

## **Images Of Christ From As Seen In Famous Objects**

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Images of Christ in the Torah Series

Exodus 12 and 16

The Christian Church throughout the world is now celebrating Advent. Advent comes from the Latin word which means “the approach” or “the arrival.” The church throughout the world is preparing itself for the approach or arrival of Messiah Jesus as we celebrate his birth on Christmas Day.

Last week I began our Advent series by looking at images of Jesus from the first book of the Torah, that is, from the book of Genesis, the first book of the Bible. Today we are going to look at images of Jesus in the book of Exodus, the second book of the Bible.

Before we look at the scriptures together in detail, I want to give you a little principle for interpreting the Old Testament. A lot of folks struggle with the Old Testament and say: How do I read this book profitably? So much of it was written for a different time, a different culture, for a different people. There are all these rituals that I don’t understand. There are sacrifices. There are names that I am not familiar with. How do I read a book, some of which was written 3500 years ago, and have it be meaningful for my life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? After all, I am not a traveling nomad wandering through the desert. Most of you don’t have a flock of sheep.

One of the principles that you can employ to read the Old Testament profitably is to read the Old Testament in a Christ-centered way. The entire Bible is a book about Jesus. From beginning to end, the whole flow of scripture is designed to point to Jesus. Jesus said this when he spoke with two of his disciples on the road to Emmaus following his resurrection.

#### SLIDE – Luke 24.25-27

Lk 24:25 He said to them, “How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!

Lk 24:26 Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?”

Lk 24:27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

When you read the Bible, in other words, you should ask: where do I encounter Jesus in this text? How is Christ revealed in this story, in this Psalm, in this commandment?

We read the Bible in a Christ-centered way through a principle that is called typology. A type is a pattern or a model where the reader finds some correspondence between a person, event, or thing in the Old Testament and a person, event or thing in the New Testament. So through typology we find as we saw last week that the blood of Abel, the first victim of murder on earth, is meant to point forward to the blood of Jesus, who was another murder victim.

The reason that typology works, and the reason we can read the Bible in a Christ-centered way, is because the same God who inspired the Old Testament also inspired the New Testament and that God controls history. He is the one who caused different people, events, and religious celebrations to have their correspondence and fulfillment in the New Testament. In the Old Testament, the things we see are like a shadow on the wall. We try to figure out the shadow and ask: what does this mean? We see certain features and ideas, for example, a holiday or a religious ritual, and we say: What did God mean when he had this particular holiday, this ritual, included in the Old Testament? When we see the fulfillment in Jesus, we say: now I know what the shadow was about. Now I understand the shadow that was cast on the wall.

Several years ago Marlene and I along with a small group of Christian leaders got to spend some private time alone in the Sistine Chapel, which is located in The Vatican in Rome. It was an enormous privilege to have the Sistine Chapel opened up for us before hours so that we could spend about an hour and a half alone inside without the crowds. The interesting thing about the Sistine Chapel is that there is an architectural example of typology on the left and right walls. On the left hand side of the Sistine Chapel there are various paintings taken from the Old Testament and on the right hand side of the Sistine Chapel, Michelangelo painted their fulfillment in the life of Jesus.

For example, on the left hand side we have the Old Testament story of the baby Moses, whose life is threatened by the evil King Pharaoh and on the right hand side, we have the murder of innocent babies in Bethlehem by the evil King Herod. Back and forth across the room, typology helps us as we find these points of correspondence between the Old Testament and the New Testament. This isn't just speculation where we let our imaginations run wild. The New Testament actually explains Old Testament figures to us.

Last week I began this Advent series by considering images of Christ found in famous persons from the book of Genesis. This week I would like to consider images of Christ found in famous objects from the book of Exodus. Next week we will consider images of Christ found in famous holidays from the book of Leviticus. In this second of my Advent talks, I've called today's message: Images of Christ Found In Famous Objects From The Book of Exodus. Let's pray.

