



“The Passover Lamb”  
Luke 22:1-23

**Idea:** Jesus is the embodiment of everything Passover symbolized.

**Intro:** Today is Easter Sunday. It is the oldest and most important festival of the Christian Church. On this day, believers celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In the West, we commemorate this holiday annually between March 21 and April 25. We do this on the first Sunday after the first full moon following the northern spring equinox. If you have ever wondered why Easter is not on a fixed day like Christmas, this is the reason. As families gather with others on this holiday, they carry out different traditions. Many of them host easter egg hunts for their children. Eggs represent new life and rebirth. This ancient perspective was coupled with the medieval practice of not eating eggs during Lent, so hunting and eating eggs on Easter Sunday was a real treat. As such, it became part of the custom for Easter celebrations.

Easter underscores the resurrection of Jesus Christ, but there is more to our observance of this holiday than this one day. Chronologically, we know that last Sunday was Palm Sunday. It is the day we celebrate Jesus’ triumphant entry into the city of Jerusalem amid shouts of praise (Mark 11:1-11). He had set His face toward Jerusalem many weeks earlier (Luke 9:51). His salvific mission required Him to be in Jerusalem. On Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday of Easter week, we remember Jesus as He taught in the Temple and debated with the religious leaders of Israel. Then, on what is called Maundy Thursday (Holy Thursday), we mark the Lord’s observance of the Passover meal with His disciples and the institution of Communion. Good Friday is the day the soldiers nailed Jesus to the cross and raised Him between two criminals. It is the day, the earth trembled, the sky grew dark, and the King yielded up His spirit. It is the day that Jesus died as a holy sacrifice for sinners. It was a dark day, but we refer to it as Good Friday because Sunday is coming. As such, Resurrection Sunday is the culmination of this Holy Week. It is on Sunday that we recognize that Jesus’ death on Friday was greater than a martyr’s death. It was more than a substitutionary death. It is greater because the resurrection of Jesus from the dead made it possible for sinners to inherit the riches of the Kingdom of God. The resurrection overcame the curse of death, hell, and the grave (1 Cor 15). Jesus’ death on the cross has made it possible for sinners to be in relationship with Holy God.

Everything that we read in the Gospels has been moving to this moment. For that matter, everything we read in the Old Testament has been moving toward this moment. Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection were the very purpose of His incarnation. He came to suffer and to die. He came to crush the serpent’s head while being bruised on the heel (Gen 3:15). This He accomplished on the cross, in the tomb, and through being raised from the dead. Just before He was to be put on trial and crucified, Jesus enjoyed one final meal with His disciples on Thursday evening. It was the time of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, commonly referred as Passover. During this most significant meal, Jesus described how He was the embodiment of everything Passover symbolized.

Read Luke 22:1-23.

**Inquiry:** Passover, Harvest, and Tabernacles were three of the most important feasts on the Jewish calendar (Lev 23). For these feasts, all the Jewish men were expected to go to Jerusalem to celebrate (Deut 16:16). The Feast of Passover commemorated the deliverance of Israel from Egypt. As such, it was a time for both remembering and rejoicing over God's great salvation (Ex 11-12). During this week, of the first century, thousands of excited pilgrims crowded in and around Jerusalem, causing the Romans to always be nervous about possible uprisings. Passover had strong political overtones, and it was the ideal time for some would-be messiah to attempt to overthrow Rome's authority in Israel.

In addition to the Romans being nervous about the crowds, the Jewish religious leaders did not like the crowds that were following, celebrating, and heralding Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah. They had been watching, debating, and attempting to trap Jesus for months to no avail. Now that He had arrived in Jerusalem according to His purpose and plan, it was time for the religious leaders to advance their desire to rid themselves of this nuisance (22:2). Judas Iscariot, as one of the twelve disciples of Jesus, had seen in Jesus a path to throw off Rome and reestablish David's monarchy. However, when he began to understand that this was not Jesus' mission, he became incensed toward the Lord and decided to turn against Him in bitter retaliation. So, he teamed up with the religious leaders against Jesus (22:3-6).

While the details for Jesus' betrayal and arrest are being worked out, He spends this final evening with His disciples in observance of Passover. Peter and John had made all the preparations for this meal. They had found the man who was hosting them. They had purchased a lamb and sacrificed it at the Temple. As Jesus and the other disciples arrived, the lamb was roasting and the other elements for the Passover meal were set out. Everything was ready for this seder meal, whereby each element helped tell the story of Israel's suffering and God's great deliverance. It was the responsibility of the host to retell the story. So, "*when the hour came,*" Jesus taught His disciples the most wonderful truths ever revealed (22:14). He explained to them that the salvation brought about by the death of lambs and the spreading of their blood upon the doorposts of their houses, which caused the LORD to pass over and not to strike them (Ex 12), foreshadowed the greater deliverance from sin that He would soon accomplish through His death, burial, and resurrection. Jesus revealed that He was the great Passover Lamb. As such, we discover on this Easter Sunday that Jesus acted in four ways on our behalf.

As the Passover Lamb, Jesus...

### **1. Suffered brutally.** (vs. 15)

Imagine yourself as one of the lambs being held in pens throughout Jerusalem during the week of Passover. Your fate is a bloody and gruesome death, as your throat is cut, and your blood spilled out. Innocent lambs suffered on behalf of sinful people. As the Passover Lamb, Jesus suffered brutally in three ways:

- He suffered bodily.  
Before the Sanhedrin He was struck over and over again by the guards (Luke 22:63-65). After being handed over to Pilate, the Romans repeatedly struck Him over the head with a staff (Mark 15:19), and then they flogged him with thirty-nine lashes from a cat-of-nine-tails. That whip was laced with bone, stone, and metal fragments, which grabbed and ripped off the flesh from His back. Jesus was beaten to a bloody pulp. Then, the guards smashed a crown of thorns down into His skull and draped a robe over His oozing back before placing the center beam of the cross upon His shoulders. Jesus carried that beam outside the city to Golgotha. There on the hillside, He was nailed to the cross and hoisted up to hang.

