

Redemption

Introduction

“How have we come to believe that at the cross this God of love suddenly decides to vent his anger and wrath on his own Son? The fact is the cross isn’t a form of cosmic child abuse—a vengeful Father, punishing his Son for an offense he has not even committed. Steve Chalke and Alan Mann, *The Lost Message of Jesus*.

“If the cross is a personal act of violence perpetrated by God towards human kind but born by his Son, then it makes a mockery of Jesus own teaching to love your enemies and to refuse to pay evil with evil.” Steve Chalke and Alan Mann, *The Lost Message of Jesus*.

These are statements made by so-called Christians which criticise bible believing Christians understanding of how the death of Jesus leads to our salvation.

Specifically our understanding that Jesus death was a form of penal substitutionary atonement for our sins. What does that mean penal substitutionary atonement? You may have heard it being used. Basically it means that Jesus was punished on our behalf for us to be saved.

These arguments against penal substitutionary atonement make 2 false assumptions as part of their argument, first, that Christ was not a willing participant in his death. This we know is clearly wrong. Christ willingly went to his death, we see this when Peter tries to deter Jesus from his suffering and death and Jesus harshly criticises Peter. The second wrong assumption is that God doesn’t save by death and suffering. That punishment and death contradicts Jesus message of love and peace. And it is this assumption that we are going to partially look at tonight.

Tonight we are continuing our 9 week series on the whole bible and we are going to look at how God saves. By looking at how God saves in the Old Testament we will see that penal substitution is something that God has always used to save and that this matches closely with how he saves in the New Testament.

Passover

So how did God save his people in the Old Testament? To answer that I want to explore the Passover where the Israelites are saved and I want to ask 3 questions about the Israelites, **(P)** the first question is What are they being saved from? Second, How are they being saved? And third what does God instruct them to do? But before we look at the passage we just read in detail, I want to explain the context. Can you remember the passage Bruce looked at last week? God promised to Abraham that his descendants will be a **(P)** great nation, have land and a ruler. Well his descendants – the Israelites had multiplied greatly, so they

had the numbers of a nation. But at this point in our story they are slaves in Egypt. Now you may remember Bruce saying how unlikely God's promises were to be fulfilled with Abraham, well they were almost as bad here. With regards to the promise of being a nation, **(P)** they had the numbers, but they hardly had a national identity being slaves for another nation. Being slaves also meant they didn't have any land**(P)** or a ruler **(P)** of their own and it didn't look like they were getting one any time soon. So for God's promises to be fulfilled, Israel needed to be saved out of slavery by GOD.

That answers the first question, **(P)** what they are being saved from, the Israelites are being saved from slavery in Egypt.

how does God save the Israelites? Well if you've seen any of the Moses movies, Prince of Egypt, you may have gathered that it had something to do with 10 plagues. Nine plagues had come and gone, it had affected the Egyptians, frogs, locusts, water turned into blood, boils, but it was not enough for Pharaoh to release the Israelites from slavery. The tenth plague, however, was that every firstborn in Egypt shall die. How would the Israelites be saved from this plague? What were these instructions they had to follow? Well, God gives it to them in the chapter we just read.

Each house is to select an animal, often a lamb. And this lamb is to be without blemish. Then the animal is killed and cooked whole and eaten and its blood is put on the door frame of the house. Now you may well ask the question here, why did an animal have to die? Why couldn't they have just sprinkled flower petals on their doorstep, after all isn't it just a way of marking the house for God to Passover? Why did it have to be the blood of an animal? To answer that we need to look at Derek's sermon from 2 weeks ago. We saw in Genesis 3, when sin entered the world that it also brought death. For sin to be properly punished God required death. So that explains why the blood, but you may ask why do the Israelites have to worry about sacrificing a lamb to avoid death, isn't God judging Egypt for worshipping Egyptian gods (Ex 12:12). Well it says in Ezekiel that the Israelites had been guilty of worshipping the Egyptian gods as well (Ezk 20:4-10). So the Israelites were as deserving of God's punishment as the Egyptians. Only the sacrifice, the death of the lamb could fulfil God's punishment of death, only the death of a lamb could substitute for the Israelites.**(P)**.

And finally what was the response required from the Israelites. The Israelites had to believe that God would save them and they had to obey and put the blood of the lamb up on the doorposts. IF they did not obey, they would not be saved.

The other thing that God instructs the Israelites to do at the first Passover is to set up a Passover festival so that the Israelites will remember what God had done for them (Ex 12:24-28) and so that their children and their grandchildren and great grandchildren would know what God had done for them here in Egypt. **(P)**. The Passover festival was very important for the Israelites, there are many episodes of the Israelites carrying out Passover all the way through the OT. However there are also times when the OT mentions that they stopped doing Passover and that they had forgotten what God had done for them. God also set up more sacrifices regarding guilt and sin which you can see in Leviticus which follow a similar pattern. But even with the sacrifices it never completely dealt with the Israelites sin, they had to continue to keep doing sacrifices. They were still looking forward to Gods new covenant, when they would truly be Gods children, and live forever with him as King.

Lord Supper/Crucifixion

With that in mind we are now going to look at how God saves in the New Testament and I want to ask the same questions that we did for the Passover and the Israelites in the OT, this time with the focus on us. So **(P)** First, What are we saved from? Second, How are we saved? And third, what does God want us to do? I am going to first look at the similarities between Jesus death and what we have just looked at in the Old Testament, and then I am going to look at some significant differences.

