

REASON TOGETHER CHURCH

REASON TOGETHER STUDY

HYSSOP

*What Does This Overlooked Plant Reveal
About the Blood of Christ?*

JOHN 19:28–30 KJV



Sermon & Pastor's Commentary

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Aloha, church family.

It is wonderful to welcome you to Reason Together Church.

Whether you are here with us in the sanctuary or joining us online, thank you for spending this time with us.

If this is your first time here, we want you to know that you are among friends.

You do not need to pretend that you have every answer.

You are welcome to bring your questions.

You are welcome to open your Bible with us.

And together, we will reason through the Word of God.

Today's question begins with one small word in the account of the crucifixion.

It is a word most readers pass without stopping.

It is not the word cross.

It is not the word blood.

It is not even the word finished.

The word is hyssop.

John tells us that the sponge filled with vinegar was placed upon hyssop and lifted to the mouth of Jesus.

Why did John tell us that?

Why identify the plant?

Why preserve that particular detail when every sentence surrounding the death of Jesus carries such enormous importance?

Our Reason Together question for today is:

Why was hyssop at the cross?

What does this overlooked plant reveal about the blood of Christ?

Bring your questions.

Open your Bible.

Let's Reason Together the Word of God.

Let us pray.

Heavenly Father,

Thank You for giving us Your Word.

Thank You that no detail of Scripture is wasted.

Teach us to read slowly enough to notice what You have placed before us.
Help us follow this small branch through the story of redemption.
Help us distinguish what Scripture clearly teaches from what an illustration may reasonably suggest.
Protect us from making a symbol say more than Your Word says.
Protect us also from reading so quickly that we miss the connections You have given us.
Show us the Passover lamb.
Show us the blood upon the doorway.
Show us the cleansing of the unclean.
Show us the prayer of a guilty king.
Most of all, show us Jesus Christ.
For anyone burdened by guilt, reveal the cleansing power of Christ's blood.
For anyone who has never trusted Him, make the Gospel plain today.
And for those who already know Christ, deepen our gratitude for the words, "It is finished."
In Jesus' name,
Amen.

Our opening Scripture is John 19:28-30.

John writes:

"After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst."

"Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth."

"When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost."

Before we continue, let me briefly explain how giving works at Reason Together Church. It does cost money to keep the lights on, provide ministry materials and carry the message beyond this room.

Our church family has been faithful in providing what is needed from week to week.

We do not pass a collection plate.

If you are visiting with us today, we are not asking you to give.

You honor us with your presence, and that is more than enough.

If you have a home church, we encourage you to support that church faithfully.

Members who choose to give may use the gift box or the online option.

Giving should be willing, cheerful and free from pressure.

If this is your first time with us, you may complete a guest card with only your first name and email address.

That is all we request.

Our Keiki Kids Center is available during our services and events.

After the service, please join us at the Reason Together Café.

We have free locally grown coffee, an RTC mug waiting to be filled and free refills on conversations.

Now let us return to that small word in John's account.

Hyssop.

Most of us did not wake up this morning thinking about hyssop.

If we made a list of the ten most important words in the Bible, hyssop probably would not appear on it.

Most Christians can explain something about faith.

Most can say something about grace.

Most recognize words such as salvation, forgiveness and redemption.

But ask someone to explain hyssop and the room may become quiet.

Hyssop is not a person.

It is not a nation.

It is not a doctrine by itself.

It is a small plant that could be gathered into a bunch and used for sprinkling or applying liquid.

Even the exact botanical species remains uncertain.

Several plants native to that region have been suggested.

We do not need to settle the botanical question to understand the Biblical function.

Scripture tells us what hyssop did.

The word appears twelve times in the King James Version.

Those references are not twelve disconnected pieces of gardening information.

Again and again, hyssop appears near blood, water, cleansing, deliverance and restoration.

Then John places it at the cross.

Sometimes the smallest word in a passage opens the largest door into the rest of Scripture.

So where does that door first open?

The first Biblical mention of hyssop is found in Egypt.

Israel had been enslaved for generations.

Pharaoh had resisted the command of God.

Plague after plague had fallen upon the land.

Still Pharaoh hardened his heart.

Then God announced the final judgment.

The firstborn in every household would die.

But God provided a way of deliverance.

Each Israelite household was instructed to select a lamb.

It was to be a lamb without blemish.

The lamb would be killed.

Its blood would be placed in a basin.

And then hyssop entered the story.

Listen to Exodus 12:21-23.

"Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel, and said unto them, Draw out and take you a lamb according to your families, and kill the passover."

"And ye shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is in the bason, and strike the lintel and the two side posts with the blood that is in the bason; and none of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning."

"For the LORD will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when he seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, the LORD will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you."

Notice the sequence.

A lamb was selected.

The lamb was killed.

The blood was placed in a basin.

The hyssop was dipped into the blood.

The blood was placed upon the lintel and the two side posts.

The household remained inside.

God saw the blood.

And judgment passed over that house.

Now let us ask the obvious question.

What saved the firstborn inside?

Was it the strength of the house?

No.

Was it the goodness of the people inside?

No.

Was it their Israelite ancestry by itself?

No.

Was it the courage of the firstborn child?

No.

Was it the value of the hyssop branch?

No.

God had said in Exodus 12:13:

"And when I see the blood, I will pass over you."

The issue was the blood God had provided and the promise God had given.

The safest house in Egypt was not the strongest house.

It was the house beneath the blood.

The poorest family beneath the blood was safe.

The weakest family beneath the blood was safe.

The most frightened family beneath the blood was safe.

Their security did not rest upon the intensity of their confidence.

Their security rested upon the faithfulness of God to honor the blood He had appointed.

And what was the role of hyssop?

Hyssop did not create the blood.

Hyssop did not give the blood its power.

Hyssop did not persuade God to keep His promise.

Hyssop carried the blood God had provided to the place God had commanded.

That is the central discovery of our study.

Hyssop never provided the cleansing.

Hyssop applied what God had already provided.
The branch was never the savior.
The lamb died.
The blood marked the doorway.
God delivered the people.
The hyssop was simply the humble instrument of application.
Now think about the doorway itself.
The hyssop was dipped into the blood below.
It was raised toward the lintel above.
The blood was placed on the two side posts.
There is a vertical movement and a horizontal movement.
From our side of Calvary, it is difficult not to recognize a cross-shaped picture.
Blood below.
Blood above.
Blood upon either side.
A family sheltered beneath the blood of a lamb.
We should say this carefully.
Exodus does not say that the Israelites consciously painted a complete cross on their doors.
There was no wooden board running through the middle of the open doorway.
The text identifies the lintel and the two side posts.
It does not describe a continuous cross visibly painted upon the wood.
But the motions used to apply the blood present a striking cross-shaped picture.
The Israelites did not yet understand Calvary.
They did not know about a Roman cross outside Jerusalem.
They did not know the name Jesus of Nazareth.
They knew what God had told them for that night.
Kill the lamb.
Apply the blood.
Remain beneath it.
Trust the promise of God.
Hebrews 11:28 later says of Moses:

"Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them."

Through faith.

Their obedience did not make the blood powerful.

