

The Sign of the Covenant

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[0:00] I stand before you today uncertain if this is really a sermon or a history lesson.

! And most likely it is a blending of both because much of what we read in the Bible, and that's even better. But I want us to take a journey back this morning, back into, as we start, to a mysterious time before the creation of the things that are visible, this planet, the solar system, the universe.

We will go back for just a moment here before angels were even created. Far back in eternity. We can go as far back as our finite minds will allow us.

And no matter how far back you're able to go, the Godhead is always there. The three persons of the Trinity, the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Christ Jesus, and the Spirit of God are always there. It doesn't matter how far back you can go.

There's always further back to go. And they are always there. And there was communication among them. There were promises made. Plans were made. Love was expressed.

[1:45] People ask me, where does love come from? It comes from the Trinity. Because before there was anything, there was love among the Godhead. And at some point, and we don't know when, angels were created to be worshipers of God, of the triune God.

And among those created beings, there was one that stood out. He was sort of the chief angel. And his name was Lucifer.

And at some point, and we don't know when, Lucifer led a rebellion in heaven. Now, just that very concept is hard to wrap your arms and your mind around.

But there was a rebellion in heaven. Revelation says there was a war in heaven. And Lucifer led this. And he led that rebellion at some point.

We don't know when. And millions, perhaps billions, of these created beings, we call angels, threw in with him.

[3:00] They said, we'll follow Lucifer. We think Lucifer is going to win this battle. And Lucifer had a goal in mind. And his goal was to be like the Most High God.

And he said, I'm going to establish my throne even above that of the Lord's. Now, in addition to creating heaven, God also created the earth.

And at some point, we don't know exactly when, God reached down into the dirt of earth. And he fashioned a man.

And he named him Adam. This man, Adam, lived in peace and harmony with God.

He lived in perfect obedience to the Creator God. He walked with the Creator God on this planet.

[4:04] And when we get to the New Testament, we actually learn that the Creator God with whom Adam walked has a name.

And we find out that his name is the Lord Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity who carried out actively the plan of creation.

So he was walking with what we would refer to as the pre-incarnate Christ, millennia before Bethlehem. And, of course, Christ being the second person of the Trinity, he's always lived.

And he walked with Adam. Adam was told to do certain things. He was to exercise dominion over the earth. God had him even name the various animals that existed.

He was placed in a perfect environment called the Garden of Eden. And there Adam became a farmer and a gardener. God knew, though, that Adam was only half a man.

[5:09] And he needed a helper or a helpmate. So he caused a deep sleep to come over Adam. And he took one of his ribs. And God fashioned a woman.

And the Lord, when Adam came to from the surgery, the Lord brought to Adam the woman. And Adam, in whatever language was spoken in those days, we don't know what, said, wow.

Wow. Now, that may not be King James, but that's what he said. He said, wow. Her name was Eve. He said, yeah. They didn't have any clothes on.

And they were not ashamed. In fact, the scriptures tell us they were enveloped in a glorious cloud, a cloud that could only come from the creator God with whom they walked in the garden.

Now, Lucifer, let's go back to him for a moment. The formerly exalted and now fallen chief angel had been cast out of heaven.

[6 : 17] And of all the places the Lord could have cast him in the universe, he cast him to planet Earth. He was cast down to the Earth. There he met with Eve in the Garden of Eden.

He had disguised himself as a serpent. He was not yet a snake. That comes later. But he was a serpent. And he is in this tree called the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

And he has a conversation with Eve. That should have been a clue. She's talking to a serpent. In a tree. And they have this conversation.

And there was something that Eve knew about that tree because she'd learned it from Adam. That place of meeting at the Tree of Good and Evil, there had been a prohibition placed by the creator God on Adam and through him to Eve that they were not to eat of the fruit of the tree.

They were not to eat of that tree. They could eat from any tree in the garden. And we can only imagine how marvelous and wonderful they must have been.

[7 : 37] But they were prohibited from eating from that tree. Well, of course, Satan, disguised as the serpent, says, well, God's a cosmic killjoy.

