

**Pictures of Passover**

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Good afternoon, everyone.

To being the sermon today I'd like you to do a little exercise. This will be a word association exercise. When I say the words "God is \_\_\_\_\_" what comes to your mind? I'd like you to write down three words that come to mind when you hear the phrase "God is." Don't overthink it, just write down the first three words that come to mind when you hear the phrase "God is." I'll give you a minute to do that.

Okay, so what did you write down? What words came to your mind? Who would like to give me a word that you wrote down?

I wanted to do that exercise to illustrate a point. And the point is that all of us here are used to thinking like Greeks. By that, I mean that Western civilization is based on education and thinking and thought processes that go back to the Roman Empire and before that to the Greeks. That's what I mean when I say that today we think like Greeks. We think in terms like those mentioned—God is love, God is almighty, God is powerful, God is great, and so on. These are abstract terms—terms that you can't touch or taste or feel or see.

But if you were in Israel and asked a Jew to do this same exercise, you would get answers like God is my **rock**, God is my **fortress**, God is my **shepherd**, and so on. We see this especially in the Psalms, where we see phrases like this used regularly. That's a big difference between the Western or Greek thinking that we're used to and the Eastern or Hebrew thinking that is reflected in a lot of the Bible. Greek thinking is more about *abstract concepts* and Hebrew thinking is a lot about *pictures or word pictures*. And the Bible is full of pictures and word pictures.

Five weeks from tomorrow night we will be gathering to observe a ceremony that in many ways is all about pictures. That ceremony is, of course, the Passover. What comes to your mind when you think about the Passover? Probably such things as **lambs**, **blood on doorposts**, **footwashing**, **unleavened bread and wine**. All of these are *pictures*—things we can touch, taste, feel and see. All of these are symbols with important lessons to teach us.

In the sermon today I would like to explore this concept of pictures that teach us about Passover and the sacrifice of our Savior Jesus Christ. That's why I'm titling today's sermon "**Pictures of Passover**." I've already mentioned a few of these pictures of Passover, and we're familiar with what they represent. The **blood on the doorposts**, which reminds us of the plagues that struck Egypt and God's breakfast deliverance of the Israelites from slavery. **The lambs**, which were slain so that God would pass over the Israelites and spare them from death. **The foot washing**, showing us the need to have a humble and serving attitude. **The unleavened bread**, symbolizing the bruised and beaten body of Jesus Christ. And the **small cup of wine**, symbolizing His blood shed for us. These are all *pictures*.

It's obvious from these examples that **God uses pictures** to teach us important lessons. God uses these pictures as *teaching tools* for us to help us understand important concepts. We've all heard the saying that a picture is worth a thousand words, and God knows that too. That's why we see

pictures and symbols used quite often in the Bible.

Another important aspect of pictures is that pictures are often far better at *reaching the heart*. In our Western thinking are used to using a lot of words to reach the head first and the heart, but in the Bible God often uses pictures to reach the heart first and then the head—the other way around from what we’re used to.

In today’s sermon we’ll go through some other pictures of Passover that we’re probably not so familiar with. But they are pictures that teach us about other aspects of the Passover and Jesus Christ’s sacrifice for us that we don’t necessarily hear about every year—or maybe we’ve never heard about them. These are pictures that in many cases would have been easily understood in the culture of that day, but today we’re several thousand years removed from that culture and miss the point of what God was conveying through those pictures and symbols. And by going through these today I hope to help us all better understand the significance of Passover and Christ’s sacrifice and what that means for all of us.

I’d like to start with a picture found in the last book of the Bible, in **Revelation 13:8**. Breaking into the story flow, we read of **“the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.”** This is a major, if not *the* major, theme of the Bible—that Jesus Christ, the **Lamb of God**, who *was* God and was *with* God, came to earth to give His life as a sacrifice for our sins that we might be forgiven and reconciled to the Father and to inherit the Kingdom prepared for us as part of a plan that was formulated from before the world itself was created. We’ll see this theme or parts of this theme repeated in the other pictures we’ll be covering today.

