

## **THE PASSOVER LAMB EXODUS 12:1-13**

### **INTRODUCTION:**

It was such a significant moment in the life of the people of Israel that they changed their calendar to reflect it. They began to number their existence from this month in which they offered a Passover Lamb. “The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in Egypt, ‘This month is to be for you the first month of your year.’” So everything was marked from that event when God brought deliverance to His people. For those of us who are Christians, we have a solid basis for seeing this as a type of our own deliverance from sin. The beloved Apostle Paul, who was so deep in his knowledge of the Old Testament, referred to Jesus as our Passover – “for Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed.” (I Cor. 5:7) Simon Peter also made such a declaration, “For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefather, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.” (I Peter 1:18-19)

So it is with New Testament authority that we read this Old Testament record and learn about our salvation. Jesus is to us what that little lamb was to an Israeli household on the night of the Passover. With the record of the first Passover before us, let us look carefully to see what we can learn of our Lord in this passage.

### **I. GOD SELECTS THE LAMB.**

God Himself gave the word concerning a Passover lamb, “Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household.”

1. God specified a lamb or a goat for the offering.

The statement we have just read speaks of a lamb, however a later reference indicates that it could have been a lamb or a goat. The New Testament focuses upon the Lamb. Since the offering was being made to the God of Israel, it was His prerogative to decide what the offering would be. So God exercised His holy and sovereign choice in deciding that the offering would be a lamb.

It is of interest that Jesus was first presented to Israel by the authorized forerunner John the Baptist as, “the Lamb of God which takes away the sins of the world.” He is the Lamb that God Himself has personally chosen for this role of redemption that makes our salvation possible.

2. God set the qualifications for the Lamb.

In the instructions that Moses received, it was made clear that not just any lamb would do. The lamb that was to be the Passover lamb had to meet certain criteria.

“The animals you choose must be one year old males without defect, and you may take them from the sheep or the goats.” There were two very specific specifications set forth.

First, the lamb must be a year old male. Being a year old indicated that it would be vigorous and strong. It is of interest that Jesus was the first born son of Mary and that He was offered as the sacrificial lamb in the thirty-third year of His life. It was just as Jesus was entering the vigor and maturity of life itself that He was presented before God the Father as our Passover Lamb.

Furthermore the Lamb was to be “without defect.” At least as far as the eyes of men could determine, the Lamb was to be without spot or blemish – perfect! You could not bring a lamb that was maimed or had an evident defect. It had to meet the divine specifications.

It is not an accident that it was made clear that Jesus was “without sin.” His disciples found Him to be without sin. His critics found Him to be without sin. The Roman authorities found Him to be without fault. More importantly God the Father Himself said, “This is my Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” Jesus met the specifications that Holy God had set down for the Lamb. He was indeed our Passover Lamb.

3. God required a time of testing for the Lamb.

In the instructions that were given the Lamb was to be selected on the tenth day but it was not offered until the 14<sup>th</sup> day. “Take care of them until the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the month when all the people of the community of Israel must slaughter them at midnight.” This means that there were four days of observation and testing for the lamb. These four days could be used to make sure that the lamb was not sickly or flawed in some way. When it was

offered on the 14<sup>th</sup> day, the man of the house could be confident that he was offering to God his very best.

Without question the Lord Jesus underwent three years of testing. During those three years He was tested by the people of Israel, by Satan the adversary of God, and even by His own disciples. During those three years He was under the careful scrutiny of Heaven itself. And at the end of the three years He was found to be all that God the Father required. Jesus is the Lamb that was selected by the Father, the elect of God. As such He is our Passover Lamb.

## **II. THE LAMB IS SLAIN BY THE WHOLE ASSEMBLY.**

The slaughter of the lamb took place on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the first month.

1. The lamb was slain at twilight.

Actually the Hebrew term means, “between the evenings.” Scholars indicate that this probably means that the lamb was slain sometime between three in the afternoon and dark. The Hebrew people have followed the custom through the years of killing the Passover Lamb sometime around six o’clock in the evening.

It is noteworthy that Jesus, our Lord, died on the cross in that time between the evenings. He actually died sometime between three in the afternoon and six in the evening. It provided adequate time for Joseph to take down His body from the cross and place it in his prepared tomb before the Sabbath began at sunset.

2. The lamb was slain as a substitute for the first born.

We must never forget the context for this Passover Lamb. The word of judgment had been pronounced – every first born son in the land of Egypt is to die. In their natural state the first born sons of Israel do not have immunity from this judgment. So that they can be protected from the deadly judgment that is to fall at the midnight hour, God offers the plan in which a lamb will die in the place of the first born. So as each father in the tribes of Israel killed the Passover Lamb, the whole family knew that that little lamb was dying in the place of the first born. It must have been an awesome moment for that family when they watched the quiver of death as the life of the lamb was poured out and they realized that it was their first born son who should have been giving out his life. Without the offering of a substitute, every first born son in Israel would have died.

We must never forget that Jesus died in our place. The death that He died on the cross should have been my death. The judgment that fell on Him was supposed to fall on me. He is my Passover substitute.

3. The whole assembly had a part in the slaughter of the lamb.

The emphasis upon the participation of the community in this event is significant. “When all the people of the community of Israel must slaughter them at twilight.” Actually it seems that the father of each family functioned as a priest in this ritual. The whole family was standing around and participating as he cut the throat of the lamb and shed its blood. God wanted us to note that it was the whole community that brought about the slaughter of the lamb.

