



8. Covered by the Blood (1) Exodus 11

We looked last week at the devastation wrought by the 10 plagues on the economy and society of Egypt. And the reason – God’s just judgement on the nation of Egypt for the bondage, injustice and genocide on the nation of Israel.

This evening we come to the climax of the plagues – the death of the firstborn. It was different from the other plagues. In no way could it have been termed a natural phenomena – the selective death of the first-born of people and animals (or at least those that remained after the nine others!) - it was a supernatural act caused by the Angel of Death who acted as the means of God’s judgement.

It differed in another way. The previous plagues had all avoided the Israelites – God made it that way, but this time to be protected the plague, the people had to obey God precisely as He commanded them to do. It wasn’t just protection from the Egyptians but obedience would also protect them from the Egyptians who would be a mixture of grief, anger, revenge and waning rid of Israel from their midst. As a result the people were not just protected from the wrath of God, but were freed from the bondage of Egypt.

And what was the act of obedience? It was something simple – that each family would kill one of their lambs (their livestock had escaped the plagues of course) and spread the blood on the doorposts and lintels, eat the meat and burn the carcass. There were all the other regulations that came with the passover meal which I shall get to in a minute.

Of course we know the rest – all the houses covered by that blood did not experience the plague as the angel of death passed over – all their inhabitants were safe. Why was it that the wrath of God was not poured out on Israelite houses? Because the blood showed that in that house were people that had acted in simple obedience to Him and sacrificed a lamb in accordance with His commands. The blood on the doorposts and lintels was a sign, a covering, that showed that the people had received God’s gracious provision for them and as a result they would be freed from their bondage.

We know as we read this story of the salvation of Israel, we see our own salvation in it too. Theologians and Bible Expositors see this event in history as being a type of Christ because it is in effect prophetic, pointing forward as it does to Christ.

But it’s more than that. Passover shows is some basic principles about the relationship between God and the human race which are consistent throughout scripture. What are they? Justice and wrath, Grace, Shed Blood and Freedom. We are going to explore the first three this week and look at Freedom next week.

◆ Justice & Wrath

The whole concept of an angry God is something we sometimes don’t like to think about too hard as Christians. Hearing about hell and judgement isn’t something we like to think about too hard. Many years ago preachers made great play of it. You’ll hear some Jonathan Edwards on it in a moment. It was the standard fare of evangelists and to read back old sermons from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is usually cringeworthy to the twenty first century eye.

But we should not be wishy-washy about what scripture teaches? Our God is a just God who has been sinned against and spurned by His created beings who have done things that deserve only His wrath which leads to eternal punishment. But look here in Exodus and we see the wrath of God poured out on Egypt in a terrible way and indeed on anyone who does not obey Him on Passover night. He is the God of justice and deals in anger with those who have sinned.

But there is something else about God’s justice – it’s a long-suffering justice – he does give people an opportunity to realise what they have done and deal with it before He metes it out. There is plenty

of warning but if we ignore warnings it doesn't mean that God has forgotten but that birds will come home to roost. Here's a statement about this written by Jonathan Edwards in 1741.

The wrath of God is like great waters that are dammed for the present; they increase more and more, and rise higher and higher, till an outlet is given; and the longer the stream is stopped, the more rapid and mighty is its course, when once it is let loose. It is true, that judgement against your evil works has not been executed hitherto; the floods of God's vengeance have been withheld; but your guilt in the meantime is constantly increasing, and you are every day treasuring up more wrath; the waters are constantly rising, and waxing more and more mighty; and there is nothing but the mere pleasure of God, that holds the waters back, that are unwilling to be stopped, and press hard to go forward. (Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God).

Let's understand this. Sometimes God's justice is temporal – people get their come-uppance in life but for certain, unless their sin is dealt with in life, they face the wrath of God at the final judgement.

Hebr 2:3 (NASB) For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?

◆ Grace

What's wonderful about our God is that wherever we hear about wrath, we also hear of the grace of God. God could just bring wicked men to nothing in a moment and bring them to judgement with all the eternal implications that has – but He doesn't. Why is God long-suffering? This is the reason why 2 Peter 3:9 *The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some people understand slowness, but is being patient with you. He does not want anyone to perish, but wants everyone to come to repentance.* (ISV)

The observation from the words that I would now insist upon is this. "There is nothing that keeps wicked men at any one moment out of hell, but the mere pleasure of God." By the mere pleasure of God, I mean his sovereign pleasure, his arbitrary will, restrained by no obligation, hindered by no manner of difficulty, any more than if nothing else but God's mere will had in the least degree, or in any respect whatsoever, any hand in the preservation of wicked men one moment. Jonathan Edwards (1741)

And it's only God's good grace and pleasure that people still have an opportunity to repent today. And in the tale of death and destruction we have in Exodus we see the grace of God poured out in Israel. It was a tale of grace when God made His promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It was by grace that God still used this man, this murderer Moses, to face Pharaoh. It was by grace that God rescued a people that took at least 80 years before they got around to crying out to Him! And it was by grace that God provided a way by which His wrath on Egypt didn't therefore include them. They may have been under bondage but they were no angels either – they were sinners. But by grace God showed them a way by which His wrath could be averted from them – the covering of blood.

◆ Shed Blood

Which brings us nicely to the third basic theme of the chapter and of scripture – shed blood. I've got to say here that the whole theology of shed blood in the Bible is quite broad and I'm going to only deal with a few aspects of the blood here this evening as relates to Exodus 11.

