

**Exodus 12:1-13**  
*Preparation for Passover*

For many weeks now, we have been looking at the various plagues that God has brought upon Egypt

- Nine plagues, to be exact

It has been fast-paced

- Staccato fashion

But for the next few sermons, we will hit the Divine pause button

- There are some preparatory steps that Israel must take

You see, the 10<sup>th</sup> and final plague doesn't take place until toward the end of Exodus 12

- There are some steps of obedience that Israel must fulfill first

Specifically, these steps of preparation deal with the Passover

- This event would have major ramifications for Israel's history

The Exodus would set into motion a whole new way of life for Israel

- They had been enslaved for over 400 years
- But soon they would be released

For many generations, Egypt was all that Israel knew

- They had learned to call Egypt home

But God was about to take Israel to the Promised Land

- A whole batch of God's promises would begin to be fulfilled

**Let's read Exodus 12:1-13**

In these thirteen verses, let's ask a series of questions about the Passover

- When did Passover take place? (12:1-2)
- Who was involved with Passover? (12:3-4)
- What was the Passover sacrifice? (12:5)
- How was Passover carried out? (12:6-11)
- Why was Passover necessary? (12:12-13)

**I. When did Passover take place? (12:1-2)**

1 Now the LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt.

The LORD has told Moses about the final plague

- In chapter 11, Moses told Pharaoh what would take place in Egypt

The first-born of every home would be killed

- Except, of course, the homes of the Israelites

Now the LORD gives more revelation to Moses and Aaron

- We notice from verse 1 that they are still “in the land of Egypt”

In other words, various elements of law and code were given to Israel before they reached Sinai<sup>1</sup>

2 This month shall be the beginning of months for you; it is to be the first month of the year to you.

The LORD tells Moses that the Passover would literally define and shape the future calendar of Israel

The first month of the year was called Abib<sup>2</sup>

- In our calendar, it occurs mid-March through mid-April

Abib means “young head of grain”

- It reflects the fresh, life-giving nature of springtime

What a perfect way of celebrating Israel’s religious history

- The beginning of the month was a reminder of the Passover event

The name of this month was later changed from Abib to Nisan

- This is a Babylonian title that was still being used in the time of Jesus

The Hebrews had numerous calendars<sup>3</sup>

- Religious calendar
- Civil calendar
- Agricultural calendar

- **When did Passover take place? (12:1-2)**

## **II. Who was involved with Passover? (12:3-4)**

3 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.

Moses and Aaron are to “speak to all the congregation of Israel”

- We notice a big change in focus with this verse

Up until now, who has been the focus?

- Pharaoh
- The Egyptians

But from this point on, Israel will once again regain the focus

- They are the covenant people of God

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<sup>1</sup> John D. Currid, *An EP Study Commentary, Exodus*, 238.

<sup>2</sup> Ronald F. Youngblood, *Everyman’s Bible Commentary, Exodus*, 58.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

For the first time in the Bible, this word “**congregation**” is used<sup>4</sup>

- Used in a religious sense, this word stresses the community aspect of Israel

So all across the land of Egypt, wherever Israelite families lived, families would gather to celebrate the Passover<sup>5</sup>

- The whole nation would be eating together
- But at different geographical locations

The emphasis would be on the commonality of the moment

- Israel was gathered to celebrate on this one night

Israel is given specific instructions about the celebration of Passover

- “**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**”

Notice the specific timing of the selection of the sacrifice

- “**on the tenth of the month**”

There is no contextual reason given for the tenth day<sup>6</sup>

- It’s simply what God determined

On this specific day, each household is to select a sacrifice

- “**a lamb for each household**”

The head of each household was to make sure that the animal was large enough to feed every member of the family<sup>7</sup>

One lamb would be sufficient for each household or family

- But what if the household was too small for one lamb?

God even made a provision for that

- Let’s look at verse 4

4 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.

