

Text: Exodus 12:12-13, 23

Title: "Christ our Passover propitiation"

Time: 10/4/2020 am

Place: NBBC

Introduction: "Carest thou not that we perish?" Some of the men who asked our Lord that question in Mark 4 were fishermen who had grown up on the Sea of Galilee and undoubtedly had sailed through many difficult waters throughout their life. But this time, there was something about this storm that was beyond both their seafaring proficiency and their courage. So they awaken Jesus, who was sound asleep on a comfortable pillow in the back of the boat, and they ask Him this question. "Don't you even care that we are perishing?"

Awakened from a sound sleep, Jesus arose. Perhaps he rubbed His eyes, let out a yawn and did a little stretching, and then stood and said simply, "Peace, be still." "And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm" (Mark 4:39b).

*Noah Webster's 1828 Dictionary* has a good word for what happened to the storm after Jesus said those words, one for the wind ceasing and the great calm that replaced the storm. The word is *propitiation*. What happened to the weather surrounding that boat that day was a propitiation of the weather. When Jesus took the wind out of the storm and the waves out of the sea, He propitiated them.

The word *propitiation* is an important theological word that communicates powerful salvation truth that is richly taught us in the history of the Passover event of Exodus 12. *Propitiation* comes from the Latin prefix *pro-* together with the word from which we get our word *pity* (*pio*). It means *to make someone for pitying someone else*. The opposite of *propiti-*

*ation is to incite to wrath.* The presidential debate last week incited many to wrath. CNN news anchors were visibly upset. That was the opposite of propitiation. When the Bible tells us that “a soft answer turns away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger” (Prov. 15:1), it is describing both what propitiation and its opposite are. Propitiation is the turning away of wrath. Its opposite is the stirring up of anger.

Noah Webster provides a note on the theological importance of the word. He explains, “In *theology*, [propitiation is] the atonement or atoning sacrifice offered to God to assuage his wrath and render him propitious to sinners. Christ is the propitiation for the sins of men” (2.45).

Christ is our propitiation because, in the words of the Apostle Paul, He is our Passover (1 Cor. 5:6-8, “Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore, let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth”). Two weeks ago, we saw that Christ is our Passover sacrifice. This morning I want us to know what Noah Webster knew, that Christ is our Passover propitiation. We will learn three things about this from our passage this morning.

I. The problem solved by Christ our propitiation is the Lord (vv. 12, 23a).

Illustration: After hearing a loud bang and seeing one of their warning sensors light up, Astronaut Jack Swigert of Apollo 13 radioed back to earth with the message, “Okay, Houston, we’ve had a problem.” Those three men may

have cited on that occasion some lesser problems they were experiencing, but suddenly and unexpectedly, they had a chief problem that called for their total and immediate attention because it threatened the very safety of their existence. That phrase, "Houston, we have a problem," has made its way into popular culture as something to say when you come to realize that unexpectedly you are in serious trouble.

Application: The Bible is clear that every one of us has one especially serious problem that deserves our immediate and total attention. The big and serious problem that each one of us has is the same problem everyone in the land of Egypt, the Egyptians and Israelites alike, had in our passage. The problem is stated at the end of v. 12 - "I am the Lord." This is a problem for mankind because the Lord is holy in all His perfections. God in His holiness is a problem for sinners like you and me. Our sin creates a response in His holy nature that is a response of just, uncompromised, immediate, and righteous wrath over our sin.

From a biblical perspective, Egyptians were non-religious pagans and the Israelites were religiously privileged, but both were in danger that evening in the land of Egypt. And so we read in our Bibles about God's wrath for nonreligious sinners like the Egyptians: "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness" (Rom. 1:18); and immediately following Paul says this about God's wrath for religious sinners like the Israelites: "But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God" (Rom. 2:5).

In fact, every truly born again believer understands that he was once under God's wrath: "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others" (Eph. 2:1-3).