Their obedience demonstrated that they believed what God had said.

We must also notice something else.

Was it enough for a lamb to die somewhere in Egypt?

The death of the lamb provided the blood.

But the household was told to place itself beneath the provision God had made.

They did not improve the blood.

They did not supplement the blood.

They trusted the word of God concerning the blood.

That distinction will matter when we reach the Gospel invitation.

But before we return to Calvary, hyssop appears again.

This time we do not find a family waiting inside a house.

We find an outcast waiting outside the community.

Leviticus 14 describes the cleansing of a person who had suffered from leprosy or a serious skin disease.

We should remember what that condition meant in the life of Israel.

The person was not simply dealing with a medical problem.

The person could be separated from home.

Separated from family.

Separated from community life.

Separated from congregational worship.

The word spoken over that life was unclean.

Imagine hearing that word attached to your name.

Imagine watching people step away when you approached.

Imagine your children growing older while you remained outside.

Imagine longing to worship with the congregation but being unable to enter.

Then one day the disease was gone.

The priest examined the person.

And God provided a ceremony by which the healed person could be pronounced clean and restored.

Listen to Leviticus 14:4-7.

"Then shall the priest command to take for him that is to be cleansed two birds alive and clean, and cedar wood, and scarlet, and hyssop:"

"And the priest shall command that one of the birds be killed in an earthen vessel over running water:"

"As for the living bird, he shall take it, and the cedar wood, and the scarlet, and the hyssop, and shall dip them and the living bird in the blood of the bird that was killed over the running water:"

"And he shall sprinkle upon him that is to be cleansed from the leprosy seven times, and shall pronounce him clean, and shall let the living bird loose into the open field."

That is one of the most unusual ceremonies in Scripture.

Two living clean birds were brought.

One bird was killed in an earthen vessel over running water.

The living bird was taken with cedar wood, scarlet and hyssop.

They were dipped into the blood of the bird that had died.

The person was sprinkled seven times.

The priest pronounced the person clean.

Then the living bird was released into the open field.

Why two birds?

Why did one die while the other lived?

Why was the living bird identified with the blood of the slain bird?

What did the formerly unclean person see when that blood-marked bird was released?

Scripture does not explicitly say, "These two birds are a prophecy of the death and resurrection of Jesus."

We should not claim more than the passage claims.

But we are permitted to see the picture placed before us.

One bird dies.

Another bird lives.

The living one is identified with the blood of the one that died.

The blood is applied to the unclean person.

The unclean person is pronounced clean.

And the living bird rises into the open sky.

Death.

Blood.

Cleansing.

Restored life.

Freedom.

The ceremony did not merely say that a spot on the skin had disappeared.

It announced that the person who had been standing outside could come home.

The individual could see family again.

The individual could reenter community life.

The individual could return to worship.

Biblical cleansing was not merely the removal of a stain.

It included the restoration of the person.

Some people live with a word attached to their identity.

Unclean.

Unwelcome.

Unworthy.

Damaged.

Disqualified.

They may no longer hear other people say it aloud.

But they still hear it inside.

Every time they remember their past, the word returns.

Every time they approach a church door, the word returns.

Every time someone speaks about grace, they assume that grace is for other people.

Leviticus 14 tells us that God made a way for the outcast to be pronounced clean.

The person did not pronounce himself clean.

The hyssop did not pronounce him clean.

The branch carried the blood and water appointed by God.

And the priest announced what God had provided.

This prepares us for the day when Jesus would personally reach out and touch those whom everyone else considered unclean.

That truth deserves an entire Reason Together Study of its own.

For today, we will simply observe that the ceremonies of cleansing were pointing forward.

The blood of birds could not permanently cleanse a human conscience.

The released bird could provide a picture of freedom, but it could not free the soul from sin.

Something greater was coming.

Someone greater was coming.

Hyssop appears again in Numbers 19.

This time the problem is contact with death.

Under the law, touching a dead body produced ceremonial uncleanness.

That did not necessarily mean the person had committed a moral sin.

A son caring for the body of his father could become ceremonially unclean.

A person preparing a loved one for burial could become ceremonially unclean.

Someone entering a place where death had occurred could become ceremonially unclean.

The law taught Israel that death and uncleanness were incompatible with the presence of the living and holy God.

Numbers 19 describes the red heifer.

Cedar wood, scarlet and hyssop were cast into the burning of the heifer.

Its ashes were used with running water to prepare water of purification.

Later, a clean person took hyssop, dipped it into the water and sprinkled those who had been defiled through contact with death.

Again we see the pattern.

God provides the means of purification.

Hyssop carries what God provides.

But the New Testament asks us to look beyond the outward ceremony.

Hebrews 9:11-14 says:

"But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building;"

"Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us."

"For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh:"

"How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"

How much more.

Those three words carry us from the ceremony to Christ.

If the ashes of a heifer could serve the purpose God assigned within ceremonial law, how much more can the blood of Christ cleanse the conscience?

The ceremony purified the flesh ceremonially.

Christ purges the conscience.

The ceremony addressed temporary uncleanness.

Christ obtained eternal redemption.

The ceremony had to be repeated.

Christ offered Himself once.

The water could touch the outside.

The blood of Christ reaches the guilt that follows us on the inside.

Hyssop could carry water to the flesh.

Only the blood of Jesus can purge the conscience.

What do we do with guilt no one else can see?

What do we do with the memory that returns when the room becomes quiet?

What do we do when other people have forgiven us but we cannot forgive ourselves?

What do we do with a record that cannot be rewritten by good intentions?

Some people try to distract the conscience.

Stay busy enough and perhaps it will become quiet.

Some try to argue with the conscience.

Compare yourself with someone worse and perhaps you will feel better.

Some try to punish themselves.

Carry the pain long enough and perhaps you will finally pay for what you did.

Some try religion without Christ.

Perform enough activity and perhaps God will overlook the stain.

But the conscience does not need to be distracted.

It needs to be purged.

Good works performed today cannot travel backward and remove yesterday's sin.

Regret is real, but regret is not redemption.

Tears may express sorrow, but tears cannot purchase forgiveness.

Only the blood of Christ can purge the conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

Notice the purpose at the end of Hebrews 9:14.

The blood purges the conscience "to serve the living God."

God does not cleanse us so that we may spend the rest of life staring at the stain He removed.

He cleanses us so that we may rise and serve Him.

The person in Leviticus came home.

The cleansed conscience in Hebrews returns to service.

Grace does not merely release us from yesterday.

Grace restores us for tomorrow.

Centuries before the cross, a guilty king understood that he needed this kind of cleansing.

David had sinned grievously.

He had committed adultery with Bathsheba.

He had arranged the death of Uriah.

He had attempted to cover what he had done.

Then Nathan the prophet confronted him.

Psalms 51 records David's prayer of repentance.

Listen to his words.

"Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions."

"Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin."

"For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me."

David did not blame Bathsheba.

He did not blame Uriah.

He did not blame the pressures of leadership.

He did not call his sin a mistake in judgment.

He said, "My sin is ever before me."

Then David prayed in Psalm 51:7:

"Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."

Was David asking a priest to strike him physically with a branch?

