

THE LAW OF LOVE

a Holy Week study from Hosanna Revival

by Jill Dreyer

THE LAW OF LOVE

a Holy Week study

Text copyright © 2024 by Jill Dreyer

Design copyright © 2024 by Hosanna Revival

Published by Hosanna Revival in Cincinnati, Ohio.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publisher, except as provided for by U.S. copyright law.

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Cover design: Hosanna Revival



Welcome! I am so glad you are here. I have prayed for you as a reader: that the Word of God would come alive to you in a new way, that you would come to know the Lord more deeply, and finally, that through those things, you can experience Holy Week and the celebration of our risen Savior more richly. I hope this devotional empowers you to approach the Bible, even the tricky parts, and feel equipped and welcomed to learn, experience, and apply God's Word.

The Bible is one continuous story from start to end, God's perfect Plan A. At first glance, one might notice that it is made up of sixty-six books, all written in different time periods, languages, literary styles, and by various authors—and most apparent are the two distinct sections, the Old and New Testaments. In reading the Bible, one might think that the Old Testament was a rough draft, and God just changed his mind, made a Plan B, and introduced a new character in the New Testament. It might even appear that God himself changed from a wrathful, legalistic egomaniac who never got enough praise from humans into the person of Jesus: meek and lowly, ready to give his life up for mankind.

In closer study, however, the Bible is a beautiful story of a loving, good, and altogether worthy Lord, who loves his people and creation so much that he desires to be with them and bless them with his presence. The story of the Old Testament is one that establishes the greatness of God and the unworthiness of his people. Even so, God makes a covenant with his people, a promise that he will create a way to be their God despite the gaping space between them. Because of the sinful state of the Israelites, the covenant comes with laws required of them in order to be right with God. Yet they are unable to uphold their end of the covenant due to the debilitating power of sin. Jesus was born into this world, not only fulfilling the prophecies, but to fulfill the law itself and show how it points us toward him. Jesus' life,

death, and resurrection was what we needed to be delivered from sin and death in order to experience his promise. The Old and New Testaments are not contrasting or conflicting; one or the other is not in error. They work together to tell the beautiful story of God fulfilling his promise to be with his people.

What to Expect

In this devotional, we will examine *some* aspects of the law and how they apply to Christ's life, death, and resurrection. This is a non-exhaustive study of a very exhaustive law. Some of the examples we will explore are specific laws, some are instructions, some are major themes, some are only covered by a handful of verses, and of course, there are many that we will not cover at all. Each example will illustrate how the law ultimately points to Jesus. Each day we will explore how they connect to Jesus as he paved the way for the Lord's presence to rest with his people.

We will be discussing our sin and unworthiness (prior to Jesus dying to declare us worthy) a lot in the coming week. How this sits with you will be indicative of where you are in your faith journey. If you get stuck sitting in shame and the weight of sin, make sure to read and rest in the story of Christ. Wrestling with and questioning God can be healthy, but if you feel that it is shaking your assurance in your salvation or the goodness of God, work through this week alongside a fellow believer or mentor. If you do not see your sin, or maybe think something along the lines of "Sure, I am not perfect, but am I that bad?" then pray for your eyes to be open to the greatness, magnitude, and love of God. The more you know God, the more you will realize the expanse of this love—the love of a perfect God offered to imperfect people.

*The love of
a perfect God
offered to imperfect
people*

How to Read This

Each day, there will be Old Testament passages for you to read, followed by some contextual explanation. Then you will read New Testament Scripture, with content to connect the two sections together. I invite you to pause after each Scripture reading to reflect on your own prior to reading my words. If you have extra time, you may read multiple translations or read the chapters before or following my selection. Some of the Scripture might be passages you have read a hundred times, making it easy to gloss over. Other verses might seem irrelevant to our modern Christian faith, also making it tempting to skim past. Let yourself be challenged and spend time seeking their significance.

Next, you will find some questions prompting you to reflect, journal, discuss, or pray. My hope is that each day's Scripture will evoke a response in you. Perhaps your response will be one of worship and awe, a softening of your heart for the Lord. Or maybe you will be filled with more questions than you had before. Can I invite you into that? Remember Jesus' words in Matthew: ask, seek, and knock (Matthew 7:7-8). He wants you to come to him, even in your wrestling, doubt, and questioning.

Scripture

Exodus 6:7

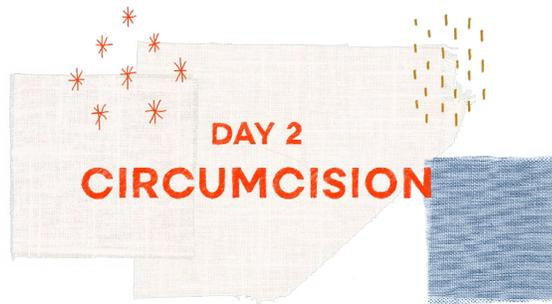
Today's Scripture is short, but it will be the heart of our study this week. This is a promise, echoed in a variety of ways throughout the Old Testament. Specifically, it is repeated at least twenty-eight times. I invite you to read some of the other variations of this promise: Exodus 29:45-46, Leviticus 26:11-13, Deuteronomy 29:13, Jeremiah 31:33; 24:7, and Ezekiel 11:20.

Paraphrased simply, God says, "I will be your God and you will be my people." It is a promise of the Lord's presence with his people. God created his very own treasured people to walk and commune with, as he did in the garden of Eden with Adam and Eve. Because of their sin, however, they were separated from God and his presence. God's plan from the beginning was to be with his people, and as we will see, this plan is fulfilled in the resurrection of Christ.

*I will be
your God and
you will be
my people*

Reflect

01. What was your very first reaction to today's verse?
02. Journal about why you think that may have been your reaction.
03. In many of the verses that recite this promise, the Lord reminds the listener, "I am the God who brought you out of Egypt" (ex: Exodus 29:45-46). In doing so, God asks us to remember his faithfulness. As we engage in challenging Scripture that causes us to wrestle, it is important to remember God's goodness. Write down some of the good truths you know about the Lord. Remember the things that lead you into worship of him. What is particularly impactful to you about God in your faith right now?