#### SLIDE – Exodus 12.1-13

Ex 12:1 The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in Egypt,

Ex 12:2 "This month is to be for you the first month, the first month of your year.

Ex 12:3 Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household.

Ex 12:4 If any household is too small for a whole lamb, they must share one with their nearest neighbor, having taken into account the number of people there are. You are to determine the amount of lamb needed in accordance with what each person will eat.

Ex 12:5 The animals you choose must be year-old males without defect, and you may take them from the sheep or the goats.

Ex 12:6 Take care of them until the fourteenth day of the month, when all the people of the community of Israel must slaughter them at twilight.

Ex 12:7 Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses where they eat the lambs.

Ex 12:8 That same night they are to eat the meat roasted over the fire, along with bitter herbs, and bread made without yeast.

Ex 12:9 Do not eat the meat raw or cooked in water, but roast it over the fire—head, legs and inner parts.

Ex 12:10 Do not leave any of it till morning; if some is left till morning, you must burn it.

Ex 12:11 This is how you are to eat it: with your cloak tucked into your belt, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand. Eat it in haste; it is the LORD'S Passover.

Ex 12:12 "On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn—both men and animals—and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the LORD.

Ex 12:13 The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt.

Let's look at vv. 1 and 2 more closely.

## SLIDE

Ex 12:1 The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in Egypt,

Ex 12:2 "This month is to be for you the first month, the first month of your year.

What God is saying in vv. 1-2 is that as he protects the Jewish people from judgment and sets them free from slavery in the exodus, his activity is so monumental, it is so enormous in their national history that they are actually going to change their calendars as a result. You see, before the Passover and before the Exodus, the month that Passover was in was not the first month of the year. The calendar was different. But now we read in vv. 1-2,

## SLIDE

Ex 12:1 The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in Egypt,

Ex 12:2 “This month is to be for you the first month, the first month of your year.

The salvation that I am going to bring about through the Passover Lamb is going to usher in a new age. What I’m about to do is so extraordinary that you will measure time differently in the future because of my activity. Because I intervened in your life and protected you from this tenth plague through the Passover Lamb, you are going to have a new beginning.

In a sense, what God is saying is that the whole nation of Israel will be born again. No longer measuring their national history simply from the calling of Abraham, their forefather, now the great event in the nation of Israel is going to be the Passover and the Exodus.

This, friends, is a type, an image, of Jesus. Because God came into the world in Jesus, people now measure time differently. God’s intervention always changes the calendar. The calendar now is measured by BC – before Christ, and AD, which stands for “anno domini,” in the year of our Lord. Not only do national calendars change because of God’s intervention in the life of nations; not only do global calendars change because of the intervention of God, but I believe our personal calendars change when we experience the first day and first month of salvation through Jesus our Messiah.

Let me ask you a question: Have you experienced the in-breaking of Jesus into your life in such a radical way that you begin to measure time differently from that point forward?

- “Here is the way I used to be, but now because Jesus broke into my life, I am very different.”
- “Here is the way I used to think, but now that Jesus broke into my life, I think differently now.”
- “Here is the way I used to relate; here is the way I used to feel; but from the point Jesus entered my life I feel different now. I relate differently now.”

It is no longer business as usual, one season following another. The life defining event for you, the point at which your life broke in an entirely new direction so that you truly can measure time before this event and after this event, is not the day you graduated from college or your anniversary date or even your birthday. It is this event of God breaking into your life. This is your true birthday. This is your new beginning.

Some of you might say:

- “The calendar in my life changed when I was in college.”
- “The calendar in my life changed when I began attending this church.”
- “The calendar in my life changed when I went to a Christian camp.”

- “The calendar in my life changed through a friend who helped me to meet God.”

And friend, even if you were raised in a Christian home and you can't remember a time when you didn't believe in Jesus – maybe you were raised in the Lutheran church or the Roman Catholic church, or in a Baptist church – even if you were raised in a Christian home, there must be a time when you made Christ your own, when you said: “I am no longer just worshipping the God of my mother or father. I am no longer just believing in the God of my grandmother or my church. It is not only because I was raised this way, I am taking this God that I've been taught about to be my God. I take this Christian faith, which has been handed down to me, to be my faith.” Have you done that?