No.

David was using the language of Biblical cleansing.

He knew what hyssop represented.

He was asking God to do inwardly what the ceremony pictured outwardly.

Apply the cleansing I cannot provide for myself.

Wash what I cannot wash.

Remove what I cannot remove.

Restore what my sin has broken.

Listen to the verbs David used throughout the Psalm.

Have mercy upon me.

Blot out my transgressions.

Wash me.

Cleanse me.

Purge me.

Create in me a clean heart.

Renew a right spirit within me.

Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation.

David did not say, "I shall cleanse myself."

He did not say, "I shall perform enough good deeds to balance the record."

He did not say, "I shall use royal power to control the story."

He asked God to act.

God is the cleanser.

God is the restorer.

God is the One who makes the sinner white as snow.

That phrase should sound familiar to everyone connected with Reason Together Church.

David said:

"Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."

Isaiah 1:18 says:

"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

That is the verse from which Reason Together Church receives its name.

The invitation to reason together is not an invitation to negotiate whether sin matters.

God does not say, "Come now, and let us agree that scarlet is close enough to white."

He does not ask us to rename the stain.

He identifies sin as scarlet and red like crimson.

Then He promises cleansing that only He can provide.

How can scarlet become white as snow?

Ordinarily, scarlet stains white fabric.

A white cloth does not make scarlet dye disappear merely by touching it.

Human effort cannot reverse the direction of the stain.

But God can do what we cannot do.

The verse that gave this church its name asks the question.

The trail of hyssop leads us toward the answer.

At Passover, blood protected a household from judgment.

In Leviticus, blood and water were applied to the outcast who could come home.

In Numbers, purification was provided for those touched by death.

In Psalm 51, a guilty king asked God for inward cleansing.

In Isaiah, scarlet sin became white as snow.

And now we return to John 19.

Now the word hyssop should sound different.

John writes:

"After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst."

Jesus knew that all things were now accomplished.

He was not a helpless victim surprised by the events.

He had come to give His life.

He had said in John 10:18:

"No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself."

Every prophecy was moving toward fulfillment.

Every appointed purpose was reaching completion.

Then Jesus said, "I thirst."

Psalm 69:20-21 had said:

"Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none."

"They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink."

John continues:

"Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar."

They filled a sponge with that vinegar.

They placed it upon hyssop.

And they lifted it to the mouth of Jesus.

At the first Passover, hyssop carried the blood of the lamb to the people.

At Calvary, hyssop carried the vinegar of the people to the Lamb.

That is a sermon observation rather than an explicit definition in the text.

The Bible does not say that vinegar is another word for sin.

But consider the contrast.

Humanity offered Jesus rejection.

Humanity offered Him mockery.

Humanity offered Him a crown of thorns.

Humanity offered Him nails.

Humanity offered Him reproach.

And in His thirst, humanity offered Him vinegar.

Jesus received what humanity offered.

Then Jesus gave humanity what it desperately needed.

He gave His life.

He shed His blood.

He completed the work of redemption.

After receiving the vinegar, Jesus said:

"It is finished."

Not, "It is almost finished."

Not, "I have done My part, and now humanity must complete the rest."

Not, "The symbols need to continue until someone finds a better sacrifice."

It is finished.

The Greek word John records is tetelestai.

It speaks of something brought to completion.

The appointed work had been accomplished.

The debt of sin was not reduced.

The work was finished.

The sacrifice was not temporarily sufficient.

The work was finished.

The way of redemption was not awaiting one more lamb.

The work was finished.

Then Jesus bowed His head and gave up the ghost.

John continues the account.

Because the Sabbath was approaching, the soldiers came to break the legs of those who had been crucified.

They broke the legs of the first man.

They broke the legs of the other man.

But when they came to Jesus, they saw that He was dead already.

They did not break His legs.

One of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear.

John says that blood and water came out.

Then John explains in John 19:36:

"For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken."

Why is that important?

Return to Exodus 12:46.

God said concerning the Passover lamb:

"Neither shall ye break a bone thereof."

At the first Passover, we find a lamb.

At the first Passover, we find blood.

At the first Passover, we find hyssop.

At the first Passover, we find unbroken bones.

At Calvary, we find the Lamb of God.

At Calvary, we find His blood.

At Calvary, we find hyssop.

At Calvary, we find that none of His bones were broken.

Paul states the conclusion plainly in 1 Corinthians 5:7:

"For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us."

John did not mention hyssop because he had suddenly become interested in plants.

He surrounded the death of Jesus with Passover details.

He wanted us to see the Lamb.

John had introduced Jesus at the beginning of the Gospel with the words of John the Baptist:

"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

Now, near the end, the Lamb is upon the cross.

The hyssop is present.

His bones remain unbroken.

And the Lamb declares that the work is finished.

The first Passover was not an isolated rescue story.

It prepared the world to understand Calvary.

We can also notice one more echo without forcing it beyond the text.

Leviticus 14 brought hyssop, blood and running water together in the cleansing of the outcast.

Within a few verses at Calvary, John records hyssop, blood and water.

John does not explicitly say, "This fulfills Leviticus 14."

Therefore, we should call it an echo rather than our primary proof.

But what an echo it is.

The outcast was cleansed and restored through what God provided.

At Calvary, the Savior was pierced and blood and water came from His side.

The One rejected outside the city opened the way for the outcast to come home.

Some readers raise a practical question.

Matthew and Mark describe the sponge being placed upon a reed.

John mentions hyssop.

Is that a contradiction?

All of the accounts agree that a sponge containing vinegar was lifted to Jesus.

John preserves the hyssop detail.

The exact physical arrangement of stalk, branch and supporting reed is not described fully enough for us to reconstruct it with certainty.

Hyssop may have been associated with or attached to a supporting stalk.

The ancient term may refer to a plant capable of providing the necessary reach.

We do not have to settle the exact species or mechanical arrangement to accept the testimony of the Gospel writers.

They emphasize different true details of the same event.

Our conclusion does not depend upon a botanical theory.

John says hyssop was there.

Exodus says hyssop was there at Passover.

John says the bones of Jesus were not broken.

Exodus says the bones of the Passover lamb were not to be broken.

Paul says Christ is our Passover sacrificed for us.

The Biblical connection is already strong without speculation.

Now we must ask the personal question.

What does any of this mean for us?

It is possible to become fascinated with the symbolism and never trust the Savior.

It is possible to study the doorway and remain outside the blood.

It is possible to define hyssop, trace every reference and still carry an uncleansed conscience.

Biblical information is precious.

But information about salvation is not the same as receiving salvation.

Return once more to Egypt.

Imagine someone standing outside a blood-marked house discussing the symbolism.

That person might accurately identify the lamb.

He might explain the basin.

He might describe the hyssop.

He might admire the marks upon the doorway.

But if he refused to enter and remain beneath the blood, knowledge would not shelter him from judgment.

The safe place was beneath the blood God had provided.

What does that mean for a sinner today?

It does not mean that Christians perform a ceremony in which we literally apply the blood of Jesus with a branch.

It does not mean that our actions make Christ's sacrifice effective.

Jesus offered Himself once.