Why? Because he knows, and he's jealous, and he knows that if you eat from this tree, you're going to be just like him. You're going to know good and evil.

And, of course, you know the scriptures. Eve partook of the forbidden fruit. And then I usually try to skip over this, but then Diane and I have this vigorous conversation at home, so I'm not going to skip over it.

And Adam, who was with her, did you get that, man? Adam, who was with her, also partook of the forbidden fruit.

This is why it is always referred to as Adam's sin. Eve was deceived. Adam chose to sin. This was sin being introduced into the human family.

[8 : 47] And let me just say to you parenthetically, this was not sin being introduced into the universe. That had already occurred, hadn't it? Lucifer rebelled.

I'll be like the Most High God. My throne will be above His. There we have the first sin in the universe. This was the first sin on planet Earth, and it involved the human family, our great, great, great, and keep going for a long time, grandparents.

Well, they ate. They ate. And they had been warned, in the day you eat thereof, you will surely die. God had told them that. And you eat that fruit, Adam, you're going to die. Well, they ate. Sin was introduced. And a lot of things happened immediately.

A lot of things happened immediately. First of all, they realized they were naked. And they were ashamed. Shame was introduced into the human race.

[10 : 00] And they were ashamed. And the Scriptures tell us they then tried to hide themselves from the presence of God in the trees of the garden.

And I'll say to you rhetorically, and I've said this before, where do you go to hide from God? You know, you'll never find that place. Jonah looked at the bottom of the ocean, and he couldn't find it. There is no place to hide from God. But they tried to hide among the trees. They also grabbed some pretty good-sized fig leaves, and they sewed them together.

Now, that presupposes something. Think about that. They had to come up with some type of cord, some type of awe to do the sewing. But they sewed fig leaves together to make a covering for their shame, hoping to once again have favor with God and to be able to come into his presence.

Now, what was that? Well, let me tell you what that was. This was the creation of the first human religion. They created a religion. Religion is always mankind's efforts to reach God.

[11 : 14] And they can be well-meaning, they can be deadly, but they always fall short. We can't reach God. He can reach us. And that's what Christianity is, Christ reaching down to us.

So they create this human religion, hoping by their self-effort, they can once again make themselves presentable to God. Something else happened instantly.

Adam and Eve died. They died. Now, they died immediately, but they did not die physically. Life went on physically.

They died spiritually. Spiritual death is separation from God, and they were instantly separated from God. In fact, we will note later that they were actually booted out of the Garden of Eden.

The Garden of Eden went away, and they were outside the garden. But they died spiritually. And, beloved, everything that has flowed from the wellhead of the human race, has been infected with Adam's sin.

[12 : 28] Everything that flows from that well is polluted. Well, we didn't have to wait very long to see this manifested.

Adam and Eve have two sons. One of them is named Cain. One of them is named Abel. And Cain, in a fit of jealous rage, kills his brother Abel.

Cain, in a fit of jealous rage, kills his brother Abel. I've spent almost 41 years in or around law enforcement, and that astonishes me. And it probably astonishes you.

When four people were on the earth, 25% were murderers, and 25% were murder victims. That's astonishing.

That's astonishing. Cain, of course, is banished from the sight of Adam and Eve by a terrible judgment of God. God gives Adam and Eve another son.

[13 : 27] His name is Seth. And he fits into the godly line that we can follow all the way through Scripture down to the birth of the Christ child. Well, let's fast forward.

Let's fast forward. Sin, from the original sin in the garden, fills the earth. And a number of generations occur, and we come down to a man named Noah.

We come down to Noah. Though a sinner himself, Noah is granted favor, merit, or grace, all correct in the Hebrew language, with God.

It was a bestowal of a grace gift. He found favor with God. God told Noah, the human race has become so polluted with sin that God said, I intend to destroy all life on planet earth.

And he informed Noah. He said, Noah, I'm going to save you. I'm going to save your wife, your three sons, and their wives.

[14 : 43] Eight people out of millions by then that were on planet earth. And you know the story. Noah was instructed to build an ark. You know where an ark was.