When people are set free, they mark time differently. I've talked with alcoholics and they will tell me: “It has been three years, three months since I've been living in sobriety.” A person in a highly abusive marriage might say: “The first day, the first month of my life was when I escaped and I was no longer afraid to go to sleep.”

So, again, I ask you: Do you have in your life a new calendar marking a new beginning, a fresh start, your new freedom as a result of God breaking in? And even if you were raised in the church, even if your home was a Christian home, is

there a moment when you took that faith that was handed down to you and you said: "I am now making this my own; I am appropriating it for myself."

My new beginning took place at a Passover dinner nearly 32 years ago when I was 18 years old. Where do you mark your new beginning from? Perhaps it would be today at this weekend, at this service. Maybe God has been knocking on the door of your life and you need to respond.

The new age Jesus ushered in is coming into the world is not just an individual thing, it's a global thing. We read in Luke 4.18,

#### SLIDE

Lk 4:18 "The Spirit of the Lord is on me,  
because he has anointed me  
to preach good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners  
and recovery of sight for the blind,  
to release the oppressed,

Jesus' coming means marital healing and physical healing; the healing of our bodies is possible. Jesus' coming means peace and not war between the nations is possible. The fact that God came to us in Jesus means good news for poor people and not just rich people. The world can't just go on as it has – as if God did not visit planet earth on Christmas Day. Something different has happened to the very structure of reality because of God's visit that causes us to measure time differently.

Now, we read in v. 5 about the Passover Lamb.

SLIDE

Ex 12:5 The animals you choose must be year-old males without defect, and you may take them from the sheep or the goats.

The lamb had to be a year-old male without defect. In other words, the lamb that was to be slaughtered on Passover was to be a young lamb that was perfect.

Through the principle of typology, this business of seeing correspondence between the stories of the Old Testament and the New Testament, we read in the New Testament that Jesus was often called The Lamb of God, or the Passover Lamb. That is what John the Baptist called him in John 1.29,

SLIDE

Jn 1:29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

And John 1.36,

SLIDE

Jn 1:36 When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God!"

The writer of the book of Revelation was fond of calling Jesus "the Lamb" in writing about the New Earth that will be our eternal home. John, the author of Revelation, says this in Rev. 22.1 and 3,

## SLIDES

Rev 22:1 Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb

Rev 22:3 No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him.

Jesus is not just called “the Lamb,” he is called “The Passover Lamb” by the apostle Paul in 1 Cor. 5.7,

## SLIDE

1Co 5:7 Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast—as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.

And he is called “the Spotless Lamb” in 1 Peter 1.18-19,

## SLIDE

1Pe 1:18 For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers,

1Pe 1:19 but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

In fulfillment of this type of the Passover Lamb being without defect, absolutely spotless and perfect, Jesus lived an utterly sinless life. Have you ever spent time thinking about the sinlessness of Jesus? Imagine a human being who lived such a perfect life that there was absolutely no divergence between who he really was and what he showed to the world. With all the rest of us, there are areas of life

that we keep hidden. There is some degree of separation between what we claim to believe and what we claim to be, and we really are like but imagine a person where what he is and what he shows are absolutely in sync.

Jesus never said one thing and did another. He was not one kind of person in public and another kind in private. His life was absolutely consistent , 100% of the time, no flaws. What you saw close up and what you saw in public was the same. Imagine a person who always has pure motives for everything they do. Jesus never manipulated anyone. He never had a hidden agenda. He never had a selfish reason for saying or doing anything. He was entirely above board. There was no passive-aggressiveness with Christ.

The sinlessness of Christ means that he always, in every moment, loved God his Father with all his heart, with all his soul, with all his mind, and with all his strength. He always lived for the glory of God his Father and not his own glory. He always did the will of God his Father. He always put God his Father first in everything.

