Sermon for Mid-Weel Lenten Service, Week 3

# The Text: Exodus 12:1-14

# Shadows of the Savior—The Sacrifice of the Lamb

This Lenten season we are studying a series of pictures in the Old Testament that foreshadowed the Savior, and of all these shadows perhaps none is more beautiful or impressive than that of a lamb.

**I. A lamb**

For several hundred years the people of Israel had been in Egypt, ever since Joseph had brought his father and his family to that land. For a long time, they were treated kindly because of Joseph, but eventually the Egyptian rulers resented all that the Israelites had, began to oppress them and turned them into slaves. But the Lord in the heavens was watching, and when it was time, he sent Moses to Pharaoh, demanding the release of his people.

It took more than Moses’ words to convince Pharaoh. So God sent a series of plagues. Each time the plague was preceded by the command, “Let my people go that they serve me.” When the plague hit, Pharaoh relented, but when the plague was lifted, he would change his mind. Nine times this happened, until finally God’s patience was exhausted, and the tenth and final plague was sent upon the stubborn king. It was the spring of the year, and night had fallen. With the night came abject terror, for the Lord had passed through the land of Egypt and killed every firstborn in the land. Not one Egyptian house was spared, from Pharaoh’s palace to the beggar’s hut. And, in the midst of their bitter howling over their loss Pharaoh demanded that the people of Israel leave.

In the houses of the Israelites there was no howling, however, for no firstborn were slain. Before God’s angel passed through the land that night, God told each family to choose a one-year old male lamb that was perfect and without blemish, to care for it for four days and then, at twilight on the fourth day, to slaughter it. Then they were to roast and eat it that evening, together with unleavened bread and bitter herbs, also with their cloaks tucked up into their belts, their sandals on their feet, and their staffs in their hands, ready to travel in a hurry out of the land of slavery. But there was an extra special instruction given about the lamb’s blood. They were to take some of it and smear it on the door-posts of their houses. That was to be the saving sign. Wherever the Lord saw the blood, he would pass over that house without bringing death into it.

Until the end of Old Testament times Israel was to remember and celebrate that night. On the first month of their year- our month of April- they were to celebrate God’s passing over their homes in Egypt because of the blood of the lamb. And each year they were to slaughter a lamb just as they had in Egypt, until THE Lamb came.

**II. The Lamb**

There are many parallels between the sacrifice of those Passover lambs and the sacrifice of Christ, the Lamb of God. First, the lamb freed Israel from its slavery by its death. Mankind is caught in even worse slavery- that of sin- and Christ THE Lamb died to set us free. Israel laboured under the hard Egyptian taskmaster. Mankind’s slavery is to the worst taskmaster of all, the one called the devil, who delights in sin’s misery and destruction, and the freedom THE Lamb has brought us.

The Passover lamb was to be a male without defect. Peter picks up on this parallel in his first epistle, where he writes that we are redeemed with “the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect” (1 Peter 1:19). The Passover lamb was to be sacrificed. Paul told the Corinthians that “Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed” for us (1 Corinthians 5:7).

The Israelites were to put the lamb’s blood on the door-posts so that God would pass over their homes and they would be spared from destruction. That, of course, is a beautiful picture of the precious blood of THE Lamb called Christ sparing us from hell’s damnation. Later in the chapter, Moses and Aaron were directed by the Lord not to break any bones of the Passover lamb. That is what happened also to Jesus when the soldier pierced his side with the spear instead of breaking his legs on Calvary.

All those lambs, all those years, had one purpose—to point to THE Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

**III. My Lamb**

Someone once said, “To say Christ died is history. To say Christ died for sinners is theology. To say Christ died for me is salvation.”

During Lent, then, it is important for us to ask: Where is the Lamb in our lives? It depends on whether we are daily aware of how much we need him for forgiveness and healing, for praise and thanks, for help and consolation, for resisting of temptation and to lead us through our lives to heaven. Lent is a good season to stop and reflect, to look at that baptismal font and thank God for applying the blood of his Lamb to me there, to stand at that communion altar and receive the body and blood of the Lamb shed for me, to look ahead and thank God that when my day comes I can step before Him because he has washed my robe and made it white in the blood of His Lamb, MY Lamb.

**IV. The world’s Lamb**

One more thought remains about that precious Lamb of God, the thought that when he truly has become MY Lamb, then I want him to be the world’s lamb. Good news is for sharing; the Lamb that is mine needs to become the property of others. Lenten time is also a good time for our personal missionary efforts, a good time to invite that family member, that special friend, that nearby neighbour to our services to behold the Lamb of God for sinners slain.

Lent is a good time for intensifying our prayers for missions, both here and overseas. Yes, Lent is a good time to remember that he is the world’s Lamb.

Please, Lord, let Jesus be more than a Lamb. Let him be, by your grace, THE Lamb, MY Lamb, the WORLD’S Lamb. Amen.