Hebrews 10:10 says:

"By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."

Hebrews 10:12 says:

"But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God."

The sacrifice is complete.

The blood is sufficient.

The work is finished.

Faith does not make the blood effective.

Faith receives the salvation His effective blood has already provided.

Romans 3:23 says:

"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

That includes the visibly broken person.

It includes the outwardly respectable person.

It includes the person in the far country.

It includes the person sitting in a church sanctuary.

Sin is not merely a problem other people carry.

David said, "My sin is ever before me."

Every one of us needs the mercy David requested.

Every one of us needs the cleansing Isaiah promised.

Every one of us needs the Lamb God provided.

Romans 3:24-25 speaks of being justified freely by God's grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

"Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood."

Through faith in His blood.

Not faith in our goodness.

Not faith in our church membership.

Not faith in our knowledge of ceremonies.

Not faith in our ability to repair our record.

Faith in Jesus Christ and His completed work.

Ephesians 2:8-9 says:

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:"

"Not of works, lest any man should boast."

The hyssop could never boast.

It was only a branch carrying what God provided.

The Israelite household could never boast.

They were delivered because God honored the blood He appointed.

The cleansed leper could never boast.

He was restored through the provision God established.

David could never boast.

He cried for mercy.

And no Christian will stand in Heaven boasting about how effectively we saved ourselves.

Our song will be about the Lamb.

Revelation 5:9 says:

"Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood."

By thy blood.

The branch was never the savior.

The ceremony was never the savior.

The pastor is not the savior.

The church is not the savior.

Jesus saves.

Perhaps you are listening today with a conscience that feels permanently stained.

You have tried to forget.

You have tried to compensate.

You have tried to become a different person without first bringing the old guilt to Christ.

Hear the promise of the Gospel.

The blood of Jesus Christ can purge the conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

You may say, "Pastor, you do not know what I have done."

That is true.

I may not know.

But the question is not whether your sin is greater than my knowledge.

The question is whether your sin is greater than the blood of Christ.

And it is not.

You may say, "I have carried this stain for years."

The woman or man who had lived outside the camp may have carried the word unclean for years.

God still made a way home.

You may say, "I should have known better."

David knew better.

He still had to ask for mercy.

The Gospel does not tell us to make sin smaller.

It tells us that Christ is greater.

You may say, "Surely I must do something to help pay the debt."

Jesus did not say, "It is mostly finished."

He said, "It is finished."

Repentance is not an attempt to purchase forgiveness.

Repentance is turning from sin and from every false object of trust toward the Savior who paid the debt.

The question is not whether you can cleanse yourself.

You cannot.

The question is whether you will trust the One who can.

The Gospel invitation now comes to every one of us.

Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God.

He entered the world and lived the sinless life we have not lived.

He is the Lamb without blemish.

He died upon the cross for our sins.

He shed His blood.

He was buried.

God raised Him bodily from the dead on the third day.

The living Christ offers salvation to sinners.

Admit that you have sinned against God.

Believe that Jesus died for your sins, was buried and rose again.

Repent.

Turn from sin and from every false object of trust.

Place your faith in Jesus Christ alone.

Romans 10:9 says:

"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

Romans 10:13 says:

"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

You do not need to be inside this building to call upon Christ.

You do not need a pastor physically standing beside you.

You do not need a piece of hyssop.

You do not need to repeat a magical formula.

Speak to God honestly in your own words.

Confess that you are a sinner.

Tell Him that you believe Jesus died and rose again.

Ask Him to save you on the basis of Christ alone.

The prayer does not save you.

Jesus saves the sinner who places faith in Him.

If you make that decision here today, please speak with me after the service.

We would be honored to help you understand what has happened and connect you with faithful believers who can walk beside you.

If you are joining us remotely, please visit www.ReasonTogether.Church and use the contact information there to tell us about your decision.

We would love to hear from you and help you take your next step.

For those who already know Christ, stop returning to a stain God has cleansed as though your guilt were more authoritative than His promise.

That does not mean pretending sin caused no damage.

It does not mean refusing to make restitution where restitution is possible.

It does not mean avoiding consequences.

David experienced painful consequences even after receiving mercy.

But forgiveness means that the believer's standing before God rests upon Christ rather than upon a doomed attempt at self-cleansing.

If God has purged your conscience, rise and serve the living God.

If God has pronounced you clean through Christ, do not continue living outside as though the door remains closed.

If Christ has set you free, do not keep building a cage from memories He has forgiven.

And when another repentant sinner comes toward the church carrying the label unclean, remember the God who restores outcasts.

We do not minimize sin.

We point sinners to cleansing.

We do not pretend scarlet is white.

We proclaim the God who can make scarlet sin white as snow.

Now let us gather the trail one final time.

At Passover, hyssop carried blood to a doorway and a household was delivered from judgment.

In Leviticus, hyssop carried blood and water to an outcast who was pronounced clean and welcomed home.

In Numbers, hyssop carried purification to those touched by death.

In Psalm 51, David asked God to purge the guilt he could not remove.

In Isaiah, scarlet sin became white as snow.

In Hebrews, the blood of Christ purged the conscience from dead works.

And at Calvary, hyssop appeared beside the true Passover Lamb as He brought the work of redemption to completion.

The hyssop was small.

The hyssop was ordinary.

The hyssop could not save a firstborn child.

The hyssop could not cleanse an outcast.
The hyssop could not purge David's conscience.
The hyssop could not forgive a single sin.
It simply carried what God had provided.
At Passover, God provided the lamb.
In the ceremonies, God provided the blood and water.
For David, God provided mercy.
At Calvary, God provided His Son.
The hyssop pointed.
The Passover prepared.
The ceremonies illustrated.
The prophets promised.
Jesus accomplished.
And the Savior declared:
"It is finished."
Let us pray.
Heavenly Father,
Thank You for the small details of Your Word that lead us toward the greatness of Christ.
Thank You for the Passover lamb.
Thank You for the blood upon the doorway.
Thank You for the promise that judgment would pass over those sheltered beneath the blood.
Thank You for making a way for the outcast to be pronounced clean and welcomed home.
Thank You for providing purification for those touched by death.
Thank You for preserving David's honest prayer so that guilty people would know where to turn.
Purge us with hyssop, and we shall be clean.
Wash us, and we shall be whiter than snow.
Thank You for inviting us to reason together with You.
Thank You that scarlet sin can become white as snow, not because we rename it or hide it, but
because You provide cleansing.
Most of all, thank You for Jesus Christ.
Thank You for the true Passover Lamb.

Thank You that His bones were not broken.

Thank You for His blood shed for sinners.

Thank You that He offered one sacrifice for sins forever.

Thank You for the words, "It is finished."

For anyone trusting Christ today, give assurance based upon Your promise.

Help that person connect with faithful believers and grow in Your Word.

For believers carrying guilt You have forgiven, teach us to rest in the sufficiency of Christ.

Give us courage to make right what can be made right while refusing to insult Your grace through endless self-punishment.

Make Reason Together Church a place where sin is taken seriously, grace is proclaimed clearly and repentant people are welcomed home.

Keep us from trusting symbols instead of the Savior.

