



NOW THE BLOOD SHALL
BE A SIGN FOR YOU ON
THE HOUSES WHERE YOU
ARE. AND WHEN I SEE THE
BLOOD, I WILL PASS OVER
YOU; AND THE PLAGUE
SHALL NOT BE ON YOU
TO DESTROY YOU WHEN I
STRIKE THE LAND OF EGYPT.

EXODUS 12:13

DELIVERANCE

FOR THE FUTURE

DATE

February 8 & 9

WEEK

2 of 4

KEY VERSE

Exodus 12:13

SETTING THE STAGE

The first day at a new job. A bended knee and a trembling hand holding a ring box. The first time holding your newborn child. An unexpected call from the doctor. Some days mark us forever. They change who we are and how we see the world.

Such days are burned into our memory. When we think back, the smells still linger in our noses, and the tastes still hover on our tongues. These vivid memories seem so palpable. Life-changing days like these will remain etched into our minds, forever shaping us.

In chapter 12 of Exodus, the Israelites are on the cusp of a life-changing day that would be filled with sensory overload. There would be simultaneous rejoicing and devastation, feasting and mourning, joy and sorrow, and forgiveness and judgment.

In our Scripture today, we arrive at the life-changing day: the Passover. The Passover was the day that the Israelites were freed from bondage to the Egyptians. It would serve as an Independence Day for the Israelites, changing the course of their history. In fact, this day was so monumental that God ordered that the Passover would start their calendar year. It was symbolic of the fresh start and fresh life that God was granting to the people of Israel (*Exodus 12:1-2*).

The Passover was the last of the Ten Plagues that God sent to the Egyptians. The purpose of the plagues was to display God's authority. The word "plague" is the Latin word for "mighty blow." The mighty blows that God dealt the Egyptians included afflicting them with boils and lice, killing their fish, livestock, and crops, and causing a thick darkness to come across the land.

The tenth plague was by far the deadliest and most devastating. God would sweep over the land of Egypt, visiting every home and taking the life of every firstborn male—unless the house was covered by the blood of an innocent lamb. Today, we will look at the Passover and learn about the substitute of the lamb, the symbol of the blood, and the signpost of the event.

LESSON OUTLINE

1. A Substitute
2. The Symbol
3. A Signpost

THINGS TO KNOW

- Plague: Latin word for "mighty blow."

DELIVERANCE

FOR THE FUTURE

1. A SUBSTITUTE

The judgment of the Passover was not just for the Egyptians. It was also for the Israelites.

The Passover was intended to showcase God's supremacy over all of the Egyptians' false gods. But the judgment of the Passover was not just for the Egyptians. It was also for the Israelites. The day would serve to distinguish the people of God from those who worshipped other gods. It would identify the Israelites as God's chosen and protected people. The Passover would occur to everyone who dwelt in the land of Egyptians. Both the Egyptians and the Israelites were going to be visited by God that day because all people are ultimately judged by God.

Before His appointed visit, God provided detailed instructions to Moses that the Israelites were to follow in order to spare their households.

EXODUS 12:3-6 *Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying: 'On the tenth of this month every man shall take for himself a lamb, according to the house of his father, a lamb for a household. ⁴ And if the household is too small for the lamb, let him and his neighbor next to his house take it according to the number of the persons; according to each man's need you shall make your count for the lamb. ⁵ Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats. ⁶ Now you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month. Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at twilight.*

Every Israelite household was instructed to take a year-old male lamb on the tenth day of the month and slaughter it on the fourteenth day. The purpose of the lamb was to serve as a substitute. Instead of their first-born son passing away, the lamb would die in his place.

This was not the first time a lamb was sacrificed as a substitute for God's people. We see two instances in Genesis in which there was a blood sacrifice. In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve were literally covered by the sacrifice of an animal. It stood in their place and covered their nakedness. And on Mount Moriah, God provided a lamb as a substitute just as Abraham was about to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice.

However, God made it clear that not just any male lamb would do. He provided specific qualifications for this substitute: the lamb was to be one year old. It was to be free from blemish or defect. These are no small details. The age of the lamb mattered because, at one year, a lamb is at the peak of its strength and vibrancy. And the perfection of the lamb mattered because it was a representation of the quality of its life. We will see later in Deuteronomy 17:1 that a blemished animal was an abomination to God. In order to offer a perfect substitute, the Israelites were expected to find a perfect sacrifice.

Impending judgment hung over the head of all those residing in Egypt that evening. Death was on the doorstep of every house in Egypt. As the sun rolled beneath the horizon, all were in danger. But God had provided His people a way to spare themselves and their households from the fate that all deserved. The Israelites had the opportunity to take God at His word and exercise their faith in Him. They could find a substitute that would stand in the impending death in place of their firstborn sons. Behind the cover of a young, perfect lamb, they would be shielded from the wrath of God and instead receive the mercy of God.