It was the death of the lamb and the brushing of the blood on the doorposts and lintels of the Israelite houses that averted the wrath of God on them. There's a few ideas here. The first is that to prevent death in their household as a result of sin, another life had to be forfeit and that was marked by the death of the lamb. It's the principle of substitution – a life for a life and the shedding of blood is a mark of that. However, it was not just the shedding of the blood that saved the Israelite families, but it was also that mark of obedience; of killing it and spreading the blood on the doorposts and lintels that saved them. They made a choice to obey God and follow His commands. By covering themselves with the blood they were saved because that blood made a statement of what they were relying upon.

Another basic principle that as we examine our own salvation we see exactly the same principle applied. For our sin to be dealt with eternally, there needed to be a substitution. We know from the letter to the Hebrews that the blood of a lamb may have been good enough to get the Israelites out of

Egypt or keep the people in Israel in fellowship with God year by year, but it needed a special lamb to be sacrificed to have eternal efficacy – and that was by the slaying of the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world – Jesus.

1 Peter 1:18-19 says:

“For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver and gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.”

And we know from the letter to the Hebrews, that the sacrifice and shedding of Jesus’ blood was once for all. It’s done, finished. But like in Exodus 11, that shed blood only becomes efficacious in the life of men and women when they take the active personal decision to cover themselves with the blood of Christ. Now I know that’s not the words we use often – but in effect when we accept Christ, when we accept that He died for our sins and ask Him to come into our lives and decide to follow Him, that’s what we are doing – we are spreading His blood on the doorposts and lintels of our lives.

1Joh 2:1 (NASB) My little children, I am writing these things to you that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; 2 and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for [those of] the whole world.

What is a propitiation? **“Propitiation is a theological term denoting that by which God is rendered propitious, i.e., that 'satisfaction' or 'appeasement' by which it becomes consistent with His character and government to pardon and bless sinners. The propitiation does not procure his love or make him loving; rather, it renders it consistent for him to exercise his love towards sinners. ... Propitiation is translated from the Greek *hilasterion*, meaning "that which expiates or propitiates" or "the gift which procures propitiation". (Wikipedia)** And how did God do that? By the shedding of the blood of Christ – by His sacrifice on the cross.

Covered by the blood – the wrath of God is averted from us – why? Because the Lamb was slain and we’ve taken that blood and spread it on our doorposts and lintels. As we look at the Passover which Jews have celebrated for millennia, we see Jesus written all over it.

It’s a pity we don’t have communion this week, because I think Communion helps us understand this passage and Passover helps us understand more fully what the shed blood of Christ is all about but in our second part next week we will revisit this.

The Jews were called to celebrate Passover once a year – it’s the pinnacle of the Jewish year. But at the Passover meal that Jesus celebrated with His disciples, he instituted another feast. Now that’s an interesting lace to institute the Lord’s supper – as Passover – bearing in mind we now know that Passover symbolises so much about Jesus. And like Passover, the death of Jesus reminds us again of His broken body and shed blood – and for the fact we are covered by the blood. But I think the Lord’s Supper takes us a step (or three) beyond Passover. It’s an “as often as you do it” feast. I know it is the practice of some to have it rarely even once a year. But the Lord’s Supper is something most Christians do frequently. That to my mind is appropriate as the Lord’s Supper celebrates a momentous moment in the whole of human history.

It isn’t just a token remembrance but a dynamic opportunity to meet with the risen Christ whose shed blood means that we don’t live any more under the wrath of God. One of the features of the New Testament is that salvation isn’t something that’s past, but it’s present and future. So when we trusted Christ we were covered by the blood. However, we know that we were saved, are being saved and one day will be saved when we go to be with Jesus. So it’s in 3 tenses and the blood covers us in all three. So we were covered – past – but we also see a present aspect – scripture.

Knowing that we are covered by the blood is important when the Accuser comes to us and points out our sin and weakness and attacks us in other ways. What can we plead in return for those accusations? Our strength, our righteousness, our authority all comes because we are covered with the blood of Christ. A key scripture about claiming the blood of Christ is here:

Reve 12:9 (NRSV) The great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world--he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. 10 Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, proclaiming, "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Messiah, for the accuser of our comrades has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God.

11 But they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they did not cling to life even in the face of death. 12 Rejoice then, you heavens and those who dwell in them! But woe to the earth and the sea, for the devil has come down to you with great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!"

So what is our reply to satan when he accuses – to plead the blood of Christ – our doorposts and lintels are painted to show our sin has been dealt with and we have been rescued from his power and lies.

Oh, how precious is this blood-red shield! My soul, cower thou down under it when the darts of hell are flying: this is the chariot, the covering whereof is of purple; let the storm come, and the deluge rise, let even the fiery hail descend, beneath that crimson pavilion my soul must rest secure, for what can touch me, when I am covered with His precious blood? Spurgeon

Covered by His precious blood. Why have a regular communion? To remind us that our righteousness, our status, our authority, our ambassadorship – anything and everything that we are in Christ are because of His shed blood. We are not objects of wrath, but people of salvation.

That's why we always do an act of confession at the table. The table is a dynamic place where we can take an opportunity to find forgiveness because of the shed blood of Christ and appropriate it afresh for ourselves. Hallelujah – we are covered by His blood and nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ!

Prayer

Matt Redman "Nothing but the blood"

Your blood speaks a better word
Than all the empty claims I've heard upon this earth
Speaks righteousness for me
And stands in my defense
Jesus it's Your blood

[Chorus]

*What can wash away our sins?
What can make us whole again?
Nothing but the blood
Nothing but the blood of Jesus
What can wash us pure as snow?
Welcomed as the friends of God
Nothing but Your blood
Nothing but Your blood King Jesus*

Your cross testifies in grace
Tells of the Father's heart to make a way for us
Now boldly we approach
Not by earthly confidence
It's only Your blood

[Chorus]

We thank You for the blood
We thank You for the blood
We praise You for the blood
We praise You for the blood
Nothing but Your blood
Nothing but Your blood King Jesus

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