New Boston, we have a problem. Perhaps surprising, perhaps unexpected, but certainly no less real. Our God is holy, and our sin affects Him something like a Mento candy hitting Coca-Cola. Just like the disciples were hit by the wind and the waves of a storm they could not handle, we are facing the wrath of God's judgement because He is perfectly holy and because you and I are completely sinful. The problem addressed by Christ our propitiation is that the holiness of God is our Destroyer.

II. The solution provided by Christ our propitiation is His own blood (vv. 13a, 23b).

Illustration: The man who famously radioed back to earth from Apollo 13 about the problem that threatened their lives was not originally supposed to be on the flight. Astronaut Jack Swigert was a late replacement for Astronaut Ken Mattingly who was originally supposed to go. Mattingly was grounded because he had been exposed to a contagious disease. On April 17, 1970, Mattingly and all of the world with him rejoiced when the crew of Apollo 13 finally safely splashed down in the South Pacific Sea after their moon mission was aborted. Mattingly did not have to solve the problem. His substitute did.

Application: When it comes to Christ our propitiation, Christ is the saving substitute who solves the problem sinners have with the holiness of our God. This substitute, however, would not splash down unharmed. Instead, his precious blood would be shed and splashed on the lintel and doorposts of the hearts He would save from the Destroyer.

In Egypt that night, the blood was applied to the doors of slave homes in the shape of a cross. Jesus died on the cross of Calvary as our substitute and propitiation. He shed His blood under the wrath of God, and that blood propitiated God's wrath against our sin. The Bible says, "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Cor. 5:21). Where God sees the blood of Christ, His holiness is satisfied, His judgement complete, His condemnation fully executed, and so sinners behind the blood are now safe.

The Bible is clear that the blood of Jesus Christ is central to our salvation from sin. We are redeemed and justified by the blood of Christ: "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Rom. 3:24-26). "Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him" (Rom. 5:9).

We are united as one church by the blood of Christ: "Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the

commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: but now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby" (Eph. 2:11-16). The blood of Christ that unites us must be allowed to break down all the man-made walls that divide us.

We are reconciled to God through the blood of Christ (Col. 1:20-22); our consciences are purged from dead works to serve the living God through the blood (Heb. 9:14); we have boldness to enter the holy of holies in prayer by the blood (Heb. 10:19); we are cleansed by the blood as we grown in grace, walk in the light, have fellowship together, and confess our sins (1 John 1:7-9); and we shall stand in the presence of our Savior someday clothed in white robes that have been washed in the blood of the Lamb (Rev. 7:14).

How should we, a blood-saved people, then live? 1 Pet. 1:17-19, "And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear: forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." To the degree that the blood of Christ is precious to us, we will live in the fear of the Lord.

And what have we done when we fail to live in the fear of the Lord? Heb. 10:29, "Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden underfoot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" May we magnify and glorify the provision of Christ our Passover propitiation, His own precious blood, by worshipping and serving Him reverently in godly fear.

III. The power of Christ our propitiation saves the house (vv. 13b, 23c).

Application: God's promise on the night of the tenth plague was that if the blood of the lamb is on your door, the destroyer will pass you by. God's promise this morning for you and I is that if the blood of Christ is on the door of our heart, the destroyer will pass us by. In Egypt, you had to stay in a house like that. Here this morning, we have to have a heart like that. The door of our heart is blessed with the shed blood of Christ when we invite Him by faith to come place that blood there. Have you by faith put the blood of Christ on your door by trusting Him to save you from your sin?

Conclusion: The disciples marveled at the power of Christ to propitiate the storm of the sea. This morning we are called to marvel at the power of Christ to propitiate the wrath of God upon the sins of the whole world: "And He [Christ] is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

Jesus said to his disciples in the boat, "Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?" And the text tells us, "And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another,

‘What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?’” (Mark 4:40-41).

In view of His own shed blood and provision for our propitiation of God’s wrath upon us, the One with this power, comes to us with the same questions this morning: “Why are ye fearful? How is it that you have no faith?” Christ, our Passover propitiation, calls us to repent of our fearing unbelief and sin and to trust Him as the one whose shed blood has calmed the storm of God’s wrath against us. What will your answer to Him be?

“A man came—I think it was actually in Philadelphia—on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction—the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

—David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

*Preachers and Preaching*