

The Feast of Cover – Over

By [Mike Glodo](#)

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You have heard this word of God read, let's ask God's blessing on this portion of his word.

Oh, Lord, open our eyes that we may behold wonderful things in your law, by your Spirit, make us sensible to your truth and to make us lively in believing it and help us not simply to be hearers of this word only, but doers as well. And I ask that You would help me to know nothing but Christ, him crucified, and all these things we pray in His name. Amen.

I have a question for you young people here this morning.

If you want something, but you're not sure both of your parents will say, "yes"- What do you do?

You first ask the parent, who will say "yes."

It's a very important life skill. It's called "triangulation." Can you say triangulation with me?

Grown-ups triangulate too.

If I want to go out for Italian ice, I don't ask my wife, who is the Chief Diet Enforcer in my house. I ask my children first, and once I have a super majority, then I ask my wife.

At work, sometimes we will sell an idea to others and get support for it before we ask the person who has to approve it.

In law enforcement, we have such a thing called "Good Cop, Bad Cop," don't we?

Now it's definitely not always a good thing. Sometimes children of divorced families play triangulation better than anyone else. It can be a very difficult thing, but nothing compares to the difficulty we experience when we triangulate God, and by that, I mean triangulating God's justice and His mercy, or his love.

Many people, believers and seekers alike, see those two qualities in God in tension with one another. How can God be just and at the same time be merciful? In fact, sometimes we might even see them in opposition to one another. For some people, God's justice is just not justice for others. God's Love trumps His justice for others. We are good at asking God for justice on other people, but less inclined to ask it on ourselves. So we have this tension between God's justice and his love.

And in fact, one of the earliest heresies of the church was to see the God of the Old Testament as a different God than the God of the New Testament in Jesus Christ. Historically, this has been true and experientially, it is still true for all of us at some time and for many of us all the time.

So how do God's justice and His mercy meet?

We've read the story of the first Passover. We're going to find the answer. We're going to find that God's justice and His mercy meet because they meet within God Himself. And when we are tempted to triangulate God's justice and mercy, we must turn to God Himself for the answer. God's justice and mercy meet within God himself, because God is one with himself.

Now, as we think about this story that we read of the Passover, one of the first things that may occur to some of you is how cruel of God to execute justice in the way he did, the firstborn in every Egyptian household died and even among their livestock. And this is a legitimate question, especially in a modern age where we see perhaps religion as the source of a lot of conflict, but let's try to understand a little bit more what's going on here in relation to that question.

First of all, you may have an objection to judgment in general, any judgment in the Bible, and there may be little I can say to someone who objects to justice in principle or to judgment in principle. But perhaps, if you'll think of it this way, that there is never salvation without judgment, that when someone is trafficked, whether it's sex trafficking or labor trafficking, to free that person requires judgment and justice upon the oppressor. When someone has hurt someone and has wounded them deeply, for that person to experience freedom from those wounds and hurt, requires judgment on the person who inflicted them that they might realize what they had done. Think about Israel's situation here, 400 years of slavery.

The wombs of Israel had been robbed by Pharaoh's genocide. The labors of Israel had been robbed in order to build Pharaoh monument cities, to name things after himself, to glorify himself. And so for Israel to be freed from this slavery, there had to be a breaking of that power, a destruction of the power which oppressed and deprived them of life and liberty.

And truth be told, when we step back to think about such a story as this, we realize that we are, at the same time, both Egyptians and Israelites, that there are things that we do that control or exert power over others, that are unjust, and for people to be free from what we have done against them, we must be judged in this. And this leaves open the question of, how will God do both - to bring justice and mercy?

This is not Israel taking revenge against its captors, but rather the God who had promised life and blessing to them, freeing them from their captors.

So with that, we can see and we can understand what God says in verse 12, when he says on this last plague, this is the final of 10 plagues that on all the gods of Egypt, I will execute judgment, because God is not just destroying the power of Pharaoh, he is putting to shame the gods of Egypt. Every one of the plagues is some kind of an assault on some kind of an Egyptian deity, and in doing so, God shows that the gods of Egypt are not powerful.