Old Testament Scripture

Genesis 17:3–14

We will be talking a lot about covenants and laws in this study, so it is important to go back to the original covenant between God and Abraham. There are a few things to note about these verses. First, God is promising Abraham descendants—countless descendants. A few verses prior, the Lord even says to Abraham, “Look up into the sky and count the stars if you can. That’s how many descendants you will have!” (Genesis 15:5). Yet, an important part of this story to remember is that Abraham is approaching old age and his wife, Sarah, is barren and they have no children. Next, God promises the land of Canaan to Abraham (Genesis 15:12–21). Finally, God promises to be their God: “I will always be your God and the God of your descendants after you . . . and I will be their God” (Genesis 17:7–8). Not only does God promise to be their God three times, but it resembles the promise we read yesterday in Exodus 6:7—the promise of his presence. In this covenant, God is establishing his people (Abraham’s countless descendants), his place (the land of Canaan, where Jerusalem and his temple will eventually be built), and his very presence.

If you have ever rented an apartment or held a job, you are familiar with contracts. A contract indicates the service provided or expectation of one or both parties. All contracts require a signature, an indication that you will abide by the contract. Similarly, God requires a signature from Abraham, as well as his eventual descendants, in the form of circumcision. Why circumcision? Not only does it physically and permanently mark his people as his own, binding them into a covenant with him, it also shows the very consequence of not abiding in the covenant. In a 2015 sermon entitled,

“Life and Prosperity, Death and Destruction,”¹ Tim Keller said, “What’s the curse of the covenant? To be cut off!” Circumcision is a physical mark of a spiritual distance or “cutting off” his people will experience if they walk away from the covenant. Today, circumcision is a fairly common practice, but at the time, Abraham and his descendants were among few people practicing it. It is one of the ways God set his people apart from surrounding nations; it marked his people as his own.

New Testament Scripture

Romans 2:25–29; Galatians 3:8–9; Galatians 4:21–31

In Romans 2:25–29, Paul explains the place circumcision holds in the church after the resurrection of Christ. More specifically that, in and of itself, it does not achieve salvation. In the same way a signature on a contract does not actually ensure that all parties will adhere to the contract, circumcision did not ensure that the Jews would follow the law. In fact, Paul is drawing on Old Testament Scripture that looks to a time when circumcision will be marked on their hearts.

Jeremiah 9:25–26 says, “A time is coming, says the Lord, when I will punish all those who are circumcised in body but not in spirit.” The Israelites knew their sin prevented them from a true circumcised heart, leading them to break the covenant, so they looked toward a time when their hearts would be circumcised. As prophesied later in Jeremiah 31:33–34:

*I will put
my instructions
deep within them*

“I will put my instructions deep within them, and I will write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. And they will not need to teach their neighbors, nor will they teach their relatives, saying ‘You should know the Lord.’ For everyone, from the least to the greatest, will know me already.”

How sweet to know, without a physical reminder, of the deep love and presence of the Lord. An external circumcision was always meant to point to a circumcision of the heart.

In our Old Testament reading, we learned that God establishes Abraham’s descendants as his people and promises them the land of Canaan. Within these verses, however, God highlights that Abraham lives in Canaan now as a foreigner (Genesis 17:8). He also orders that even the foreign-born servants in their households be circumcised. In Galatians 3:8-9, Scripture reveals that God intentionally used this command to foreshadow a day that

¹ The Gospel Coalition, “Tim Keller | Why Circumcision?” YouTube, April 13, 2015, video, 3:53, [youtube.com/watch?v=IiOJISWS_xQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IiOJISWS_xQ).

he would use his people to bless those outside of the bloodline. Remember, God said that he was going to make Abraham a father of *many* nations.

There is beautiful symbolism here. Throughout the story of the Israelites, there are many times when they are foreigners, travelers, or even exiles away from their land. This helps us to remember that we are *all* foreigners to the kingdom of heaven. None of us belong there or should have citizenship. Yet, God wants us there. His blessing extends to all nations, through his covenant people.

In Galatians 4:21–31, Paul reminds us of the story of Abraham. In the chapters following Genesis 17, Abraham and Sarah, in their unbelief that they will conceive a son, come up with a plan for Abraham to produce an heir with their slave, Hagar. Only later does Sarah become pregnant by Abraham, revealing God’s faithfulness. Even so, the two women and their sons, as Paul shows us, are an illustration of slavery to the law when we try to fulfill God’s plans out of our own efforts (Hagar) and freedom from the law when we trust in God’s faithfulness (Sarah).

Christ has truly set us free

But God promised that among Abraham’s descendants there would be “many nations, and kings will be among them!” (Genesis 17:6). There were indeed many kings in his lineage, all leading to the one true King, Jesus. It was not by human effort, but in God’s plan, that Christ would be born—not from the man Joseph, but by the Spirit in Mary to come and fulfill the law so we could be free from it. Our circumcised heart is not possible without Christ’s death and resurrection, freeing us from the shackles of sin. Paul continues in Galatians 5:1 saying, “So Christ has truly set us free. Now make sure that you stay free, and don’t get tied up again in slavery to the law.”

Reflect

01. Are there any sins to which you feel enslaved—sins that you routinely struggle against or that leave you feeling discouraged or shameful?
02. On this side of heaven, we are not free from sinning, but we are free from the power sin holds on us. How can we find a balance between not being enslaved to sin (working out of our own willpower to flee it) but not willingly indulging in it?
03. Are there sins that you know are wrong but internally struggle to understand why? Do you ever think, “I love the Lord, but do



Old Testament Scripture

Exodus 25:10–22; Exodus 16:33–35; Numbers 17:1–10

Exodus 25 is one of those passages that is easy to skim over; after all, do we really need to know the dimensions, materials, and decor plans for the tabernacle? Maybe not, but the bigger picture is important. God is telling Moses, down to the nitty-gritty details, how to create the place where his very presence will linger. How could mere men possibly create something worthy of housing our great, holy God, who created the entire universe? They could not. So, God had to give exact directions *and* specifically equip certain people with the talents to follow them. In Exodus 31:3–6, God says, “I have filled him with the Spirit of God, giving him great wisdom, ability, and expertise in all kinds of crafts. . . . I have given special skill to all the gifted craftsmen so they can make all the things I have commanded you to make.” Further, it reveals God’s character as creator. Surely he put that same level of detail into creation, and then some. And if that is true, imagine how much more detail and beauty he has put into our eternal home, which we will share *with* the Creator!

