

Exodus 12

Christ Our Passover

Picture in your imagination for a moment a Jewish family petting their one-year-old lamb.

It is white as snow. Indeed, this lamb is flawless. It would win the blue ribbon at a state live stock exhibition. It is incredibly beautiful.

Little Benjamin pets it with his small hands, running his fingers through its white wool. Its fleece is white as snow, clean and cuddly. He, along with the rest of the family has grown fond of the lamb. It has become attached to everyone during the past week of intense observation. The lamb was taken out of the flock and set apart by the family so they might carefully examine and observe it. Father Abraham has put the lamb out into the bright sun light each day and examined it in minute detail for any signs of a blemish, or see if it has become lame, or has some unexpected imperfection. The lamb must not be chosen at the last minute. It has to become a part of their little family. There is a sense of family identity with the lamb. To give up this lamb would be to give up something very personal. It would be like having a new pet in your home when you quickly grow attached to it.

This lamb is the father's pride and joy. It is the very best of his flock. The animal had to be in its first year, not old and ready to die, but in the prime of life, full of vigor and life. It had everything to live for. It had to be an animal that was extremely valuable.

Late in the afternoon of the 14th day Nisan Abraham called his family together. "The time has come," he says. They walk outside into the garden. Little Benjamin runs behind them. He knows that something is going to happen to his lamb.

Father takes time to explain that there is no reason for this lamb to die except that God intended to make the blood of that lamb the way of His people to escape the coming judgment upon the first born in Egypt.

He lifts his head to heaven and prays: "Lord God of Israel, we have heard You speak. You have promised to deliver us from the slavery tonight if we do what you tell us to do with the lamb You have given to us. Lord God we now obey You."

With one quick slash of the long knife, father Abraham lays open the lamb's throat. The little body quivers and is still as its blood pours out into a bowl. Then with hyssop branch he smears the blood of the lamb on the doorposts and the crosspiece above the door of their house.

Benjamin cries out: "Why did you have to kill my lamb?" Mother explains to him again why the lamb had to die for him. He is the firstborn in the family.

A few minutes later the father prepares the lamb for roasting, with special emphasis on keeping the lamb whole and intact.

Father explains to the family the importance of the blood and the roasted lamb. "The blood is on the door to keep God's judgment away. Now, eat, and when you do, you will be telling God that you accept the lamb as the way of escape from death."

The word "Passover" means to pass over, to spread the wings over, to spare, to protect. Judgment passes over and the LORD God stands guard protecting those who trust in His provision. It is a beautiful type of the salvation God has provided in Christ. The Passover meal was a profession of faith in Yahweh to save His people from the avenging angel of death.

In this ceremony recorded in Exodus chapter twelve we have a perfect picture in prophecy of what Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, did for us.

THE JEWISH PASSOVER (12:1-13, 23)

Judgment was coming upon all the first born living in Egypt (Exodus 11:4-5; 12:12).

God had already brought nine plagues of judgment on Egypt because Pharaoh would not let God's people go.

Moses said, "Thus says the LORD, 'About midnight I am going out into the midst of Egypt, and all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of the Pharaoh who sits on his throne, even to the firstborn of the slave girl who is behind the millstones; all the firstborn of the cattle as well.' . . . For I will go through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments—I am the LORD" (Exodus 11:4–5; 12:12).

One of the things that made this judgment so powerful was the people of Egypt thought Pharaoh was god. Pharaoh considered himself a divine ruler who held life and death in his hands. The death of the first born was the greatest blow to their religious system because the Egyptians never accepted death. They abominated the thought of it and worshipped everything that symbolized life. This would bring the reality of death and judgment to every home in Egypt, from Pharaoh's household to the most humble home. No one was exempt.

If "every shepherd was an abomination to the Egyptians" what would a lamb in the sacrifice at the Passover make them do? (Genesis 46:34). This subject is still an abomination to many people. However, the Good News of salvation by grace through faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for our sins is still "the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes" (Romans 1:16).

