

In the name of + JESUS +

There's blood all over the place this evening. Everywhere you look: blood. If you're squeamish, the Old Testament reading from Exodus probably isn't your favorite, go-to Bible story. But if you can just step by it and look more carefully, you find that there's more here than meets the eye.

They were already nine plagues in. Egypt was being hammered. Pharaoh's "no-give-in" policy was being brittle and broken, though even with the threat of a final plague, he would let his arrogance and pride rule the day.

It did. It ruled the day, but not the night. It was the night when the Lord sent throughout the entire land his "angel (*messenger*) of death." That angel was looking for blood—plenty of it—blood smeared around the entry of a house. Where there was that, the angel brought nothing to the inhabitants. Man and beast were safe. But where there was no blood—where an innocent victim had not already given its life to save the lives of those inside the house—the angel gave out what he had been sent to bring.

And there was much weeping. Much loss. Much sorrow.

It was during the countdown for this last and rescuing plague that the children of Israel were commanded by God to celebrate the Passover. Indeed, the angel of death was passing over. The liturgy for the Passover was rather straightforward: PRAY-&-EAT, but hurry up. Chew fast. Make haste...with walking sticks in hand and sandals firmly-fitted. Be ready to head out. This "eat-and-go" meal was to be repeated annually as participation in and reminder of the exodus—the rescue—that God was bringing about for His people. A memorial erected to which Israel might look to see a promise fulfilled, and within that very fulfillment, a promise to be fulfilled—a greater promise, really.

It was all a bloody rescue, to be sure. Plenty of violence. God's wrath openly exposed. Israel set up to watch upfront and personal Almighty God at war: "*On all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments; I am the Lord*" (Exodus 12:12). The Lord's idolatrous enemies were seeing His judgment in full force. Nothing held back. Firstborn slaughter. Such violence. So much blood.

Although all this blood and gore shocks our mild-mannered sensibilities, it's intent is to shake us up-an-out of our complacency: our complacency over God's Word and its place in our lives, our complacency over striving to be faithful to that Word and trusting in His promises, our complacency over obedience to the First Commandment, "*You shall have no other gods.*"

To be sure, the very word, "complacency," is rather mild-mannered. It finally means that we don't care, that we're looking the "other way" from the Word and commands of our God, that we're just not going to go out of "our way" to walk in His Way. That's what it means to "have other gods." But the Lord gets our attention—He will rub our faces into the stench of our guilt, make us see the horror of our sin and His righteous judgment. We may all want to look away—surely this doesn't concern me!

"*The soul that sins shall die,*" says the Scripture, and there was surely plenty of that going on in that first Passover. Plenty of dying. An innocent lamb slaughtered to cover the sin and guilt of those inside the house. An innocent lamb eaten, its life giving life to those who consumed it. A lamb—a Lamb without spot or blemish— at the heart of God's all-out judgment against His enemies.

It was John the Baptizer who first pointed Him out: "*Behold,*" said John, fingers still dripping wet from his river work, "*Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*" (John 1:29).

As hot-shot-great as he thought he was, the Pharaoh of Egypt was but a (puny) shadow of the greater pharaoh: the old Evil Foe. A liar and murderer from the beginning, the satanic pharaoh masked his wicked ways in terms that only spell complacency: "*Did God really say...?*" Well, of course He did; it says it right here! But...who cares...He couldn't have really "meant" that...He couldn't have really meant it "that" way!

Yet, while we are complacently chasing our other gods, the Lord is not complacent. He doesn't look the other way. He cares. He cares for us, for our life! And for our life, He will provide another Lamb, and like a lamb led to the slaughter, one without spot or blemish but one from whom people hide their faces—why is that?—has He become so marred, so beaten, so bloodied for and by our sin—mine...and yours?

"Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." This is God's Lamb, the Passover Lamb, the once-and-for-all Sacrifice for sin that brings healing and forgiveness and life.

The Lamb of God: bloodied and slaughtered: BEHOLD. Look. Don't turn aside. This is the horror, the punishment, the judgment for your sin and mine. BEHOLD. Look...but not just "look."

Also eat...and drink. This Lamb gives His very life as a ransom for you and for the world. He says, *"Take and eat, this is My body which is given for you...take and drink, this is my blood of the new testament poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins."*

The Passover Lamb of God puts Himself into you—His very life laid down for you received by you. See what goes on here. Christ Jesus is our Passover Lamb sacrificed for us (1 Corinthians 5:7). He is the victim, the Lamb having no spot or blemish. He is perfect. He never looks away from God's Word of command and promise. Never. Jesus is faithful to the Father in every way, and He is willing: humbly willing.

"Nevertheless, Father, not My will, but Yours be done." Always that way for Jesus. Humbly willing. He is the Way. His blood marks you, dripped upon you in the water of your Holy Baptism and poured into you at His Passover Table.

When you eat the Lamb's Body and drink His blood in the Sacrament of the Altar, you are participating in the Lord's Great Exodus. The satanic pharaoh is chasing you fast and furious. His days are numbered and his intent is violence and brutality of the worst, eternally-devastating sort! Such is his nature, and he will stop at nothing to have you. Nothing. *"Look the other way,"* he counters. *"The cross is shameful, weak, grotesque. Look the other way."*

But the Lord will not have it! Rather, *"Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Take and eat, my Body given for you...Take and drink, My Blood shed for you for forgiveness of sins."*

There's more here than meets our eye. Here is the forgiveness of sins. Yours. The world's. In Jesus' Body and Blood. And where there is forgiveness, there is also life and salvation. He says so. He makes it so:

“Whoever feeds on My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day” (John 6:54 ff.).

This is the Lord’s Passover, the Great Passover, the one to which the Exodus Passover pointed. Don’t look the other way. Plenty of blood, to be sure, but look carefully. Behold and see. In that blood is life—yours! Your life from His life, given to you, shed for you. The death angel passes over. He can’t stand the sight of blood—this Blood!—holy Blood!—and so much of it—covering up and covering over. Your sin. Your guilt. Your shame. Righteous blood covering sinners and sin. All sin. All sinners.

Once-mighty Pharaoh and army drowned in the water. So have you, drowned and surfaced to new life, life that breathes the air of the Spirit. Powerful life. Life in Jesus’ name! It’s all there, in the blood and gore.

More than meets the eye. Far more.