it was kept for four days, kept and examined, cared for and fed in the family and it was to live in the family and fed within the family for four days and from the very moment it was there it was an innocent marked out for death.

It was never going to become the pet lamb, but it was in the family and it became known in these few days as the lamb that God had said was to be set apart.

[17 : 02] So there was something very immediate about that, wasn't there? Something very real, something very costly, a great visual lesson, particularly for the children in the family when they would have seen this lamb and maybe even become remotely attached to it in that time.

But then we're told in verse six that the lamb was to be taken out and slaughtered at twilight and then the blood was to be used and the lamb was to be eaten.

So you've got this picture that is developing where clearly this year old lamb in the home which God has given directions about is a substitutionary, is doing something on behalf of somebody else.

It is teaching the people that it's life for life. Their life is going to be saved, the life of their firstborn is going to be saved because this substitutionary perfect lamb is going to be slaughtered in the place of their son.

So symbolic of the judgment that was staying upon the Egyptians but was going to be kept from them. It's saying that there is a price to be paid for justice to be won and it is to be paid and their sin is to be atoned for through this lamb, this substitutionary lamb.

[18 : 39] And the blood was to be taken and this was to be, as it were, sealing their homes. It was to be placed on the lintel, the top and on the sides of the door as a very, again very visual picture and there's much more you could say about that and everything, different things that went on with it but it was there as a symbol.

And the lamb in itself was to be roasted and was to be eaten and all of it was to be eaten with bitter herbs. It was to nourish the people, it was to prepare the people for a journey that they were going on.

So it wasn't just sacrificial, it wasn't just substitutionary, it was to be practical. It was actually to be eaten because they were then going to leave that very night, they were going to leave Egypt, they were going to leave the place that had enslaved them for these hundreds of years and they were going to leave so they were needing energy and they were needing nourishment and they were to eat it in haste.

It wasn't to be, and you've heard me say this a lot here and probably a community, you were to eat it with your lines guarded with your long gown to be tucked up into your belt so that you could run and so that you were guarded up and ready for moving it, you're staffing your hand, you're ready for action.

It wasn't a kind of celebratory feast that lasted for days when you were lying on your elbow and eating and drinking wine and things like that. It wasn't to be like that at all. It was a very practical meal at that level.

[20 : 14] And in so many different ways you can take this expectant truth and apply it to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Can't you? In so many different ways. And the Bible just gives us so much authority to do that. This is the Lamb of God. Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. John says, for Christ our Passover lamb has been sacrificed.

Not just any lamb. Just Passover, there's an amazing link of course between the Passover and the Lord's Supper and Jesus Christ just takes that Old Testament sacrament or the Old Testament work and he applies it to the New Testament sacrament of the Lord's Supper and applies it obviously to himself.

And we see the clear parallels of the expectancy of the Old Testament and how God used this Passover hundreds of years before to prepare us for the coming of Jesus and what it means that Jesus comes as the Lamb of God is that personal provision for us.

And there isn't that great link between the personal eating of the lamb and the Passover here and the taking of Jesus Christ for yourself. So it was a great thing.

[21 : 33] So it was a great thing to remember that personal element to salvation. Not just covenantal, not just general, but it's a personal taking. There's the kind of paradoxical elements of personal and community and coming together and being individual.

And a multitude that no man can number but you stand before God as an individual, no one else could stand there for you. And that personal element of what God has done, great important aspect to your own testimony.

It's not just biblical truth you're telling, it's not just the facts of the gospel, but it's what He has done for you. There's this personal element to it. There are two girls in today for lunch who have become Christians in the last year in the congregation.

Neither of them have been baptised. They're going to be baptised next month in the congregation. And both of them are willing to give and share their personal testimony at the front in church as they're baptised.

That's a great thing. It's a biblical good thing that they're courageous and bold enough to do that. And we rejoice and give thanks. That's the case. Personal testimony, this reality that Jesus is sufficient for all, but He must be efficiently taken individually by each believer.