The Bible tells us that "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). It also tells us there is a punishment for sin, and no one is exempt. "The wages of sins death" (Romans 6:23a). "The soul that sins will surely die" (Ezekiel 18:4). The writer of Hebrews said, "And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this *comes* judgment . . ." (Hebrews 9:27a).

The LORD God is holy and He must punish sin. There are no exceptions.

Each Hebrew family was responsible for selecting a lamb (Exodus 12:3–5).

Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying, "On the tenth of this month they are each one to take a lamb for themselves, according to their fathers' households, a lamb for each household. Now if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his neighbor nearest to his house are to take one according to the number of persons *in them*; according to what each man should eat, you are to divide the lamb."

The lamb is to be in the prime of its life.

"Your lamb shall be an unblemished male a year old; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats" (v. 5).

Jesus Christ was thirty-three years old in the prime of his life. There was no reason for Him to die.

The Passover lamb was "unblemished" (vv. 5, 6).

It was kept under scrutiny and carefully watched to make sure it was perfect for the sacrifice.

Jesus Christ was carefully observed for three years. The Jewish leaders and the people scrutinized him. One of those who knew Him best observed that He was "as if a lamb unblemished and spotless" (1 Peter 1:19). He went on to add that Christ, "WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting *Himself* to

Him who judges righteously . . ." (1 Peter 2:22–23). The word for "unblemished," "without blemish" is used of a sacrifice without spot or blemish and morally of a person who is without blemish, faultless and unblameable.

Daily the Jewish leaders scrutinized Jesus' teaching in the Temple and local synagogues. The religious leaders were in fierce opposition to Him and carefully watched Jesus seeking to find a blemish in Him. "When He left there, the scribes and the Pharisees began to be very hostile and to question Him closely on many subjects, plotting against Him to catch *Him* in something He might say" (Luke 11:53–54). Jesus even asked them in a tense situation, "Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me?" (John 8:46). What can we say about Jesus after all that intense observation for three years? They simply couldn't find any sin to lay charge against Him. Jesus had never experienced sin. He was totally innocent (Cf. Matthew 27:4, 19, 24; John 18:38; Luke 23:41; Mark 15:39).

Moreover, God the Father on three occasions declared His approval of His Son. We are told of the beginning of His ministry that "when all the people were baptized, Jesus was also baptized, and while He was praying, heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove, and a voice came out of heaven, 'You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased.' When He began His ministry, Jesus Himself was about thirty years of age" (Luke 3:21–23a). He is a lamb who is in the prime of His life and He is God's choice. Jesus "committed no sin," either before or during His suffering (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15; 1 John 3:5).

The Passover lamb had to be slain (12:6).

"You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month, then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel is to kill it at twilight" (Exodus 12:6).

The lambs were slain between noon and 3 p.m. on Nisan 14. Three hours of darkness covered the land from noon to 3 p.m. while Jesus hung on the cross (Mark. 15:33). It is as if God the Father hung an immense, dense black veil over Calvary so depraved eyes could not see the horror of the wrath of God being meted out against the sinless One. Jesus cried out from the cross, "ELOI, ELOI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?" Mark translates it for us, "MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAST THOU FORSAKEN ME" (v. 34).

Martin Luther sat contemplating in his study this profound saying of Jesus. He sat there for a long time, without food, in deepest meditation. After a long time he rose from his thoughts and was heard to exclaim in utter amazement, "God forsaken of God! Who can understand that?"

It is impossible for us to understand that cry of our Savior. "One would need to go to hell itself, and go free from the taint of personal sin, and go as the holy Son of God, to understand it. No one ever will be in hell in that condition. Therefore, no man on earth, no victim in hell, can approach the experience that will enable him to understand the significance of Jesus' terrible cry. Thank God, our savior made it forever unnecessary for us to experience or understand His fourth word from the cross. . . . God forsakenness describes those depths. When He cried, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' my hell, your hell, all the hells of all guilty sinners was burning their fires out on Him! He paid that price, not for Himself, but for each of us individually, personally, particularly" (Russell Bradley Jones, *Gold from Golgotha*, p. 48, 52).