If you want to see, friend, how crooked your life is, just measure it by the straight edge of Jesus. People say: I don't know if I'd call myself a sinner. Really? Just compare your life with Jesus. He never gossiped, not even once. How about you? He never whispered one little negative thing about one of the disciples to the other disciples. He never said to John: "What do you think Peter meant back

there? Did that hurt your feelings?" He never exaggerated. He never told a lie. How about you? He was never arrogant. He never belittled anyone. He never put anyone down who was weak or hurting. He never treated the least in society, the poor, the handicapped, the sick, women in his day, as if they were least in his eyes. Everyone who ever met Jesus felt himself or herself to be incredibly important.

He never looked over someone's shoulder when he talked with them to find someone more interesting or more powerful to talk to. With Jesus, it didn't matter who you were or how much money you had, or how much you knew, you always felt valued by him. Now imagine that this perfect person named Jesus is alive and you can be friends with such a person. Do you believe that you are important, that you are valuable to this perfect person named Jesus?

Jesus was so perfect that the judge at his trial before his crucifixion, the judge named Pontius Pilate, said this about Jesus in Luke 23.4,

#### SLIDE

Lk 23:4 Then Pilate announced to the chief priests and the crowd, "I find no basis for a charge against this man."

One of the criminals who was crucified next to Jesus gave this testimony in Luke 23.41,

#### SLIDE

Lk 23:41 We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.”

Even a soldier who was standing there to guard the crosses looked up at Jesus at the moment of his death and said in Luke 23.47,

SLIDE

“Surely this was a righteous man.”

Jesus is the Lamb that is perfect.

Jesus is the Lamb that eliminates all distinction. Exodus 12.7, 12 and 13

SLIDES

Ex 12:7 Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses where they eat the lambs.

Ex 12:12 “On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn—both men and animals—and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the LORD.

Ex 12:13 The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt.

Now, friends, the only difference – and this is a really important point – between those who lost their firstborn that night of judgment and those who didn’t, the only difference between those houses that were visited by the Angel of Death and those that the Angel of Death passed over was that one house was marked with the blood of the lamb on its doorpost and the other house had no blood on it.

This is not a racial thing. This is not an ethnic thing. God was not drawing a distinction between one house being owned by a Jew and another house being owned by an Egyptian. Jewish houses without the blood would have received a visit from the Angel of Death. Ethnicity had nothing to do with the Jewish people being protected from God's judgment. Neither did education, or whether the homes were headed by men or women, or by single parents. It had nothing to do with folks' social status. The only issue was whether the blood of the lamb was on the doorpost of the house.

Do you understand, friends, that Christ's blood eliminates all the distinctions that we commonly make? It eliminates all the census form boxes that you check off and that we human beings use to make distinctions among ourselves. No census form box means anything to Jesus Christ. Christ died to save people in all of our diversity – single, married, men, women, Anglo, Latino. Sin is no respecter of cultures. All people have sinned – every race, every political persuasion. Every culture needs to be reconciled to God. Because the disease of sin is global, the remedy must be global. As Jesus planned his death, he embraced the whole world. John 12.32,

#### SLIDE

Jn 12:32 But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself."

It is an historic fact that Christianity began in Asia. During the first few centuries of the Christian era, Syria, Egypt, and Mesopotamia became centers for the church. By the time the Roman Empire granted Christian toleration in the 4<sup>th</sup> century there was no question that Christianity was primarily an Asian and North African religion. Over the centuries, the center of Christianity shifted north and west first to Europe and then to North America. But as Philip Jenkins wrote in his award-winning book, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*:

*Over the past century, however, the center of gravity in the Christian world has shifted inexorably southward to Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Already today, the largest Christian communities on the planet are to be found in Africa, Latin America, and Asia. If you want to visualize a “typical” contemporary Christian, we should think of a woman living in a village in Nigeria or in a Brazilian favela. As Kenyan scholar, John Mbiti has observed, “The centers of the Christian church are no longer in Geneva, Rome, Athens, Paris, London, New York, but Kinshasa, Seoul, Buenos Aires, Addis Ababa, and Manila.*

Philip Jenkins concludes saying:

*Soon the phrase “a white Christian” may sound like a curious oxymoron, as mildly surprising as “a Swedish Buddhist.” Such people can exist, but a slight eccentricity is implied.*

Jesus Christ is not a tribal deity. He does not belong to one culture or ethnic group. He is (John 1.29)

## SLIDE

Jn 1:29 ...The Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!

