

**Christ: Our Passover Lamb**

**Part 1**

**Exodus 12**

We will continue with this series from the book of Exodus on this Resurrection Sunday. Ms. Jordan Harris and her dad just recently returned from Israel. She had always wanted to go to Egypt and Israel, so in anticipation of this study, she traced the route that the children of Egypt came out from through the wilderness to the Promised Land. As Jordan and I were catching up this week on her trip, it reminded me of my favorite resurrection story. It is about a man whose wife wanted to go to Israel. He took her, but he also took his mother-in-law. The mother-in-law had always wanted to go to the Holy Land to all the sacred spots where Jesus ministered. They flew to Israel and were there about six or seven days. When they were at Caesarea Philippi, all of a sudden the mother-in-law just died. That was horrible! It is one thing to face a death here in the states, but it is another thing to face a death in a foreign country. So they had to go to the embassy and start the process of getting her back home. They worked with a local Jewish mortician, and he was wonderful. As they worked together, he presented this thought to the man, “Your mother-in-law had always wanted to come to Israel to see all of these holy spots, and since she is a Christian, why don’t you just bury her here?” The man said, “No.” The mortician began to explain how they buried in Israel and he would give him a really good deal. He brought out a cost comparison chart of how much it would cost to get her home to bury her in the states so they could see how much more economical it would be to bury her there and how wonderful it would be for her to be buried where her Lord was buried. Again, the man said, “No, I'm taking her home.” The mortician just couldn’t understand why he was so insistent that she had to be buried at home and not in Israel, so he asked, “Why? What do you have against her being buried in Israel?” The man said, “Well, I heard about a man that died here and buried, and then three days later, He came back alive. There is no way I’m going to take that chance! My mother-in-law is going to be buried in the United States of America!”

When we began Exodus, Kory and I had to make a decision whether we were just going to preach through this book every Sunday no matter what. We agreed that was God’s will, so we are trusting that while this will not be a normal Resurrection Sunday sermon, it is what God had planned for those of us here at Hardin Baptist this morning. The children of Israel have been in Egypt for 430 years. The last 100 or so years have been really, really severe, really, really harsh. The nine plagues have already come upon the Egyptians. They have been warned about the tenth and final plague, yet Pharaoh refuses to soften his heart and let the children of Israel go. So he hardens his heart again and we are now at the stage where God is going to deliver His people from Egypt. In chapter 12, He tells us how He is going to redeem them. It will be different from what you might think. It talks about the famous Passover. We will read verses 1-20, and pay close attention because this is actually God speaking to us. Then we are going to turn to 1 Corinthians 5 and read verses 6-8. As you read about the Passover, please note that Paul will tell us that Christ, our Passover Lamb has been sacrificed. So we will read this passage in its historical context, but then we will interpret it fully through the lens of the New Testament, as we are supposed to do. What has been given to Israel here is a type of Christ as the Passover Lamb. When Christ came, we fully understand how God fully redeems us from sin.

**Scripture**

***“The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt,“This month shall be for you the beginning of months. It shall be the first month of the year for you. Tell all the congregation of Israel that on the tenth day of this month every man shall take a lamb according to their fathers' houses, a lamb for a household. And if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his nearest neighbor shall take according to the number of persons; according to what each can eat you shall make your count for the lamb. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male a year old. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats, and you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month, when the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill their lambs at twilight.***

***“Then they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. They shall eat the flesh that night, roasted on the fire; with unleavened bread and bitter herbs they shall eat it. Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted, its head with its legs and its inner parts. And you shall let none of it remain until the morning; anything that remains until the morning you shall burn. In this manner you shall eat it: with your belt fastened, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. And you shall eat it in haste. It is the Lord's Passover. For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the Lord. 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 no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt.***

***“This day shall be for you a memorial day, and you shall keep it as a feast to the Lord; throughout your generations, as a statute forever, you shall keep it as a feast.Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall remove leaven out of your houses, for if anyone eats what is leavened, from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel. On the first day you shall hold a holy assembly, and on the seventh day a holy assembly. No work shall be done on those days. But what everyone needs to eat, that alone may be prepared by you. And you shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread, for on this very day I brought your hosts out of the land of Egypt. Therefore you shall observe this day, throughout your generations, as a statute forever. In the first month, from the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread until the twenty-first day of the month at evening. For seven days no leaven is to be found in your houses. If anyone eats what is leavened, that person will be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he is a sojourner or a native of the land. You shall eat nothing leavened; in all your dwelling places you shall eat unleavened bread.”* (Exodus 12:1-20)**

Then in 1st Corinthians, Paul is addressing a problem in the church at Corinth of the sin of sexual immorality.