Keep us from admiring the doorway while remaining outside the blood.

Fix our eyes upon Jesus.

May we leave knowing that the branch was never the Savior.

It pointed toward the Lamb whose blood cleanses from all sin.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

Thank you for being with us today.

Please join us at the Reason Together Café for free coffee and conversation.

If this was your first time worshipping with us, we do not simply say goodbye.

We say, Aloha Nui Loa.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

Aloha.

REASON TOGETHER STUDIES

PASTOR'S

COMMENTARY

WHY WAS HYSSOP AT THE CROSS?

What Does This Overlooked Plant Reveal About the Blood of Christ?

John 19:28-30 KJV

"Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth." John 19:29

Dr. Thomas W. Hawksley

Pastor & Teacher

Commentary in Brief

CENTRAL CONCLUSION Hyssop never supplied the blood, created the cleansing or possessed saving power. It was the humble instrument that applied what God had provided. At the cross, John places this familiar instrument of Passover and purification beside Jesus, the true Passover Lamb, immediately before He declares, “It is finished.”

Hyssop is easy to miss because it appears to be a minor detail in a major event. The cross already confronts us with the suffering Son of God, the fulfillment of Scripture, the vinegar, the final cry and the death of Jesus. Why pause over the plant used to lift the sponge to His mouth?

We pause because Scripture has already given hyssop a history. At the first Passover, a bunch of hyssop carried the lamb’s blood from the basin to the lintel and side posts. In Leviticus, hyssop accompanied blood and running water when an outcast was pronounced clean. In Numbers, a clean person used hyssop to sprinkle those who had been defiled through contact with death. David then prayed, “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean.”

The King James Version uses the word hyssop twelve times, not only four. Those references can still be gathered into four major movements for teaching: deliverance at Passover, restoration of the unclean, purification from death and fulfillment at Calvary. Psalm 51 brings those ceremonies into the conscience, while Hebrews 9 explains why the blood of Christ is better than every repeated sprinkling.

The blood on the Passover lintel and two side posts gives us a striking cross-shaped picture. There is movement upward toward the lintel and outward toward the side posts. We can see why Christian teachers connect that doorway with Calvary. Yet Exodus does not say that Israel painted a cross, does not specify the stroke order and does not place blood on the threshold. The picture is useful. The inspired connection is stronger: “Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.”

The clean-and-unclean theme adds another powerful layer. Under the law, contact with uncleanness ordinarily made the clean person unclean. Jesus touches a leper and the leper becomes clean. A woman with an issue of blood touches Jesus and receives healing. Jesus touches the realm of death and life answers. His holiness is not fragile. He is the Holy One who overcomes what defiles and destroys.

CONTROLLING STATEMENT Hyssop pointed to blood applied, cleansing received and fellowship restored. At Calvary the symbol gives way to the Savior. Hyssop pointed. Jesus finished.

1. Why Pay Attention to One Small Word?

John Chose to Name Hyssop

John 19:28 says that Jesus knew all things were now accomplished. He then spoke so that Scripture might be fulfilled: “I thirst.” A vessel full of vinegar stood nearby. Those present filled a sponge and placed it upon hyssop. After Jesus received the vinegar, He said, “It is finished,” bowed His head and gave up the ghost.

Matthew and Mark also describe the sponge and vinegar. They say it was placed on a reed. John preserves another detail: hyssop. His word does not invite superstition. The plant did not make the vinegar holy and did not complete the work of salvation. Yet John’s Gospel repeatedly asks readers to recognize the fulfillment of earlier Scripture in the events surrounding Jesus.

A small word can carry a large history. When a KJV reader hears hyssop, the word reaches back to Egypt, the law of cleansing, the prayer of David and the covenantal sprinkling described in Hebrews.

John does not stop the crucifixion account to explain all of that. He trusts the Biblical vocabulary to do its work.

READING KEY Do not begin with modern symbolism. Begin with the places where Scripture itself has already used hyssop.

2. Hyssop Appears More Than Four Times

Twelve KJV Occurrences Form Seven Principal Settings

The teaching that introduced this question spoke of four instances of hyssop. The KJV actually uses the word twelve times. Five occur in Leviticus 14 and two occur in Numbers 19. The remaining references appear in Exodus 12:22, 1 Kings 4:33, Psalm 51:7, John 19:29 and Hebrews 9:19.

That correction strengthens the study. Hyssop is not an isolated object appearing once at Passover and then mysteriously returning at the cross. It belongs to a sustained Biblical vocabulary. Its dominant ceremonial role is to carry or accompany what God appointed for protection, cleansing or restored access.

First Kings 4:33 gives a different setting. Solomon spoke of plant life from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that springs out of the wall. The contrast places hyssop among small, ordinary growth. Scripture does not choose an impressive cedar branch to perform the work of application. A common plant serves the command of God.

For teaching purposes, several references can be grouped without confusing the count. Passover gives deliverance from judgment. Leviticus gives restoration of the outcast. Numbers gives purification from death. John brings us to the cross. Psalm 51 and Hebrews 9 tell us how those scenes should shape our understanding of cleansing.

ACCURACY NOTE Say “four major movements” rather than “the four times hyssop appears in the Bible.” The KJV records twelve occurrences.

3. At Passover the Blood Had to Be Applied

The Lamb Supplied the Blood

Exodus 12 takes place under the threat of judgment. Each Israelite household was commanded to take a lamb without blemish, kill it and place its blood on the two side posts and upper door post. The family remained inside the marked house. God promised, “when I see the blood, I will pass over you.”

Verse 22 identifies the instrument: “And ye shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is in the bason, and strike the lintel and the two side posts with the blood that is in the bason.” The hyssop did not provide a substitute. It carried the blood of the substitute to the place God commanded.

No Israelite family could place confidence in the quality of its branch. One household may have held a larger bunch and another a smaller one. The promise was not, “When I see the hyssop.” The promise focused on the blood.

The household also had to remain within the door. The blood was sufficient because God appointed it, but the family did not treat the command as an interesting idea while sleeping outside. Biblical faith trusts God’s provision and takes refuge where God has promised deliverance.

PASSOVER PRINCIPLE Hyssop never improved the blood. It carried the provided blood to the appointed place.

4. Did Israel Paint a Cross on the Doorway?

A Strong Picture Must Remain an Honest Picture

The arrangement naturally invites Christian reflection. The basin was below. The lintel was above. The side posts stood on the right and left. A hand lifting blood from the basin to the lintel moves vertically, while striking the side posts creates a horizontal relation. Those movements can form a memorable cross-shaped picture.

We should not move from “can form a picture” to “the Bible says they painted a cross.” Exodus does not tell us which mark came first. It does not describe a continuous line between the posts. It does not say blood ran down the middle. It does not place blood on the threshold below. It names three locations: the lintel and two side posts.

The connection with Calvary does not depend on recreating ancient brushstrokes. Scripture gives us something stronger than geometry. A lamb without blemish dies. Blood marks those sheltered from judgment. Deliverance comes through a substitute. The household remains beneath the sign God provided. The New Testament then declares, “Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.”