Probably only a few minutes later Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "It is finished!" (John 19:30). And He died.

Jesus was the Lamb of God who was carefully observed and chosen to be killed. John the Baptizer saw Jesus coming to him and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29, 36). "And Jesus answered them, saying, 'The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit'" (John 12:23–24). Hebrews 9:22 gathers up all of the teaching in the Old Testament about sacrifices saying, "And according to the Law, *one may* almost *say*, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness."

Peter observed, Christ "Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed" (1 Peter 2:24). Romans 5:6, 8-9 explains why He had to die. "For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. God demonstrates His own love

toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him."

The blood of the lamb had to be applied (12:8).

"Moreover, they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses in which they eat it" (Exodus 12:8).

Jesus made it imperatively clear that He must be accepted by faith in order to appropriate His salvation. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16). The apostle John summarizes everything with these words: "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him" (3:36).

The meat of the lamb had to be eaten (12:8–11).

Moses gave instruction to the people on how to prepare for their journey in Exodus 12:8–11.

They shall eat the flesh that *same* night, roasted with fire, and they shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. Do not eat any of it raw or boiled at all with water, but rather roasted with fire, *both* its head and its legs along with its entrails. And you shall not leave any of it over until morning, but whatever is left of it until morning, you shall burn with fire. Now you shall eat it in this manner: *with* your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it in haste—it is the LORD'S Passover.

Jesus is food for the believer to eat daily. We have to appropriate the provision God has made in Jesus Christ. Not only did God provide for their salvation from the death angel, but He also provided nourishment for their travel. Jesus not only saves us from sin, but He also provides daily bread for our spiritual lives. We must come to Him for nourishment every day. What we ate for spiritual food yesterday will not carry over for today or tomorrow. It is a daily feasting on Christ.

In John 6:51–58 Jesus explains what I mean.

I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh." Then the Jews *began* to argue with one another, saying, "How can this man give us *His* flesh to eat?" So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also will live because of Me. This is the bread which came down out of heaven; not as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live forever."

Change the metaphor and the need for daily sustenance becomes perfectly clear. "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). We appropriate Christ by faith.

The Passover was perfect protection God's judgment (12:12–13, 23).

There was only one way to be saved that dreadful night in Egypt when the angel of death came to inflict judgment.

For I will go through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments—I am the LORD. The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live; and when I see the blood I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy *you* when I strike the land of Egypt. . . For the LORD will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when He sees the blood on the lintel and on the two

doorposts, the LORD will pass over the door and will not allow the destroyer to come in to your houses to smite *you*" (Exodus 12:12–13, 23).

That was the only means of escape.

Today there is only one means of escape from the wrath of God. I John 1:7–9 says, "if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

We are also reminded in Hebrews 9:27–28, "And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this *comes* judgment, so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without *reference* to sin, to those who eagerly await Him."

The Passover was to be a memorial supper (12:14. 42).

"Now this day will be a memorial to you, and you shall celebrate it *as* a feast to the LORD; throughout your generations you are to celebrate it *as* a permanent ordinance. . . It is a night to be observed for the LORD for having brought them out from the land of Egypt; this night is for the LORD, to be observed by all the sons of Israel throughout their generations" (Exodus 12:14, 42).

On the night before His death, Jesus and His disciples celebrated the Passover meal (Matthew 26:26f). However, that night this celebration was more than a Passover; it was the beginning of a memorial supper celebrating God's new covenant with man. Properly officiated the ordinance of the Lord's Supper is a reminder of what Jesus accomplished on our behalf as our Passover lamb. The apostle Paul gave instruction to the church at Corinth in 1 Corinthians 11:23–27.

"For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me." In the same way *He took* the cup also after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink *it*, in remembrance of Me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes. Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord."

Don't trample on the blood.