Within these details, the purpose of the ark of the covenant is revealed. In Exodus 25:22, the Lord says, “I will meet you there and talk to you from above the atonement cover.” The ark of the covenant was the resting place of the Lord’s presence, the very place where he spoke to Moses and the line of Levite priests.

There is another detail I want you to keep in mind: Read Exodus 25:12–15 again. It describes poles that are to be inserted into the sides of the ark and never removed. The purpose of these poles, as described, is for carrying the ark as the Israelites traveled in the wilderness before coming into their promised land. The tabernacle and everything in it had to move with them

whenever the Lord guided them to a new camp. The ark required carrying poles because men were not allowed to touch the ark itself. Remember, the ark was the place of the Lord's presence; no man was worthy to touch it. If someone touched the ark, they would immediately perish.

In each of the Old Testament Scriptures we read today, we see *what* God instructs Moses to put inside the ark. Given that it is called the ark of the covenant, it should not be a surprise that the Lord instructs Moses to put the “stone tablets inscribed with the terms of the covenant” (Exodus 25:16) inside the ark. Moses will not receive the stones until later in the story of Exodus, but God himself writes his commandments on the tablets. In *Ten Words to Live By*, Jen Wilkin writes, “an ancient people in a distant land were given the *aseret hadevarim*, the Ten Words” (page 11). Those tablets are not only God's law for his people, but also his very words. God's word put humans into existence, his breath gave us breath. We live by his word. The *aseret hadevarim* were given at a time when the Israelites were in the wilderness, learning how to be God's people. Obeying these laws kept them right with the Lord; it was how they could be near his presence.

*his breath
gave us breath*

The next item in the ark was mentioned before the instructions for the ark were even given (Exodus 16:33–35). Manna was the daily food God provided for the Israelites in the desert. The manna arrived each morning and disappeared each day, showing them that God meets their needs and sustains their lives each new day.

The final item in the ark, Aaron's budding staff, is a symbol of God's choice of the line of Levi to be the priests, the only ones authorized to meet with God and come into his presence. So, housed inside the ark are God's word, his food, and the rod of his authority.

New Testament Scripture

John 1:1–4, 14; John 6:29–40; John 19:17–19

The stone tablets containing God's commandments did not just show the Israelites how to live moral and upright lives, they were the way God's people had to live in order to be united to him. When we do not follow God's commandments, we distance ourselves from him. We make ourselves unholy, incapable of entering into communion with a holy God. Yet, even with explicit instructions, the Israelites failed (just as we do) to follow them, maintaining the chasm between God and his people.

This was not news to God; he knew from the *very* beginning, as we see here in John 1:1, that we would need something beyond ourselves and our

ability to follow the law to make it possible for us to be near him. From the beginning, that was Jesus, the fulfillment of the law on our behalf. Jesus was the Word of God given to his people. Through the law, we find death in our inability to make ourselves righteous enough to be united to the Lord, but through Jesus, the Word of Life, we find life and access to our holy God.

Jesus was the Word of God given to his people

John 6:29-40 takes place the day after Jesus fed five thousand people with just five loaves of bread and two fish.

Jesus even tells the crowd, “You are seeking me for food, not because you know who I am” (John 6:26, author’s paraphrase). In these verses, God is calling his followers to believe in him. It is also important to remember Jesus has just fed the five thousand because the people had asked him for a sign—just like Moses fed the Israelites with manna—and did he not do just that? Jesus provides bread for the people in the same way God did. The manna was placed in the ark to remind the Israelites how God had sustained them. Now, Jesus tells the crowd, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry again” (John 6:35). Jesus came down from heaven and sustains us—in the same way the manna had—but he will bring us into eternal life.

Finally, in John 19:17-19, we see Jesus’ crucifixion on the cross. In Genesis, Adam and Eve eat from a delicious, living tree, leading humanity into sin and death. Now we see Jesus hanging from a dead tree, paving the way for humanity to live eternal life free from sin with our Father. Let’s remember the third item in the ark of the covenant: Aaron’s rod.

Jesus came down from heaven and sustains us

The rod is a symbol of a tree once again, this time a dead one, yet with blooms of almonds. This indicated the priestly line, the only ones authorized to approach the ark, where God’s presence was found. Jesus, who was with the Father in the beginning, was the only one truly worthy of coming into the Lord’s presence, but instead descended into the death we deserved, separated from God, so that we could have eternal life with him. Just like Aaron’s rod, the cross was a dead tree, with the promise of life hanging on it.

The ark held God’s Word, his bread, and his rod. Jesus is the Word of Life, Bread of Life, and Tree of Life. When man was unable to touch the ark, Christ made it possible for us to rest in the presence of God, and for God to be among his people.

Reflect

01. Second Samuel 6 tells a story about a man who reached out his hand to steady the ark and was immediately struck down. When you hear about this, what are your initial feelings?
02. How can this change your approach to God's Word, prayer, or worship?



Old Testament Scripture

Leviticus 13:45–46; Numbers 5:1–4

When was the last time you read Leviticus? I would venture to guess it has been a while. It is not the most engaging book of the Bible. Leviticus is the job description of the levitical priests. Among these jobs includes the duty to declare people “clean” or “unclean.” There are many things that could make a person unclean, such as touching a dead body or blood. Our Scripture today is found at the tail end of a much longer description of the process of how a person with various afflictions of the skin is declared clean or unclean. If you were to go back and read all of Leviticus 13, it might remind you of the plans to build the tabernacle and the ark from yesterday: repetitive and challenging to stay focused on. Let’s remind ourselves that this is the Word of God and his words are intentional and purposeful.

