

Preparing for Passover

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- [0 : 0 0] Well, if we could, with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling this morning, if we could turn back to that portion of Scripture that we read, Exodus chapter 12.
- Exodus chapter 12, and if we read again at the beginning. 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 father's houses, a lamb for a household, and so on.
- As you know, at the start of a new year, one of the first things we often hang on the wall is a calendar. Now, some of you might be good with technology, and you'll have it maybe on your phone or your iPad.
- You'll have something like Google Calendar. But as I'm often reminded, if it's not written on the calendar, then I don't know about it. And that's why we hang calendars on our wall, because each month we're filling up our calendar.
- [1 : 1 6] And it quickly fills up with hair or hospital appointments. It fills up with doctor or dentist appointments. And there's also birthdays and anniversaries and holidays and shift patterns and days off and school terms.
- There's all these appointments that we need to remember and make sure that they're written down so that we'll remember to attend them. And, you know, that's what it was like for the Israelites here when it came to the exodus from Egypt.
- The Lord gave the Israelites a new year. He gave them a new calendar because the exodus was going to be a new beginning. The exodus was going to be a new beginning.
- And this new beginning was going to be marked in their calendar every year by remembering the Passover. And that's what we have here in Exodus chapter 12.
- It's one of those crucial chapters in the whole Bible. But it's also a crucial chapter in the book of Exodus. Because the appointment of the Passover, it was to be written down and remembered for generations to come.
- [2 : 2 3] Now, as you know, the Passover was going to be the final blow to Pharaoh. It was going to be the final blow for refusing and resisting and rejecting the Lord.
- The Passover and this plague of death, the final plague of killing the firstborn in Egypt. It was going to be the knockout punch to Pharaoh.
- It was going to bring an end to this clash and conflict between the Lord and all these Egyptian gods in Egypt. And, you know, this decisive and divine intervention for the Israelites, it was going to be written down.
- This is the one that was going to be remembered in their religious calendar for generations to come. They were going to remember the knockout punch each and every year.
- And God willing, we'll look at that more next Lord's Day. But they were going to be given this religious calendar. A religious calendar that will begin each year in the spring, which is around this time of year, around March, April time.

- [3 : 28] And this new year will begin by remembering the beginning. They will be remembering their new beginning that took place at the Passover. And the section of Exodus 12 that we're considering this morning, it's all about preparing for the Passover.
- It's preparing for Passover. Because when the Lord instituted the Passover, He gave instructions. He gave instructions for the substitute of Passover, the supper of Passover, and the sign of Passover.
- So, first of all, the substitute of Passover.
- The substitute of Passover. Look at verse 3. It says, It says, Now, as we said, When the Lord instituted the Passover, He gave instructions for the Passover.
- And the Lord gave instructions to His servants here, His servants Moses and Aaron. And they were to recite and repeat these instructions to the congregation of Israel.
- [5 : 37] Now, I want you to mark and make a note of the word that's used here in verse 3. The beginning of verse 3. The word congregation. Congregation.
- He says, Speak to all the congregation. Tell all the congregation. And that's an important word to mark and to make note of. Because this is the first time.
- This is the first time in the book of Exodus that the Lord identifies the Israelites as a congregation of people. He identifies the Israelites as a covenant community of worshiping witnesses.
- They're a congregation. A congregation that are being called out. Because that's what's happening here in the Exodus from Egypt. They're being called out.
- As a congregation, they're being called out of the darkness and the death and the dungeon of slavery. And they're being called into the light and the life and the liberty of salvation.
- [6 : 37] As a congregation, they're being called out. And, you know, that's actually where we get the word church from. The word church means called out.
- That's what it means. To be called out. Because when you're a member of the church, you're someone who has been identified. Someone who is identified as being called out.
- You've been called out of darkness and death and the dungeon of slavery to sin. And you've been called into the light and life and liberty of salvation through Jesus Christ.
- And that's what every congregation, that's what every Christian is. Every Christian in this congregation, they are called out. They've been called out. They're part of a covenant community of worshiping witnesses.
- And, you know, my friend, as we look at this preparation for Passover, I can't help but apply this to us as we prepare to sit at the Lord's table next Lord's Day.
- [7 : 40] Now, as you know, it has been two years since we last sat together at the Lord's table as a congregation. And if we were just to look around, we'd see that a lot has happened and a lot has changed in that time.
- Because there are people who were with us then who are sadly no longer with us. There are others who were in church regularly. But for one reason or another, they're no longer able to come.
- And there are some of you who weren't here two years ago. But now you're here every week, which is so encouraging to see. And I hope you'll keep coming. And that you'll be here next Lord's Day, if not to partake and participate in the Lord's Supper, but just to watch and to witness what happens.
- It's always fascinating to see what happens at the Lord's Supper if you've never seen it before. But, you know, my longing and my love for you as the congregation is that you'll be a committed Christian.