In fact, they are no gods. They're the gods created by the human heart, and Pharaoh himself was the chief representative of this. Pharaoh was believed to be a son of the gods, and it was by his claim to divine power and status that he was able to exercise such brutal control and power over Israel. And so when God breaks down the power of Egypt by bringing judgment upon Israel, about on Egypt's gods. He breaks the power of Pharaoh, who was believed to be God like.

We see that there's no salvation. There's no freedom, if the powers that enslave people are not broken.

But having seen that and understanding what God is about to do bring judgment on Egypt's gods and free his people from their slavery, I want us to just focus of the many elements of this story we could focus on, to focus on just a couple of things, and it's primarily contained in verse 12. God is explaining what is about to happen on that night, that night of the first Passover. In verse 12, we are told God said, "I will pass through the land of Egypt that night. And I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast."

You have a picture of God coming near and God passing through all of the land of Egypt. And you'll see in your Bible the translation most likely says "pass through."

But then there's another verb that pertains to God's actions, verse 13.

The blood of the innocent lamb, the pure and spotless lamb or goat, was to have been spread on the lintel above the door posts and on the doorposts themselves. And when God saw the blood on the doorpost, we are told, "I will pass over you." How do we reconcile these two activities of God passing through the land of Egypt, all the land of Egypt, including where Israel is?

And yet at the same time, he's passing over the houses where he finds the blood on the door posts. Well, it looks almost like God is maybe a bad postal carrier. Here skipping houses, or like a newspaper delivery person who only throws the paper, or in this case, throws the death of the firstborn to certain places, and skips over. If I could visually demonstrate it, I would, but you get the idea of puddle jumping – that when God comes to an Israelite house. He skips that puddle.

But we're asking the question of, how do God's justice and mercy meet perfectly in him? And I think there's a better way to understand what verse 13 is telling us when it says, "I will pass over."

That word used to pass over here, does not occur in very many places in the Old Testament. In fact, it only occurs here and in two other places. And one place that it occurs that helps us understand what's going on here is in Isaiah, chapter 31. God is describing in Isaiah 31 what he's going to do for his chosen city, for the city of Jerusalem, and for Mount Zion, the place on which he caused his glory to dwell when enemies came against that city later in Israel's history.

Here's what Isaiah, the prophet said would happen. God says in Isaiah 31 verse 5, like birds hovering, so will the Lord of hosts protect Jerusalem. He will protect and deliver it. He will spare and rescue it. And the word translated "spare" there is the same word that's translated "pass over" in Exodus 12. Well, what does it mean that he will "spare" it?

It's not a very good translation, frankly, but we see from Isaiah 31 verse 5, what it really means. God says, "I, like birds hovering, so will the Lord of hosts protect Jerusalem." You get this visual image. You have to put on your Hebrew mindset and have this visual image of God stretching his wings, as it were, over his chosen city. He's going to protect Jerusalem by spreading his protection over it like a like a mother eagle.

In fact, we see elsewhere in the Old Testament, God describing the glory cloud in the wilderness as God spreading his wings over Israel to protect them from the heat by day and the cold by night in the wilderness. When that word pass over is used by Isaiah, it's really describing what God would do when He spread the wings of his protection over his city.

How does that change how we view that first Passover night?

If you go to the British Museum, you can see an example of this. In the Egyptian world, people were accustomed to carving images of their gods over the doorways of their houses. And if you go to the British Museum, there's a crypt or mausoleum that has been excavated and brought to London from Egypt. And you'll see, in that crypt or mausoleum, the carved image of a god over the

doorway, and it is the Egyptian sun god. It's a circle, but not just a circle, it is a circle with wings spread out.

And so the Egyptians marked the protection of their homes by carving the image of the winged sun god over their doors, but not the Israelite houses. The Israelite houses, those who were not supposed to eat leaven, the leaven of Egypt, as they prepared for this hasty departure, was there a god stationed over the doorway of the Israelite houses to bring protection to those houses? And here we find the answer is "yes" on that pass overnight.

It's not simply that God would put a sign of protection, but he says, "I will cover over. I will spread my wings." In other words, what the Israelites would see when they looked at the blood on the doorpost was an image of God Himself and what he was doing on that night.

What was he doing? He was spreading the wings of his protection over those houses, the houses of his people, but he was not doing it in the form of a winged Egyptian Sun God, but he was doing it in the form of the blood of an innocent lamb.