If the household is too small for a lamb, then God allowed that household to share the sacrifice with a neighbor

- They could join forces and share the sacrifice

Not only the numbers of persons was to be taken into account

- But also his/her appetite

Not everyone eats the same amount<sup>8</sup>

- Everyone has individual differences when it comes to how they he/she eats

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<sup>4</sup> R. Alan Cole, *Tyndale OT Commentaries, Exodus*, 105.

<sup>5</sup> Douglas K. Stuart, *NAC, Exodus*, 273.

<sup>6</sup> Cornelis Houtman, *Historical Commentary on the OT, Exodus, Vol 2*, 170.

<sup>7</sup> Michael Bentley, *Travelling Homeward*, 144.

<sup>8</sup> Houtman, 171.

Look at the end of verse 4, “according to what each man should eat, you are to divide the lamb”

- When did Passover take place? (12:1-2)
- Who was involved with Passover? (12:3-4)

### III. What was the Passover sacrifice? (12:5)

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

The sacrifice couldn't be any regular animal

- It had strict requirements

First, the sacrifice must be “unblemished”

- God demanded the very best from the Israelites
- A cull, diseased, or injured animal would not suffice

A defective gift is an insult to the recipient<sup>9</sup>

- In Malachi 1, the LORD chides His people for not bringing the best for sacrifice<sup>10</sup>, “But when you present the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And when you present the lame and sick, is it not evil?” (Mal 1:8)

Second, the sacrifice must be a “male”

- The animal must be male in order to represent and be a substitute for the first-born<sup>11</sup>

Third, the sacrifice must be “a year old”

- Around 1 year of age, the animal would have entered into adulthood
- It would have reached its prime

Fourth, the sacrifice was selected “from the sheep or from the goats”

- The LORD allowed for either a lamb or a goat to be sacrificed<sup>12</sup>
- The word allows for either

This sacrifice was a foreshadowing of a greater Sacrifice

- Jesus Christ, giving His life for sinners
- Jesus Christ, atoning for their sins

When John the Baptist saw Jesus, do you remember what he said?

- “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29)

As Robert read earlier in the service, Jesus was prophesied in Isaiah 53

- “He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth; like a lamb that is led to slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, so He did not open His mouth” (53:7)

<sup>9</sup> Nahum M. Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary, Exodus*, 55.

<sup>10</sup> John L. Mackay, *A Mentor Commentary, Exodus*, 206.

<sup>11</sup> C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament, Exodus*, 327.

<sup>12</sup> Currid, 240.

Do you realize that Jesus Christ fulfilled all four of these requirements?

First, Jesus was “**unblemished**”

- He was sinless, pure, and completely free from the effects of the sin nature

Consider these verses

- “**you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, *the blood of Christ***” (1 Pet 1:18-19)
- “**For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as *we are*, yet without sin**” (Heb 4:15)

Second, Jesus was a “**male**”

- He could not have been a female

Jesus is the Lord, not the Lady, of the Church

- He is the King, not the Queen
- He is the Son of man, not the Daughter of man
- He is the Son of God, not the Daughter of God

He was the second Adam

- By necessity, He had to be a Man

Third, Jesus was in the prime of His life

- He wasn't a child
- He wasn't an old man

In the very prime of His life, as an adult, He gave His life on the cross for sinners

Fourth, Jesus was selected “**from the sheep or from the goats**”

- He was, in a very real sense, one of the people

His own brothers didn't believe in Him

- The people of Nazareth thought of him as a mere “**carpenter's son**” (Mt 13:55)

- **When did Passover take place? (12:1-2)**
- **Who was involved with Passover? (12:3-4)**
- **What was the Passover sacrifice? (12:5)**

#### **IV. How was Passover carried out? (12:6-11)**

**6 And you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month.**

The household would keep the sacrificial animal for four days

- Presumably, the animal would be monitored to ensure that it remained ready for sacrifice
- It would be guarded to keep it free from injury or sickness
- It would also safeguard anyone else from counting it as their sacrifice<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Houtman, 173.

