

# Christ Our Passover

*“Put away leaven out of your houses . . . whosoever eateth that which is leavened, even that soul shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel” (Ex. 12:15-19).*

## EXODUS CHAPTER TWELVE

We have assembled again in joy and thanksgiving to commemorate the loving life-sacrifice for us of our faithful Elder Brother—

*“CHRIST OUR PASSOVER IS SACRIFICED FOR US” (1 Cor. 5:7).*

In our first reading, Exodus 11 and 12, we have the historic institution of this observance: the very first of the Mosaic ordinances—given before the Law itself, and the only sacrifice still observed by the Jewish people. In chapter 11, God announced the final plague, and told Moses that as a consequence, the Egyptians will not only let them go but will actually drive them out. Let us consider together chapter 12, and learn what we can from the working out of these wonderful events.

Verse 1: *“In the land of Egypt.”* The Passover preceded the Law. It was instituted while they were still in Egyptian bondage. It was in fact the very means of deliverance from that bondage. This is fitting.

Verse 2: *“The beginning of months.”* This event is the foundation of their national existence: a completely new beginning as a chosen nation of royal priests. The word “beginning” is *Rosh*: chief or head.

Verse 3: *“The 10th day.”* The Passover lamb was to be selected and separated unto God four days before it was offered. This may portray Christ’s sacrifice four thousand years after the Woman’s Seed was first symbolically designated in Eden as slayer of the Serpent seed and deliverer from the Serpent bondage. It was on this tenth of Abib, exactly forty years later, that Joshua led Israel across the Jordan into the Promised Land. And it was on this same day, too, that Christ rode triumphantly into Jerusalem, and was acclaimed as King. Israel, all unknowingly, thus selected its Passover Lamb of deliverance.

Verse 4: Each household must have a lamb, except that if a household were too small, two or more houses must combine in the observance. When we are few, we must draw more closely together in worship.

Verse 5: *“without blemish.”* Christ must be absolutely perfect in character and conduct, never once yielding to the sinful motions of the flesh. This was the tremendous, agonizing, lifelong burden he bore in love for mankind. Truly it was for himself also, as in God’s wisdom he was constituted one of them in order to save them, and he partook of all their needs, including deliverance from the body of death by a perfect sacrifice. But the motive of doing it for self would have been far too little and weak to supply the power for this mighty work. Only selfless love for mankind was strong enough for this highest and greatest accomplishment in the history of the human race.

We are not required to do the same, nor could we; but we *are* required to make a tremendous, lifelong effort in that direction, with the same motivation of love: and produce measurable “fruit.”

“A male.” God’s arrangements are orderly in beautiful variety and distinctiveness. There is a distinct place each for male and female, and each excels in its own sphere. God has appointed the man as head, but the woman is uniquely blessed in being the source of the Seed of deliverance, without the participation or intervention of the man.

Modern, fleshly notions—on this as on everything—are an ugly, barbaric, misguided reaction to man’s wicked and cruel abuse of his position of headship. All the spiritual beauty God appointed is lost.

“Of the first year.” It must be young. Christ was young, cut off in the midst of his years. Youth is ideally the time of freshness and strength and innocence and vigor. The redeemed will *“renew their youth.”* Age is weakness and decay.

*“Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth” (Ecc. 12:1).*

“Or from the goats.” This is interesting. At first glance, it doesn’t seem to fit the type, but there must be a lesson in it. Really, it is the goat-element which requires the sacrifice, the putting to death. It was the goat-nature Christ overcame and nailed to the cross. The sheep-nature does not come naturally. We are all wild goats by nature, but we must *learn* to submit as sheep to the hand of the Shepherd.

Verse 6: “*Ye shall keep it up.*” The word means “guard carefully.” Some versions render it “guard” or “safe-keeping.” God’s Own purpose in Christ is sure and safe, and He also requires very diligent care in man in relation to it. For four thousand years the glorious Lamb-purpose was safe and sure with God, Who changes not.

“Kill it in the evening.”—of the fourteenth day. Literally, as margin: “between the two evenings.” No one is sure just what this means. The Jews, and commentators generally, suggest it means between two parts of the evening, though they do not agree on where the evening is divided. This seems an awkward explanation: there’s no hint in Scripture of one evening ever being called “two evenings.”

The simplest explanation seems to be that of bro. Thomas (who comes up with many unique, yet clear and logical, explanations of puzzling passages). He suggests it simply meant sometime during the twenty-four hours of the fourteenth day, between the evening that began it and the one that ended it. (Jewish days begin in the evening, at sundown.) This, in the providence of God, enabled Christ to both partake of the Passover and be killed as the Passover lamb, all within the appointed time.