Instead of reading all of chapter 13, however, I only listed two verses for you to read. They happen to be among the more challenging verses of the chapter. They describe the fate and requirements of those with various skin diseases. Not only are they afflicted with painful, unsightly sores, rashes, and burns, but they must wear battered clothing, leave their heads uncovered, cover their mouths (so they do not spit on others), call out “Unclean! Unclean!” as they walk by people, and on top of all that, live in isolation on the outside of the camp. In fewer words, they are humiliated and exiled. Why would God let this happen to his people, the ones he has chosen, loved, and called his own? Could he not just heal them instead of making them outcasts?

Numbers 5:4 helps us to understand: “Remove them so they will not defile the camp in which I live among them.” On a very practical note, maybe God did not want them to infect others. But remember, the presence of God rested at the center of the camp. This rule more than likely was a product of compassion, set in place to protect those suffering from infections. It instructs them to approach the holy, yet dangerous, presence of the Lord cautiously. Remember, even the levitical priests had to follow strict rules about how to live and what they can and cannot do prior to entering the tabernacle in order to stay clean. So it makes sense that those who were unclean were required to live further from him.

This reminds me of Genesis 3:23 when God banished Adam and Eve from the garden after eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Previously, God walked in the garden of Eden with Adam and Eve; they enjoyed unhindered communion with him. When they sinned, they were banished from his presence. Genesis 3:24 says, “After sending them out, the Lord God stationed mighty cherubim to the east of the Garden of Eden.” If we think back to yesterday’s description of the ark in Exodus 25, we notice there are two cherubim placed on the atonement cover to protect it. The cherubim protect the Lord’s presence from those who are unworthy to experience it.

Still, is it in the character of God to push the sick and unworthy away from him? When engaging in Scripture like this that we have to wrestle with, it is important to remember the truths we know about God. Look back to the truths you journaled about in Day 1 to remember God’s character.

New Testament Scripture

Luke 5:12–14; Luke 17:11–19

The beauty of the Old Testament is that it is not the end of the story. Even when God gave these instructions to Moses, he knew he would send his Son not only to heal the sick, but to save them from their sin. Those Levitical laws show us what we deserve because we are *all* unclean and *none of us* are worthy enough to be near to the glory of God. Romans 3:23 says, “For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard.” The burns, rashes, boils, and swelling are an external representation of a spiritual disease. If you have ever read *The Portrait of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde, you will notice that the story illustrates this well. It is the story of a man who maintains his youth and beauty while living in darkness and crime. Yet hidden in his attic is a portrait of him that ages, deteriorates, and shows every evil he has committed. Our bodies often mask the sin we commit in our hearts.

In Luke 5, we see a different story. Jesus, the living, breathing, physical presence of God, not only talks to and comes near to the man with a skin disease, but he *touches* him. The man was healed and Jesus told him to go to the priest, as is stated in the law, to be declared clean. While the law would have required this man to be further from the Lord's presence, Jesus' physical touch tore down the barrier, paving the way for him to return to the temple and commune with the Lord.

Jesus, the living, breathing, physical presence of God

In Luke 17, Jesus does not even need to touch people with skin conditions, his words alone heal them. Notice that only one of these men comes back to thank and praise him, and Luke notes that this man is a Samaritan. I think this points back to God's heart for the foreigner. We are all unclean and foreign to the kingdom of heaven, but God sent Jesus down to absorb our sin—just like Dorian Gray's portrait—so that we may appear clean before the Lord.

Reflect

01. The topic of our sin and unworthiness can make us uncomfortable. Being reminded of our distance from God can lead us into questioning his love for us. But we cannot stop there. Remembering these things should bring us into deeper awe of his love because we are so undeserving. What Christ has done for us can be summed up in Ephesians 2:13: "Once you were far away from God, but now you have been brought near to him through the blood of Christ." He closed that distance between you and God. Take note of your response to today's Scripture and content.
02. What are some next steps you could take based on your response? Perhaps you need to talk to a friend and fellow believer to work through your wrestling. Maybe you need to come to the Lord in repentance or with worship.



Old Testament Scripture:

Deuteronomy 21:15–17; Genesis 25:29–33; 1 Samuel 16:1–13

Birthright and inheritance are common themes throughout the Old Testament and, as you read in Deuteronomy 21, there were strict rules surrounding them. Being the firstborn son was important, it meant inheriting a double portion compared to his brothers. That required a lot of responsibility, most likely taking over his father's business, carrying on the name and bloodline, and becoming the patriarch of the family. A second or third born son would likely either stay in the family and serve the eldest or would break off and start a new family line. As families grew, there might not be space for all the sons to stay. Being firstborn came with obvious advantages.

Yet, God often worked out of birth order. Throughout Jesus' genealogy, the line often shifts. The bloodline passes from Adam to his third son, Seth. A few days ago we read about Ishmael and Isaac: the sons of Abraham, born of Hagar and Sarah, respectively. Ultimately, the bloodline continued through Isaac, the second born. Jacob passes his blessing on to Judah, his second son, instead of Reuben because of Reuben's sin. Today's passages are the stories of Jacob stealing Esau's birthright and David, the youngest of all his brothers, being anointed as king.

The stories of Abraham and Jacob seem to contradict each other. In an attempt to fulfill God's promise himself, Abraham had a son with Hagar. Only later did he fulfill God's promise by having a son with his wife, Sarah. If the law had been provided at the time of Abraham, Ishmael would have been the rightful son as the firstborn, not Isaac. Because it was out of Abraham's own works, however, the birthright and bloodline did not go through Ishmael.

The opposite seems to be true of Jacob. Once again, we see someone, out of their own willpower, trying to take what does not yet belong to them. Jacob not only convinces Esau to give away his birthright, but a few chapters later, he deceives Isaac and steals Esau's blessing. The story is long, but God does eventually bless Jacob, despite taking what is not his. In doing so, he renamed Jacob Israel, "because you have fought with God and man and have won" (Genesis 32:20). This will become the story of the Israelites: wrestling with God, and God giving his blessing anyway. So, in one story God does not follow the path man made, but in the other story, he does.