That you'll be confessing Jesus Christ as your Lord. That you'll be a member of this congregation and the church of Jesus Christ. That you'll be part of this covenant community that has been called out.

[8 : 56] This covenant community that is full of worshiping witnesses. That's my longing for you. That you'll be called out of darkness into light.

From death into life. From the dungeon to liberty and freedom and fullness in Jesus Christ. But as you know, as it was for the Israelites, salvation can only be accomplished.

And salvation can only be applied to you through a substitute. Salvation can only be accomplished and applied through a substitute. Because in preparation for the Passover, we read there that on the tenth day, on the tenth day, every male who was the head of his home, he was to take a lamb from the flock in the field, and he was to tie it outside the door of their house.

He was to take a lamb from the flock in the field and tie it outside the door of the house. The lamb was then to remain outside the door of the house until the fourteenth day.

From the tenth day to the fourteenth day of the month. Now, it's not clear as to why there's this four-day window. Some suggest that it was to avoid this last-minute rush of worshippers running out to their field to get a lamb.

[10 : 19] Which would, I suppose, suggest that how gracious the Lord is. That he knows our timekeeping. He knows our temperaments. He knows that there are some who are always early for worship.

And there are others who are always last-minute or even late. Which is why the Lord gave them plenty of time. He gave them four days. Not only to indicate a suitable lamb, but also to inspect it.

Because their substitute for Passover, it had to be the best they could afford. They had to give their best offering to the Lord. They had to offer a suitable sacrifice and a suitable substitute to the Lord.

But, you know, it not only had to be a suitable sacrifice and substitute. It had to be a specific sacrifice and substitute. The lamb, we're told, was to be a year old and without blemish.

It was to be a healthy lamb. It was to be a lamb. Not one with a defect or a deformity. It was to be without spot. It was to be without blemish.

[11 : 26] The Passover lamb was to be suitable and specific. It was to be a sacrifice and it was to be a substitute. The Passover lamb was to be a perfect substitute.

Because it was a personal substitute. The lamb was to be a perfect substitute. Because it was a personal substitute. And a Passover lamb was to be provided, as we read, for every home.

Everyone in the congregation was to have the provision of a Passover lamb. And the provision of this personal substitute. Everyone in the congregation was to have the opportunity to partake in this Passover.

There was to be a lamb for a household. There was to be a suitable and a specific sacrifice and substitute for every household in the congregation. And notice, you know, the care and the compassion of the Lord.

That he ensures that those who live on their own are even provided for. That's how much the Lord has care and a compassion towards those who live on their own.

[12 : 43] He says they're not forgotten. The Lord provides, we're told, for the neighbor. The nearest neighbor. Who could be the widow. Or the orphan. Or the elderly.

That's what we read in verse 4. 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. So the Passover lamb was to be a perfect substitute. It was to be a personal substitute. But it was also to be a powerful substitute.

A powerful substitute. Because as we said, they would take the lamb from the field. And from the flock in the field. And they would take it on the tenth day of the month.

This new month. And they were to tie the lamb outside the front door of their house. Until the fourteenth day of the month. And so for four days. For four days the Passover lamb was outside their front door.

[13 : 47] And it was a visual and a vivid reminder that they had a substitute. They had a suitable and specific sacrifice and substitute. This Passover lamb was a constant reminder.

And a continual reminder to them. That every home in the congregation. Had a perfect and personal and powerful substitute. And you know my friend.

What I find amazing is that one commentator said. He said you cannot. You cannot read the account of the Passover. Without seeing what it foreshadows. And without seeing what is fulfilled.

In the person and work of Jesus Christ. Because as you know. And as we were saying to the children. It was John the Baptist. Who pointed to Jesus.

Who is our suitable and specific sacrifice and substitute. And it was John the Baptist who said about Jesus. Behold the lamb of God.