***“Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed. Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”* (1st Corinthians 5:6-8)**

Can you imagine being a slave to the Egyptians for your entire lifetime? But you have heard about this covenant that God made with your forefather, Abraham. And now, Moses has gone before Pharaoh, and nine times, he told him to let God’s people go, yet he refuses to let them go. He will go one more time and tell Pharaoh to let God’s people go, or here is what will happen. Yet again, Pharaoh refuses to let God’s children go. Now, God is getting ready to redeem Israel from Egypt. But before He does, He calls Moses and Aaron to a meeting with Him there in Egypt. He explains to them exactly how this is going to happen. Regardless if this was Resurrection Sunday or not, we would still title this message - Christ: Our Passover Lamb. Knowing what we know about the New Testament, we can't read this passage without seeing it in light of what God tells us about Christ in the New Testament. So when we look back at these 20 verses in Exodus chapter 12, we are going to see four things:

1. The Calendar
2. The Lamb
3. The Sign
4. The Festival

Depending on time, and how well you listen, we will see how far we get in the message this morning, so buckle your pew belts and let's think about Christ, our Passover Lamb.

**The Calendar**

When I slowed down and began to read this passage over and over again, I noticed something I had never seen before. Usually when we talk about Passover, we immediately go to the Lamb and skip the first two verses. Verse 1 actually talks about God telling Aaron and Moses that this month would be the beginning of months for them. It would be first month in the beginning of a new year. God was changing their calendar. Imagine it is July, and I say that God told me to tell you we are no longer going to celebrate January as the beginning of our year. As the church, we are going to start celebrating a new year starting in July. It is kind of strange, isn’t it? What is going on here? God is sharing with the children of Israel that their redemption from Egypt is going to change their life so, that this month will bring a new calendar year to them. They will never count time like they used to, but will count time starting that day. In other words, the Exodus will bring a new life to the children of Israel, and they will get a new calendar. This means once the children of Israel come out of Egypt, they will no longer be who they used to be. They used to be slaves in Egypt. But when they come out of Egypt, they will no longer be slaves ever again. They will now be sons of God loving in the land of promise. They will get a new start. God is telling them to throw the other calendar away, because they aren’t just making a new year’s resolution, it is going to be a new beginning for them.

You realize where I am going with this…Our Passover Lamb, Christ, didn’t redeem us from physical bondage, but redeemed us from spiritually bondage. So for us as Christians, Egypt symbolizes our old life when we were enslaved to sin. God is telling us when we come out of sin; there will be a new calendar to live by. We won't just live by the fact that we have been physically born, we live by the fact that we have been spiritually reborn. He wants us to forget what is in our past and look forward to our future with Him. We will not be who we used to be! We understand from the full teachings of the New Testament that as Christ, our Passover Lamb, died, we who have had His blood applied to our hearts died too. When Christ died, the sinner you used to be who was under the condemnation of God’s wrath and judgment, died with Christ. That person was alive to sin and dead to God. He lived according to his unredeemed flesh, did what he wanted to do, and crowned himself lord of his life. That person no longer lives; he died with Christ. The good news is that Christ didn’t stay dead. Because you went down into death with Christ, when He was raised from the dead by God and got up, you got up too. It wasn’t the old you who got up, it was a new you. The old you was the guy who was dead to God and alive to sin. The new you is now alive to God and dead to sin. And you don’t live according to your unredeemed nature; you live according to the Spirit of God.

Just this past week, Celisa told me happy birthday. For a minute, I was thinking it is kind of late, because my birthday is January the 17th. She could tell I was caught off guard, and said, “I’m wishing you a happy spiritual birthday!” I was saved on March 24th, 1974. On that day, I became a new creation in Christ, and the “former things passed away, and behold, all things became new.” At salvation, God gave you a new calendar, a new life; you have a new identity in Christ. Do let anyone ever tell you that you are just an old sinner saved by grace. You are now a saint of God!