During this time, the family would grow attached to the animal

- It became almost like a pet

You know how quickly you can bond with an animal

- It was no different with this animal

The family would have identified with this animal<sup>14</sup>

- It would become almost like a part of the family

But this Passover animal would become the Passover sacrifice

- It had to die

The children might ask, “Daddy, why does this animal have to die?”

- The father would respond, “Because it is a substitute. God will require the death of my first-born or this animal.”

Yet this animal was destined for slaughter

- Let’s keep reading in verse 6

then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel is to kill it at twilight.

All the individual households in Israel were to kill their animals “at twilight”

- Around the same time, everyone was to kill their sacrificial animals

It was to be a synchronized event

- Not a random schedule

“at twilight” is literally “between the two evenings”<sup>15</sup>

- This was approximately 3 PM to 5 PM
- This would have given everyone enough time and light to sacrifice their animals

Each of the household leaders would slaughter the animal

- Most likely by slitting its throat

The shedding of blood was a necessary part of the Passover

- It wasn’t a pleasant site

But one or two things would take place

- Either the animal would be slain
- Or the first-born would be slain

Blood represents the very essence of life

- “For the life of the flesh is in the blood” (Lev 17:11)

The Israelites were just as much under the threat of death as the Egyptians

- If they didn’t obey the LORD’s teaching, then they would lose their first-born as well

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<sup>14</sup> Philip Graham Ryken, *Preaching the Word, Exodus*, 332.

<sup>15</sup> Mackay, 207.

The sacrificial animal represented the family

- It died so that the first-born didn't have to
- It was a substitute

We will do well to note the absence of several key items<sup>16</sup>

- There is no mention of the priesthood
- There is no mention of the Tabernacle or Temple
- There is no mention of an altar

These items would come into focus much later in Israel's history

- For now, it was a very primitive picture of Israel's sacrificial system

7 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.

The responsibilities didn't end after killing the animal, however

- There was more to be done

Some of the blood of the animal was to be put on the “two doorposts and on the lintel”

- This, of course, was around the doorframe
- Much like our modern-day casing

Why the door?

- Because it was viewed as a type of portal into another world<sup>17</sup>

Inside the door, there was a family and a home

- Outside the door, there was another world

No blood was to be applied to the threshold on the floor<sup>18</sup>

- Blood was not to be trodden under foot

The placement of blood on the doorposts and lintel signified that that house was covered

- An animal had been sacrificed
- The family had been obedient

8 And they shall eat the flesh that *same* night, roasted with fire, and they shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs.

The animal was to be cooked and eaten

- But it was to be prepared in a certain way

It was to be “roasted with fire”

- It was to be cooked thoroughly

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<sup>16</sup> Cole, 105-06.

<sup>17</sup> Houtman, 176.

<sup>18</sup> Keil and Delitzsch, 328.

This was probably the quickest way to cook the animal<sup>19</sup>

- It was probably an effective way of capturing the blood that would be put around the door

The meat was to be eaten with “**unleavened bread and bitter herbs**”

- Unleavened bread was bread that had not had time for the yeast to rise

Bitter herbs were very plentiful in Egypt

- They would later represent the bitter years that Israel spent in the land of Egypt

9 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.

The Israelites were told two restrictions about the consumption of the sacrificial meal

First, it was not to be eaten “**raw**”

- This was given partially to prevent the Israelites from consuming the blood with the meat

Second, it was not to be “**boiled at all with water**”

- This most likely would have taken longer to cook<sup>20</sup>

It was to be roasted with fire, “**both its head and its legs along with its entrails**”

This would be in contrast to the elaborate butchering that would normally take place at a sacrifice

- Again, the focus is on getting the meat cooked quickly

10 And you shall not leave any of it over until morning, but whatever is left of it until morning, you shall burn with fire.