[14 : 48] Who takes away the sin of the world. And you know the New Testament. It repeatedly reminds us. And reassures us. That Christ is our Passover lamb.

Christ is our Passover lamb. Who was sacrificed to redeem his people from death. And it's all because he is the perfect lamb. He is the personal lamb.

He is the powerful lamb. That is our substitute. He is the perfect sacrifice and substitute. For the congregation. You know that's why the hymn writer could say.

Man of sorrows. What a name. For the son of God who came. Ruined sinners to reclaim. Hallelujah. What a savior.

Bearing shame and scoffing rude. In my place condemned. He stood. Sealed my pardon with his blood. Hallelujah. What a savior.

[15 : 49] Guilty, vile, and helpless we. Spotless lamb of God was he. Full redemption, he says. Can it be? Hallelujah.

What a savior. What a savior. My friend, are you trusting in this Passover lamb? Christ our Passover lamb.

So my friend, when the Lord instituted the Passover, he gave instructions. He gave instructions for the substitute of Passover. But then he gave instructions for the supper of Passover.

The supper of Passover. That's what we see secondly. Look at verse 6. We're told that you shall keep it. This is the lamb. 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 their houses in which they eat it.

[16 : 50] 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, your staff in your hand.

And you shall eat it in haste. It is the Lord's Passover. And so from these verses, we can see that the Lord not only gave specific instructions about the sacrifice and the substitute of Passover.

But the Lord also gave specific instructions about the supper of Passover. That on the 14th day of the month, you were to take this lamb.

The lamb that you had taken from the flock in the field that had been sitting outside your front door for four days. You were to take your perfect and personal and powerful substitute.

[17 : 55] And at twilight, which was the period between the setting of the sun and darkness. At twilight, every home. So everybody would be outside their own front door.

And they would be killing their Passover lamb. And they would kill the lamb by simply slitting its throat. And then catching all the blood in a basin.

The blood was to be caught in a basin as the life of the animal drained from it. And you know, if we were to see it, it would be such a vivid and visual picture of what they deserved for their sin.

And yet, what they were seeing, what they were witnessing outside their own front door, what they were seeing was someone dying, something dying in their place. And it was a perfect and personal and powerful sacrifice and substitute for them.

And of course, the blood that was drained from the Passover lamb, it was to be used for the sign of the Passover. We'll consider that in a moment. But the supper, the supper of the Passover that the Lord instructs them on, it consisted of preparing the Passover lamb to be eaten inside the home of everyone in the congregation.

[19 : 17] But the Passover lamb, as we read, it wasn't to be eaten raw. It wasn't to be boiled in water. It had to be roasted in fire. And that phrase, roasted in fire, it's repeated in verses 8 and 9, in order to explain and emphasize that God is a consuming fire.

God is holy. God hates sin. He's of purer eye than to behold iniquity. He cannot look upon sin. Therefore, sin must be dealt with in the heated fires of hell.

And again, it's a visual and a vivid reminder of this perfect, personal, and powerful sacrifice and substitute. It's a reminder of what this spotless lamb encountered and endured on behalf of the people.

It was a reminder of the pain and the punishment that the Passover lamb received. And that should have been theirs. And you know, this, of course, it's a picture.

It's a pointer. Always pointing us forward to the New Testament. To Jesus, our Passover lamb. Who, as you know, my friend, he encountered and he endured the heated fires of hell at the cross of Calvary.

[20 : 35] Hell descended into his soul. Because, you know, it was Jesus. It was Jesus who experienced the pain and the punishment of the cross. It was Jesus who lived the spotless life we cannot live.

And it was Jesus who died the death we deserve to die. But more than that, we're told that when the Lord instituted the supper of the Passover, he gave instructions about bread.

Unleavened bread. The Passover lamb was to be eaten with unleavened bread or matzah, as the Jews call it. Matzah.

And matzah was made simply from flour and water. There wasn't to be any yeast, no leaven to put in it, put in it to make it rise. So if you like faitas, it would be like a tortilla or some flatbread.

That's what they had. And for generations to come, this Passover meal with matzah would mark the beginning of the feast of unleavened bread, which was a seven-day feast from day 14 when the lamb is killed until day 21 of the month, where all the Jews, they were to remove all the leaven or all the yeast from their homes and only eat unleavened bread.

