
The blood of the lamb protects

Exodus 11:1, 4-7; 12:6-7, 12-13 and 21-30; 1 Peter 1:17-21

Last week Hetty focused on the actual exodus as described in chapter 14; this week we go back a step, to the final preparations for the exodus, so that this sermon coincides with our celebration of Communion. We focus on the blood of the lambs.

The nine plagues so far have not changed the mind of pharaoh. God is going to punish the Egyptians with a tenth plague, the death of the first-born, so that they release the Israelites. Is this punishment of pharaoh too harsh? We need to remember that a leader has great responsibility and takes his people to a good or a bad place. This kind of solidarity is common in the OT and we also see it around us, e.g. in India and Brazil. For some it remains a difficult point in the OT.

On the positive side, the Israelites will be safe thanks to the blood of a lamb. God will see the blood on the doors and pass over these houses. (The word 'pass over' occurs in 12:13, 23 and 27, and is the origin of our word Passover.)

The blood of a lamb protects God's people. Why is that so? We only know that this is how God decided to do things. The lamb takes our place, it dies in our place. According to the Bible, blood has the power to forgive.

No bone of the Passover lamb was to be broken (12:46); John 19:36 emphasises that none of Jesus' bones was broken. He is our perfect lamb.

To many of us this 'blood-theology' is dear and it is biblical. However, many modern minds are offended by this prerequisite of shedding blood. Let us be aware that for outsiders it's a hard idea and makes little sense! So 'cleansed by the blood of Jesus' is not an expression to use in evangelistic outreach.

You might say: 'But wait, I don't need this! I am not as bad as these Egyptians!' No, hopefully not, but you are still sinful. All humans are sinful in God's opinion. (Reflect on how you missed the mark in the past week.) 'Leading a good life' will not save you. By nature and habit we all stray from God and his holy will, we are alienated from Him.

Passover tells us: 1. We need salvation. 2. Our salvation is not our own achievement.

The Communion table brings the same message. God is 100% the author of our salvation.

You might say: 'But we are New Testament believers!' OK, after Good Friday there is no more need for shedding blood because Jesus did that once for all; we merely commemorate his death, we do not repeat it. Jesus is called the Lamb of God in 1 Peter 1:18-19 and other places. The Passover meal was thus a type, a prefiguration, of the death of Jesus. What we can keep from the OT is the celebratory character of the meal together.