[22 : 49] And as we take Christ, we remember and we recognise and we know that He is there not just to redeem us, but to nourish us. So He nourishes us in our Christian walk.

We recognise and see that and we recognise and also see the importance of community, just as it was important for the whole household to be part of that. We see the importance of sharing our faith in the family and the covenantal truth of that and the baptisms of our children and seeing that God works in that great way.

And of course we recognise Him as the perfect substitute, far, far more perfect than a lamb that was only examined by a family, which ultimately, obviously, wasn't perfect, perfect, perfect.

But Jesus is perfect and 1 Peter 1.19 again uses, you know, it's so good, isn't it, to just grasp what the Old Testament teaches, because it brings so much more to our New Testament verses that apply to these things at 1 Peter 1.19, we are saved, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

Same language, talking in the same way about Christ as a lamb without blemish or defect. And His precious blood has been shed for us.

[24 : 15] So there's this great perfect substitute that Jesus is, and He didn't just come for four days, just in the home for four days like this lamb.

He was among us and with us for 33 years. And very publicly in His ministry for three years, He also was marked for death.

In the same way as the Passover of the Monarch came into the house, they knew it was, it wasn't going to be the pit. It was marked for death. And so Christ from the moment that He was born was marked for death.

That is why He came. That is why He was there. And His life in many ways, in ways that probably we will never fully understand, as the whole of heaven and earth had Him under, it's microscopic, microscope.

And it's Satan himself, it sought to find some kind of chink in His perfection and break Him and send Him back to heaven, defeated and destroyed even with the temptations we recognize and see and know that under the microscope Jesus Christ was perfect and becomes in the perfect sacrifice because He does what we can't do and He lives in the way that we can't live and then He dies the death that we deserve.

[25 : 34] And then in His perfect substitute and atoning sacrifice for our sins. We see the cost, the great cost, you know, there's some way in which the Passover Lamb spoke of cost, life for a life, but only in a very small way compared with the reality of the divine life for our life.

You think your life's worthless? You think nobody cares about you? You'd love to be noticed by the world? But you've been noticed by Christ and He's paid the price, the divine life has been given for you on the cross.

There can't be any greater worth that you will ever hold than that worth and finding your identity and that identity of being Christ.

And we see and remember again, Peter speaks in 3, 318, Christ died for sins once for all, they're righteous for the unrighteous to bring us to God.

So He's righteous and as God looks down on us, we are unrighteous. We fail in the core room of God.

[26 : 44] We are in the dock and we are unrighteous, but Christ is righteous and we receive His righteousness because of what He's done. And this life of gratitude is a life that is the only answer to the grace of God so that it keeps us from grumbling about who we are and what we are in life because He is the perfect substitute for us.

And also obviously in His being slaughtered, it's rather a crude phrase to use, the Lamb was slaughtered but that is absolutely the case with Jesus Christ and Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our sins, life for life, taking the judgment that we deserve upon Himself and that reality that we are protected and saved by His shed blood, not in a kind of physical way as it was for the Old Testament, but absolutely in a spiritual way.

John, I hope I'm not stretching the parallels in the illustrations too far by talking about this, but when John says in John 10, 9, I am the gate, I am the door, whoever enters through me will be saved.

There's surely some kind of parallel there between Him being the way and that way being sealed as it were in His blood and protected by Him as our Lord and Saviour and from separation from Him and from life and from the Gospel.

So it's a really great truth and it's a really significant truth for us and there are wonderful parallels probably undoubtedly far more than we've even mentioned this evening.

[28 : 54] But I would remind you again as I've already said that we are to take this parallel of the Passover and apply it to our own lives and we're to be people who in our lives eat take of the Lord and follow the Lord and serve the Lord and we're to use the parallel of eating it in haste.

I want to finish with that parallel again. This is how you eat it, with your cloak tucked into your belt, your sandals and your feet and your staff in your hand, eat it in haste, it's the Lord's Passover.