In other cases, God makes his choice out of order. In the story of David, Samuel was called by the Lord to find and anoint the next king of Israel; once again, instead of working through the bloodline of Saul and anointing Saul's son Jonathan, he picks someone unexpected. Samuel is told to go to the house of Jesse, and Jesse is instructed to bring his sons together. Samuel starts with the eldest son, tall and handsome: "Surely this is the Lord's anointed!" (1 Samuel 16:6). But no, God had not chosen the first son—the deserving and strong one. Neither did he choose the second, third, or even seventh son. God picks the eighth son, the one who was not even called to the meeting. Later, Saul even calls him a boy! But this is the one God has chosen. Generations later, David's great-great-(many times over)-great-grandson Jesus would say, "So those who are last will now be first then, and those who are first will be last" (Matthew 20:16).

I hesitated to include birthright as a theme this week. There is a rule that the first son inherits a double portion, but God himself often did not follow the rule. Sometimes God refused the firstborn because man stepped ahead of the Lord, then sometimes he blessed it even though someone *really* stepped ahead of him. God sometimes chose the one we would least expect him to choose, like the eighth son, David. Then again, sometimes he chose exactly who makes sense—David's firstborn son, Solomon, came to the throne next. Birthright is messy; there is no pattern.

he chose us anyway

Then again, *we*, in our sin, are messy. None of us deserve to be in God's royal line or included in his story, but he chose us anyway.

New Testament Scripture

Romans 8:15–17; Galatians 3:24–4:7

There was only one person deserving of God's inheritance. Jesus was not only God's firstborn Son, but his only Son. He is the rightful first Son of God, deserving of the entire inheritance, yet God acted out of birth order and let us inherit with him. The Son was with God in the very beginning, as we read in John 1 earlier this week, and only for our benefit did he step down from heaven to be born as a baby into our world. Before returning

to the Father, Jesus died on the cross as atonement for our sins. In doing so, God adopted us as children (Romans 8:15). We are coheirs with Christ. It is not Christ receiving his full portion and then letting us receive what is leftover. We are receiving what he is receiving, the full inheritance.

*We are
coheirs with
Christ*

So, what is the inheritance we receive? The simple answer is heaven. Heaven generally drums up positive images—clouds and robes, maybe gold and jewels. Many people are excited to see loved ones who have passed before them. But heaven is even greater than we could ever imagine: It is the garden of Eden without the snake. We will walk with God in perfect communion. No tears will be shed; no sin will exist. If there is gold, it will be no more than the pavement that we walk on (Revelation 21:21), because the Lord will be our focus. There will be no darkness, for he is light. There will be singing, dancing, eating, and celebrating all in worship of God.

As soon as Adam and Eve fell into sin, they were banished from the garden and the promise of heaven was no longer ours, but God did not stop in paving the way to welcome us back in. He provided the law, which held the place as guardian until the appointed time when he provided his Son for us. God sacrificed his firstborn because he cares for the second born, last born, foreign born, and orphaned.

Reflect

01. Take time to reflect on what your inheritance with Christ entails.
02. Be honest with yourself, do you spend more time thinking about earthly blessings or your inheritance of the eternal kingdom of heaven and full communion with the Lord?
03. What does this tell you about your eagerness for heaven?



Old Testament Scripture

Exodus 12:1–16; Genesis 22:2–13

While you may have never partaken in a Passover feast, it was a significant tradition the Israelites were instructed to celebrate each year. In fact, in Exodus 12 alone, the Israelites are instructed five separate times to take time each year to remember the Lord's Passover. So it is important for us also to understand and remember the reason for this celebration.

The first Passover took place at a time when the Israelites were enslaved in Egypt, but the Lord was calling them out of slavery in Egypt to follow him. Egypt was a strong and mighty nation that worshiped pagan gods, and the Israelites were becoming entwined in this foreign culture. These gods became all they knew until God called on Moses to bring his people back to him. You are likely familiar with the ten plagues the Lord sent in order to rattle Pharaoh so that he would let the Israelites leave; each plague is an attack on a different Egyptian god. The final plague is an attack on Pharaoh himself, since he was worshiped as a god as well; to do so, he would kill Pharaoh's firstborn son, the heir, along with all other firstborn sons of the nation. The Lord himself would descend down into Egypt and execute his judgment. Remember, the Israelites were still in Egypt at the time of this plague and, even as God's chosen people, were not safe from the penalty of God's just judgment. So, God made a way for them to escape death when he would "pass over" them.

To be safe from God's judgment and save their sons, the Israelites were instructed to sacrifice an animal, often a lamb, to cover their sins. The lamb was to be without blemish. Small families were instructed to combine together so that the lamb would be in balance with the number of people it would atone for. The lamb sacrifice saved the Israelites from the rightful

judgment of God prior to the journey that led them to be in the presence of God, in the place God provided for them, and to live as his people.

There were some other stipulations to participating in the Passover meal. Foreigners, slaves, and temporary residents were invited to partake, but only if they had been circumcised. This may seem extreme, but this was the celebration of the Lord saving his people and his people were under the covenant. So if others were to participate, they would need to be under the covenant as well, and so, they would require the mark of the covenant—circumcision.

This points us back to Abraham, the forefather who had been the first to receive the covenant and be circumcised. In Genesis 22, we read a story about Abraham called to sacrifice to the Lord. But, as you read, Isaac started wondering, perhaps with rising concern, “Dad, what are we going to sacrifice? We have no animals.” Abraham had placed such faith in the Lord that he was willing to sacrifice his son, the one whom God had promised his numerous descendants would come from. Hebrews 11:19 says, “Abraham reasoned that if Isaac died, God was able to bring him back to life again.” He put his faith in God’s promises, and God, at the very last moment, the perfect timing, provided the sacrifice.

*He put
his faith in
God's promises*

New Testament Scripture

Luke 22:7–19

The Last Supper is a commonly recited story. It is the night where Jesus broke bread with his disciples, experienced betrayal, and predicted Peter would deny him. But we often forget that it was the Passover meal; in fact, Jesus says, “I have been eager to eat this Passover meal with you before my suffering begins” (Luke 22:15). This should point us back to the first Passover, or to remember “the reason for the season.” It sets the stage for the rest of the story.