**The Lamb**

Next in the passage, God immediately gives us the basis on which we have this new calendar, this new outlook, this new life, this new identity. It is a lamb. Now it can be a goat, but the Bible uses the terminology of a lamb. From verses 3-12, our tongue might get tied when we read all of it because it is detailed. But we need to understand that in order for God to redeem Israel out of Egypt, it will require a death. It will require the death of the firstborn. All the firstborn of man and animals are under a death sentence. God will tell the children of Israel that He is giving them a lamb so they know there is a distinction between them and the Egyptians. Note that the firstborn of Israel was under the same death sentence as the Egyptian’s firstborn were. The reason was because when it comes to their full redemption and their leaving Egypt, God doesn’t want them to think they were better than the Egyptians were. God wants them to know they were just as sinful as the Egyptians. As a matter of fact, if you read the story, Israel hardened their hearts as much as Pharaoh hardened his heart against the word of God. What is happening here is when it comes to the judgment of God in death is that the Egyptians are going to get justice. They are going to get what they deserve; their firstborns are going to die. But Israel will get grace.

Do you see this? If you have put your faith in the Passover Lamb, I hope you never think that God redeemed you from sin because you are better than the people who are still in sin. You are not. Don’t ever look within yourself and think there is something about you that makes you better than someone else. You had better praise God that you are on the side of grace, not the side of justice, and that God made a distinction in your life by providing a Lamb.

The passage tells us that on the tenth day of the month a lamb had to be selected. It had to be a male, a yearling, and without blemish. Then it had to be scrutinized until the fourteenth day. On the fourteenth day at twilight, each household would kill their lamb. Do you have any idea how many lambs died that night? If we are right in the estimation that two and a half to four million people came out of the land, and a lamb is being sacrificed per household, then hundreds of thousands of lambs died that night in Egypt.

Throughout the Bible, there is what is called the theology of the lamb. In Genesis 22, it was a lamb for a man. It was the story of Abraham (Abram) when God was testing his faith by offering his beloved son, the child of promise. They start going up the mountain and Isaac said *hey dad, I know you are getting old, but this is important. You forgot the sacrifice!* Abram said, “God will provide Himself a lamb.” They get to the top of the mountain, and when it comes time for Abram to take the life of his son as a sacrifice to God, God stops the death of the son and substitutes a lamb; a lamb for a man. In Exodus 12, we have a lamb for a family. When you get to Leviticus 16, there is a lamb for a nation. But the time the Old Testament era is finished and you get to the New Testament and John the Baptist sees Jesus coming, he announces, “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” You see the progression of the Bible about the lamb. There is a lamb for a man, a lamb for a family, a lamb for a nation, and ultimately, a lamb for the sin of the world. It will just be one lamb…the firstborn Lamb of God, His very own Son. So when you read the story of the Passover lamb and you see its selection, its scrutiny, and its sacrifice, you must see it in light of Jesus as our Passover Lamb. He was selected, not by you or me, but by God. The Bible says God chose Christ to be the Lamb of God who would be sacrificed before the foundation of the world. Do you understand that? Before He ever created the world, before He created you and me, He had already chosen to sacrifice His Son on a cross for us! He knew what it would take to redeem us before He ever created us! And He still did it.

The lamb was to be a male in the prime of his life, without blemish. When I was a kid, I used to wonder why Jesus couldn’t have just left Heaven, showed up, went to a cross, pricked His finger, spilled some blood, and went back to Heaven. I had always heard we were saved by the blood of Jesus. Why did it take the emptying of Himself? Why was He born of a virgin? Why was He raised by earthly parents? Why did He begin a public ministry at 30 years old? Why did He have to be baptized? Have you ever heard the expression, “Pull the wool over someone’s eyes?” Have you ever done that? You kept something hidden from someone hoping they would never find it out, and you live with that secret that you have pulled the wool over their eyes. You are not who they really think you are. How do we really know Jesus didn’t pull the wool over our eyes? You see, they didn’t just choose a lamb and then kill it on the same day. They chose it, brought it home with them, and then kept it up and had to scrutinize that lamb for almost four days. The reason was because if anything can pull the wool over your eyes it is a lamb. I mean, you take a year old lamb, wool everywhere, how do you know if it is without blemish? How do you know it is without spot unless you take your hands and pull the wool back to get down to the skin of the animal? How do you know if that bone structure is what it is supposed to be with all of that wool? So for four days, the lamb was like a pet. Moses will later tell them not to bring to God one with a bad eye, blind, a defect, or crippled. It would be easier to let those animals that will die go because you know they will die anyway. But those best animals are hard to depart with. That is what God requires here, the best.