Remember, this meal was to take place at twilight

- But what happened to the leftovers, if any?
- Yet again, God provides guidelines for this

“**And you shall not leave any of it over until morning, but whatever is left of it until morning, you shall burn with fire**”

- The Passover meal was not to be nibbled on afterwards

It was not to be treated as an ongoing meal

- Rather, the leftovers were to be burned the following morning

The sacrifice was too sacred and holy to be used for any other purpose<sup>21</sup>

- It was totally consecrated

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<sup>19</sup> Sarna, 55.

<sup>20</sup> Stuart, 277.

<sup>21</sup> Currid, 243.



11 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.

Perhaps the strangest element of the Passover meal was given here in verse 11

- It is the way in which the participants dressed

Normally, one would think of having such a meal in a relaxed fashion

- Shoes off
- Comfortable clothing

But that's not the case

- The loins were girded
- The sandals were on the feet
- The walking staff was in hand
- The eating was in haste

The dress of the day was that of long flowing clothing

- Much like a dress or robe

To have one's loins "**girded**" meant that the loose clothing was tucked in

- The long clothing would not be a tripping hazard
- One could easily move quickly, if needed

The people were to wear their sandals

- They were not to take them off when they came into the house

The walking staff serves an obvious purpose

- To assist individuals in walking
- Providing stability to those who were tottery

Moses tells Israel to eat the Passover "**in haste**"

- This was not a relaxed, casual meal
- There was an element of swiftness and speed involved

Why?

- Because God was about to deliver Israel from Egypt!
- They needed to be ready at a moment's notice

All of these elements would help to facilitate a rapid exit

- They would be ready to leave very quickly

- **When did Passover take place? (12:1-2)**
- **Who was involved with Passover? (12:3-4)**
- **What was the Passover sacrifice? (12:5)**
- **How was Passover carried out? (12:6-11)**

## V. Why was Passover necessary? (12:12-13)

12 For I will go through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike down all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments — I am the LORD.

This verse takes us back to Exodus 11:4, “Thus says the LORD, ‘About midnight I am going out into the midst of Egypt’”

- Yahweh Himself was going to perform the action

He would not work through a secondary agent, as He had in previous plagues

- That’s because this plague was unlike any other before it

The attack on the first-born would take place “about midnight”

- A time of vulnerability
- A time of unpreparedness

God says that He will go through the land of Egypt

- And He will “strike down all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast”

This is a strong word that we have seen before in Exodus

- It was used to describe how Moses struck down the Egyptian, killing him (2:12)
- It was used of Pharaoh’s taskmasters beating the Israelites for not meeting their quota (5:14)
- It was used of Moses striking the Nile (7:20) and the dust of the earth (8:16, 17)
- It was used of hail striking everything in the field (9:25)

This is a violent action

- It would achieve God’s intended purpose

But then we are told an interesting bit of information

- This really helps us to see the plague accounts in a more significant light

Toward the end of verse 12, the LORD tells Moses, “and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments — I am the LORD”

- There is a lot in this one statement

Some may look at the plague accounts and say that God is being cruel to the Egyptians

- But that wasn’t God’s primary intent

According to Exodus 12:12 the plague accounts were for one overarching purpose

- To execute judgment on “all the gods of Egypt”

I have noted before that Egypt was a polytheistic society

- They believed in many, many gods

To name a few

- The Nile River
- The sun god
- The Pharaoh himself
- Pharaoh’s first-born
- Various animals

The ten plagues were various targets that God was taking down

- And He did achieve victory and supremacy

Back in Exodus 5:2, Pharaoh made this statement, “Who is the LORD that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, and besides, I will not let Israel go.”

- The plague accounts were an education in the nature and character of Yahweh

So it shouldn't surprise us, then, to see the last phrase of verse 12 being, “I am the LORD”

- Oh, by the way Pharaoh, I am Yahweh
- Do you know more about Me now?