This weekend we are celebrating baptism. Our Christian baptism further supports this elimination of racial, ethnic, gender, and socio-economic distinctions. We read in Gal. 3.27-28 these words:

## SLIDE

Gal 3:27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

Gal 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Friends, if you are still making distinctions in your heart like the census box forms, if you are still evaluating people based on human distinctions of race or accent, or ethnicity, or occupation, or gender, or education, or wealth, if you still divide the world up with these human distinctions, you do not understand what Christ came to do. All the dividing walls between us are supposed to fall because of the blood of the Lamb. This is the trajectory of the kingdom of God. This is what God's kingdom is supposed to produce as it leavens the society.

The Passover Lamb is the Lamb that protects us from God's judgment. What saves a person from the judgment of God is when God sees the blood of the Lamb over your life. While the scope of God's love is universal, and God is at work in all nations, God's love finds its focus and ultimate expression in a particular way – through the unique, final, once and for all death of Jesus Christ on the cross.

#### SLIDE – Exodus 12.12-13

Ex 12:12 “On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn—both men and animals—and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the LORD.

Ex 12:13 The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt.

By the principle of typology, when God sees the blood of Messiah Jesus, the Lamb of God, applied to your life by your trust in his blood, then you are saved from his judgment. As God looks at your life in judgment, friend, he is looking to see whether your life has been marked by the blood of Jesus or not. It says in v. 7 these words:

#### SLIDE

Ex 12:7 Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses where they eat the lambs.

Now, I want you to notice what is not on the doorposts. God doesn't say: “I want you to nail to the doorpost of your house the genealogical record of your ancestors. Tell me, what country did your ancestors come from. Are they

European? Are they Asian? Are they African? Tell me about your family heritage.” I can’t tell you how many people that I’ve talked to about issues of faith and whether they believe themselves to be right with God, will tell me about their heritage – their praying grandmother, their mother, their grandfather, their father, their grandfather who was a Methodist pastor. God doesn’t command us saying, “Put on the doorpost of your house your genealogy.”

He doesn’t say: “What I want you to put on the doorpost of your house is the record of your attendance at church. Show me the blue ribbon you won for perfect attendance at Sunday School.”

You say: “I haven’t missed Mass in 25 years.”

He doesn’t say: “What is going to save you in the Day of Judgment is your church attendance.”

God doesn’t say: “What I want on the doorpost of your house is your 1040 tax form. I will pass over you in judgment because of the size of your charitable deductions. I will be impressed by how much you gave to charity and how much you gave to the church.” Nailing your tax forms to the door of your house won’t save you.

Neither will your degree, your diploma, your membership in a political party, your professional training, your SAT scores, or the written testimonies of all your friends and relatives. God doesn't say: "What I want you to do is to start collecting from everyone who knows you is their testimony about the quality of your life. Nail on the doorpost the eulogy that will be spoken at your funeral."

- Well, she was such a good mother. She always gave of herself. She worked herself to the bone.
- Dad was a great dad. He listened to me. He was always there for me. He never missed one of my baseball games.

What your children say about you, what your spouse says about you, what your friends say about you will not save you from God's judgment. God doesn't even ask you to write out the testimony of your own conscience – how you think about yourself. It doesn't matter, friend, how you evaluate yourself – whether you think you are a pretty decent person who has really tried hard or whether you feel you always tried your best to be good.