If you understand that story, you know understand Jesus’ life in ministry. Some believe that the three to four days symbolize the three and a half year ministry Jesus had as the Son of man, but I like to think there was a close inspection than even that. I like to think that Christ as our Passover Lamb was not only selected by God, He was scrutinized by man. I personally believe the reason the gospel spends so much time on the last week of Jesus’ life was so that we would know that God was not pulling the wool over our eyes, and that Jesus is who He said He is, the Son of God. And if He is going to be our Passover Lamb, He has to be without spot and blemish. So do you know what happened? As they were bringing those temple lambs into Jerusalem to start the process of a family selecting an animal, guess who came into Jerusalem into the temple…Jesus. The first day He came to Jerusalem He went to the temple, then He leaves it. But then He spends all day Monday, all day Tuesday, all day Wednesday, all day Thursday, (four days) primarily in the temple. He hangs out with the preachers, if I can say that. He is hanging out with the scholars. I don’t see him hanging out over in the corner on His knees before God praying, trying not to be noticed. No, He is the Lamb of God, and He is saying look at Me, check Me out, put your hands on Me and see if I am trying to pull the wool over your eyes. To get the attention of the Jerusalem leaders, He goes drives out the moneychangers and cleanses the temple, and they want to know by what authority He does this. Just to show us that He is doing it on the authority of God, He curses a fig tree and it dies. The reason is because that fig tree looked promising. It looked leafy, but it had no figs, no fruit. That is how that big, massive temple looked. It looked impressive, but when God looked down at that temple, there was no fruit. So now, we see Jesus and the Pharisees in a head-to-head confrontation time after time, and they can find no fault in Him. As a matter of fact, they are now scared. The Bible tells us they were going to kill Him, but they decided not to do it during Passover because He is the people’s Messiah. Everyone in Jerusalem is getting excited about this guy named Jesus and all the things He is doing! So they decide to wait and not kill Him during the Passover feast. Whoa…if He is our Passover Lamb, He has to die during the feast. So what happened? One of His own betrayed Him. So they finally bring a charge against Him to the Romans. His sin (their charge) was, ‘This man claims to be God!’ ‘What is your plea, sir?’ ‘Guilty as charged, I am the Son of God.’ Even Pilate said, ‘I can find no fault in this man.’ But the Jews killed Him anyway.

Now Passover lamb wasn’t just killed; it was sacrificed, and then the blood was poured in a bowl. So I want you to see that our Passover Lamb, Jesus Christ, was not just killed. Jesus Christ was sacrificed, not by the Jews or Romans, but by God, not so the blood of the Lamb of God could be taken and put on the frames of our doors, but so His blood could be applied to the doorposts of our hearts and our lives!

In the original Passover, once that lamb had been selected, scrutinized, it was sacrificed. Now imagine that lamb being killed. I don’t want to alarm anyone, but this would be like killing your pet dog. Can you imagine the dad bringing that lamb the kids have been playing with, and the kids asking dad ‘What are you doing?’ as he brings the knife to the throat of the lamb? Daddy did what Moses told them to do, and that was to explain to the children why they were killing the lamb. He explained that because they were under the judgment of death, the firstborns were going to die unless they killed that lamb without spot or blemish and apply its blood to the doorpost of their house. And when God sees the blood, He will pass over. The lamb would be used by God to bring them out of Egypt and start them on the journey to the Promised Land. So they would take hyssop (a bush that had branches with leaves that would draw fluid to it), dip it into that basin of blood, and they paint the doorframes and the lintel, but not the threshold. You never trample on the blood of the lamb of God!

**The Sign**

Now, verse 13 says, “*The blood shall be a sign for you*…” I was raised in a church that used to sing, “When I see the blood, I will pass, I will pass I will pass over you.” Because of that song and the way I used to read it in my Bible, I always thought the blood was applied to the doorframes so that God could see the blood. That is not completely true. The blood was a sign for Israel. Yes, God said He would pass over when He saw the blood. But first, before He saw the blood, He wanted them to see the blood. I want you to see the blood, the blood of Christ. There would not have been a resurrection had there not been a death. But there had to be a death because you were a sinner, and I was a sinner. To make a distinction of us from the world, God gave us His Lamb, and we are supposed to see the blood of the Lamb. That is why the New Testament talks about the blood making us right with God. It is the blood that makes atonement for our sin. That is why Peter said we are not redeemed with silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like a lamb without spot or blemish. When we look at the blood, we have to look up! But when God passes through the land, He doesn’t look up to see the blood, He looks down to see the blood. So while God was looking down that night for the blood, Israel was in their house looking up at the blood on the doorpost and the lintel of their houses. It was a sign to them. I think it was a sign that taught them that to be rescued from death; it would take a death. For them to be saved from sin, it would take the life of one who had no sin. To get to leave Egypt, a lamb had to die for them! They had to be covered by the blood. So when they saw that blood, they made sure they were on the inside of the protection of the blood. They were thankful when death passed through the land that they were not on the outside of the blood. Because when they saw the blood, they trusted that what God said was true, that not only will He save them by grace, but He will save them by grace through faith.