So we see that this theme of a sacrifice for our sins actually begins before the world and the first human beings, Adam and Eve, were created. God knew that by giving human beings freedom of choice, much of the time our choices would be wrong and would lead to suffering and death. So He knew that we would need a Savior and planned that from the beginning. And after Adam and Eve sinned, God said He would send the promised one who would bruise Satan’s head and whom Satan would bruise His heel. So even that far back we have a promise of a Savior who would die by crucifixion, having nails driven through His heels.

And archaeologists have found a skeleton of a man who was crucified at Jerusalem in the first century A.D. **This photo illustrates** how he was crucified. The object on the left is the man’s heel bone with the iron nail driven through it and the reproduction on the right shows how the man’s foot was fastened to the upright piece of wood by a nail driven through the heel bone. So this prophecy given in the time of Adam and Eve would be fulfilled in the crucifixion of the Messiah.

We find the theme of a sacrifice well before the book of Exodus and that first Passover we’re so familiar with. We actually find the theme about 400 years earlier with Abraham. Let’s notice this in **Genesis 12:1-3—**

**1 Now the LORD had said to Abram: “Get out of your country, from your family and from your father’s house, to a land that I will show you.**

**2 I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing.**

**3 I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”**

This is the first promise to Abraham. And we see here that Abraham was promised land, descendants and that all nations would be blessed through his Seed or descendant, the Messiah. So this is what God is going to do for Abraham: He’s going to give him land, descendants and by implication the Messiah. But what does Abraham have to do to receive these promises? Part of it is spelled out here—he has to leave his homeland and family and relocate to the Holy land—but he has to do something else as well. It’s not spelled out here, but it is spelled out in **Genesis 17:1-2—**

**1 When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless.**

**2 “And I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly.”** What was the condition Abraham had to meet? To be blameless. What does that mean? It means to be perfect or sinless. It’s the same thing Jesus Christ tells us we have to be in **Matthew 5:48—48 “Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.”**

But when and how was this covenant formalized? Notice **Genesis 15:18—**

**18 On the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram . . .**

But this is at the end of the story. The covenant being formalized is in the verses leading up to verse 18. Let’s go back to verse one of this chapter and see what leads up to this: **Genesis 15:1—**

**1 After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, “Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward.”**

Do you notice the pictures here that God uses to communicate with Abraham? God tells Abraham, **“I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward.”** He uses two pictures. He tells Abraham, **“I am your shield,”** meaning that God promises to be Abraham’s protector. God will watch over him and keep him safe from any enemies, in other words. And God also tells Abraham, **“I am your exceedingly great reward.”** To put it in modern terms, God is essentially telling Abraham that he has just won the lottery—that God will be his great prize, his huge pile of gold or wealth. God is using *pictures*.

Skipping down to verse five, God gives Abraham *another picture* to describe what He will do for Abraham. **Genesis 15:5—**

**5 Then He brought him outside and said, “Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.” And He said to him, “So shall your descendants be.”**

Did you catch the other picture God gave Abraham? **“Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them. So shall your descendants be.”**

So we see God communicating with Abraham with picture, picture, picture. And now, skipping down to verse nine, we come to another picture. It’s a picture that we read about and wonder what in the world is going on because we don’t understand the picture. But Abraham *did* understand the picture—a very profound picture. Let’s read about it.

**Genesis 15:9-18**

**9 So He said to him, “Bring Me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram [a sheep], a turtledove, and a young pigeon.”**

**10 Then he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, down the middle, and placed each piece opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds in two.**

**11 And when the vultures came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away.**

**12 Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, horror and great darkness fell upon him . . .** skipping down to verse 17—

**17 And it came to pass, when the sun went down and it was dark, that behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces.**

What do we notice about what is described here? **Let's start with the animals mentioned here.** What do they have in common? For one thing, they are all *clean* animals. What else do you notice about them? These are the animals that about 400 years later would be those used in the *sacrificial system* for ancient Israel—cattle, goats, sheep, doves and pigeons.

Notice something else here. What does God tell Abraham to do? God just tells Abraham to bring the animals. He doesn't tell him what to do with them. But obviously Abraham knows what he's supposed to do, because that's what he does in verse 10. Abraham **“cut them in two, down the middle, and placed each piece opposite the other.”**

What is going on? Let's look at a picture. **Here is an illustration of what is being described.** Abraham has cut the animals in two, splitting them down the middle, and placed the two halves facing each other with the blood from the two halves running down and pooling in the middle.