[21 : 53] And that's what we read in verse 14. It says in verse 14, Now we'll come back to that when we reach chapter 13.

We'll be looking at the feast of unleavened bread. But what's clear is that the leaven was to be removed from their home for seven days, from day 14 to day 21. And they were only to eat unleavened bread as a symbol of sanctification.

They were only to eat unleavened bread as a symbol of sanctification. The Israelites were to consecrate and commit their lives to the Lord.

That's why they didn't eat unleavened. That's why they only ate unleavened bread. The Israelites were to consecrate and commit their life to the Lord. And you know, that's something that's picked up again in the New Testament.

Because Jesus said, you'll remember, He said, Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees. Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees.

[23 : 17] Beware of the Pharisees, said Jesus, who look the part. They look the part with their public prayers and their tithing and their fasting. They look the part. Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees who look consecrated, who look committed on the outside.

But Jesus says, the truth is, they worship me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Their heart is far from me.

And you know, that's why Paul said to the church, he said to the Corinthians, Cleanse out the old leaven. Cleanse out the old leaven. In other words, consecrate yourself to the Lord.

Commit your life to the Lord. Confess Jesus Christ as Lord. Because it's not what's on the outward that matters. It's what's on the heart that matters.

And Paul says, Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. So make a commitment. Make a confession. Consecrate yourself to the Lord.

[24 : 22] That's why we've been encouraged here. Consecrate yourself to the Lord. But there's one more thing that was to be eaten during the supper of Passover. So there was the Passover lamb, roasted in fire.

There was the unleavened bread, the matzah. Then there was bitter herbs. Or the Jews called it maror. Maror. It's an endive, which is a bitter herb.

And nowadays, the Jews who remember the Passover, they still remember the Passover. The bitter herb that they use nowadays is horseradish, which is probably what some of you put on your Sunday roast.

Horseradish, a bitter herb. And the bitter herb was a symbolic reminder of the bitter slavery. The bitter slavery that the Israelites experienced and endured in Egypt.

And how Pharaoh, we read that in chapter 1, how Pharaoh made the lives of the Israelites bitter with hard labor. But you know, what's remarkable is that the supper of Passover, the supper was not only a provision of protection, which involved participation in the Passover.

[25 : 35] The Passover also exhorted and encouraged preparation for the Exodus. It encouraged preparation for the Exodus. Because we read in verse 11, So you weren't to eat the Passover all relaxed and resting.

No, you were to partake in the supper of the Passover as someone who was dressed. As someone who was ready. Ready for whenever the command came to exit Egypt.

To leave immediately. And you know, God willing, this Saturday evening as part of our preparatory service for the Lord's Supper, I'd like us to look at the Passover meal in greater detail.

And consider how the institution of the Passover, it foreshadowed and was fulfilled in the institution of the Lord's Supper. You know, what we see here is that when the Lord instituted the Passover, He gave instructions.

He gave instructions for the substitute of Passover, the supper of Passover, and then lastly, the sign of Passover. The sign of Passover.

[27 : 01] Look at verse 12. He says, 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.

So once again, the Lord promises His people that the final plague in Egypt, this final plague, it will be the knockout punch they've all been waiting for.

And this is the knockout punch that they need to remember as they go on into the wilderness. And as we said before, this powerful and painful plague, it was going to be very personal.

It was going to have an impact and even an influence upon every home in Egypt, regardless of who they were, because there was going to be sons and fathers and grandfathers and even great-grandfathers.

[28 : 09] The firstborn in Egypt, they would all die because the wages of sin is death. But the only reason, the only reason the Israelites didn't die because of their sin was because of the sign of the Passover.

The sign of the Passover. They were sheltering under the blood, under the shed blood of the Passover lamb. The blood of the lamb that had been slit from its throat, the blood that they caught in the basin, it means it had been smeared upon the doorposts and the lintel of their houses.

And that blood, that blood was a sign because the Lord said, when I see the blood, I will pass over you.

When I see the blood, I will pass over you. And you know, for this congregation, the sign of the Passover, the sign of the Passover was a public declaration outside their front door.

The sign of the Passover was a public declaration of their private dwelling. The sign of the Passover was a public declaration outside their front door.

[29 : 28] Everybody could see it. A public declaration of their private dwelling. It was a public declaration that they were sheltering under the shed blood of the Passover lamb.