And there's very much a sense in which that reminds us of the already and the not yet of being Christians that we are not yet at the marriage feast of the Lamb and as Christians our Christian life and our taking of Christ is to be done, how can you say it, not to be done in haste but is to be we are to live our Christian life with the urgency that is paralleled by this truth about eating the Passover meal in haste.

That is we're remembering that it is what Christ has done and the suffering he's undergone is so that we can live our lives here as believers following him and serving him and on a journey with him to the promised land.

So the people have got ate the Passover meal in haste because they were on a journey and they were on a journey to the promised land. Now, we've, there's that whole question of already being part of the kingdom and yet there's much of the kingdom that we will enjoy on that last great day and the Lord suppers very much a parallel of that as well that remember this until he comes and there's a sense in which it's to be a nourishment for the journey is to prepare us for the enemies and for the battles and for the barriers that we'll face on the way to the promised land, the giants that are there that need to be expelled before we can inherit the land and so very much our lives are to be lived as Christians with that mentality that we're strangers passing through and that we are to live our lives recognizing that Christ is there for us to nourish us, to feed us, to help us live our Christian lives.

[31 : 28] How often do we make Christ a burden that somehow we need to obey and serve as if he's a burden but he's there as a redeemer and a nourisher to feed us, to help us when we battle and struggle and to help us when it's difficult and to enliven us and give us energy for the Christian world because he knows we can't do it on our own.

It's a life of active service and often I think again in the Passover the 8th, the meet with bitter herbs, I think sometimes there's a lot of bitter herbs we need to deal with in our own lives that remind us that we need him and we continue to need him and might be the bitter herbs of past sins that we struggle with or with present failure that threatens to just kind of overwhelm us and make us give up.

Let's remind ourselves of his provision, of his forgiveness, of his grace, of his goodness and as we rise from another Sunday, today's been great to look at this passage and to look at the resurrection body this morning and I hope it inspires us to move forward and to keep going and not to give up and to serve the one who empowers and forgives and redeems and buys us back and this great work that Jesus did expected right in the very bowels of the Old Testament.

It was right there at the very core of that whole picture of the Israelites being taken from slavery into freedom. Christ we are free and if we are free we are free indeed and maybe we'll be able to live life to the full in that knowledge and find him a beautiful Savior ready to listen to us, ready to hear us, ready to wipe away our tears and to help us to live the life of faith which we recognise so often as a struggle, as power heads and pray before returning thanks and so on.

Heavenly Father we thank you for your word, we thank you for its freshness even though we may have read these chapters and looked at this truth many times before, maybe we've looked at this whole story and thought what on earth has it got to do with me, maybe we've seen it, an amazing God preparing away and gently hinting towards a Messiah who was to be a unique one, not one that ended up being the expectation of the Jewish people who looked for a very earthly and a very flesh and blood Savior but in the wrong way.

[34 : 19] Maybe we not misunderstand the nature of our incarnate Savior who was spiritual from heaven and who died, who was buried and who rose again to return to glory and to return to the Father to be the first fruits of all who will follow him and maybe we recognise ourselves in that place and maybe we have a longing and a desire for others to belong to Jesus to give us the ability to share our faith in simple ways that people today will understand and will realise and see and know is real and may you work in people's hearts and bring them from death to life, we plead for our city, we plead for our friends, we plead for this gospel that we would not just luxuriate in it for ourselves and become fat and careless about the spiritual needs of others but that we would be lean and sharp and prayerful spiritually and alive and concerned using each opportunity that we can with all our helplessness to depend on you to bring the gospel to bear in people's lives.

We remember Richard as he will shortly be leading the service, the songs of praise and we pray and ask that that would be a real blessing, we thank you for the number of people that are willing to go to that service, 30 or 40 people in that complex and pray for those who are going from here to support it and we really ask that you bless that as a short opportunity and there is not much time to share the gospel and not sure how many of them really want to hear the gospel, they love to sing the songs but may we pray and may there be a breakthrough to those that are in the evening of their days that they would find and know Jesus and find them to be a delightful and glorious saviour, we pray for that and pray for them tonight and hear us as we sing together and respond to your word and give praise to you.

Amen.