This is quite a gory scene with a lot of blood from the sacrificed cow, the goat, the sheep and the two birds. And as the sun is going down, Abraham goes into a deep sleep, and as we read, **“horror and great darkness fell upon him.”** This is a Hebrew expression meaning *he was terrified and scared to death*. So again, what's going on here? God knows, because He told Abraham to get the animals. And Abraham knows, because he knew what to do with the animals. But *we* don't know what's going on because we don't know what the customs were and we don't understand the picture.

So what is the picture? I learned what this meant from a teacher who has studied a great deal into Jewish history and culture and has made many trips to Israel going back several decades. As part of his studies into biblical culture, he spent quite a bit of time living with Arab Bedouin families in the desert. What is Abraham's culture? He's a desert nomad. He's a Bedouin. “Bedouin” is an Arabic word meaning someone who lives in the desert. It comes from the word *badu*, which is Arabic for “desert.” If you want to know how Abraham and Sarah lived, you can go to Israel, Jordan or Egypt and look at how the Bedouin live. They are still living the same way Abraham did 4,000 years ago.

This teacher told the story of how he witnessed a covenant ceremony like this being carried out today—nearly 4,000 years after what we read about here in Genesis. He described the ceremony this way. He was living with this large Bedouin family and one day he knew something unusual was up. He didn't speak Arabic so he didn't know what was going on and wouldn't find out until later. He noticed that on this particular afternoon everyone in this family started cleaning up and putting on their best clothing. And late in the afternoon another large Bedouin family arrived and they greeted each other warmly. They had a big meal together with everyone excitedly talking and enjoying themselves.

But after the sun had set and it grew dark, the mood changed and became very sober. The two fathers of the two families sat down beside each other before the fire and were talking in very serious tones. The teenaged son of one of the men and the daughter of the other were nearby and

the fathers were pointing and gesturing at them by the light of the fire, and it soon became obvious that they were negotiating a marriage covenant for their children. Then the two men stopped talking and someone brought a goat in from out of the darkness and stopped in front of the two fathers. They then took a knife and cut the throat of the goat and its blood poured out and formed a pool of blood there in front of the two men.

And then the father of the groom took off his sandals and splashed through the pool of blood to the other side. He stopped and waited, and then the other father did the same thing—took off his sandals and walked through the blood, with the blood splashing everywhere. The teacher found out later that this was called a *blood covenant*. But what did it mean?

The symbolism of each father walking through the blood was that they were saying, “If my son doesn’t keep up his end of the covenant—if he doesn’t prove to be a good husband and a good provider for his bride, *you may do this to me*—cut my throat and walk in my blood.”

And the other father was symbolically saying, “If my daughter doesn’t keep up her end of the covenant—if she isn’t a pure virgin and isn’t a good wife, *you may do this to me*—cut my throat and walk in my blood.”

That is an incredibly powerful picture. And from what this teacher explained, this actually does take place to this day. From time to time they will find a Bedouin father at the bottom of a desert wadi with his throat cut and footprints in his blood. The covenant was broken, and he paid the price that he had agreed to in that ceremony.

With that background, let’s reread **verse 17**—

**17 And it came to pass, when the sun went down and it was dark, that behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces.**

First a smoking “oven,” as it says here, passed between the animal halves. I don’t think “oven” is the best translation here. It sounds odd to us to have an oven moving around like this. As I mentioned before, Hebrew words tend to have a broad range of meanings, and that’s true here. The word basically means something that contains coals or fire. Because it is emphasized as **something that is smoking**, this seems to be referring to what is called a fire pot, which was a clay jar in which you would put hot coals overnight that you could then use to restart your fire the next morning by pouring out those coals on some sticks and straw and starting a fire. These were the days long before matches or bic lighters, and fire pots were commonly used for starting fires. And the coals would put off smoke as is described here.