But he was told to build an ark. It took him 120 years. He preached salvation every day. He preached the judgment of God, coming judgment. And always remember, judgment delayed is never judgment denied.

God was long-suffering and patient. He still is. And he waited 120 years. And finally, the ark is constructed. It's completed. The animals are in place.

You know the story. And your Bible and in mine, it probably says, and God said, Noah, it's time, go into the ark. In Hebrew, he said, Noah, it's time, come into the ark.

Because the Lord was in the ark. The second person of the Trinity. The ark, my brothers and sisters, is a type of Christ. It is a type of Christ.

[15 : 45] They were protected from judgment by being inside the ark. I won't follow this out today, but we're protected by being in the ark called the church.

The true church. The invisible church. If you're in there, judgment will not come. There is no condemnation for those who are in the ark of Christ. Well, they finally come off the ark, and we all have almost immediate evidence that sin was still with us.

Noah gets drunk. And in that state, his son Ham does something sinful. We're not told what it is, and we should not read too much into that.

And there's been speculation for centuries over that. But he commits a grievous sin. So grievous that God passes judgment on not just Ham, but on his son Canaan.

And the Canaanites became the perennial enemies of God. They were the enemies of God. And so it goes. We see sin polluting. Sin built upon sin.

[16 : 53] In fact, within a few generations, after Noah and his family came off the ark, mankind was so sinful that God came down, confused their language, so that they would be forced to spread in people groups across planet Earth.

Across planet Earth. That's how sinful. In just a few generations. And we see this throughout the Word of God. We'll fast forward again.

This is our history lesson. God looks down, and He spots a man. His name is Abram. Now, I would like to tell you that Abram was so perfect and pure that God said, well, I've got to do something for this guy.

But it doesn't ever work like that. It never works like that. God looked down at Abram out worshiping the moon. That's hard to take, isn't it?

His people, from the historic and archaeological records, they were moon worshipers. And you could really see the moon in the desert. I've been over in that part of the world. You could see the stars and the moon.

[18:09] The full moon had come up. They'd go out and worship the moon. He was a pagan moon worshiper named Abram. He is living, at that time, in Ur of the Chaldees.

That place was later named Babylon. Even later, it would be known as Iraq. I'm going to tell you, folks, the headlines today are very contemporary with the Old Testament.

Things that are unfolding today, all these names are in the Bible. This Iraq is ancient, Babylon, or Ur of the Chaldees. God grants favor with Abram by grace, unmerited favor, and he orders Abram to leave his country and his people behind and become a nomad.

And Abram obeyed in part. He left his country, he became a nomad, and he lived as a nomad his entire life on earth.

But he didn't exactly leave his family. He basically took them with him. And they're all out there traveling with him and they're dying off because it was God's intention that he leave.

[19:22] He leave. Abram is told in the 12th chapter of Genesis that he will be the father of a great nation. We know that is going to be the Hebrews later, Israel.

He's going to be the father of the Hebrew people. I have fun with my Jewish friends because David Ben-Gurion, of course, founded modern Israel in 1948, May 14th.

And I tell him that Abraham looked more like Saddam Hussein than David Ben-Gurion. The founder of the Jewish people was an Iraqi. Now, don't tell the Orthodox that.

They'll fight you for that. But it's the truth. An Iraqi founded the Hebrew people. And he's going to found this great nation. And through this nation, the world is going to be blessed.

They're going to receive the word of God. But they're also going to receive and have born through them the Messiah, the deliverer of God's people from their sins.

[20:26] The Messiah will come through this nation. And God tells Abraham, I will bless nations that bless you and I will curse nations that curse you.

And that goes on to this day. That goes on to this day. We don't have time this morning to talk about the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Jebusites and all the Ites. Where are they that cursed Israel?

They're gone. Where's the Third Reich who killed six million Jews? They're gone. That's for another day. Abram roams the region childless.

Now you have to understand that was a great embarrassment to Abram and his wife Sarai. Great embarrassment. So Sarai decides I'm going to speed things up.

God had promised they'd have a son. They're getting older. They're getting much older. And God and Sarai decides she's going to help out God. Never try to help out God.