The only issue regarding the judgment of God is whether your life is protected by the blood of Jesus or not. Have you put your trust totally in Jesus' shed blood and his shed blood alone to save you? Are you pinning your hopes on Christ alone plus nothing? That nothing goes on the doorpost of your house except the blood of the Lamb.

Let me bring this down to earth. The major issue that keeps people from entering a saving relationship with Jesus is that folks are relying on something other than Jesus to save them. Often it is self-reliance. You are trusting in something in yourself, some shred of goodness, some achievement like church attendance, family commitment, or religious rituals.

Maybe you believe that salvation is a matter of God balancing the scales. This is a popular way that people think they are going to be saved. Many people believe they are going to be saved by God putting their bad deeds on one side of the scale and their good deeds on the other. If their good deeds outweigh the bad, then God will welcome you into heaven.

But the Passover Lamb and the blood of Christ tells us that this is not the way God saves. If we are saved from the consequences of our bad deeds, it will not be because they weighed less than our good deeds. There is no salvation by balancing the records. There is only salvation by canceling the records. The record of our bad deeds, along with the just penalties that each deserve, must be blotted out not balanced. God has a totally different way of saving sinners than by weighing our deeds. There is no hope in our deeds. There is only hope in the suffering and death and blood of Jesus Christ the Passover Lamb of God.

There is a second object that points plainly to Jesus from the book of Exodus.

That is the manna that God supplied to feed the children of Israel in the wilderness. We read in Ex. 16.1-4 these words:

## SLIDE

Ex 16:1 The whole Israelite community set out from Elim and came to the Desert of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had come out of Egypt.

Ex 16:2 In the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron.

Ex 16:3 The Israelites said to them, "If only we had died by the LORD'S hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death."

Ex 16:4 Then the LORD said to Moses, "I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions.

The people's food came down from heaven. We read in v. 4,

## SLIDE

"I will rain down bread from heaven for you.

In John 6.35 Jesus identifies himself with this statement.

## SLIDE

Jn 6:35 Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.

He calls himself the bread of life and seven times in this chapter he tells the people that he came down from heaven. For example, in John 6.38 we read:

## SLIDE

Jn 6:38 For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me.

In John 6.41 and 42 we read these words:

## SLIDE

Jn 6:41 At this the Jews began to grumble about him because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven."

Jn 6:42 They said, "Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, 'I came down from heaven'?"

What we are learning from John 6 concerning the heavenly origin of the Son of God speaks to us of Christ's eternity. In other words, contrary to the popular misconception regarding Jesus, God the Son did not begin his existence in the womb of the Virgin Mary. Rather, God the Son traces his existence back to all eternity. As the great Athanasius put it, "there never was a time when the Son of God was not."

The apostle John quoted Christ near the end of his great revelation. We read this in Revelation 22.12-13,

## SLIDE

Rev 22:12 "Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done.

Rev 22:13 I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.

Jesus Christ calls himself the Alpha and the Omega, which is the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. In the alphabet one cannot speak of anything before Alpha. There is nothing before Alpha in the alphabet. Nor can one speak of anything after Omega. There is nothing after Omega in the alphabet. There is no before Christ; there is no after Christ. Christ has the unique honor and great glory of always having been when nothing else was. Christ will outlast everything. That is what it means that he is God come in the flesh. Nothing existed before God and nothing will outlast God. He is the bread who came down from heaven.

The bread that came down from heaven is called “manna” by the Israelites in Exodus 16.13-15,

#### SLIDE

Ex 16:13 That evening quail came and covered the camp, and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp.

Ex 16:14 When the dew was gone, thin flakes like frost on the ground appeared on the desert floor.

Ex 16:15 When the Israelites saw it, they said to each other, “What is it?” For they did not know what it was.

Moses said to them, “It is the bread the LORD has given you to eat.

When it says in v. 15 that the Israelites said to each other:

#### SLIDE

## “What is it?”

The Hebrew for “what is it?” is “man hu.” The word “manna” derives from the Hebrew man hu. What’s this? What is this stuff that is coming down from the sky? What is this stuff that’s feeding us? What do you call this? What is this made of?