2. THE SYMBOL

We live in a culture that values symbols. If we watch old Western movies, it is easy to tell the difference between the hero and the villain based on their cowboy hats. If a character is wearing a white hat, he is a hero because his hat is symbolic of his moral purity. But if a character is wearing a black hat, he is a villain because his hat is symbolic of his corruption and willingness to terrorize the local saloon. And if a character is wearing a brown hat, he is probably Clint Eastwood, and things are going to get ugly.

We see symbols on a national level. The bald eagle, the Statue of Liberty, and the American flag are symbols to many of hope, freedom, and an opportunity to have a better life. We also see symbols on an intimate level. Our wedding rings represent the commitment we have made to our spouses. Made from precious metals, our rings symbolize that our devotion and durability are unending, even through the harshest of seasons.

In Exodus 12, we learn that the blood of the young, perfect lamb is an important symbol.

EXODUS 12:6, 12:12-13 *And they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses where they eat it ...¹² ‘For I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD.¹³ Now the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.*

God gave additional instructions to His people about animal sacrifice. The Israelites were told to take the blood and spread it over the doorposts of their homes. The blood was a symbol that identified the people of God. It indicated that those inside the home believed God would keep His word. The painting of each doorframe represented their faith and obedience to God. God explained that when He visited the land of Egypt later that night, He would “pass over” the homes where there was blood. When God saw the blood, He saw the substitute. He saw their faith and their obedience to Him. The symbol of the shed blood on the door was an external demonstration of an internal commitment to trust God.

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The blood on the doorpost from the sacrificial lamb is not the only symbol in Exodus 12. In the next set of instructions from God, we see that the Israelites were directed to participate in a Passover meal that would also be very symbolic.

EXODUS 12:8-11 *Then they shall eat the flesh on that night; roasted in fire, with unleavened bread and with bitter herbs they shall eat it.⁹ Do not eat it raw, nor boiled at all with water, but roasted in fire—its head with its legs and its entrails.¹⁰ You shall let none of it remain until morning, and what remains of it until morning you shall burn with fire.¹¹ And thus you shall eat it: with a belt on your waist, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. So you shall eat it in haste. It is the LORD’s Passover.*

Like the instructions regarding the sacrificial animal and its blood, the Israelites received detailed stipulations about the meal that would follow the Passover. They were to eat unleavened bread. This bread did not contain yeast, and they were not permitted time for the bread to rise. God wanted them to eat the meal with a belt on their waists and shoes on their feet so that they could leave in a hurry. It was a reminder to the people of Israel that they were to be ready to follow God. They could be called to make their exodus out of Egypt at any moment.

This dinner was to be a farm-to-table meal. The Israelites roasted their lamb, made fresh bread (with gluten), and accompanied the meal with bitter herbs that were themselves very symbolic. They were instructed to eat the bitter herbs as a reminder to them of their bitter enslavement in Egypt. The herbs

were also symbolic of the bitterness of sin. In *The Doctrine of Repentance*, Puritan pastor and theologian, Thomas Watson, said, “Till sin be bitter, Christ will not be sweet.”¹

The Passover serves as a signpost that points toward something even greater for God’s people.

This highly symbolic Passover meal would endure for generations. Every year, when the Israelites would eat this meal, the smells and tastes would bring them back to the night that changed the history of their nation. They would recall the sacrificial lamb. They would be reminded of the bitterness of sin and slavery. They would remember the attitude of hastiness that they were to show when God called them. Ultimately, the Passover Meal would serve as a reminder of the deliverance they could experience. It prompted them to maintain an attitude of sacrifice, a readiness to obey God, and a regard for sin as bitter.

An extra layer of symbolism was added to the tradition during one very special Passover meal. Nearly 1,500 years after the first Passover, Jesus and His disciples gathered in the upper room, and they shared the Passover meal the night before His death. They ate the lamb, and they ate unleavened bread. They ate the bitter herbs. It was on that night and at that dinner that Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper. He took the unleavened bread, and He broke the bread as a symbol of His body that was going to be broken on the cross. He took a cup of wine, and He explained to His friends that His blood was going to be poured out for the forgiveness of sins (*Luke 22:14-21*). And then, with haste, Jesus got up from the table because God was calling Him to be obedient, even unto death (*Philippians 2:8*). He was going to become our Passover Lamb, and He would taste the bitterness of sin like nobody before Him had ever tasted – and like nobody ever will.