This is an eloquent reminder to us how each of us had a part in the death of Christ. We use a little track in our FAITH presentation which emphasizes this. Individuals are pictured as gathered around the foot of the cross. One of them has a hammer in his hand and some hammers are seen lying on the ground. The obvious implication from the picture is that each person there had a part in nailing Jesus to the cross.

There have been attempts through the years to fasten the blame for the death of Jesus on the Jew. This is an unjust accusation against the Jewish people. While they played a part in the death of Jesus, Pilate, the Roman governor, also played a part. We were all there nailing Jesus to the cross.

### **III. THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB IS APPLIED TO THE HOUSE.**

It was not enough to slaughter the lamb. The blood had to be caught in a vessel and application had to be made.

1. The blood is applied to the sides and tops of the door frames.

Moses was specific about what to do with the blood. “They are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the door frames of the houses where they eat the lambs.” The door was the entrance into the house as well as the means of protection for those that are in the house. The entrance into protection was through that door. As they walked through that door and saw the splattered blood above the door and down either side of the door, they were reminded that they were covered by blood. It was the blood of the Passover Lamb that provided the saving covering that night.

So it is with us! It is the blood of Jesus Christ that gives us covering from the deserved judgment of God.

2. The blood is not sprinkled on the floor.

There was no blood on the floor beneath the door. It was on the sides and above the door. The blood was so precious that you did not trample it underfoot. Those people of Israel knew that it is this blood that is saving our first born son from the death angle. You would not trample underfoot something that had preformed such a precious ministry in the life of your first born son.

We must not count the blood of the covenant, our Passover Lamb, as a common thing. We must not trample it underfoot. Surely we must say with Peter that it is “precious.”

3. The blood is the basis for the redemption.

This is the underlying lesson that we must learn. The first born of Israel was redeemed by blood. No one has ever been redeemed apart from blood. Material things can never redeem – only blood can redeem. In our case it is not the blood of an innocent little lamb taken from the flock, but rather the blood of the Lamb from the pastures of Heaven.

4. The application of the blood is an act of faith.

When the father of the family took a piece of hyssop, dipped it in the blood and sprinkled that blood on the doorpost, he was acting in faith. The very act of sprinkling the blood was an act of faith. Faith was appropriating what God had provided.

Even though the blood of Jesus, the Passover Lamb has been shed for the sins of the world, you must personally appropriate it by faith. Have you ever placed your life under the covering of the blood? Have you ever acknowledged to God that your only hope of eternal life is what Jesus Christ did for you on the cross?

#### **IV. THE BODY OF THE LAMB BECOMES THE FEAST FOR THE REDEEMED.**

1. The lamb was roasted in fire.

“That same night they are to eat the meat roasted over the fire along with bitter herbs and bread made without yeast.” The specifications made clear that the lamb must be roasted. It could not be boiled but rather it must be roasted in fire. The fire is a reminder of the sufferings and sacrifice of the lamb.

There is no way for us to begin to comprehend the depth of the sufferings of our Lord on our behalf. As the Lamb of God, He went through the fire for us. This roasting in the fire was essential if He was to be the food for our feast.

2. It is eaten by the whole family in celebration.

Everyone who lived under the roof of the house on which the blood was sprinkled took part in the eating of the lamb if they were a part of the Covenant. Circumcision was required. Even the slaves could eat if they had been circumcised.

They were instructed, “This is how you are to eat it: with your cloak tucked in to your belt, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand. Eat it in haste; it is the Lord’s Passover.” That dark night as they sat in their homes eating the roasted lamb, under the covering of the blood the Lord passed through the land of Egypt leaving behind a dead firstborn in every family. But on that same night of death, those under the blood were feasting on the lamb. They were feasting on the lamb with their clothing in place so that they were ready to leave at the sound of the trumpet.

This is our privilege! While the world around us rushes head long toward certain judgment under the hand of God, we gather in the household of God under the covering of blood and feast on the finished work of the Lord Jesus.

Indeed, He is our Passover Lamb! Aren’t you grateful that we have a Lamb!

(Alternate Outline)

God’s judgment on sin a fearful thing! The penalty is death. Egypt along with its leaders have defied the Holy God of Israel, and the penalty is death—the selective death of the firstborn son in each family. Since the people of Israel were sinners too, if the angel of judgment came to Egypt to impose the penalty, the firstborn in the Israeli family would not be immune. They too would die at the hand of the Destroyer.

But God had a plan! His plan involved the death of a lamb. A chosen lamb could die in place of the first born in each family. We have the description of this whole historic episode in this chapter.

When we come to the New Testament, we learn that the whole human race is under the same penalty as Egypt. Every human being has been tested by God and found to be guilty

of sin, and the penalty for sin is death, eternal death. But we learn in the New Testament that God has plan—and the plan is just like the one in Exodus 12; a Lamb can die in place of the guilty sinner. I want us to use the Exodus passage to demonstrate just how clear and simple God’s plan of redemption really is.

I. THE SELECTION OF THE LAMB.

1. The selected Lamb must be chosen by the Father..
2. The selected Lamb must be a one year old male.
3. The selected Lamb must be without spot.

II. THE SLAYING OF THE LAMB.

1. The time for the slaying.
2. The nature of the slaying.
3. The use of the blood.

III. THE SPRINKLING OF THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB.

1. An Act of faith.
2. Over the place of entrance.
3. The power in the blood.

IV. THE SHARING OF THE LAMB.

1. The slain Lamb provided strength when eaten.
2. The slain Lamb could be eaten only by those in the covenant.
3. The slain Lamb must be eaten without leaven.