Jesus tells his disciples to go ahead of him to prepare the meal—there will be a man who provides a room for them. They have the place, the company, and we know there was bread (most likely unleavened) and wine. But did you notice what is not there? It is the main event of the Passover meal,

described in great detail by God to Moses—the sacrificed lamb. The other Gospels also do not mention a lamb or animal as part of the meal. The one they call teacher, rabbi, the one who calls himself “Son of Man,” does not have a lamb to sacrifice at the Passover meal. He is the only one who knows it, but Christ himself is

*Christ
himself is the
Passover Lamb*

the Passover Lamb to be sacrificed. In the same way God provided the sacrificial ram to Abraham, he provided the sacrifice for all of man to save them from rightful judgment. Unlike Isaac, Jesus knew all along that this is what he had stepped out of heaven to do.

In Luke 22:19, Jesus takes the bread and breaks it saying, “This is my body, which is given for you.” The Passover requires a sheep or goat “with no defects” (Exodus 12:5). This looks toward Christ, who would live a sinless life to cover the sins of many. His body will be broken the very next evening just as the Israelites were instructed to “slaughter their lamb or young goat at twilight” so that “[t]his plague of death will not touch [them]” (Exodus 12:6, 13). His blood will be shed on the wooden cross just as they were told to smear the blood on the doorposts to save them from death in the presence of the Lord. From the beginning, it was always going to be Christ, whom God would provide, as the sacrifice to reconcile our sinful selves—to allow a way for us to be in his presence.

In Exodus, God tells his people to remember the Passover. Celebrate it every year. Tell your children about it, your children’s children, generation to generation. Because he knew, even then, he was going to do it again. But the sacrificial lamb will be his firstborn, beloved Son to save us from the slavery not of the Egyptians but of our very sin, and he will bring us into his kingdom to be with him.

*he will
bring us into
his Kingdom to
be with him*

Reflect

01. Why is it significant to know that God had planned from the beginning to give his Son as a sacrifice?
02. Some church traditions might recognize today as Maundy Thursday. It is often celebrated by taking part in communion and perhaps a foot washing ceremony, which were modeled by Christ at the Last Supper. It is the beginning of the three days leading up to the resurrection. What could you do today and in the coming days to remember the significance of Christ’s death and prepare your heart for the celebration of his resurrection?



Old Testament Scripture

Leviticus 1:1–5; Leviticus 17:10–12; Genesis 15:8–18

If you have ever watched the show *Survivor*, you are probably familiar with Jeff Probst telling the participants, “In this game, fire represents your life.” When a participant is voted off the game, their torch of fire is extinguished; their life in the game is over. In the Bible, blood represents life, and God is specific about when and how blood is shed. Our Scripture reading takes us back to Leviticus to briefly familiarize ourselves with the animal sacrifice rituals and laws found in the Old Testament. Most notably, what you should have taken away is that the Israelites were called very specifically to not eat or drink the blood of an animal. Doing so would make a person unclean. This actually points back to the first time God tells his people not to drink the blood of an animal in Genesis 9:2–4:

“All the animals of the earth, all the birds of the sky, all the small animals that scurry along the ground and all the fish in the sea will look on you with fear and terror. I have placed them all in your power. I have given them to you for food, just as I have given you grain and vegetables. But you must never eat any meat that still has the lifeblood in it.”

God gave the animals’ flesh to eat, but not its blood—not its life. So how does this align with the laws of animal sacrifice? The scene is described in Leviticus 1: the animal is presented, the sinner lays his hand on the head of the animal, and then its blood is shed. The next step is for the priests to present the blood and splatter it onto the altar in the tabernacle to purify them. The splattering of the blood was meant to remind them of what they deserved for their sin.

Leviticus 17:10–12 explains it further: They are not to eat of the blood because its life is in it, and the life was not for them to receive. Man was not given the lives of the animals; man was not even worthy of his own life. Leviticus 1:4 instructs them, “Lay your hand on the animal’s head, and the LORD will accept its death in your place to purify you, making you right with him.” The lives of the animals were given back to the Lord in place of their own lives.

In Genesis 15:8–18, we read a strange story about Abraham, a few animals, and a torch. Abraham had just asked the Lord how he will know for sure his promises will come true. God’s response can be a bit of a head scratcher: bring me some animals. Abraham does this and then cuts them in half, laying each half side by side. This was a common way covenants were sealed at the time; what Abraham had created was called a blood path, since the blood of the animals would surely have been streaming into a path between the two halves, creating an aisle. Next, the two participants of the covenant are supposed to walk through the path together, the blood shed symbolizing what will happen to one of them if the covenant is broken. Instead, Abraham fell asleep and awoke to a torch of fire floating down the blood path. Similar to *Survivor*, the fire torch here represents God’s life—his presence with Abraham. So, it is God walking down the blood path alone, without Abraham. This means that God will be fulfilling the covenant by himself. Man will not be able to uphold the covenant.

New Testament Scripture

Hebrews 9:11–26; John 6:53–56; Luke 22:20

In Hebrews 9, the author discusses the limitations of the animal sacrifices to fully satisfy God’s judgment. He explains that the animals are far less than Christ’s sacrifice. The items in the tabernacle are only representations of the things in heaven. The priests had to repeatedly provide the sacrifices. These were mere placeholders, representations of the things to come—of Jesus.

*Jesus was
a far greater
sacrifice*

Jesus was a far greater sacrifice, precious and able to cover all sins of mankind. He could satisfy the wrath once and for all.

After generations of being instructed specifically not to drink the blood of another creature, we are asked to drink of Christ’s blood in the practice of communion. Instead of us giving animal life back to the Lord, it is him giving his Son’s life to us. We were not even worthy to possess the lives of animals, yet we are declared worthy of the Lord. In instructing us to symbolically drink his blood, he is giving his very life to live in us. John 6:56 says, “Anyone who eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and

I in him.” Remember how the Lord walked down the blood path without Abraham; there is no sacrifice we could have provided that would satisfy God’s righteous judgment. It was graciously given as a gift back to us. It should be our blood being shed, instead it is the blood of our Lord. The Lord faithfully provided the sacrifice and fulfilled the covenant, creating a way for his presence to rest with his people. This time, he does not live inside the ark in the temple but inside of us.

