

# Exodus – Lesson 10

## The Passover

### Read Exodus 12:1-28, 43-51

1. (a) From Exodus 12:1, what had God done to the *calendar*? Why would this be significant later?

God assigned the month of the Passover to be the *first month of the year* (i.e. the “*beginning of months*”). This month, named *Abib* (13:4), later changed to *Nisan*, would start the new year. Symbolically, the Hebrew calendar would always begin with a reflection of the fact that God established them as a people, with the Passover occurring at the beginning of the year.

- (b) Referring back to Exodus 9:31, during what season of the year did the Hebrews leave Egypt? How does this fit with the new arrangement of the *calendar* given in 12:1?

The first month, *Abib/Nisan*, would be the starting point of the year. It falls between our mid-March to mid-April, during the spring, the time of planting crops. This would be significant because it represents the beginning of *both* the agricultural year and the festival year. The agricultural year would begin with the planting of crops and end with their harvest before winter. The festival year would begin with the feast of Passover, commemorating the *establishment* of Israel as a nation under God as he brought them out of Egypt.

2. (a) From Exodus 12:1-6, list the requirements God makes regarding the Passover lamb.

The requirements are as follows: 1) the lamb was to be selected on the tenth day of Nisan, 2) a lamb was to be selected for each household (unless the household was too small, in which case the smaller household was to combine with another), 3) the lamb was to be without blemish (i.e. visibly perfect), 4) the lamb was to be a 1-year-old male, 5) the lamb could be either a sheep or a goat, 6) the lamb was to be brought into the house until the 14<sup>th</sup> day of Nisan, and 7) the lamb was to be killed at twilight on that day.

- (b) According to vv. 7-11, list the restrictions placed on the Hebrews as to *how* they were to eat the lamb? Why are these restrictions put in place?

The restrictions regarding eating the lamb include: 1) the lamb was to be killed and some of its blood put on the doorposts and lintel of the house, 2) the lamb was to be roasted, 3) the lamb was to be eaten with unleavened bread and bitter herbs, 4) the entire lamb was to be roasted, 5) none of the lamb was to remain until morning, and 6) the people were to eat the lamb clothed in ready-to-travel clothing and in haste. The restrictions were put in place 1) because this was God’s ordinance for the obedience of the Israelites, 2) because it represented the haste by which the Exodus itself would proceed, and 3) because the blood over the doorpost would protect the Israelites from the plague coming against the firstborn of Egypt.

3. (a) Compare Exodus 12:7 with 12:13 and 12:23. For what *purpose* does God require them to put some of the blood on the doorposts and lintel of the house?

The blood over the doorpost would be a *sign of obedience* that would signal to God, as he passed through Egypt killing the firstborn, to “pass over” this particular house because it contained his own people. The blood would act as a form of “protection” from the wrath of God as it comes against Egypt for its *disobedience* and defiance. Clearly, God would already know where his people were, and which houses were to be avoided. However, the blood would be a *sign for the people* that God had protected them from death and destruction through a *blood sacrifice*. The shedding of blood, and its visibility over the door, would be a constant reminder of the protection offered from God’s wrath.

(b) Who is included in those upon whom God would “execute judgments” (12:13)? What does it mean that God would strike judgments “on all the gods of Egypt?”

**God would bring his judgments against the entire nation of Egypt, from Pharaoh’s household down to the lowliest servant in the land, including even their (domesticated) animals and their cattle. Nothing living in Egypt would be spared, except those willing to express their faith in God to believe his word and put blood over the doorpost as a sign of obedience. God would “strike down” the Egyptian gods; he would demonstrate that they are nothing but fiction, and that his power as the Living God cannot be matched by the made-up religion of the Egyptians. However, the term could also refer to *Pharaoh himself*, given that he was revered as a god. The true God of Heaven would come to execute judgments on a man, a lowly man who *thought* he was a god and had the power of deity, but only proved to be flesh-and-blood, with all of the limitations thereof.**

4. (a) From Exodus 12:14-20, list the *regulations* imposed on the Passover feast?

The regulations of the Passover included: 1) it was to be a *permanent* feast day and celebration, 2) it was to be marked by seven days of eating unleavened bread (beginning on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the new year and new month, Nisan), 3) it was to be marked by a holy assembly on the first day (i.e. the 14<sup>th</sup>) and again on the seventh day (i.e. the 21<sup>st</sup>), days of “Sabbath” rest, 4) the feast of Unleavened Bread (i.e. the Passover meal) was to be celebrated on the 21<sup>st</sup> day after the lamb was killed.