What is smoke associated with in the Bible? Let’s notice a few scriptures:

**Exodus 19:18**—Mount Sinai was covered with smoke when God descended onto it.

**Isaiah 6:4**—The temple was filled with smoke when God came to it.

**Revelation 15:8**—The temple in heaven is filled with smoke from the glory of God.

**Joel 2:30 and Acts 2:19**—Pillars of smoke are a sign of the day of the Lord.

So what does this smoke represent? Obviously it represents God. When the smoking fire pot passes through this **bloody pool or path** between the animal halves, this is the first party to the covenant agreeing to the terms of the covenant and symbolically saying, “I love you Abraham. I

will give you land and descendants without number, and the Messiah will come through you. And if I don't live up to my part of this agreement, this is what you may do to Me." It's an incredibly powerful moment. God doesn't say a word. *It's all a picture.*

Now it's Abraham's turn. After the smoking fire pot moves between the pieces, what happens next? **A burning torch of fire** passes through. What is fire associated with the Bible? It's never associated with people, as we might expect since this is a covenant between God and man, Abraham. Again, Let's notice some scriptures. What is fire always a symbol of?

**Exodus 3:2—God appears to Moses through a burning bush.**

**Exodus 13:21—God leads the Israelites by a burning pillar of fire.**

**Exodus 24:17—God appears like a consuming fire on Mount Sinai.**

**Hebrews 12:29—Declares that “our God is a consuming fire.”**

So what does this fire represent? Obviously it represents God also.

So what's going on here? We have God, represented by a **smoking fire pot**, walking through this blood path, and normally Abraham, the other party to the covenant, would have walked through the blood next to signify his agreement to the terms of the covenant. But put yourself in Abraham's sandals in this situation. What is his obligation under this covenant? *He is supposed to be perfect.* But *he can't be perfect* because he's human.

He knows that as soon as he sets foot in that blood, he's as good as dead. He's a dead man. To set foot in that blood would have been to say, “If I don't keep my part of the covenant—to be perfect—you may do this to me.” He won't live to see his descendants. He won't live to receive the land he was promised. The promise of the Messiah won't come to pass because he will die childless. It's all about to be over.

And then, as Abraham is ready to step forward into the blood and sign His own death warrant, something completely unexpected happens. A **burning torch of fire** moves in front of him and passes through the blood in his place. What has happened? God the Father symbolically walked through the blood first to affirm the covenant and to assure that He would carry out His promises. **Then Abraham should have walked through the blood** next to show that he agreed to be perfect—sinless—to keep his end of the agreement. But how can he do that? He knows he can't be perfect. He knows he's a dead man if he sets foot in that blood.

And then the unexpected happens. God symbolically—in this case the being who would become Jesus Christ—takes Abraham's place. He walks through the blood knowing that Abraham cannot be perfect. He says, in this picture, “Abraham, if you and your descendants are not perfect, *you may do this to Me.*” And there is no question that they will sin because they are human. So He takes on Himself the penalty in Abraham's place. At that point the one who would become Jesus is *sentenced to death.* Again, not a word—*only a picture.* A very profound picture. A deeply meaningful picture. A picture of a God who loves us so much that He is willing to die for us.

Let that sink in. Could God die? Not as God, no. But if He became human, yes. So that Being had to become human to carry out that promise. And He would, about 900 years later, carry out that promise.

In the life of Abraham we find another important picture of Passover and Christ's sacrifice. We won't spend nearly as much time on this picture because it's one we're more familiar with and it's one that doesn't take a lot of background understanding to figure out what the picture is telling us. We find this picture in a few chapters later in **Genesis 22:1-14**—

**1** Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am."

**2** Then He said, "Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you."

**3** So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he split the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him.

**4** Then on the third day Abraham lifted his eyes and saw the place afar off.

**5** And Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you."

**6** So Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife, and the two of them went together.

**7** But Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." Then he said, "Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?"

Have you ever noticed these words here: "*Where is the lamb for a burnt offering?*" It's not where is the *calf* or where is the *goat* or where is the *dove*, it's "**where is the lamb?**" Here is a clear pointing forward to the Lamb of God Who will take away the sins of the world. And notice Abraham's response:

**8** And Abraham said, "My son, *God will provide for Himself the lamb* for a burnt offering." So the two of them went together.

**9** Then they came to the place of which God had told him. And Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order; and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, upon the wood.

**10** And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.

**11** But the Angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" So he said, "Here I am."

**12** And He said, "Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me."

**13** Then Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there behind him was a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son.