One of the essential qualities of manna is not only its heavenly origin, but its mystery. What’s this? One of the reasons that manna is such a fitting type of Christ, one of the reasons that manna is such a wonderful image of the one who is to come, Jesus Christ, is because of this quality of mystery. Over and over in the gospels people looked at Jesus and said: “Who are you?” After Jesus calmed the storm on the Sea of Galilee, we read in Mark 4.41 these words:

### SLIDE

Mk 4:41 They were terrified and asked each other, “Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!”

Even John the Baptist, who knew so much about Jesus, sent some of his disciples to ask this question:

### SLIDE – Matthew 11.2-3

Mt 11:2 When John heard in prison what Christ was doing, he sent his disciples  
Mt 11:3 to ask him, “Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?”

At Jesus’ trial, the High Priest demanded an answer citing Matthew 26.63,

## SLIDE

Mt 26:63 But Jesus remained silent.

The high priest said to him, "I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God."

There is a mystery to the kingdom of God. It is not obvious. Jesus said that his kingdom was like a merchant looking for fine pearls. His kingdom is like a treasure hidden in the fields. To pierce the mystery of Jesus Christ requires seeking. It requires questioning. It requires asking. It requires digging.

You cannot look at Jesus in a superficial way and think that you can grasp him at all. At Christmas we sing about this mystery in the song "Hark the Herald Angels Sing." We read these words"

*Veiled in flesh the Godhead see  
Hail the Incarnate Deity  
Pleased as man with men to dwell  
Jesus our Emmanuel*

Or we sing this song:

*What child is this  
Who laid to rest  
On Mary's lap still sleeping  
Whom Angels greet  
With anthems sweet  
While shepherds watch are keeping  
This this is Christ the King  
Whom shepherds guard  
And angels sing  
This this is Christ the King  
The Babe, the Son of Mary*

It is a mystery that the babe born in Bethlehem was, in the words of the Nicene Creed: “Begotten of the Father before all ages, Light of Light, True God of True God, begotten, not made, of one substance with the Father, through whom all things were made.”

Friend, you will discover who Jesus is only if you seek him out. He is the manna from heaven who sustains us.

Like the children of Israel, many of us find ourselves spiritually starving. We find ourselves dying in the wilderness of our own regrets and worries, our fears, our feelings of being overwhelmed by life. If you find yourself utterly overwhelmed by life, it is almost certain that you are struggling with one of two issues. One, you have never really trusted in Christ as your Savior and Lord or two, you believe in Christ for life after death, but you are trying to run your life in this world by yourself.

I think of some of you who have failed in your marriages. You look back over your failed marriages and your heart aches over what might have been and what could have been. Grief over loss is certainly healthy to a point but you are now wracked with self-condemning thoughts. Self doubt is eating away at your own confidence so that you wonder if you ever can love again, or be loved. Even though you may be a Christian, at no point have you really released the failure of

your divorce entirely to Jesus Christ. Jesus is the manna sent from heaven to save you and to sustain you in this world.

I think of some of you who have been brutally disappointed in romance.

Someone, perhaps a person in our own congregation, just cut you off in what felt like a ruthless way. You wonder before God: "How, God, could you have let this happen?" Your heart feels like you've been shot through. You ache to be with this other person, who does not want to be romantically involved with you. If you spread out your hurt and pain before the Bread of Life, he can come and sustain you and fill the holes in your life with acceptance and affirmation.

I think of some of you parents whose sons or daughters have gone off the rails.

You see your son or daughter in serious trouble, making huge mistakes in life.

The affect of your worry for your son or daughter is absolutely killing you. You find yourself distracted. Some of you find yourself unable to love your husband or wife or your other children the way you need to because you are so obsessed about your one troubled child. Most tragic of all is the fact that you cannot trust your child to the Lord. The Bread of Life comes to sustain us in the wilderness of all of our worries and fears.