The Passover is rich with symbols, from the lamb to the blood to the meal that followed. Each element was carefully designated by God to represent a large truth. But God had an even bigger plan in mind than freedom from the Egyptians when He provided instructions to the Israelites. The Passover serves as a signpost that points toward something even greater for God’s people.

3. A SIGNPOST

Just as the first Passover was very personal and the Israelites personally applied the blood of the lambs to the doors of their houses, we too, by faith, need to personally apply the blood of Jesus, the Lamb of God, to the doors of our hearts.”²

The Passover proved to be a remarkable event for the Israelites who heeded God’s instructions. It was a “mighty blow,” the tenth and final plague that delivered them from the grip of Pharaoh. As God’s judgment swept across the land, killing the firstborn sons of the Egyptians, the Israelites were safely covered from God’s wrath by the blood of a perfect animal sacrifice. The next morning, the Egyptians wailed in distress while the Israelites tasted God’s freedom and goodness. God had displayed His authority, identified His people, and upheld them among their oppressors.

However, as remarkable as the Passover was as Independence Day for the Israelites, it pales in comparison to the ultimate deliverance that God had in mind for all of His people. The bigger purpose of that historic day in Egypt was to serve as a signpost pointing to Jesus Christ and the Gospel. In 1 Corinthians, the Apostle Paul makes the connection that what we see in Exodus is a shadow of what was to come. And, that what was demonstrated on the cross was the substance.

1 CORINTHIANS. 5:7B *For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.*

God’s instructions for the lamb pointed to the day when Jesus Himself would be slain as the ultimate, sacrificial Lamb in place of God’s people. Like the young, perfect lamb that was required on the day

¹ Thomas Watson, *The Doctrine of Repentance*, Pennsylvania: Banner of Truth, 1988.

² Darrell Bock and Mitch Glaser (Eds.), *Messiah in the Passover*, Michigan: Kregel Publications, 2017.

of the Passover, Jesus was in the prime of His life when He was sacrificed. He was a full-grown and vibrant man who was unblemished in that He never sinned and had no fault (*2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15; 1 John 3:5; 1 Peter 1:18-19*).

Every element of the Passover pointed to the Gospel, including God's instruction to paint the blood of the lamb across doorposts. God would later instruct His people to identify themselves and exercise their faith by painting Jesus' blood across their hearts.

In *Messiah in the Passover*, Dr. Rich Freeman describes the Passover as a signpost: "Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. He is the fulfillment of Passover. Like the first Passover lambs sacrificed to redeem Israel from slavery in Egypt, Jesus' death on the cross redeems us from slavery to sin ... And just as the first Passover was very personal and the Israelites personally applied the blood of the lambs to the doors of their houses, we too, by faith, need to personally apply the blood of Jesus, the Lamb of God, to the doors of our hearts."³

The past picture of the Passover points to the future plan of God in Jesus Christ.

HOW HIS PLAN SHAPES OUR PURPOSE

Although the Passover occurred thousands of years ago, the day points to our ultimate deliverance through Jesus Christ. In Exodus, the Passover lamb saved the Israelites, an event that led them on their journey to the Promised Land. Today, Jesus saves us and leads us toward the promised land of Heaven.

Like the Israelites, all of us are in danger of experiencing the wrath of God's judgment. We all are sinful, and because of our sin, we deserve death and Hell (*Romans 3:23, 6:23*). Tony Merida gives us more insight into the need for a perfect sacrifice: "This need for a perfect sacrifice reminds us of our own state. We, being corrupted by our sin, cannot save ourselves. Our good works are like the blemished lamb – unworthy before a holy God. We need One who serves as a substitute on our behalf. Jesus is the lamb for the household of God. Only through faith in Him are our sins covered. He alone is our hope."

Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the Passover Lamb whose blood was poured out on the cross for us. We can trust in Jesus as the perfect, unblemished substitute that stands in our place. We are invited by God to escape judgment and find mercy through the blood of Jesus. It is His desire that we flee the bitter bonds of sin. We can experience deliverance from our past – and deliverance from all of the things that will ensnare us in the future – through a better Lamb.

When we apply the blood of Jesus to our lives, we will escape God's judgment. God will "pass over" us, and we will be spared eternal death. Instead of receiving what we deserve, we will be given the gift of eternal life (*John 3:16*).

We follow the signpost of Passover to the cross. Our story as believers in Jesus Christ is the story of the Passover. It is the story of sacrifice. It is the story of blood. It is the story of faith, and it is a story of deliverance. The death of the Passover lamb changed the history of the Israelites. Jesus' death changes everything for our future. One day, we will arrive in Heaven, the land flowing with milk and honey, and all of God's people will sing, "Worthy is the Lamb!" (*Revelation 5:12*).

³ Bock and Glaser, *Messiah in the Passover*.