[21:33] Okay? God doesn't need our help. We need His. But she decides I'm going to offer to Abram my handmaiden an Egyptian woman by the name of Hagar.

And she goes to Abram and he doesn't object. He doesn't object. And Hagar and Abram have a son by the name of Ishmael. Ishmael is the progenitor of the Arab nations.

That lapse of faith exercised by Abram and Sarai is with us to this day. There's not a headline any day ever when we don't read about something going on between the Arab nations and the Jewish nation.

It's going to be with us to the end of time. God comes He changes Abram's name. Now this is very difficult in English. In Hebrew it is something like Ibrahim.

Ibrahim. And that's how it would sound in Hebrew if he was from Oklahoma. Ibrahim. We'll settle with Abraham. It just sounds better. And Sarah Sarai is named Sarah.

[22:46] Renamed. And God tells them you're going to have a child in your old age and you're going to name him Isaac.

And Abraham enters into a covenant with God. And some of you are keen students of the Bible and say you're skipping all around. Yeah I am but I'm up here and you're not.

Sorry. He enters into a covenant. God and Abraham and they did it the way you do covenants. God never established a covenant unless blood was involved.

Every covenant God ever established involved blood. Abraham goes out under the instructions of God and he kills a bunch of different animals and he cuts them up.

It was bloody folks. What does that remind us of? There's some more blood going to be spilled a few thousand years later isn't there? He cuts them up and the way you established the covenant in those days is the two people that were entering into the covenant walked among the pieces of the now dead bloody animals.

[24:00] Well God didn't do that. He put a deep sleep on Abraham. Abraham goes to sleep and God walked among the pieces.

Why? What is that telling us? God does not need us to establish a covenant. He is quite capable of doing it on his own without our input.

He did not need the input of Abraham to establish this covenant. It was a covenant of blood. It was on the basis of grace and it is a one sided covenant requiring nothing from Abraham.

God established this covenant with animal sacrifice which are pictures of the cross that would come later. So now we see this covenant with Abraham and his descendants between himself, his descendants and the creator God of the universe.

And God says to Abraham there is going to be a sign of the covenant. I am going to give you a sign and for the Hebrews the sign was circumcision performed on male children on the eighth day of their life.

[25:18] I read an interesting report, a medical report years ago, Diane showed it to me, but in the life cycle, you know, you're born and you go, go, go, go, and then you die and your blood coagulates and the strongest that blood coagulates in the human body is on the eighth day.

It builds up to the eighth day and it goes down from there. Isn't that amazing? On the eighth day is the strongest that blood coagulates. So he establishes this sign and we know that is a cutting away of the foreskin and we know the male anatomy that that involves and one theologian has said that particular feature of the male human body was chosen because by it sin continues to be spread through the planet.

circumcision for us it was a lesson we are to go through circumcision. We are to circumcise our hearts from sin.

This was the physical example of Israel with a spiritual application today. from that time all Jewish males were to receive the covenant sign of circumcision.

If you were under the covenant and a male then you underwent the right of circumcision. The surrounding cultures knew about this and they talked about it and said they're different.

[26:46] They're different than all of us. Well let's fast forward again and we are heading somewhere. The Hebrew children have been taken into bondage.

You remember all that? Abraham had Isaac who had Jacob and Jacob had a gaggle of sons and they sold Joseph the youngest at the time into slavery and he's there and you know all that story and he saves two nations.

And then the Bible says it is sad. It says a pharaoh came up that did not know about Joseph and he puts the Hebrew children under slavery for over 400 years.

They are in slavery in a pagan country! And there is a couple there by the name of Jacobet and Amron and they have a little boy by the name of Moses.

And the Egyptian pharaoh had decreed because the Hebrews were growing in number that all male Hebrews should be killed at birth. He wanted them tossed into the Nile River.

[27:54] I was on the Nile River and I was thinking of that and many other things connected to that great river. His parents though feared God more than the government.

Who should we fear more? Fear God. Fear God. Obey the government as long as they don't ask you to do anything that violates the command of God.