- (b) According to Exodus 12:43-49, *who* is allowed to participate in the Passover? What *restrictions* does God place upon those who participate? *Why* these restrictions?

Only natural Jews and their slaves were allowed to eat of the Passover; no foreigner or hired servant who was not Jewish could eat of the Passover meal. Any sojourner who wished to participate must “join” the Jewish people through circumcision. The meal must be eaten in the house (i.e. “one house”), none of the meat can be taken outside, and none of the bones of the animal could be broken. These restrictions clearly represent the *importance* and *centrality* of God’s election of Israel as a nation – only those who were a part of the chosen people of God, either naturally or by circumcision, could participate in a festival designed to *remind* these people of the work of God and his power to redeem them.

- (c) Why would God insist that no *leaven* be found in their houses during this feast (see 1 Cor. 5:1-8)?

Leaven, in Scripture, symbolizes the permeating effect of sin throughout the life of human beings. God uses this ingredient as a symbol of sin, and he demands that it be removed from their lives (i.e. both literally and figuratively) before they can come into his *most holy* presence. It is a tangible reminder of the fact that God is holy, and that we are not, and that God has made provision for us to come into his presence without any stain or blemish or permeating sin. This is what Paul means when he talks about how leaven “leavens the whole loaf.” In this context, Paul is referring to the sin of arrogance that has permeated the entire Christian church; the sin of one individual has infected the entire church, and it must be rooted out. This is the picture God paints for the Israelites; they must root out all sin from their lives before they can come into the presence of God.

- (d) What does Jesus mean by the term “leaven” in Matthew 16:5-12?

Jesus uses leaven, in this case, to describe the teachings of the Pharisees and Sadducees. The leadership were teaching a way of salvation based on *their* regulations, and they were rejecting the clear position of Jesus as their Lord. Jesus warns about how easy it is for *false* teaching to become “normal” amongst people who reject the clear signs God gives in favor of what seems to be “easier.” The natural tendency of human beings is to look for “ways” of salvation that can be accomplished by human effort, but Jesus warns that such ways ultimately lead to separation from God rather than his presence.

5. (a) How does John the Baptist connect Jesus to the Passover in John 1:29-36? How is Jesus spoken of in Revelation 5:11-14? Why is this significant?

**John refers to Jesus as “the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”** The picture of Jesus as a “lamb” is a metaphorical reference to the idea that Jesus is the Passover lamb, the one whose blood was shed to avert the wrath of God as he comes to kill. Jesus, by virtue of his sacrifice, *propitiates* God’s wrath and God “passes over” those who have been sprinkled with this blood, those who have had this blood painted on the “doorposts” of their heart. Jesus is spoken of as the “Lamb” in Revelation as one of his most *frequent* monikers. This lamb who was sacrificed becomes the most-honored one (i.e. at the right hand of God with power and wisdom and might, etc.) *and* stands as the judge over all humanity. Those who are included in his sacrifice are able to worship *him* as the center of their new life.

- (b) List the *parallels* that you can find between the Passover feast and the redemptive work of Christ.

There are a number of parallels between the Passover feast and Christ: 1) the sacrifice of the lamb paralleling the death of Christ on the cross, 2) the use of leaven as a symbol of the permeating work of sin overcome by the death and resurrection of Christ, 3) the haste of the event symbolizing the need to hurry away from sin, 4) the commemoration of the Exodus as symbolic of the redemption from the slavery of sin that Christ’s death accomplishes, 5) the celebration limited to the chosen people just as Christ’s death was only sufficient for the elect of God, 6) the use of unleavened bread symbolizing the body of Christ which was broken by God for redemption, 7) the feast held at the first of the year reminding us that Christ’s work was planned from the foundation of the world, 8) the lamb having no broken bones foreshadowing the crucifixion where none of Jesus’ bones were broken, 9) the commemoration of this feast by Jesus on the night he was betrayed as a direct representation of these events foreshadowed in the Passover, 9) the wrath of God averted by the blood of Christ just as the blood of the Passover lamb averted the death of the firstborn, 10) Jesus as the firstborn Son paralleled in the final plague that was to come upon Egypt, 11) the Passover as the “first” great Jewish sacrifice and Jesus as the “final” great sacrifice of all time, and 12) the Passover as a celebration of worship in much the same way that Sunday is a celebration of the death and resurrection of Christ.