John Mackay, in his commentary on Exodus, writes these words, “The LORD then adds as it were his signature to the verdict he has pronounced: I am the Lord”<sup>22</sup>

Yahweh has taught Pharaoh many things

- Yahweh is sovereign
- Yahweh demands exclusive worship
- Yahweh expects obedience
- Yahweh will punish those who disobey
- Yahweh is the loyal, faithful God
- Yahweh will protect His people

13 And 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.

Verse 13 goes back to the overarching purpose of the blood being put on the doorposts and lintel

- It points to two distinct purposes

The first purpose is a sign to the Israelites

- “And the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live”

Why was this a sign to the Israelites?

- Because it took remarkable faith for them to follow through with God's commands

Think about it

- Think of how crazy it sounds

On one hand, what good will it do to kill an animal and put some blood on its doorposts?

- What good could that possibly do?

On the other hand, it took great trust in the LORD and in His Word to obey

- When they saw the blood, they thought of that animal who had to give his life
- When they saw the blood, they thought of how their first-born had been spared

But there was a second purpose in applying the blood to the door

- That was a Divine purpose

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<sup>22</sup> Mackay, 210.

The LORD says, “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”

We know that the original Text of Exodus was not written in English

- It was written in Hebrew

But God is gracious in that the very name of this event is recorded here in verse 13

- God promises to “pass over” the houses of the Israelites who apply the blood to the door

“pass over”

- Passover!

The very name tells us the main element

- God would pass over the houses
- This is in great contrast to God coming down and killing the first-born in every home that didn't have the blood applied

Were the Israelites automatically exempt from the plague?

- Certainly not

Had the Israelites done nothing to prepare, then they would have had their first-born killed

- There was action that they needed to do

This morning is Communion Sunday

- A day in which we celebrate the Lord's death

But did you realize that the day in which Jesus was crucified was also Passover?

- That's no coincidence!

In the Gospel of John, we read these words, “Now it was the day of preparation for the Passover; it was about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews, ‘Behold, your King!’” (19:14)

- Jesus was crucified on the day of Passover

All over Jerusalem, countless numbers of animals would be slain

- But on a cross at Calvary, the Lamb of God was slain

It isn't surprising, then, that the apostle Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 5:7, “Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed”

- What a thought!

Jesus Himself told a group of followers, “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” (John 6:53)

- Is Jesus advocating cannibalism?
- Certainly not!

Jesus is pointing to Himself as the Passover Lamb

- His death would be the atoning sacrifice for sinful humanity

God has always provided what He demanded<sup>23</sup>

- Especially when it comes to sacrifice

In the Garden, God provided a sacrifice

- This animal died to cover Adam and Eve

With Abraham, God provided a substitute so his son Isaac would not be killed

- I am sure that Abraham and Isaac never forgot those tense moments!

God provided an endless supply of animals to be sacrificed on the Day of Atonement every year

- The priests would slaughter thousands and thousands of animals on this unique day

Then, of course, God provided the One Lamb to die for the sins of all those who would believe in Him

- Jesus Christ, “**the Lamb who has been slain**” (Rev 13:8)

Jesus’ death on the cross was a monumental event

- Don’t forget that our own calendar system is closely tied to the birth of this God-man
- B.C. – before Christ

Jesus’ death was a propitiation

- An atoning sacrifice that turned away the wrath of God

When the Israelites looked at the blood on the door, they saw that they had a covering for their sin

- The destroyer would not kill their first-born

When Yahweh looked down at the blood on the door, He saw that the sacrifice had been made

- He would not bring the death of the first-born

Dear friend, the only way for you to escape the coming wrath of God is to be covered

- To be under the blood
- To have the death of Christ applied to your life

Think of these verses as we prepare for the Lord’s Supper<sup>24</sup>

- “**having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him**” (Rom 5:9)
- “**In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace**” (Eph 1:7)
- “**Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside the gate**” (Heb 13:12)
- “**knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.**” (1 Pet 1:18-19)
- “**but 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**” (1 John 1:7)

Don’t be foolish enough to think that there is some other way to avoid the wrath of God

- God will accept the blood of His Son
- Or He will bring death and eternal separation from you

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<sup>23</sup> Ryken, 329-30.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 333.