

# Our Passover Lamb

Exodus 12:1-13:16

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## Introduction

As we live our lives there are events that become defining moments in our history. They are significant mile markers in our life's journey. There are big days like graduations or weddings or the birth of our children. On those special days we often keep something to commemorate and to remind us of that day. Things like wedding rings or diplomas hanging in our office all serve a purpose. That purpose is remembrance.

I want to share with you a special item that for many of you will have no meaning, but for me has incredible meaning. It is this: a piece of Ferrero Rocher chocolate. To you this might be but a simple piece of chocolate, but to me it reminds me of my first date with Kaitlyn. After trying for a good month to go on a date with Kaitlyn, she finally said yes. I had an elaborate plan that included a picnic at a lake watching the sunset and concluding with ice cream downtown Charleston, SC. On that first date at that picnic over lake water watching the sunset, there was a small package of this chocolate. It was our dessert. Now that we are married, this particular piece of chocolate reminds me of that first date I have with her. Occasionally I'll gift the same chocolate to her as a item to remember that very first date we had. It is a reminder of that day and the beginning of falling in love together.

This morning we are going to look at an incredible and significant moment in the history of the nation of Israel. It is the event of passover. It is a monumental event and one in which God calls the people to remember throughout their history. Jews today still celebrate the passover, remembering this particular event. As we look at Exodus together this morning, we will see that God Jesus is our Passover Lamb.

## We all Deserve Wrath, but God gives us Grace

You'll remember from last week that we saw God exert his power over the Egyptians and their gods. Each of the plagues was a direct attack, challenging Egyptians pantheon of deities. The Egyptians worshiped the Nile River as a god named Hapi and believed it to be the source of all life in Egypt. God turning the Nile into blood with the striking of Moses' staff was, in effect, a declaration of his intent to claim the life of Egypt and render it desolate. Another example is that the Egyptians worshiped a frog as the giver of life. This god's name was Heqt. God throughout the plagues mocked Egypt's idols. The very gods they worshiped, the Lord was turning them into plagues against them.

In the last and final plague, God is going to attack Pharaoh's chief idol and his favorite of gods. God is going to attack Pharaoh and his self proclaimed divine family. In the final and last plague, God is going to prove beyond all doubt that he himself is the one true God. God is going to take the lives of the firstborn sons of Egypt, including the son of Pharaoh, while he is going to preserve and save the life of the firstborn of the Hebrews.

As we read the Bible we tend to think there are good guys, then there are the bad guys. Just like the old westerns we tend to think that the Israelites are wearing the white hats while the Egyptians are wearing the black hats. The Israelites are the good guys and Egyptians are the bad guys. We think that Israel is deserving of God's favor and protection and Egypt deserves what they get. Yet, that's not really true. Here is the shocking truth of the Bible, both Egypt and Israel were deserving of the death of the firstborn, because both worshiped and served the gods of the Egyptians. Remember, Israel had no idea who Yahweh was before Moses showed up. Israel, while in captivity in Egypt, began to participate in the pagan worship that was around them. Let me show you from Scripture that this is the case.

Joshua 24:14 says, "put away the gods that your father's served beyond the river and in Egypt, and serve the Lord."

Ezekiel 20:7, "And I said to them cast away the detestable things your eyes feast on, every one of you, and do not defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt". In chapter 24 of Ezekiel we read some of the most vulgar imagery in the Bible as God calls Israel a whore who returns to their gods in Egypt.

Yet, despite Israel's unfaithfulness to God, God makes a distinction between Israel and Egypt. He has done so throughout the plagues. The livestock of the Egyptians are put to death, while the livestock of Israel survives. The hail from heaven falls on the land of the Egyptians, but the section where Israel stayed didn't have hail at all. And now here in this final and most horrible plague, God is going to make a distinction again between Egypt and Israel. So if both Israel and Egypt are guilty of idol worship, why does God treat Israel differently? Why does he protect them from the judgement of the plagues? How will he protect them? Well the answer is the passover ceremony.

God gives the people of Israel careful instructions of what they are to do. Each family is to take an unblemished lamb and sacrifice it. They are to take the blood of that lamb and paint it on the door frames. Then they would be spared from the final plague. By the blood of the lamb resting above their doors the judgement and wrath they deserved would be spared. The lamb was the substitute and absorbed the penalty of their sin. As a result, God would passover their homes.

Here is a part of this great story of passover that we so often miss. It is only by the grace of God that the firstborn of the Hebrews are saved from this final plague, and it is only by his grace that they are delivered and freed from the hand of Pharaoh.

The people of Israel did as the Lord had commanded them. When that tenth and final plague struck, the horrors I'm sure were unspeakable.

"At midnight the Lord struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the

captive who was in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of the livestock. And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he and all his servants and all the Egyptians. And there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was not a house where someone was not dead. Then he summoned Moses and Aaron by night and said, "Up, go out from among my people, both you and the people of Israel; and go, serve the Lord, as you have said. Take your flocks and your herds, as you have said, and be gone, and bless me also!" (Exodus 12:29-32, ESV)

With this mighty act of God's judgement, the final plague seals the liberation of the people of Israel. Pharaoh finally breaks as he holds his dead son in his arms. Yahweh has won. He tells the people to leave and go and serve the Lord. Pharaoh and the Egyptians were in such distress that they were commanded to leave immediately. And just as God had predicted, Israel leaves plundering the Egyptians. The Egyptians are giving Israel their silver and gold jewelry. They will do anything to get these people out of their lives. Thus they plundered the Egyptians. They left so quickly that the that the bread was unleavened.