But we fear God and not the government. These parents feared God and they refused to cast their son into the Nile River. Instead they build a basket.

Now let me tell you how that works. Jacobet built it and her husband watched. That's how those things work even today. And he's placed into the Nile.

The Nile is dangerous. It's got crocodiles. It's got all kinds of stuff in it. It's dirty too. Now I don't know how it was then. And he's floating alone this little three month old baby Moses.

[28:57] And in an exquisite display of God's sovereignty an Egyptian woman finds the little baby, the basket, and takes him to be her son.

And it wasn't just any woman. It was the daughter of Pharaoh whom they called Ra God on earth. They really believed he was God on earth. And now his daughter has found this little baby. And she knows he's a Hebrew. She knows he's a Hebrew. He's been through circumcision. And she's got this little boy. So exquisite is God's sovereignty that she seeks out a Jewish woman to raise this little boy.

He needs nurturing. He needs milk. Guess who she pays to raise him? Jacobet. She hires his own mother to raise him.

How is that? You can have babies and get paid for it too. It's not a bad deal. I was going to say something but I'm going to leave it alone. Moses grew up learning the ways of the Egyptians in science, in engineering, in mathematics.

[30 : 16] He learned the ways of the Jewish people. There's no doubt he spoke Egyptian and Hebrew. He rose in power in the house of Pharaoh to become number three from Pharaoh.

But he knew deep down he was a Jew. He knew that. That had been instilled in him by his mother. Thank God for mothers and grandmothers.

There's a lot of people in this room that were saved because of a praying mother and a praying grandmother. I guarantee it. And he grows up learning all these things and one day he sees a Jew being horribly mistreated by an Egyptian taskmaster and Moses intercedes and he kills the Egyptian.

He kills him. Well, now Moses is in great fear so he flees from Egypt and he goes into the desert to the land of Midian and there he lives for 40 years and he took a wife of the Midian people by the name of Zipporah.

She was the daughter of Jethro the priest of Midian. Well, there we have our introduction. Now we're going to get into our lesson. Exodus chapter 3 starting in verse 1.

[31 : 53] Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro the priest of Midian and he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb the mountain of God and the angel of the Lord.

Let me stop there. When you read angel of the Lord anywhere in the Old Testament that's the Lord Jesus Christ. If you don't believe me see me later I won't develop it right now that's the Lord Jesus Christ.

And the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked and behold the bush was burning and Moses said I will turn aside to see this great sight.

Why the bush is not burned? When the Lord saw that he turned aside to see. God called him out of the bush Moses and he said here am I.

Then he said do not come near. Take your sandals off of your feet for the place on which you are standing is holy ground. And he said I am the God of your fathers.

[32 : 58] The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face for he was afraid to look at God. Then the Lord said I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt.

I have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of the land that is a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, remember them?

Ham, Canaan, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. And now behold, the cry of the people of Israel has come to me and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppressed them.

Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt. But Moses said to God, Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?

He said, God is speaking, But I will be with you and this shall be the sign for you that I have sent you when you have brought the people out of Egypt.

[34 : 20] You shall serve God on this mountain. Then Moses said to God, If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, The God of your fathers has sent me to you, and they asked me, What is his name?

What shall I say to him? What is he going to say to Israel? And God said to Moses, I am who I am. Say this to the people of Israel, I am has sent you.

Wow, what a moment. Moses is ordered by the living creator God to return to Egypt as the deliverer of the Hebrew people.

people. And any time someone is commissioned in the Bible to be a deliverer, mark it down, they are a type of Christ who would one day deliver his people from the wrath of God and the judgment of sin.

never underestimate the importance of Moses as the deliverer. In fact, we are reading his words. He wrote the first five books of the Old Testament.

[35 : 35] Never underestimate his importance. You go to a Jew today, especially among the Orthodox, and you say to them, who is the most important Jew who ever lived in history, and they will bypass Abraham, the founder, they will bypass their greatest king, David, they will bypass Solomon who built the temple, and they will say Moses, the greatest Jew that ever lived.

