

Illustrations of Immanuel: A Chose Lamb

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Advent Service

Exodus 12:1-13 Now the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, ² "This month *shall be* your beginning of months; it *shall be* the first month of the year to you. ³ "Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying: 'On the tenth *day* of this month every man shall take for himself a lamb, according to the house of *his* father, a lamb for a household. ⁴ 'And if the household is too small for the lamb, let him and his neighbor next to his house take *it* according to the number of the persons; according to each man's need you shall make your count for the lamb. ⁵ 'Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year. You may take *it* from the sheep or from the goats. ⁶ 'Now you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month. Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at twilight. ⁷ 'And they shall take *some* of the blood and put *it* on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses where they eat it. ⁸ 'Then they shall eat the flesh on that night; roasted in fire, with unleavened bread *and* with bitter *herbs* they shall eat it. ⁹ 'Do not eat it raw, nor boiled at all with water, but roasted in fire-- its head with its legs and its entrails. ¹⁰ 'You shall let none of it remain until morning, and what remains of it until morning you shall burn with fire. ¹¹ 'And thus you shall eat it: *with* a belt on your waist, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. So you shall eat it in haste. It *is* the LORD'S Passover. ¹² 'For I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I *am* the LORD. ¹³ 'Now the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you *are*. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy *you* when I strike the land of Egypt.

At Christmas, we often seek perfection in gifts and celebrations, but God has already provided the perfect gift in Jesus, the true Passover Lamb.

At this time of year, many of us are busy trying to find the perfect gift(s), for our spouse, for our children, and for our friends. We are choosing the perfect photo and using it to make the perfect card. We are going to the tree farm and finding the perfect tree.

I have to find a gift for my niece Jenna. She is a teenager in high school. Shopping for a female teenager is difficult. It is tough but it is also very satisfying if you do find the perfect gift.

We chose to search for perfection, but the Israelites were commanded by to God to search for perfection. Every year, on the first month of the year, on the tenth day of the month, God commanded the Israelites to find the perfect lamb. It had to be perfect without any blemish, disfigurement, or spot.

I know when I am out searching for the perfect Christmas tree, after about half an hour I give up and go with "good enough." The Israelites could not give up. They had to find a lamb that was perfect. They had to do this every year.

These rituals of perfection that God commanded of the Israelites, the perfect lamb, the rituals of cleansing and washing, the clean white robes the priests were to wear, etc., all of these were a reminder of who God is and what it takes to enter into his presence to be his children and his people.

Leviticus 19:2 "Speak to all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say to them: 'You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.' "

As the Israelites searched for that perfect lamb, this is what they should have been thinking about. They should have been thinking about their own life. This perfect lamb that I am looking for is a substitute for me. I need a perfect lamb because my heart and soul are not without blemish. They are not even good enough. This yearly search should have been a time to reflect on their own sin and failure. But also, a time to look ahead to the coming of the true Passover lamb who would wash away their sins. Our Christmas rituals should also be a reflection on the coming of the Passover lamb and the reason that we need him.

As we seek a perfect Christmas we should remember that a perfect Christmas comes through Jesus Christ.

At this time of year, we spend a lot of time, trying to find the perfect tree or the perfect gift, perfect decorations, or the perfect Christmas dinner. We often feel like if we can make everything perfect then we will have the perfect Christmas. How much time do we spend seeking the perfect heart?

A perfect Christmas does not come from a perfect present, it comes from a perfect heart and a perfect tongue. To put it another way, when your heart is loving and forgiving and when your tongue speaks words that are gracious and pleasant, then you will have a merry and bright Christmas. If your heart is angry and your tongue bitter, the holidays will be without cheer regardless of how perfect the tree or the presents.

Proverbs 16:24 Pleasant words are like a honeycomb, Sweetness to the soul and health to the bones.

The problem is that a perfect heart is harder to find than a perfect tree. If God gave us a Christmas tree that represented our hearts it would be worse looking than the one Charlie Brown picked out. This is why God himself chose a lamb without blemish to take the place of our sinful heart.

When John the Baptist saw Jesus coming, he said, "**Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.**"

What does it mean that Jesus is the Lamb of God? It means that just as each Israelite was supposed to choose a lamb for their family, Jesus is the lamb whom God has chosen. Year after year the Israelites searched for the perfect lamb, now in the fullness of time God has chosen the only perfect lamb. The bloods of the lambs of the Israelites painted on the door post caused the angel of death to Passover their house. But the blood of the Lamb which God has chosen has been painted on the cross has caused the angel of death to pass over the world.

God has chosen his Passover lamb. God has chosen the perfect gift for us, Jesus the Christ. Because of him we can have the perfect Christmas, even though our hearts are not perfect, for he has died for your sins. Because God has chosen the perfect Lamb for us, we can celebrate Christmas with joy, knowing our hearts are made whole in Him. Amen