And you know, that's what many of us will be doing, God willing, next Lord's Day as we come to sit around the Lord's table together. Everyone sitting at the Lord's table will be making a public declaration about the private dwelling of their heart.

We will all be making a public declaration one way or another, whether we're sitting at the table or not. But if we're sitting at the Lord's table, we're making a public declaration that we love the Lord.

We're making a public declaration that we have been redeemed, not with corruptible things such as silver and gold, but by the precious, crimson blood of Christ.

The blood as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. Our public declaration will be that we are sheltering under the blood of Christ, that we have had Christ, our Passover lamb, has shed and smeared his blood upon the doorposts and the lintel of our heart.

[30 : 45] My friend, if that describes you, then the Bible says you must come. You must come. You must proclaim.

You must profess the Lord's death. You must profess that Christ is your Passover lamb. You must come and make that public declaration of what is going on in your private dwelling.

You must make known to everyone around you that Jesus is your Lord and Savior. You must tell them that it's true.

There is power, power, wonder-working power in the precious blood of the lamb. And you know, with this, I'll close.

You know, even with feelings of fear when it comes to the Lord's table and professing faith and all these things, there's always feelings of fear. There's always feelings of fragility.

[31 : 51] There's always feelings of frailty, thinking we're not good enough. I don't know enough. I'm not sure. And yet, and yet, we're exhorted and we're encouraged to come to the Lord's table as a means of strengthening us, as a means of sustaining us.

And I'm sure it's something you've missed in the past couple of years. But it's, the Lord's table is a means of grace. And it's for those who are to come just as they are.

You know, that's why the hymn writer said, and it was quoted to us on Monday evening at Christianity Explored, and I told them, I'd quote it, just as I am without one plea, but that thy blood was shed for me and that thou bidst me come to thee.

O Lamb of God, I come, I come, just as I am and waiting not to rid my soul of one dark blot to thee whose blood can cleanse each spot.

O Lamb of God, I come, I come, just as I am, though tossed about, with many a conflict, with many a doubt, fightings and fears within and without.

[33 : 15] O Lamb of God, I come, I come, just as I am, thou wilt receive, wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve, because thy promise, I believe.

O Lamb of God, I come, I come. My friend, you come, you come and make known publicly that this Lamb means everything to you, that he is Christ, your Passover Lamb, and that you are sheltering under his precious blood because you have come to know that there is power, power, wonder, working power in the precious blood of the Lamb.

You come. May the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray. O Lord, our gracious God, we give thanks to thee for the beauty of the gospel, that even the gospel is clearly presented to us in the pages of the Old Testament, that where the new is in the old concealed and how the old is in the new revealed.

And we thank thee that we can see Jesus, that he is our Passover Lamb, that he is the one who was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities.

We thank thee for the promise that the blood of Jesus Christ, thy Son, cleanses us from all sin. Lord, watch over us then we pray.

[34 : 53] Speak to us, we ask, that we would see none other save Jesus only. O Lord, do us good then we pray. Go before us, take away our iniquity, receive us graciously for Jesus' sake.

Amen. Amen. We're going to bring our service to a conclusion this morning by singing the words of Psalm 40.

Psalm 40, it's in the Scottish Psalter, page 259. Psalm 40, we're singing from the beginning down to the verse marked four.

And I know that for many of you this is your favorite psalm, Psalm 40, but Psalm 40 is the testimony of the Christian. And it's a wonderful testimony. And it's wonderful to be able to say these words wholeheartedly.

I waited for the Lord my God and patiently did bear. At length to me he did incline my voice and cry to hear. He took me from a fearful pit and from the miry clay and on a rock he set my feet, establishing my way.

[36 : 09] He put a new song in my mouth, our God to magnify. Many shall see it and shall fear and on the Lord rely. Oh, blessed is the man whose trust upon the Lord relies, respecting not the proud nor such as turn aside to lies.

We'll sing these verses of Psalm 40 to God's praise. Psalm 40 I waited for the Lord my God Overture 10 ■■■■ nhi He took me from a beautiful pit, and from the mighty plain.

And on a rock He set my feet, He stopped reaching my way.

He put a new song in my mouth, A God to my big eye.

Then each child's feet, it unshall fear, And on the glory lie.

[38 : 23] O blessed is the man whose trust Upon the Lord relies, Respecting all the proud, Lord such, As turn aside to life.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and forevermore. Amen.