What's the picture that we see here? We see here a picture not so much to teach Abraham something, although this was the greatest test of Abraham's faith. But we actually see here a picture for us today and a picture for all mankind to teach us something. **What is the picture?** It's a picture of a father being willing to sacrifice his beloved son in Abraham being willing to sacrifice Isaac. And it's a picture of a son willing to give his life in submission to his father as Isaac was willing to submit to the will of his father Abraham.

But much more than that, it's a picture of *a loving God being willing to give what He loves most* in the entire universe, His beloved Son. And it is a picture of that beloved Son *being willing to*

*give up His life in submission to His Father's plan.* Again, it is a picture for us to show the incredible sacrifice of both the Father and the Son out of their love for us.

Notice also this interesting little PS to the story in verse 14:

**14 And Abraham called the name of the place, The-LORD-Will-Provide; as it is said to this day, "In the Mount of The LORD it shall be provided."**

What, specifically did God provide in this story? He provided the necessary sacrifice. He provided the *substitute* sacrifice.

There's actually considerably more to the story here that would play out in prophetic symbolism. The story takes place on a mountain in a land called what? *Moriah*. In Jewish teaching and tradition, and I believe this is correct, this took place on Mount Mariah. Where is Mount Moriah? Mount Moriah is *the Temple Mount* on which the temples of Solomon and later of Herod the Great would be built. This would be the temple where millions of lambs and other animals would die foreshadowing the great sacrifice of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. This is where God would *provide* the ultimate *substitute sacrifice* for the world—fulfilling the name Abraham had given the mountain.

Moving forward about four centuries from Abraham's time, we come to the picture of Passover that we're very familiar with. Because we are quite familiar with this picture we won't spend much time on it, but we do need to include it today. We find this picture in **Exodus 12:1-14**—

**1 Now the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, . . .**

**3 'On the tenth day of this month every man shall take for himself a lamb . . .**

**5 'Your lamb shall be without blemish . . .**

**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. . .**

**11 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.**

**14 'So this day shall be to you a memorial; and you shall keep it as a feast to the LORD throughout your generations. You shall keep it as a feast by an everlasting ordinance.**

Again, it's a picture. Very powerful picture. The **picture of a lamb** by whose shed blood we are spared the death penalty and not condemned to death like those in the world around us. By accepting that sacrifice, and obeying God's instruction regarding that sacrifice, we are spared from death. The picture of the symbolism of the **Passover lamb** is that death passes over us by the lamb slain in our place.



Not long after this we come to another picture. After the Exodus, under Moses' leadership, God instituted the sacrificial system that pointed to an ultimate sacrifice to come. That is a huge subject we don't have time to cover today, but I will mention just a few points. One of these is that the sacrificial system wasn't to forgive sin, but was a *reminder* of God's promises that He would pay for their sin. Notice what we read in **Hebrews 10:1-4**—

**1 For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect.**

This is talking here about the tabernacle and temple sacrifices that were offered day after day year after year. The sacrifices could never make those came to the tabernacle in the temple perfect or sinless.

**2 For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins.**

**3 But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year.**

**4 For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.**

So we see that **the sacrifices were not to take away sins**, but instead were a reminder of God's promise to take away sins. And as a reminder of sins, they were a reminder that we need a Savior to take away the sins so that we can receive God's forgiveness. This is what those millions and millions of bulls and heifers and sheep and goats and lambs and doves and pigeons were a picture of—the fact that we need a Savior to take away our sins so that we can receive God's forgiveness. It's a picture that God impressed on the Israelites for about 15 centuries, not counting the time they were in exile.

Let's now look at another aspect of the sacrificial system that we read about in **Numbers 28:1-6**, and that is the morning and afternoon sacrifices.

**1 Now the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,**

**2 “Command the children of Israel, and say to them, ‘My offering, My food for My offerings made by fire as a sweet aroma to Me, you shall be careful to offer to Me at their appointed time.’**

**3 “And you shall say to them, ‘This is the offering made by fire which you shall offer to the LORD: two male lambs in their first year without blemish, day by day, as a regular burnt offering.**

**4 ‘The one lamb you shall offer in the morning, the other lamb you shall offer in the evening [or afternoon] . . .**

**6 ‘It is a regular burnt offering which was ordained at Mount Sinai for a sweet aroma, an offering made by fire to the LORD.**

Either by instruction or interpretation or tradition, the Jewish practice was to carry out the morning and evening sacrifices at 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. Here, too, the sacrifices were carried out every morning and every afternoon at these times for centuries—except for those times when the Israelites had apostacized or no longer had their temple or control of it. To this day many Jews have watches that will sound a quiet alarm at nine in the morning and three in the afternoon to remind them of these sacrifice times and of God's promise to take away sins.