The cross-shaped doorway may help someone see the unity of Scripture. We should use the picture with humility and then place the weight of the message on the direct New Testament fulfillment. An illustration should serve the inspired text, not ask the inspired text to serve the illustration.

APPROVED WORDING The movements can form a striking cross-shaped picture. Exodus does not state that every Israelite literally painted a cross on the door.

5. Leviticus 14 Brings Hyssop to the Outcast

The Ceremony Restored Someone Previously Called Unclean

Leviticus 13 describes the examination and separation associated with serious skin conditions. The KJV uses the familiar word leprosy, though the Biblical category can include conditions beyond what modern medicine calls Hansen’s disease. A person declared unclean could live outside the camp and carry a public identity of separation.

Leviticus 14 begins after healing has occurred. The priest goes outside the camp and examines the person. The ceremony does not make an active disease vanish through plant power. It confirms cleansing and begins the person’s return to ordinary covenant life.

Two living clean birds are brought with cedar wood, scarlet and hyssop. One bird is killed in an earthen vessel over running water. The living bird, cedar, scarlet and hyssop are dipped in the blood of the slain bird. The person is sprinkled seven times, pronounced clean and the living bird is released into the open field.

The scene contains death and life, blood and water, cleansing and release. Christian readers can see a pattern that harmonizes with the death and resurrection of Christ. Leviticus does not explicitly say, “These birds are a prophecy of Jesus.” We should therefore receive the Gospel-shaped picture without forcing every object into a secret code.

The pastoral force is clear. Someone who had been separated hears a new public verdict: clean. God does not only address the private condition. He creates a path toward restored fellowship. The church

should understand the importance of that movement without assuming that every illness is punishment for a personal sin.

PASTORAL TRUTH Christ does not merely remove guilt in the abstract. He restores sinners to fellowship and teaches His people to stop preserving labels He has removed.

6. Numbers 19 Brings Hyssop Into the Presence of Death

Contact With Death Produced Ceremonial Uncleaness

Numbers 19 addresses defilement associated with a dead body, a human bone, a grave or a tent where death had occurred. A person could become unclean while performing a loving duty for a family member. Ceremonial uncleanness was not automatically proof of a moral crime. It taught Israel that death and the presence of the living God do not belong together casually.

A red heifer without blemish was slain outside the camp and burned. Cedar wood, hyssop and scarlet were cast into the burning. The ashes were preserved and mixed with running water. A clean person later took hyssop, dipped it into the water and sprinkled what had been defiled.

Hyssop again functions as an instrument connected with application. It does not defeat death. It carries the water God appointed within the covenant ceremony. The rite purified the flesh and restored access within Israel's worshiping life.

Hebrews 9 uses this very setting to move from the lesser to the greater: "For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"

The old rite dealt with the ceremonial consequences of contact with death. Christ's blood reaches the conscience and brings the sinner into the service of the living God. The instrument could carry water to the body. Only the Savior can cleanse the heart.

HEBREWS CONTRAST Hyssop could carry the appointed purification to the flesh. Christ's blood purges the conscience from dead works.

7. David Asked God to Purge Him With Hyssop

Ceremonial Language Became a Prayer of the Heart

Psalms 51 is not the prayer of a man trying to hide his sin behind religious ceremony. David confesses transgression, iniquity and sin. He admits that God's judgment is right. He asks for mercy according to God's lovingkindness.

Then he prays, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." David knows the language of cleansing. He remembers the instrument used when God's appointed blood or water was applied. Yet he does not place his hope in possessing a branch. He asks God to do what no branch can do.

The surrounding requests make the meaning plain: blot out mine iniquities, create in me a clean heart, renew a right spirit within me and restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation. David moves from outward vocabulary to inward need. He does not need cosmetic improvement. He needs God to cleanse and recreate.

This is an important protection against empty religion. A person can learn the correct pronunciation of hyssop, trace all twelve KJV references and remain uncleansed. Biblical knowledge is a gift, but

knowledge must lead us to the God who saves. The symbol should move us toward confession, not away from it.

PERSONAL QUESTION Have I studied cleansing as a doctrine while refusing to ask God to cleanse my own heart?

8. John Presents Jesus as the Passover Lamb

Hyssop Is One Part of a Larger Gospel Portrait

John's Gospel prepares the reader for Passover from the beginning. John the Baptist sees Jesus and says, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." The Gospel repeatedly marks Passover seasons as Jesus moves toward His appointed hour.

At the cross, John records hyssop. After Jesus dies, the soldiers do not break His legs. John says that this fulfilled Scripture: "A bone of him shall not be broken." Exodus 12:46 had forbidden the breaking of a bone of the Passover lamb. John then witnesses blood and water flowing from Jesus' pierced side.

We should resist asking one detail to prove everything. Hyssop does not stand alone. The Lamb of God, the Passover setting, the vinegar fulfillment, the unbroken bones, the blood and water and the completed work form a cumulative portrait. John wants us to see Jesus' death as the saving event toward which the earlier patterns pointed.

First Corinthians 5:7 makes the connection direct: "For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us." First Peter 1:19 describes "the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." The Passover reading is therefore not an imaginative addition. It is part of the New Testament's own proclamation.

GOSPEL CENTER John's hyssop detail belongs within the inspired portrait of Jesus as the Lamb whose blood provides deliverance from judgment.

9. Why Was Vinegar Offered to Jesus?

The Immediate Fulfillment Comes From Psalm 69

John says that Jesus spoke of His thirst "that the scripture might be fulfilled." Psalm 69:21 says, "They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." The sour wine directly fulfills that Scripture.

Hyssop is not named in Psalm 69. We should not confuse the direct vinegar fulfillment with the broader Passover and purification echoes. Both can be present without being identical. Psalm 69 explains the bitter drink. The previous history of hyssop helps the reader understand why John's chosen detail sounds at home in a scene of sacrifice and cleansing.

A striking contrast emerges. At Passover, hyssop carried the blood of the lamb to the people. At Calvary, hyssop carried the vinegar of the people to the Lamb. Humanity offers bitterness. Jesus gives His blood. The human hand lifts a sponge to His mouth, but the saving provision comes entirely from Him.

This contrast is a pastoral reading rather than a sentence John writes explicitly. Used carefully, it helps us feel the direction of grace. We bring our sin, hostility and need. Christ gives Himself.

FULFILLMENT NOTE Psalm 69:21 directly explains the vinegar. Passover and purification supply the wider meaning of John's hyssop detail.

10. What About the Reed Mentioned by Matthew and Mark?

Different Details Can Describe the Same Action

Matthew 27:48 and Mark 15:36 say the sponge was placed upon a reed. John says it was put upon hyssop. Some readers wonder whether an ordinary hyssop stalk could have been long or strong enough to reach Jesus' mouth.

The exact Biblical plant is uncertain. The Hebrew word translated hyssop may not refer to the modern European herb commonly sold under that name. Scholars have proposed forms of oregano or marjoram, Syrian hyssop and the caper plant. Some candidates can grow from walls or produce longer stems.

The physical arrangement is also not fully described. Hyssop material may have been attached to a supporting reed. Matthew and Mark may name the stalk while John names the plant associated with the sponge. The cross may have allowed a shorter reach than some artistic depictions suggest. Scripture does not give enough detail to choose one reconstruction with certainty.