You have likely read and heard Luke 22:20 before: Christ declares that the wine in communion represents his blood. First, let’s remember this took place at the Passover meal. At the first Passover, after the lamb’s blood was shed, it was spread across the door frames to mark the house as God’s people, to save them from God’s judgment when his presence passed over. When we take Christ’s blood, we apply it to our hearts, allowing the judgment to pass over us; we are declared clean because the Lamb of God took on our sin and died in our place. Notice also in this verse that Jesus speaks of a new covenant between God and his people, his own blood given to seal the covenant. Read Jeremiah 31:33:

“But this is a new covenant I will make with the people of Israel after those days,” says the Lord. “I will put my instructions deep within them, and I will write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.”

Through the drinking of Christ’s symbolic blood, the covenant—the promise of his presence and communion with him—is within us, written on our hearts. When we put our faith in Christ, he lives with us, walks with us, rests with us, guides us, and ultimately, takes us to heaven with him.

Reflect

01. Are there any ways in your life that you are making sacrifices as a way to negotiate with God? For example, “If I ___, surely God will forgive me, bless me, provide for me, etc.” It is possible for us to use even good things (spiritual disciplines, for example) to try to make ourselves right with God. Reflect on today’s Scripture and truths and apply them to the lie that we must do things to earn something from God.
02. Hebrews 9:26 says, “But now, once for all time, he has appeared at the end of the age to remove sin by his own death as a sacrifice.” Jesus has once and for all saved us from our sin, the deed is done. God wants us to remember the ways he is faithful to us as we saw in the command to remember the Passover. Communion is how we corporately remember Christ’s death and resurrection. How can

you incorporate daily ways to remember the gospel throughout your week? How can you get into the practice of asking yourself, “How does the gospel apply to this moment?”

03. If your local church offers a Good Friday service, I encourage you to attend. Remembering Christ’s death prepares our hearts more fully for the celebration of his resurrection on Easter.



Old Testament Scripture

Exodus 26:31–34; Exodus 40:34–38; Exodus 34:29–35

Today you once again read about the plans God gave to Moses regarding the construction of his tabernacle as well as its execution and completion. This time, the part of the tabernacle you read about was called the Most Holy Place. The Most Holy Place was a room within the Holy Place in the tabernacle, separated only by a curtain. Inside the Most Holy Place, there was an altar and the ark of the covenant. Scripture tells us that after the ark had been positioned in the Most Holy Place in the temple (what would later replace the tabernacle), the poles used for carrying it were so long, they extended outside of the curtain of the Most Holy Place, only further illustrating that man is to be separated from this room. This is where the presence of the Lord rested. Hebrews 9:7-8 says,

But only the high priest ever entered the Most Holy Place, and only once a year. And he always offered blood for his own sins and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance. By these regulations the Holy Spirit revealed that the entrance to the Most Holy Place was not freely open as long as the Tabernacle and the system it represented were still in use.

While separated by sin, man was not able to access the Lord or enter into his presence. The very last verses of Exodus describe the presence of the Lord filling the tabernacle. The Israelites could physically see the glory of God in the form of a cloud above the tabernacle by day, filled with fire by night. This recalls the story of the Lord fulfilling the blood path on behalf of Abraham—a darkness descended and a flaming torch moved among them. The cloud would move, directing the Israelites on their journey, or stay, indicating that they needed to remain where they were.

Few have been called into the Lord's presence more intimately and tangibly than Moses. Moses regularly entered into God's presence; this is how he received the commandments, the law, the instructions for the tabernacle, and the directions of the Lord. Moses was often uncertain as a leader and asked the Lord for guidance, help, and confirmation. In one instance, when Moses was on Mount Sinai, prior to the construction of the tabernacle, the Lord agreed to show Moses his very presence. Exodus 33:22–23 describes this:

“As my glorious presence passes by I will hide you in the crevice of the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. Then I will remove my hand and let you see me from behind. But my face will not be seen.”

This takes place and the Lord provides a new copy of the covenants (the tablets later placed in the ark) and Moses eventually comes down the mountain. As you read, his face is radiating because he has just witnessed the glory of God. Moses wears a veil to separate himself and the glory of God that lingers on him from the Israelites in order to protect them from the strength and power of the Lord's presence. Exodus 33:20 says, “But you may not look directly at my face, for no one may see me and live.”

To understand this, it can be helpful to think of the Lord's presence like the sun. The sun is good; it provides warmth and light, improves our moods, helps plants grow, creates energy and power. But that power can be too strong for us. Even from the distance of millions of miles away, the sun can burn and damage our skin. The Lord is good and glorious, but his presence is simply too powerful for mere man, since sin separates and creates a chasm between us.

*the
Lord is good
and glorious*

New Testament Scripture

Matthew 17:1–8; Luke 23:44

In the Gospels, Peter is often found acting rashly or perhaps speaking too quickly. He slashes off the ear of one of the soldiers who comes to arrest Jesus, and tells Jesus he will surely never deny him. As we just read in Matthew 17, he sees Jesus' glowing face and offers to build a tent for him. What did he say? A tent? Some other translations may use the word “shelter.” In any case, it just does not seem like a normal response to seeing the radiating face of your friend.

But in this case, Peter was not speaking in ignorance. He would have had an intimate knowledge of the Scriptures. He would have known the story of Moses and the tabernacle. In looking at Christ's glowing face, he knew

he was witnessing a spiritual encounter. Just like when Moses entered into the tabernacle (sometimes called the Tent of Meeting) to commune with the Lord, he thought Jesus needed a tent to be housed. Some translations even use the word “tabernacle” here. Peter wanted to build a tabernacle for the Lord’s presence to rest. But Jesus did not want that; he wanted to walk among his people, be with them, touch them, and talk to them.

As we approach Easter, we should consider the end, Christ’s death, when he was hung on the cross, carrying the weight of the sin of the world, ready to commit his life into the Father’s hands. He says, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46). At that moment, the anguish Jesus experiences replicates what our souls feel in our separation from God. Jesus feels what it is like to be thrust to the outside of the camp, standing on the outside of the curtain. This is the true separation we were meant to experience in our inability to uphold the covenant.