Jesus suffered bodily. He did this for you and me (22:19).

- He suffered emotionally.

Jesus was arrested and falsely accused by His own people, including one of the twelve. Many of the people who had praised Him four days earlier were now shouting “*crucify Him.*” The guards mocked Him, and then Jesus was stripped naked and paraded through the streets of Jerusalem with a crossbeam on His shoulders. As if that were not enough, there on the cross, Jesus bore the sin of humanity and its curse. Paul speaks of this emotional suffering saying, “*For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God*” (2 Cor 5:21). Jesus had never known sin before. He had never had a sinful thought, committed a sinful act, or spoken a sinful word. Yet there on the cross every sinful thing done by humanity past, present, and future were placed upon Him, while God the Father forsook Him and exhausted His wrath against sin (Mark 15:34).

Jesus suffered emotionally. He did this for you and me.

- He suffered spiritually.  
On the cross, Jesus became the curse so that you and I could be delivered out from under it. In that moment, God the Son, as He bore the sin of humanity, was disconnected from God the Father and God the Spirit. He suffered spiritually so that you and I might be made alive spiritually.

The death of Jesus Christ was a brutal suffering, but there is a second way Jesus acted on our behalf as the Passover Lamb.

## **2. Offered Himself sacrificially.** (vs. 19)

The Passover lambs that were killed and roasted on the night the death angel came upon Egypt gave their lives on behalf of the people who applied their blood to the doorposts of their homes. The animal’s life was forfeited so that human life could be preserved. The Bible makes it clear that sin has brought death into the story of every living being. For humanity, sin has brought a doubling of death. Each person is born into this world on a collision course with physical death. Similarly, each and every person is born into this world spiritually dead, cut off from the God who created them for Himself. This is the curse of sin. The sacrificial system God gave to Moses preached the need for a sacrificial substitute. There was a need for someone to offer life in place of the death brought about by sin.

Read Hebrews 9:11-14.

On the cross, Jesus offered Himself sacrificially for sinful humanity. There is a third act on our behalf.

## **3. Atoned for sin completely.** (vs. 20)

As the Lord and the disciples observed the Passover meal, He related the cup to His blood which would be poured out for them. His blood would satisfy the wrath of God and completely atone for sin. This was different from the sacrificial system of the Jews, which was insufficient to deal with sin. According to Hebrews 9, the priests regularly had to enter the Temple and offer the blood of sacrifices on behalf of the people. Those sacrifices foreshadowed the greater sacrifice of the Messiah. They were offered on credit, believing that the Messiah’s sacrifice would cover them. Again, the writer of Hebrews helps us understand how Jesus fulfills this.

Read Hebrews 9:15, 22b, 26b.

The death of Jesus Christ was a brutal and sacrificial offering that completely atoned for sin. There is yet a final act on our behalf.

#### 4. Died willingly. (vs. 22)

Jesus told His disciples, *“For the Son of Man goes as it has been determined.”* There was never a moment in Jesus’ life whereby He did not know or understand the purpose and plan for His life. The Father had sent Him *“to seek and save the lost”* (19:10), and the only way to save the lost was to die in their place. As brutal as this sacrifice would be, He was willing to pay the price. While His humanity dreaded what was coming and wished there was another way, His divinity leaned into the Father’s will. Later in the Garden of Gethsemane, we read that Jesus prayed for *“this cup”* to be removed, but He willingly surrendered His life to the Father’s plan (22:42). What was this plan?

Read John 3:16-17.

I believe there are two reasons Jesus willingly offered His life. First, it was divine sovereignty. Jesus willingly trusted the Father’s plan to redeem sinful people. Second, it was divine love. Jesus joined the Father’s love by loving sinners enough to die in their place.

**Conclusion:** On this Easter Sunday, please understand that Jesus is our Passover Lamb. He is the embodiment of everything this feast symbolized. Today, we can celebrate how He suffered brutally, offered Himself sacrificially, atoned for sin completely, and died willingly for us. We have a such a great salvation!

How should we respond to such a great salvation? There is a song by Charity Gayle that has been blessing me recently. It is called “Because of Jesus.” I believe it personifies what our response to this great salvation ought to be. Listen to the words of the first verse:

“You made a covenant with me  
Signed by the blood that still speaks  
Now I'm forgiven, I'm called righteous  
I'm made clean

There on the cross at Calvary  
You gave it all to purchase me  
You are the Savior and the God Who set me free”

What an incredibly powerful declaration! Now, here is the response.

“Now my heart cries "This is my Redeemer"  
With my whole life I will give You praise  
All the glory to the One Who's worthy  
Because of Jesus, I have been changed”

Today, as a believer and follower of Jesus Christ, is this your response to this great salvation? Do you stand in awe of such love and grace? Are you compelled to surrender your life to the glory and praise of Jesus Christ?

As a sinner who stands condemned before God, does knowing all that Jesus did for you so that you might be made righteous before God bring you to a place of humble confession of sin, repentance, and faith? Jesus died in your place so that God’s wrath might pass over you. Now, He lovingly and graciously offers to you new life in Him. Do you want it? Do you want to be changed?