The blood of the lamb was not to be put on threshold. It was not to be trampled on. Do not trample on the blood of the Lamb of God. How tragic when men demean the blood of God. The beloved Greek scholar A. T. Robertson writing on 1 John 1:7 enunciated this thought. "Walking in the light with God makes possible fellowship with one another and is made possible also by the blood of Jesus (real blood and no mere phantom, atoning blood of the sinless Son of God for our sins). John is not ashamed to use this word. It is not the mere 'example' of Jesus that 'cleanses' us from sin. It does cleanse the conscience and life and nothing else does (Hebrews 9:13; Titus 2:14). See in verse nine both forgiveness and cleansing. Cf. 1 John 3:3" (*Word Pictures in the New Testament*).

CHRIST OUR PASSOVER HAS BEEN SLAIN.

The apostle Paul told the church at Corinth (1 Corinthians 5:7–8). "Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are *in fact* unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

It was on the Preparation day for the Jewish Passover, about 12 midday that Jesus was crucified. And that is precisely when the Passover lamb was killed in the Temple. The Passover in the time of Christ was not killed by the individual worshiper. It was killed in the Temple. The priests killed it, its throat was slit, and its blood was

collected in a silver bowl and thrown upon the altar. Then the body of the lamb was given back to the worshiper that it might be cooked and eaten at the Feast. This was all done at midday and in the early afternoon preceding the Feast, which started just as the sun went down and the first star appeared in the sky. Jesus was being crucified at exactly the time when the Passover lambs were being killed. He is God's Passover Lamb, sacrificed for the deliverance of God's people.

When Jesus died, the Temple curtain was torn in two, from top to bottom (Mark. 15:38). Right when the last of the lambs would be on the altar in front of the sanctuary the veil that separated God and man was torn open!

Jesus celebrated the Passover on the preparation day when the homes were cleansed of any leaven. The next day He was the Passover Lamb. The sacrifice of Jesus is the culmination of the whole sacrificial system. He is the sacrifice that makes all other sacrifices forever unnecessary.

"Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed" (1 Corinthians 5:7b). The death of Jesus Christ is the propitiation for our sins. The sacrifice of Himself turns away the wrath of God. It is God who is propitiated by His own provision made in the vicarious, substitutionary, expiatory sacrifice of Christ. We sinned. We are guilty. Christ annuls the power of sin to separate God and man. Our Passover not only covers our sins, but He turns back the wrath of God which we deserve and God can look upon us with His favor.

Jesus gave Himself as a ransom for our sins. "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). The word "redeemed" means "to set free by the payment of ransom." It is a ransom for life as of a slave, (Matthew 20:28), and therefore, to set free by payment of ransom. The ransom is the blood of Jesus. Kenneth Wuest observed, "The blood of Christ is costly, essentially and intrinsically precious because it is God's blood (Acts 20:28), for Deity became incarnate in humanity." More literally, we are redeemed "with costly blood, highly honored, blood as of a lamb that is without blemish and spotless, the blood of Christ." It is by the blood of Christ that we are redeemed from sin. It is an ugly picture of blood spilt because sin is always ugly. We are totally depraved and in the need of God's perfect sacrifice for sin. "Redemption" is a purchasing from the marketplace of sin with the priceless blood of a perfect lamb.

"Behold the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). He died to save us from the slavery of sin and the judgment called hell. We don't need to offer another lamb, or any sacrificial work, because Jesus is the Lamb of God who was offered once for all.

God's people are saved through the blood of Jesus alone.

However, you must accept Jesus Christ as your personal Lamb. You must accept His blood and His body as your only way of salvation. The agony that Christ endured as my Passover lamb in the substitutionary process is the agony that I must endure in hell, if I refuse to allow Him to substitute for me. His pains, His suffering, His thirst, His enduring the wrath of God, His agonizing "why" from the cross, are a prophetic manifestation of what awaits every doomed sinner in the everlasting condemnation. Why would you want to go through an eternal hell when God has provided for you salvation in a perfect lamb?

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved today."

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