In Christ's day these morning and afternoon sacrifices had evolved into quite an elaborate ceremony. Every day this was to be done—weekday and Sabbath day, Holy Day or regular day, rain or shine, hot or cold, good weather or bad, these sacrifices were to be offered daily at the temple. The ceremony went like this. As nine in the morning or three in the afternoon approached, the priest would stand by the altar with a lamb and a knife to its throat. Another priest with a shofar, a trumpet made of a ram or ibex horn, would stand at the corner of the temple complex overlooking most of the city of Jerusalem. Here's what that looked like. The Temple and the altar in front of it are here, and the priest with the shofar would be here, high above the city so that the entire city could hear when he sounded the shofar. Here's what it looked like from ground level. From ground level to where the priest stood with the shofar was probably well over 100 feet so he could be seen and hear from just about anywhere in the city.

Down in the temple courts would be another person watching a sundial. He would count down on the sundial the time to 9 o'clock or 3 o'clock and then he would signal the priest with a shofar and priest with the lamb and the knife. The one priest would sound the shofar over the city to signal the sacrifice and the other priest would then cut the throat of the lamb is a reminder of God's promise to remove their sins. Everyone in the city of about 80,000 people stood silent at this moment to remember God's promise. The sound of the shofar went like this—**SHOFAR**

Let's now step back into the first century. It's the middle of the week, a Wednesday. The city of Jerusalem has swelled from its normal 80,000 to hundreds of thousands of people who are there for the Passover in the feast of unleavened bread. In the hustle and bustle of the beginning of the feast most people hadn't noticed it, but that morning three men had been nailed to crucifixion beams outside the city walls alongside one of the main roads leading into the city. We see this in **Mark 15:25—**

**25 Now it was the third hour, and they crucified Him.**

What was the third hour? They counted hours of the day starting at sunrise. The third hour is 9 a.m.—the time of the morning sacrifice. The time when the shofar sounds and the lamb is slain to remind the people of God's promise to take away sins.

Now it's approaching 3 o'clock in the afternoon. Outside the city walls, life is draining away from the three men being crucified. The one in the middle is much worse off than the other two. He has been brutally scourged before being crucified and He has suffered greatly from pain and thirst and loss of blood. He is minutes away from the inevitable.

In the temple court yard a man diligently watches the shadow move across the sundial. It's three minutes until 3 o'clock—the ninth hour, as Luke tells us. And it's two minutes until 3 o'clock. Then one minute. Then it's time. The man at the sundial gives the signal. The priest with the shofar looks out over the crowded city of Jerusalem, takes a deep breath, and blows—**SHOFAR**

At the altar, the priest puts his knife to the throat of the lamb and draws it across. And outside the city walls, where three men are being crucified, the man in the middle raises His head, looks to His Abba, and with His dying breath shouts with all the strength He can muster, "*It is finished!*"

*Just like His Father promised.* What was finished? Yes, His long pain and suffering over many hours was finished. Yes, His life was finished. But it was more than that. He was saying, “it’s over, it’s done, it’s all finished, I paid the blood You promised **1900 years earlier.**”

And with those words and with that sacrifice He tied together the entire Bible *in one picture*. You could write books about it. You could write millions of words about this. You could write thousands of songs. But no amount of words can describe the power of the picture of the blood of God dripping into the dust—like He promised—to pay for my sins and your sins.

And for almost 1500 years that had been done every single day at 9 in the morning and 3 in the afternoon. The Gospels tell us that He was crucified beginning at 9 and He died at 3—just as the **lambs were sacrificed**. And on this particular day, just as thousands of Passover lambs were starting to be sacrificed, as Josephus tells us. God is a God of pictures. It is the picture that speaks to the heart. And He wants to touch our hearts through these pictures. Hopefully He has touched your heart today with these pictures. Hopefully this will help you understand the profound pictures He gives us of Passover.