No central doctrine depends on the branch length. Matthew and Mark preserve the reed. John preserves hyssop. We can affirm both accounts and admit that we cannot draw the exact piece of equipment from the available words.

INTERPRETIVE CAUTION Do not build the sermon on one disputed plant species or insist that John describes the entire supporting structure with a single noun.

11. When Jesus Touches the Unclean

The Ordinary Direction of Defilement Is Reversed

Haggai 2 asks the priests two questions. If holy flesh carried in a garment indirectly touches ordinary food, does the food become holy? The answer is no. If someone unclean by a dead body touches those things, do they become unclean? The answer is yes. Uncleanness spreads through ordinary contact more readily than holiness.

That background makes several Gospel moments remarkable. A leper comes to Jesus. Jesus puts forth His hand, touches him and says, "I will; be thou clean." The leper becomes clean. Jesus is not overcome by the condition He touches.

A woman with an issue of blood touches Jesus' garment. Under Leviticus 15, her continuing condition belongs to the world of ceremonial uncleanness. Yet her touch does not diminish Jesus. Power goes out from Him, and she receives healing. He then calls her daughter and sends her in peace.

Jesus touches the bier of a widow's dead son and commands him to arise. He takes Jairus' daughter by the hand and raises her. Under ordinary conditions, contact with death defiles the living. In the presence of Jesus, life moves into death's territory.

We should state the conclusion carefully. Jesus did not become morally sinful through contact. He did not treat the law as foolish. He revealed the authority and purity of the Holy One. He is not merely one more clean object inside the system. He is the One to whom the system pointed.

CHRISTOLOGICAL INSIGHT When ordinary people touched the unclean, uncleanness spread. When Jesus touched the unclean, His cleansing authority prevailed.

12. Ceremonial Uncleaness Is Not the Same as Personal Sin

Careful Teaching Protects People From Unnecessary Shame

The language of clean and unclean can be misunderstood. A person might become ceremonially unclean through childbirth, bodily discharge, contact with death or a serious skin condition. Some of those experiences involved no deliberate moral wrongdoing. The category regulated access and taught Israel about holiness, mortality and life before God.

Sin and uncleanness can overlap in Biblical imagery, but they are not identical in every case. David uses cleansing language for moral guilt in Psalm 51. Numbers 19 applies the language to someone who may have touched a loved one's body while preparing for burial. A faithful commentary must allow the context to tell us which dimension is in view.

This matters pastorally. Illness, disability, grief and ordinary bodily processes must not be treated as proof that someone has committed a hidden sin. Jesus did not approach suffering people with disgust. He told the truth, showed compassion and restored people whom society had pushed away.

The church should learn His posture. We do not call sin clean, but neither do we turn every form of human weakness into a moral accusation. We offer truthful compassion and point everyone to the deeper cleansing Christ alone can give.

PASTORAL GUARDRAIL Do not use ceremonial uncleanness to stigmatize sick, grieving or vulnerable people. Let each passage define its own category.

13. Hyssop Could Not Cleanse the Conscience

The Repeated Ceremony Pointed Beyond Itself

Hebrews does not mock the ceremonies God gave Israel. They had a real purpose within the first covenant. They marked cleansing, restored worship and taught the seriousness of approaching a holy God. Their limitation was not that God had made a mistake. Their limitation was that they were shadows rather than the completed substance.

The blood of animals and the water of separation could purify the flesh within the covenant order. They could not perfect the conscience. They could not remove sin once for all. Their repetition reminded worshipers that the final answer had not yet arrived.

Christ entered by His own blood and obtained eternal redemption. He offered Himself without spot to God. Hebrews 10 says that by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. The worshiper can draw near with a true heart because the basis is Christ's finished sacrifice.

This is where the study must land. Hyssop is useful because it teaches application. Yet no branch can apply salvation mechanically to the soul. The Gospel is not a ritual technique. Christ's work is proclaimed, and the sinner is called to repent and believe.

PERMANENT DISTINCTION The old sprinklings purified the flesh within their appointed order. The blood of Christ cleanses the conscience and secures eternal redemption.

14. Provision and Reception Are Not the Same Thing

Christ Finished the Work, and the Gospel Calls for Faith

At Passover the lamb was slain and the blood was sufficient for the purpose God appointed. Yet an Israelite household did not leave the blood in the basin and ignore the command concerning the doorway. The provided sign was received in obedient faith.

We should not press every feature into a complete formula for New Testament conversion. Still, the distinction between provision and reception is valuable. Jesus' death is not improved by our faith. Faith contributes no merit to His blood. Faith receives the Savior God has provided.

A person can stand near the Gospel, admire the Gospel and explain the Gospel while refusing to trust Christ. Religious familiarity is not salvation. Family history is not salvation. Membership, baptism, giving and service are not substitutes for personal faith in the crucified and risen Lord.

The application is not that modern believers need physical hyssop. The application is that we must stop trying to provide what God has already provided and stop refusing the refuge He freely offers. Repent of sin and false confidence. Rest in Christ alone.

FAITH PRINCIPLE Faith does not make Christ's blood sufficient. Faith receives the sufficient Savior.

15. "It Is Finished" Is the Final Word

The Savior Completed What the Symbols Could Only Anticipate

John places the hyssop action immediately before the final declaration. Jesus receives the vinegar and says, "It is finished." He does not say, "It has begun." He does not ask His followers to complete the atonement. He gives up His life after accomplishing the work assigned to Him.

The words do not mean that nothing remained to happen in God's redemptive plan. Jesus would be buried, rise from the dead, appear to His disciples and ascend. The cry declares that His suffering obedience and sacrificial work at the cross had reached completion. The debt was not passed to the sinner for a final payment.

Every earlier scene had limits. Passover had to be remembered year after year. Cleansing ceremonies had to be repeated. The water of separation addressed new contact with death. David still needed God to cleanse his heart. Hyssop kept returning because the human need kept returning.

Jesus does not keep dying. Hebrews emphasizes once, one sacrifice and one offering. The branch associated with repeated application stands beside the Savior whose sacrifice is sufficient once for all. That is why the message must end with Christ rather than the object that pointed toward Him.

FINAL EMPHASIS Hyssop was present. Jesus was sufficient. The instrument pointed, but the Savior finished.

16. What Should the Church Learn From Hyssop?

Carry the Message Without Confusing the Messenger With the Provision

Hyssop was ordinary, available and useful in the hand of someone obeying God's command. It could not boast that it had created the blood or water. It did not become the center of the ceremony. It served the provision.

That is a helpful picture for Christian ministry. Pastors, teachers, churches and individual believers do not create the Gospel. We carry the message God has given. We point people to the blood of Christ. We should never confuse the instrument with the Savior.

The church must also receive people according to the cleansing Christ provides. Leviticus gives us the public movement from unclean to clean. Jesus restores people whom others avoided. If someone has genuinely repented and trusted Christ, we should not insist on preserving a permanent identity built from forgiven sin.