The Bread of Life comes to satisfy us. The manna that came from heaven satisfies. Exodus 16.17-18,

## SLIDE

Ex 16:17 The Israelites did as they were told; some gathered much, some little.

Ex 16:18 And when they measured it by the omer, he who gathered much did not have too much, and he who gathered little did not have too little. Each one gathered as much as he needed.

It is not just that they had enough, but what they had was delightful. Look at

Exodus 16.31,

## SLIDE

Ex 16:31 The people of Israel called the bread manna. It was white like coriander seed and tasted like wafers made with honey.

What this says is that the manna from heaven tasted like cookies. They spent their day eating cookies. Baklava. Like my granddaughter. She comes in the house and says: Please, just one piece of candy. Let me get up on the counter where we have the jar. Just one piece of candy. That is what Jesus is like. He says of himself in John 6.35 these words:

## SLIDE

Jn 6:35 Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.

You know, Jesus is not just our Savior. Jesus is our satisfier. Do you know Christ as your satisfier? So many of the aches in our heart are because we've never learned how to allow the Bread of Life, Jesus Christ, to really satisfy us. When we think about all of our needs – we need love, we feel the need for affection, for self-esteem, for sexual fulfillment, for success, for the approval of

others, for recognition, significance, a sense of usefulness, financial security. We have all of these needs. Then something in our life happens that precludes the fulfillment of one or more of these needs in the strange weaving together of the circumstances in our life. Perhaps we are not married and there is a stifling of that need that we have for love or affection or sexual fulfillment.

Perhaps we get fired from our jobs. So our need for success and recognition is stifled. Or perhaps, for a period of time, we feel disapproved of by significant people in our lives or we are struggling financially. We find a gap between what we need and what we have. We can find cheap substitutes to fill the void in our lives. And many of us dull the ache that we experience by way of the gap with all kinds of idols and lusts.

But the reality is, brothers and sisters, that no human being can satisfy our deepest needs. No position, no recognition, no security can fill our emptiness. The prophet Isaiah asks us a question that we must answer in Isaiah 55.2,

## SLIDE

Isa 55:2 Why spend money on what is not bread,  
and your labor on what does not satisfy?  
Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good,  
and your soul will delight in the richest of fare.

Why do we spend so much labor and money on what doesn't satisfy? The answer is because although we've allowed the Bread of Life to save us in eternity, we've not learned how the Bread of Life can satisfy us now.

Friend, if you came to know Jesus in a more intimate way, he could provide you with the security that you so desperately seek through money and acquisition. He could let you know at the deepest core of your being that you will be protected and you will be provided for.

Jesus can satisfy your desperate craving for affirmation by assuring you that he takes delight in you through his forgiving love. He can heal our guilt. His friendship and companionship can fill our loneliness.

Even the reality that our bodies are wearing out and we are facing death can be swallowed up in a true expectation that we will be in Christ's presence. Jesus Christ, who is the Bread of Life can not only save us, but he can satisfy us if we seek him out and learn how to go to him with all of our needs – and I mean all.

Christ is the Passover Lamb. He saves us from judgment. Christ is manna from heaven, who sustains and satisfies. Let's pray.

## **Images Of Christ From Famous Objects In The Book of Exodus**

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Rich Nathan

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- B. The Lamb That Is Perfect (Ex. 12.5; 1 Pt. 1.18, 19; Lk. 23.4, 41, 47)
- C. The Lamb That Eliminates All Distinctions (Ex. 12.7, 12, 13; Gal. 3.27, 28)
- D. The Lamb That Protects Us From God's Judgment (Ex. 12.12, 13)

### II. The Manna

- A. The Manna That Came From Heaven (Ex. 16.4; Jn. 6.32, 33)
- B. The Manna That Is Mysterious (Ex. 16.15; Mk. 4.41)
- C. The Manna That Sustains Us (Ex. 16.17, 18; Jn. 6.33)
- D. The Manna That Satisfies Us (Ex. 16.31; Jn. 6.35)