He continues to be the most important figure in Jewish history. God, of course, identifies himself to Moses as the great I am.

Jesus did that a number of times in the New Testament, and when he said I am, they sought to kill him. That's how serious that title is. That is the title for Yahweh, I am.

And he identifies himself and he says, Moses, you're heading back to Egypt. Let us also make sure we know that the person there is the Lord Jesus Christ.

God is spirit. The Father is spirit. Those who worship him must worship him in spirit and truth. This is a Christophany, an Old Testament in the Gospel of John, Jesus will identify himself as the I am.

[36 : 54] Well, this great man, the greatest Jew that ever lived, has his orders. He is to go back to Egypt and he is to deliver the Hebrews out of bondage and lead them into the promised land.

And you're saying, well, he never went. Yeah, well, we'll get to that later. If we were to take a quiz at this point, we would probably finish the story by saying Moses went back, he confronted Pharaoh, he called down judgments of God on Pharaoh, the last judgment, the death of the firstborn of the house of Pharaoh when there was weeping throughout the whole land, and Moses led the children out of bondage and into the promised land although he himself did not go and now they have lived happily ever after, right?

That's how we would like to finish the story. But most of us have forgotten or perhaps have never studied something that happened along the way, which is really my focus right now.

Because something between Moses leaving the burning bush and Moses getting to Egypt to deliver the Hebrew children, something happened.

Something amazing, something somewhat confusing to Gentiles living in the 21st century. Moses loads up his family in Midian.

[38 : 38] He goes to his father-in-law Jethro, I've got to go back, I'm taking your daughter, taking your grandchildren. This is his wife Zipporah, they had a couple of boys, Gershom and Eliezer, And they're traveling in the desert.

I mean, how do you get to Egypt? You go west, follow the setting sun. And the scriptures tell us they came to a place of lodging.

Well, I can assure you that was not a motel. It wasn't a Hilton Garden Inn that I would be tracked to or even a Motel 6 that when I served on pulpit committee with Mike Dersum and he was the chair, we stayed at those.

They didn't have those out there. They didn't have them. You know what this was? This was an oasis. This was an oasis and they have those in the desert. Some trees growing out and some water.

Precious in the desert region. And so they find lodging there. They set up camp and now they're in the desert and they bed down for the night.

[39 : 44] Now, they've got to be tired. Moses has to be tired. He's been walking all this way in the desert. Zipporah's got to be even worse because she's walking and taking care of the two boys and they're worn out.

And they lay down and they go to sleep. So here we have the greatest Jew, Moses, hand-selected by God to deliver the Hebrew people, a type of Christ, important in history, important in the history of the Jews, important in the history of Gentiles.

Moses, we have Moses, this great man, and he's bedded down for the night and all has gone well to this point. The second person of the Trinity, the Lord Jesus Christ, the angel of the Lord, comes into the camp.

Now, you might think, well, that's nice. Remember the garden? They walked with God? Well, that's before sin. People might say, well, the Lord's coming in.

He's going to strengthen Moses. He's going to say, Moses, there's some other things I want you to do. You have work that lies ahead. But listen to what happens.

[41:04] In Exodus chapter 4, verse 24, at a lodging place on the way, the Lord met Moses and sought to put him to death.

Wow. God, what happened? What happened to plan A? Because there's never a plan B with God. Here, first time I read that, it went over.

The tenth time I read it, finally I started focusing on that. They're at the lodging place. They're asleep. The Lord comes into the camp, Yahweh God, to kill Moses.

Moses. What is going on here? Jesus didn't come for a friendly visit. He came into the camp to take the life of Moses.

What is this? The deliverer commissioned by God to rescue the Hebrews from the bondage of Egypt, and now Yahweh is seeking the life of Moses.

[42:15] Moses. And most of us unfamiliar with the Old Testament didn't see that coming. And to understand what's going on here, you have to go all the way back to Adam and sin.

You have to go back to Abraham and the covenant. This is why I started back yonder. Let's read on in verse 25 and the first part of 26. Then Zipporah, the Midian wife, took a flint and cut off her son's foreskin and touched Moses' feet with it and said, Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me.

