

Christ, Our Passover

Intro: We're remembering Jesus' death; and John tells us that when Jesus died on the cross something happened that was particularly noteworthy. The Jews did not want to leave the bodies of those crucified on their crosses during the Sabbath. And so they asked Pilate if they might break the legs of the victims to hasten their deaths. John tells us that when the Roman soldiers came to the thieves they broke their legs.

...but coming to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs; but one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately there came out blood and water. (John 19:33-34)

It might at first seem like an unimportant detail; but John saw in this event the fulfillment of the OT Scriptures:

For these things came to pass, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, "Not a bone of Him shall be broken. (John 19:36)

But where did the Scriptures prophecy such a thing about the Christ?

We might have expected to find that information in some prophecy in the OT concerning Jesus that describes his crucifixion. Perhaps one might think of Psalm 22 where various sufferings of the Christ were portrayed; but the prophecy is not there.

Instead the passage that John quotes seems at first an unlikely one. It comes from God's institution of the Passover in Exodus 12 where God gives specific instructions about the handling of the Pascal lamb.

It is to be eaten in a single house; you are not to bring forth any of the flesh outside of the house, nor are you to break any bone of it. (Exodus 12:46)

Was John justified in taking a verse about the Passover lamb and applying it to Jesus? Let think about it together.

Israel's Passover

Before the Exodus God instituted a special sacrifice and meal for the Jews, one that they would eat throughout their generations as a memorial of their Exodus from Egypt.

A Lamb was to be slain & eaten; and God was very specific about how that was to be done.

A perfect specimen (a male from the sheep or goats a year old)

Your lamb shall be an unblemished male a year old; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats. (Exodus 12:5)

Prepared by fire

Do not eat any of it raw or boiled at all with water, but rather roasted with fire, both its head and its legs along with its entrails. (Exodus 12:9)

One offering per family; thus not divided

On the tenth of this month they are each one to take a lamb for themselves, according to their fathers' households, a lamb for each household. (Exodus 12:3)

Offered & eaten only once

And you shall not leave any of it over until morning, but whatever is left of it until morning, you shall burn with fire. (Exodus 12:10)

Offered to save Israel from death

And the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live; 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)

Must stay in the house covered by the blood;

And you shall take a bunch of hyssop and dip it in the blood which is in the basin, and apply some of the blood that is in the basin to the lintel and the two doorposts; and none of you shall go outside the door of his house until morning. (Exodus 12:22)

Only the circumcised can have access to the sacrifice

All the congregation of Israel are to celebrate this. But if a stranger sojourns with you, and celebrates the Passover to the Lord, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near to celebrate it; and he shall be like a native of the land. But no uncircumcised person may eat of it. The same law shall apply to the native as to the stranger who sojourns among you." (Exodus 12:47-49)

Is it possible that God was giving Israel clues as to what He would do through Christ? John thought so; and suggested that Passover pointed to Jesus. The fact that Jesus' legs were not broken would be one indication of that. But is it reasonable to believe that?

Our Passover, Jesus Christ

Listen carefully to the clues and see if you hear the words that describe what Jesus did for us!

A "Lamb" slain

There are many portrayals of Jesus in the Gospels (Light, Shepherd, Bread, etc.); but one of the ones that links him to the OT is found in Jn. 1:29

*The next day he *saw Jesus coming to him, and *said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! (John 1:29)*

A perfect specimen

For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. (Hebrews 4:15)

It is no wonder that God should expect a sacrifice to be perfect; for He intended it to be a picture of His own Son.

Prepared by "fire"

Is it possible that God required that the Lamb be roasted in flames to remind us of the sufferings of the Christ?

For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings. (Hebrews 2:10)

Even the Passover lamb had to be attached to a stake; was this coincidence?

Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation, (Hebrews 5:8-9)

One offering for the whole family; thus not a bone broken

There may have been significance to the fact that the whole lamb was shared by one family in one house. That is exactly the case with Christ. By one offering he has purchased the whole family of God.

Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. (Acts 20:28)

Once offered for all

Like the Passover lamb, Jesus' sacrifice is sufficient for God's people for all time. It does not have to be repeated.

For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified. (Heb. 10:14)

To save us from death

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. (Romans 5:8-9)

Like the Passover, the blood of Jesus provides atonement or covering to save us from death.

Must stay in the house covered by blood

Just as those protected by the blood had to stay in the house, so those who are redeemed by Jesus' blood must remain a part of His body.

For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. (Ephesians 5:23)

Conclusion: *When John saw the soldiers pass by Jesus and do the unexpected, he was made to think, "Why did it happen?" And he found the answer in the Passover lamb: "not a bone shall be broken". And from that single event God was declaring that Jesus was "the lamb that takes away the sins of the world." While the Jews were themselves sacrificing their lambs for the Passover, they were on that very day fulfilling God's words in sacrificing "another lamb".*

For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. (1 Corinthians 5:7)

But how can we have access to Christ, our Passover? Again the Scriptures give us a clue. The Passover was not for foreigners but for those who entered the covenant of God through circumcision. Are we surprised then to read in the NT?

and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. (Colossians 2:11-12)