But just before he breathed his last breath, the sky became dark and the curtain around the Most Holy Place in the temple was torn down the middle. Remember the darkness before the Lord walked the blood path for Abraham. The cloud at Mount Sinai when Moses saw God pass by. The dark cloud over the tabernacle, and later, the temple. This is the presence of God descending onto the earth. The Lord’s presence came, ripping the curtain that separated himself from his people. Jesus, the passover Lamb, crucified, sacrificed for us, making a way for us to access the Father.

Reflect

01. As you prepare your heart for the celebration of Easter tomorrow, what are some impactful takeaways from this week that lead your heart into awe and love of the Lord, that you can remember in order to lead you into deeper worship?
02. If you are still wrestling with some of the topics covered in this study—our sin, separation from God, our unworthiness outside of the saving grace Christ provided for us—do not stop here. Continue to wrestle. My prayer is that you will come out of it with a deeper understanding of the Lord and the anguish he experienced to bring you to himself, because that is how deeply he loves you.

And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God’s love. Neither death nor life, nor angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God’s love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.”
(Romans 8:38-39)

God went the distance, he submitted himself to live an earthly life as man, conquered death and the powers of hell. From the heights of the sky and the depths of the earth below. That is how far he went to bring you to himself.



Scripture

John 14:15-31, Revelation 21:3

Happy Easter, friend! I hope the joy of this day fills your heart to the brim and overflows into worship of the Lord and fellowship with believers to celebrate Christ's resurrection.

We are picking up today where we left off yesterday. Early on in Jesus' earthly ministry, he said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19) after calling for the temple to be respected as God's house. John so helpfully points out *one* verse later that Jesus is referencing his own body that would be raised from the dead after three days.

We no longer need a physical building or to be among the high priests waiting to enter into the Most Holy Place in order to experience the presence of God. Instead, it is through Christ that we can come to him.

*it is
through Christ
that we can
come to him*

Recall Hebrews 9:24: "For Christ did not enter into a holy place made with human hands which was only a copy of the true one in heaven. He entered into heaven itself to appear now before God on our behalf." It was Christ's body, destroyed on the cross, as he prophesied about the temple. Then he, acting as the High Priest, entered into the true holy of holies, heaven itself, to make the sacrifice and ask for atonement for the sins of all mankind. Then he, the temple, was raised back to life on the third day, conquering the death we were destined for.

In the upper room with his disciples, Jesus shared that after his death, he would send the Holy Spirit to them. John 14:17-20 says,

"He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth. . . . [H]e lives with you now and later will be in you. No, I will not abandon you as orphans—I will come

to you. Soon the world will no longer see me, but you will see me. Since I live, you also will live. When I am raised to life again, you will know that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.”

Jesus tells the disciples that he will be leaving, but the Holy Spirit is coming. His purpose is to teach truth and remind us of everything Christ had told them. I used to think about the cloud of fire over the tabernacle, physically present and leading the Israelites through the wilderness, was something to miss. I used to think, “They could see his presence,” saddened that I do not have that tangible guidance and reminder of the Lord in my life. But to learn of the Holy Spirit makes me wonder if the Israelites would have thought of us, who have lived after Christ, “But they have the presence of the Lord *inside* of them.” In 2 Corinthians 5:1, Paul describes the shedding of our earthly bodies for the eternal bodies we will receive in heaven. Do you know what word he uses to refer to our earthly bodies? Tent.

For we know that when this earthly tent we live in is taken down (that is, when we die and leave this earthly body), we will have a house in heaven, an eternal body made for us by God himself, not by human hands.

Christ was the temple, God himself walking on earth with his people. His body was crucified and destroyed, but raised again after three days. Then he sent his Spirit to inhabit us, making our very bodies a place of meeting with the Lord. Just like Peter knew he was witnessing a spiritual encounter with the Lord upon seeing Christ’s shining face and wanted to build him a tent, when we place our faith in Christ and the Spirit enters us, our bodies become a place of meeting with the Lord himself—a tent, a tabernacle, the room behind the curtain, the Most Holy Place.

In Genesis, the Lord made the promise for us to live perfectly with him again. Throughout the Old Testament, we read example after example of how we could not work on our own behalf to make it possible for the promise to be fulfilled. Jesus’ life, however, was a testament to how it was him all along who would fulfill the covenant and create a way for us to fully live in his presence. For now, we live with the Holy Spirit in us while still living in a sin-tainted world. But in Revelation 21:3, the promise is displayed in full:

He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them.

He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them.

The story of Christ’s life, death, and resurrection is powerful all its own. It is the story of God humbling himself to the point of becoming a human, teaching and walking with his people, and eventually laying down his life because he loves us too much to let us live in our sin

and separation from God. He *simply* wants us to be with him, so he was resurrected from the death that we deserved to pave a way for us to have eternal life with him. It is beautiful and complete. But to start reading this story in the New Testament is like starting a book at its climax. When we combine the story of Jesus with the story of the Old Testament's covenantal law all pointing to Jesus, of God relentlessly pursuing his people and his people failing to live a life for him time and time again, the depth and richness of the story only increases. Our awe grows as we can see the unfathomable grace and love the Lord has for us. He simply wants us to be with him and for his presence to dwell with us.

Our awe grows as we can see the unfathomable grace and love the Lord has for us.

Reflect

01. Do you tangibly feel the Holy Spirit working in your life? How can you increase the opportunities for you to experience this?
02. Whether you are taking time this Easter morning to meet with the Lord prior to heading to church, or you are ending the day's celebrations in quiet time with the Lord, meditate on that day when we will live in the full glory of that promise.



About the Author

Jill Dreyer

Jill lives in Cincinnati with her husband, John, and daughter, Adelaide. She loves the Lord, gardening, and lattes. Writing is a relatively new endeavor in her life, but she hopes the Lord will continue to inspire words in her heart. Some of her favorite things include mornings with her daughter, coffee dates with friends, long walks and talks, and traveling with her husband.