This last plague serves as a moment of judgement and yet of deliverance. This passover was to be seared into the memory of God's people. They were never to forget it. This is why much of the passage is spent explaining the details of the feast of passover that is to be celebrated annually by the people.

But lets return to the question, why was Israel spared? Remember, they were just as idolatrous as the Egyptians were. Yet, Israel is spared from the final plague. Look at the crucial two verses to help us understand in 13:1-2.

"The Lord said to Moses, "Consecrate to me all the firstborn. Whatever is the first to open the womb among the people of Israel, both of man and of beast, is mine." (Exodus 13:1-2, ESV)

You see God owns the rights both to Egypt's firstborn and to Israel's firstborn. We get a poignant reminder here, that it is only by the grace of God that Israel's firstborn sons were spared from the judgement of idolatry, and then, they were only spared by the blood of an unblemished lamb. Israel was not spared or delivered because they deserved it or because they were better than the Egyptians. They were spared only because of the sovereign election and sheer grace of God.

The greatest mistake we can think of our own salvation purchased for us by Jesus, is that we think we deserve it. We think that because we grew up in church or because we've never been drunk or because I've been sexually pure or because I'm a good person, that we are entitled to salvation. That is certainly not the case. The only thing we deserve, because of our sin, is the punishment and judgement of God. If you think you deserve salvation, then you do not have. Only those who recognize their sin and failures will be able to call out to God for grace and mercy. You deserve wrath, but God gives you grace.

This picture of redemption in the passover event is also a picture of redemption for you and for me. As we look back onto the Old Testament having the full revelation of Jesus to serve as an interpretive key, we see that Jesus is the greater passover lamb. The events we read about in Exodus are pointing us to and anticipating greater realities that are to be found in the Lord Jesus himself.

## Jesus is Our Passover Lamb

As we cross over into the New Testament we see another night of incredible significance in the history of God's people. Jesus and his disciples are in the upper room. They are preparing to celebrate and remember the passover meal. As they walk through the ceremony of passover, Jesus interrupts the flow of the celebration. He adds meaning to the passover event that the Jews had historically celebrated every year. Here is the account from Matthew's Gospel.

"Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.'" (Matthew 26:26-29, ESV)

You see, Jesus is telling us that the passover event is really about him. What is taking place in Exodus is a foreshadow of what was to come. Jesus is the ultimate reality. Passover is the type, Jesus is the actuality. Jesus is telling his disciples and he is telling us this morning, "I am the lamb in the passover story. By my blood poured out and my body broken, that is how you escape the judgement you deserve and that is how you receive your redemption". Jesus says, "Passover is really about me". Again, Jesus tells his disciples this on the eve of his arrest and his coming crucifixion. Jesus knew what was to await him and he knew that his disciples would not fully understand what was about to take place. Jesus is telling his disciples that humanity needs a substitute. They need an unblemished lamb to lay down his life that can absorb the wrath that they deserve. Jesus is that perfect and unblemished lamb. He is the only perfect man who ever lived. Jesus tells us today, "I am the lamb that was slain on your behalf so that you can be truly free". Jesus is the greater passover lamb. He is our passover lamb.

Paul would call Jesus our Passover Lamb in 1 Corinthians 5:7 as he writes, "Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed". Jesus is the passover lamb we need. He is the pure and unblemished lamb whose blood was spilt so that our sins could be forgiven. The passover lamb endured God's righteous anger against Israel for their idolatry and so God passed over the houses of Israel. Jesus endures God's righteous anger for your sin, and passes over you because the blood of Christ rests outside your door.

God has made a way for you to be delivered and set free, forgiven and passed over from judgement. That way is through his one and only son. By

the power of God's outstretched arm he spares you His judgement and gives you his grace. What a wonderful love this is!

Yet there is a most important question. Does the blood of Christ rest outside your door? Have you put your faith in him? Have you trusted in his atoning work on the cross? Have you laid down the rights to your life? Is he your hope? Is he your forgiveness and shelter from the wrath of God for your sin? If you do not know Jesus you will share a fate far worse than those Egyptians. For you will lose your life in torment for all of eternity. God in his great mercy judged Jesus in your place. He poured out his wrath for your sin on Him. We must put our lives under the blood of the lamb. All you must do is recognize your wicked ways and admit you are a sinner. Then trust in Jesus as your passover lamb.

## Final Thoughts

Do you trust in Jesus as your passover lamb? Have you given your life to him? Are you in awe of God's grace for you in Jesus this morning? May our hearts be filled with worship and awe in thanksgiving for what God has done for us in Christ, our passover lamb.

We are preparing to take the Lord's supper together this morning. This special meal serves as a token, a reminder, of what Jesus has done. It is the new passover meal, that sears the work of Christ on that cross into our memory. The stale cracker and the grape juice might not taste quite as good as a piece of chocolate, but its meaning is far more important. Jesus did not want us to forget what he had done, but tells us that when we gather together to eat the bread and drink the cup we are to do so in remembrance of him. As we take the Lord's supper together this day, may we remember what Christ, our passover lamb, has done.

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