It would be a mistake to think that there was a death in Egyptian houses that night, but not one in Israelite houses. For In fact, there had been a death in every house that night.

In the Egyptian houses, it would be the death of the firstborn, but in the Israelite houses, it would be the death of an innocent lamb on the first Passover night, and not just an innocent lamb, but an innocent lamb as God Himself acting, because it was He who stood over the door houses, the lentils and the doorposts of the Israelite houses,

And so some 15 centuries later, John the Baptist sees Jesus coming, and he says, "Behold the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world."

He wasn't merely the firstborn of his generation. The Bible tells us he was the firstborn of all creation, because that innocent lamb in those Israelite houses in Egypt would point forward to the time when God Himself, the innocent one, would die to spare those houses.

Here we see the great I Am bringing destruction to Israel's captors. We see the great I Am and the God of the lamb in perfect unity of purpose. On this first Passover night, we find the answer to what Paul tells us later in Romans, chapter 3, verse 25:

"We are justified by grace as a gift through the redemption that is In Christ, Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation, by his blood, as a payment for

sin, by His blood to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance, he had passed over former sins."

When God passes over our sin, he doesn't skip our sin, but rather he covers us with the blood of the innocent one, and it is by his protecting blood, His atoning blood, his propitiation, that we are spared from the fate of those Egyptians.

There is no triangulation needed with God.

God is three, Father, Son and Spirit. And yet God is one, the triune. God covenanted. He committed within himself from all eternity to redeem a people from among sinners.

And here we see on the first pass overnight, there is no "God versus God" going on at all, but rather God working as God within himself. The Father sent the Son. The Son's food was the will to do the will of the One who sent him, and the Father and the Son send the Spirit to apply to us the saving work of Christ Himself. There is no "God versus God." There is no triangulating with God, because God, the just, is fully and infinitely God, the Merciful

God is able to reconcile to the world to Himself, because he within Himself possesses a perfect unity of justice and mercy. God's will is not divided. He is not at tension within Himself. He is not torn between justice and mercy, and this has great practical benefits. As we live our lives on this side of the cross, we identify with the words of the psalmist who says, "How long O Lord?" when there is injustice or there is suffering, or some intolerable condition around us.

Now we know how long it took until the time of Christ, the fullness of time, where God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, that he might redeem those who were under its curse. And therefore we don't have to go seeking vengeance against other people, because vengeance is the Lord's and he will repay. Paul says elsewhere in Romans:

"We are free to love our enemies, because while we were yet enemies of God, Christ died for us." We're free to give to those who would steal from us, we are free to be patient and long suffering, so that others, who themselves are still enemies as we once were, might become friends of God through Jesus Christ.

In the old King James Version, Psalm 85 said, "justice and peace have kissed."

This is ultimately, finally and fully true in Jesus Christ. Justice and peace have kissed.

John Newton's wonderful hymn, *Let Us Love and Sing and Wonder*, says in one verse,

*Let us wonder grace and justice join
to point to Mercy store
when by grace, in Christ,
our trust is justice smiles
and asks no more.*

Jesus from the cross, said "it is finished," meaning that he had taken to himself all of God's just wrath directed toward us, but he has taken it to himself. It is finished.

He drank the cup of sour wine to the dregs. There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ, Jesus, for the law of the Spirit, has set us free from the law of sin and death. And so as we praise and worship God, even together, we praise the slain and standing lamb who has overcome and is worthy to open the book of life to break its seven seals. He is the firstborn Son of God, not rescued from judgment, but who underwent judgment for us so that he could be the firstborn of many brothers and sisters.

On the night of the Jewish Passover, still celebrated today by Jews, the youngest child at the Seder meal is to ask, "why is this night different from all other nights?"

Every Christian child, when he or she sees this table, can ask, why is this table different from all other tables?

And we find, through the first Passover story, the answer that we ultimately find in the Gospel. And the answer is this, what is different about this table? It is because the Lord is the host of the feast, and also the feast himself.

As we prepare our hearts to come to this table, we come seeing that justice and mercy have kissed, that justice has smiled and asked asks no more, but that we would only feed upon this provision of God, so we would be strengthened in our belief that God's business is done with us before the bar, and that we now enter into His presence with great joy and blameless.

And so as we come bearing this in mind, God is not just the host, but also the feast himself. Let's prepare our hearts.

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