You see, you can't just have the shedding of the blood of the lamb; there must be the applying of the blood to your life. Please understand and take this in the way I mean this, you are not saved because Jesus died a death on a cross for you. Yes, He died a death on a cross for you, but that salvation is not applied to you until the moment you turn from sin and put your faith in Christ. That blood is a sign to you that when God sees the blood, He sees His Son. It is not your blood; it is the blood of Jesus. So when God passes in judgment over us, if we are covered in the blood of Jesus, if by faith His blood has been applied to our lives, you have this trust that God will not require your life because He required His life. Ultimately, to redeem the firstborn, it would take the death of the Firstborn. And only God could provide the Firstborn without spot and blemish, and that was His Son Jesus. Praise God for the blood!

**The Festival**

We close with the feast. Before they ever sacrificed the lamb, God told them that on the day they killed the lamb, they were to make sure they clean their house and get all of the leaven out of the house. Starting on the fourteenth day in the evening when they kill the Passover lamb, until the twenty-first day (seven days), there would be no eating of leaven in their households. They were to do it as a memorial to remember that this was the day He brought them out of Egypt. They were to do this forever, and they were to teach their children its meaning so that when the children asked, they could tell them this was the day that God led them out of Egypt.

Fast-forward to 1st Corinthians in the New Testament. Paul is writing to a church that is deeply involved in sin. They have some members of their body that is in heinous sexual sin. Paul warns them about how a little leaven can leaven the whole lump. But he said they were not leavened; they were unleavened, “…for Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed.” Then he said, “Therefore, let us keep the feast.” Paul is not being legalistic. He is not putting the Corinthian church back under the Law of Moses and expecting them to keep a feast for seven days where they rid their houses of leaven. He is using it as a metaphor of the Christian life. I want you to see that the Exodus teaches that life, for a Christian who has been set free from sin because of the death of the Passover lamb, is a feast. I don’t know what image you have of a feast, but I think of feast as good, positive, great, and glorious. But the picture is that we don’t feast on what we used to feast on because those things we used to do while in sin will no longer bring us what they used to bring us when we were in sin. The Bible is teaching that God gave us His Son to be our Passover Lamb so that once we came out of sin, He is going to work the rest of our lives to get sin out of us, and God wants us to know that.

Therefore, your life should be a feast before God. God is saying that if you have a new calendar, a point where your life started brand new, sin forgiven, made right with God, set free from sin, and you know there was a Lamb that was chosen before the foundation for you, sacrificed for you on a cross, and the blood of that Lamb has been applied to your heart, then clean out your kitchen, clean out your bedroom, clean out your closet! Don’t get holy on me and have a seven-day week where you say you won't eat leaven! No, you make this commitment; keep the feast of God for the rest of your life! He didn’t take Egyptians into the Promised Land; He took Israelites into the Promised Land. He got them out of Egypt and took them through the wilderness so He could get Egypt out of them. That is what God is doing in your life and my life. He is trying to get sin out of us.

If we could just picture this…if you want the best life possible with God, quit listening to that old lie that the old man listened to. It will not bring you what you think it will bring you. Paul says, ‘if you let that hang around in your life, Mom, it just might ruin your daughter’s life. Yeah Dad, if you want to play with it, go ahead and play with it, but when you do, just know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump!’ Parents, do you understand what is going on when you play with sin that you have been redeemed from? Then Paul applies this to the church. Did you know that it is possible that your sin could affect this whole church? Pretty soon, more people could want to hang with you and do what you are doing than to hang with Jesus and be like Him, holy. Therefore, Paul warns the church about the danger, not of sin outside the church, but sin inside the church, because we have something they don’t have; we have the blood, and we know that is not who we are anymore. Therefore, let's keep the feast.

This wasn’t the resurrection service you thought it was going to be. Church, the resurrection gives validity to the death, and we cannot understand our full and final salvation on the resurrection side until we understand the death side. He died as our Passover Lamb so that we could come out of what we used to be enslaved to. He saved us to be sanctified. He saved us to live distinctly in the Promised Land, a different people. So we have a different view than the view the world has about things because we are looking at the blood. We know that death passed over, and it passed over so they could have a brand new start, a brand new life. You and I have a brand new life. We are unleavened; therefore, let's celebrate the feast daily. It starts in our hearts and works its way out into our families, into our jobs, into our schools, and into our churches. Let's keep the feast of unleavened bread this Resurrection Sunday.