First the similarities. **(P)**What are we being saved from? **(P)**Slavery. I am a slave. You are a slave, We are all slaves. Before you start thinking I am no slave, read with me what it says in Romans 7:14 Paul says that we are slaves to sin. But what does that mean? We're obviously not chains. The explanation comes in the following verses. This passage is actually one of my favourites, not only for what it has to say, but how Paul says it, it reminds me of a tongue twister and I always get a laugh when I hear it read, so let me read it out**(P)**.

15 I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. 16 And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. 17 As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. 18 I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. 19 For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. 20 Now if I do what I do

not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.
Rom 7:15-20.

It is a tongue twister isn't it, but basically what Paul is saying is that he can't stop himself sinning and in that sense we are slaves to sin**(P)**.

Secondly how are we saved? Well, just as we've seen in the Old Testament, God requires the punishment of death to pay for our sins and as we've also seen in the Old Testament, God offers a substitute, some thing, and in this case someone to die in our place. Jesus is that sacrifice, Jesus dies in our place. We can see that the New Testament writers saw Jesus like this. If you remember the passage we read earlier describing the lamb that was to be sacrificed. It said **(P)**

"It must be eaten inside one house; take none of the meat outside the house. Do not break any of the bones. Exodus 12:46

And **(P)**

"The animals you choose must be year-old males without defect, and you may take them from the sheep or the goats. " Exodus 12:5

If you now look at some NT passages with me you will see the similarities with how they describe Jesus. **(P)** John describing Jesus crucifixion says

"These things happened so that the scripture would be fulfilled: "Not one of his bones will be broken," John 19:36

And Peter describing how we were redeemed, how we were saved says, **(P)**
For you know...you were redeemed...with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. 1 Peter 1:18-19

Clearly the new testament writers saw Jesus as the Passover Lamb.

Jesus is our Passover lamb, he is the sacrifice for our sin to save us. It is his blood that saves us.

And finally **(P)** what should our response be. Again there are similarities between the OT and the NT. Firstly we are told to remember, but instead of remembering by using the Passover festival, Jesus starts a new way of remembering and it is with the Lord Supper. We are also called to respond with belief. Jesus has died for us so that we can be saved, but just like the Israelites at the Passover we need to believe. As the well known verse in John says,**(P)** "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him." (John 3:16-17)

(P)So they are the similarities. We can see that God saves from slavery, that he does it by a substituted death and that he calls people to believe and remember. Despite what some critics of Penal substitution say, God throughout the bible has

saved this way. But there are some significant differences between the salvation of the OT and the NT. The Passover sacrifices had to be done every year, the Israelites each year would have to go through the same process of sacrificing the lamb so that they would not face death themselves. But with Jesus sacrifice it was different, look at Hebrews 10 with me on the screen (P)

For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. 2 If it could, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins. 3 But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins, 4 because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. 5 Therefore...10 we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

You see Jesus sacrifice was significantly different. His death is once for all. By his sacrifice we are saved permanently. We do not need to keep doing sacrifices like the Israelites, we are completely free through the death of Jesus.

What does it mean for us today?

So what does this mean for us today? Why does understanding the way God saves us, help? Well for those seeking to be saved, they need to realise a couple of things. (P)Firstly, you need to realise that you need to be saved. You need to recognise that sin is slavery. The Israelites were certainly aware of their problem of slavery, after all they were slaves of Egypt. But I think one of the problems in today's society is that we don't realise we are slaves to sin. People today think they are good enough, as long as they haven't murdered somebody, they can't be too bad, but what they need to realise is that they are slaves to sin. The first step in being saved, is realising that you need to be saved.

(P)Secondly we need to realise that we can't save ourselves. Israel couldn't get themselves out of Egypt. We can't save ourselves from sin. Some people think that as long as they keep doing good and try to get better, that they can save themselves, but they'll never be good enough. It is only because of what God has done that we can be saved.

(P)Thirdly because we know that God keeps his promises we can believe. Looking back we can see that God kept his covenant to Abraham and the Israelites by saving them from slavery and getting them to the promised land. And now we can realise that God is keeping his new covenant promise and saving us from sin so that we too can enjoy the promised land, we can be Gods people with Jesus as our King. We need to believe that God will be faithful.

And what about us as Christians, what can we learn by looking at how God saves us. I think there are 3 things, three R's that we can learn. They are (P) Respond, remember and rejoice. By accepting God's saving grace, the Israelites had to respond to God's promise and put blood on the door, we need to respond with acceptance that Jesus died for us. Can God really forgive me, all the things that I have done in my life? Accept and believe that Jesus died for you and that you can be forgiven. Second we need to remember what God has done. That is why the Israelites had the Passover feast, that is why we now have Lord's Supper. To remember what God has done for us. As we eat and drink the Lord's supper we can remember that Jesus died FOR US. And we should remember that he died once for all. I know of Christians who constantly wonder if they are saved, if they need to constantly become a Christian again. What they need to realise is that unlike the Israelites and their sacrifices, Jesus has paid for our sins once for all. And finally we should rejoice, we should rejoice because we are saved, we should rejoice because we are children of God. We should rejoice, by living thankful lives by telling others about this way to be saved. We should rejoice that God has sent Jesus to die in our place to save us. 3 things. Respond, Remember, Rejoice. Hopefully that has helped you understand a bit about penal substitutionary atonement, but if you want to read more and look a bit deeper at some of the arguments against it, I would highly recommend *Pierced for Our Transgressions* by Steve Jeffery and Mike Ovey. Thanks