So he, and that's the Lord, left him alone. Wow. To understand what is going on here, we go back to Abraham.

God made an eternal covenant with Abraham and the sign of that living relationship, that covenant promise, was the rite of circumcision and Moses knew this.

He had been circumcised himself on the eighth day. Moses was a Hebrew although raised in the house of Pharaoh. He was still a Hebrew when he lived in the Midian desert for forty years.

[43:31] He had been circumcised and you can bet that his mother and his father told him of the importance of keeping the covenant sign. whether through inattention or attitude, it really doesn't matter, Moses failed to circumcise his son.

He failed. In other words, by a failure on the part of Moses, his family was not displaying the covenant sign that they were commanded to display.

Was it serious? Yahweh was prepared to kill Moses until Zipporah stepped in. Zipporah stepped in. She understood the extreme danger her husband was in and that he was at the point of death. And we read there that she rubbed the foreskin and did all that on his feet.

People are going to say, well, what's that about? I read a dozen commentaries, got a dozen opinions. We'll have to talk to Moses about that someday. But the message here is that the descendants of Abraham were commanded to display the sign of the covenant.

[44:46] Moses failed to do so and was at the point of death. Even though he's this great man and great deliverer, Yahweh was ready to kill him for not displaying the covenant sign.

Now, what does this have to do with Highland Park Baptist Church in the 21st century? I am so glad you asked. As followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, we are in a covenant relationship with God.

Now, remember, as I said, any time God enters into a covenant with people, he confirms the sign of the covenant with the shedding of blood.

He did this with Abraham. He does this with his church in the 21st century. What is our sign? Our sign of the covenant, the shed blood of Jesus.

The shed blood of Jesus. How do we celebrate the blood covenant? Well, we did it just a few weeks ago. Through the blood of the covenant of the Lord's Supper. When we drink the cup, we remember the sealing of the covenant with the shed blood of Christ on the cross.

[46:01] us. But how do we display the covenant that we are in with the Lord so that the world, the world of other believers, the world of unbelievers will know that we belong to Jesus.

Well, that's found in John's gospel, chapter 13, verses 34 and 35. A new commandment I give you, a new covenant relationship based on shed blood that you love one another.

Just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples if you have love one for another.

That is the sign that each of us are to display to other believers and to a dying world. By that sign, they know we belong to Christ and Christ belongs to the Father.

And it is love on the level of Christ. It is a sacrificial love. We are to display a sacrificial love for one another even for our enemies. Even for our enemies. When Moses failed to display the covenant sign, Yahweh was grieved to the point that he was ready to remove him.

[47:23] When Moses had gone to heaven, yeah, you bet. And been disciplined, yeah, you bet. Does it grieve the Lord when we don't display the sign of the covenant blessing we're under?

Put another way, does it grieve the Lord when we don't love one another as we should? I believe the answer is yes. Does God remove such erring children through death as he was prepared to do with Moses?

Well, first of all, he certainly has the right to. He's the sovereign God. He holds our very breath in his hands according to Jeremiah. He is the sovereign God of the universe.

His ways are not our ways. His thoughts are not our thoughts. But I believe a better answer for us this morning is to remember we live in an amazing age of grace. The very foundation of the church age is that of an age of grace where God extends mercy and it's a mercy that endures to his people.

our call though is no less. We are to display the sign of the covenant. We are to love one another with a level of love that makes us like Jesus.

[48:39] His was a sacrificial love that took him to the cross. Should we be willing to die for a brother or sister in Christ? And I believe the answer is yes. The church under severe persecution understands that.

Some of you in here work at VOM. But I would suggest something else. In addition to be willing to die for a brother or sister in Christ, what about living for a brother or sister in Christ?

Maybe even better. Live for your fellow believers. It is one thing to say I would die for you, it is something else to say I will live for you if you have a need that I'm capable of meeting, I will do so. Because God is the resource, he provides everything and I will honor Christ not only with what I say but with what I do. This is why James came along centuries after Moses and he said, be ye doers of the word and not hearers only.