Wise pastoral care still tells the truth. Forgiveness does not erase every earthly consequence. Trust may require time. Harm may require restitution, safeguards or legal accountability. Grace does not call evil good. Grace refuses to say that evil has the final word over someone Christ has redeemed.

Reason Together Church exists to bring honest questions to an open Bible. Hyssop gives us a model for that work. We do not invent the cleansing. We faithfully carry the Word that points to Christ.

CHURCH-FAMILY PRINCIPLE Be a humble instrument that carries the truth of Christ, then allow Christ rather than the instrument to receive the glory.

17. Why Was Hyssop at the Cross?

The Direct Answer Returns Us to the Lamb

Hyssop was present because those at the cross used it in bringing the vinegar-filled sponge to Jesus. John records a real feature of the event. That historical answer comes first.

John's chosen detail also sounds throughout the Biblical story. Hyssop had carried Passover blood to a household awaiting judgment. It had accompanied blood and water when an outcast was pronounced clean. It had carried purification to those touched by death. It had supplied David with the vocabulary of inward cleansing. Hebrews used it in contrasting old sprinklings with Christ's better blood.

The doorway can give us a cross-shaped picture. Leviticus can give us a picture of death, life and restored freedom. The clean-and-unclean reversal can help us see the authority of Jesus. Each picture must remain under the control of clear Scripture.

The clearest final statement is simple: hyssop never provided the cleansing. It applied what God had already provided. At Calvary, the instrument of former application stands beside the true Passover Lamb as He completes the work that actually purges the conscience.

Do not leave the study admiring a plant. Behold the Lamb of God. Do not leave the study trying to reproduce a doorway ceremony. Come to Christ. Do not leave the study asking whether you know enough about hyssop. Ask whether you have trusted the Savior who said, "It is finished."

PERMANENT DETERMINATION Hyssop belongs at the cross as a historical detail filled with Passover and cleansing resonance. The final glory belongs entirely to Jesus Christ.

Questions for Personal Reflection

How many times does the word hyssop appear in the KJV, and how can those references be grouped for teaching?

What provided the blood at Passover, and what role did hyssop perform?

Why is the promise "when I see the blood" more important than the quality of the branch?

What makes the lintel and side posts a meaningful cross-shaped picture?

What details about doorway stroke order and the threshold does Exodus not provide?

How does Leviticus 14 move a person from separation toward restored fellowship?

What distinction should we preserve between ceremonial uncleanness and personal moral guilt?

How does Numbers 19 connect hyssop with contact with death?

What did David mean when he prayed, "Purge me with hyssop"?

How does John's larger Passover framework strengthen the meaning of hyssop at the cross?

Which Old Testament verse most directly explains the vinegar offered to Jesus?

How can Matthew and Mark's reed be understood alongside John's hyssop?

What happens when Jesus touches a leper, receives the touch of the bleeding woman or touches the realm of death?

What does Hebrews 9 say Christ's blood can cleanse that old ceremonies could not perfect?

Have I confused knowing about cleansing with personally trusting Christ?

Am I willing to serve as a humble instrument while giving all glory to the Savior?

Have I repented and placed my faith in Jesus Christ alone?

A Personal Invitation to Salvation

Hyssop could carry blood to a doorway, but it could not create the sacrifice. It could carry water to someone ceremonially unclean, but it could not cleanse a guilty conscience. None of us can provide the price for our own salvation.

We have sinned against a holy God. Good works, church attendance, religious knowledge, family history and personal improvement cannot remove our guilt. Jesus Christ is the sinless Son of God. He died for our sins, was buried and rose bodily from the dead. His work is sufficient.

You do not need a piece of hyssop. You do not need to be inside a church building or standing beside a pastor. Admit that you have sinned and cannot save yourself. Believe that Jesus died for your sins and that God raised Him from the dead. Repent of sin and every false object of confidence. Place your faith in Christ alone.

"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Romans 10:9

"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Romans 10:13

There is no magical prayer formula. Speak to God honestly in your own words. Confess your sin, tell Him you believe Jesus died and rose again and ask Him to save you because of Christ. Salvation is not found in the words of a prayer but in the living Savior upon whom you call.

If you are with us in person, please see the pastor after the service so we can encourage you and connect you with other believers. If you are participating from another location, visit www.ReasonTogether.Church and use the contact page. We would be honored to encourage you and help you find a faithful local church.

A Closing Prayer

Our Heavenly Father,

Thank You for the small details of Your Word that open large windows into Your saving work. Thank You for the Passover lamb, the blood upon the doorway, the cleansing of the outcast and the promise that death and uncleanness will not have the final word.

Keep us from placing confidence in symbols, ceremonies or religious knowledge. Teach us to see what they were pointing toward. Fix our eyes upon Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God whose precious blood cleanses from all sin.

Purge our hearts. Renew a right spirit within us. Help our church carry the Gospel faithfully without confusing the messenger with the Savior. Give us compassion for those who have carried labels of shame, and give us wisdom to practice truthful restoration.

Draw unbelievers to repentance and faith in Christ. Give assurance to every believer who wonders whether the work is enough. Let the words of Jesus settle the question: "It is finished."

In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.

Selected Sources

Primary Scripture

Exodus 12:1-28; Leviticus 14:1-53; Numbers 19:1-22; 1 Kings 4:33; Psalm 51:1-19; Psalm 69:20-21; Haggai 2:10-14; Matthew 8:1-4; Matthew 27:45-50; Mark 5:25-43; Mark 15:33-37; Luke 7:11-17; Luke 8:43-56; John 1:29-36; John 19:28-37; 1 Corinthians 5:7; Hebrews 9:1-28; Hebrews 10:1-22; 1 Peter 1:18-19; 1 John 1:7. All public Scripture quotations follow the King James Version.

Biblical Language and Background

The Hebrew term *ezov* and the Greek term *hyssōpos* were reviewed for the KJV occurrence pattern. The exact modern botanical species remains disputed. The commentary therefore emphasizes the plant's repeated Biblical function rather than making a species identification essential to the interpretation.

Interpretive Resources

Major commentaries by Raymond E. Brown, D. A. Carson, Craig S. Keener and Andreas J. Köstenberger are recommended for further study of John 19. Works by Gordon J. Wenham, Jacob Milgrom and Philip J. Budd are useful for Leviticus 14, Numbers 19 and ceremonial purification. F. F. Bruce is recommended for the argument of Hebrews 9.

Interpretive Cautions

This commentary distinguishes direct Biblical statements from typological inference and sermon illustration. It treats the cross-shaped doorway as a responsible picture rather than an explicit drawing commanded in Exodus. It does not make a disputed plant identification or a reconstructed reed arrangement the basis of the message.

Pastoral Note

This commentary accompanies the approved Reason Together Study *Why Was Hyssop at the Cross?* It does not replace the sermon transcript or internal Study Vault. Its purpose is to provide a readable public explanation of the principal Biblical reasoning, interpretive cautions and pastoral applications.

Until We Reason Together Again

Thank you for being with us today.

If you are joining us in person, please visit the Reason Together Café for free coffee and conversation. There are always free refills on conversations.

If this is your first time worshiping with us, we are especially honored by your presence. Aloha Nui Loa.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

Aloha.