Verse 7: The sacrificial blood of the lamb was to be struck on the two sideposts of each house’s doorway, *and the lintel* across the top of the door which connected the two posts. This was covering or purifying or protecting blood. It preserved the life of the *firstborn* from the Angel of Death. Christ is the Doorway: but considered more in detail, he is the lintel; and the two separate components of the Multitudinous Christ—Jew and Gentile redeemed—are the two sideposts or pillars he unites into one doorway. The lintel (Christ) is sprinkled with the sacrificial blood to deliver the firstborn (Christ). Truly we cannot always safely prove doctrines merely by types *of themselves* (though Paul by the Spirit is able to do this)—but the beauty and fitness of the type adds power and depth to the doctrine.

Verse 8: “*Eat the flesh in that night.*” Night was the time of opportunity for partaking. Next morning would be too late, as there was to be none left available then. Clearly this is the present Gentile Egyptian night.

The Angel of Death struck the oppressor at midnight, and Pharaoh immediately arose and ordered Israel out. Too late then to fulfil what may have been neglected. It was similarly at midnight, we remember, that the sudden summons to the ten Virgins came to *immediately* “go out” to meet the arriving Bridegroom.

“With unleavened bread.” This is clearly the most important part of the entire ordinance. Some aspects are specified once; some two or three times. But from verse 8 to verse 20 the prohibition against leaven is repeated *ten times*, and several times later, too. And the penalty for violation is being “cut off from Israel,” which is used elsewhere (as Ex. 31:14) as synonymous with being “put to death.” This is said of no other instruction here regarding this ordinance.

Paul, speaking of the Passover, tells us what the leaven means, and we see why the warning is so emphatic and oft-repeated. Leaven is “malice and wickedness” (1 Cor. 5:8). And unleavened bread he calls “sincerity and truth.” Malice is any unkind or uncharitable feeling or intention toward others; and wickedness is anything displeasing to God.

Leaven, then, is sin, fleshliness, worldliness—anything contrary to God’s will, or out of harmony with His holiness. Leaven refers to the state of the heart, and mind, and character, and intentions, and desires. “*Sincerity and truth*” is submitting wholeheartedly to the will of God in everything: utter single-mindedness. There is no other way.

“Eat it with bitter herbs.” “*We must through much tribulation enter the Kingdom.*” Tribulation comes mainly from faithfulness: from denying the flesh, and obeying the self-crucifying commands of the Gospel. It is largely the inner struggle against self: self-control and self-denial, as against the self-pleasing and self-indulgence. Very few of us in these days have much we could honestly call “tribulation” from without—from our external circumstances. If we think otherwise, consider Hebrews 11, and be humbled.

Verse 9: “*Eat it not raw or sodden.*” Raw we can easily understand: both literally and figuratively. But why not “sodden” (boiled)? In all other sacrifices, it would appear from the incident of Eli’s sons (1 Sam. 2:13-15) that the parts of the sacrifices to be eaten were *required* to be boiled and *not* roasted. Certainly at the consecration of Aaron (Lev. 8:31) and the purification of the Nazarite (Num. 6:19) the requirement was boiling.

It would seem that the requirement of *roasting* in this one unique sacrifice of the Passover is related to the required cooking of it *whole*, and not separating the parts. The latter part of the verse

emphasizes this. This is the same principle as that which required *no bones to be broken* (v. 46): it must be prepared and preserved as an unmaimed entity.

We see this *literally* fulfilled in Christ on the cross, and *spiritually* in that sacrificial and purifying fires of tribulation are not to maim and break up the Christ-Body, but to perfect and purify and *unify* it.

Verse 10: “*Let nothing remain till morning.*” All must be consumed. All must be absorbed and assimilated by the participants. The meaning and the lesson is quite obvious: we must wholly assimilate Christ our Passover before the morning dawns. He is the Word: we must absorb it all.

If, due to any uncontrollable circumstances, any were left, it must be burned. It could not be allowed to even begin to corrupt. Christ could not be allowed to see corruption. It was not fitting for the spotless Holy One of God. And when the New Day comes, nothing will remain of the mortal flesh of the Christ-Body: it will be consumed and transformed by the Spirit-fire.

Verse 11: Four related requirements: they must eat—not in the normal relaxed way—but with *loins girded* as for energetic labor or travel; with *shoes on*, which Paul says is the “preparation” or readiness of the Gospel race (Eph. 6:15); with *staff in hand*—a staff is a support, a protection from danger, something to lean on, a help to steadiness and sure-footedness on a rough way. The staff is the guidance and instruction and law of God—

“*Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me*” (Psa. 23:4).

And, lastly, “in haste”—no time to be wasted. How vitally important is this last item in the race for life! Time is our most precious commodity. It is very limited in supply, as we realize as we grow older. We are given just so much. When it is wasted, it is gone forever: it can never be regained. At the soon-coming judgment seat of Christ, we shall have to give account of how profitably we have used it. How urgent then is the apostle’s exhortation of brotherly concern—

“*Redeem the time, because the days are evil*”  
(Eph. 5:16).

Verse 12: The final, culminating judgment on Egypt: God would slay all the firstborn throughout the land, of both man and beast.

God’s ways are just. As a man, or nation, sows, so the same shall *inexorably* reap. That is inescapable, close our eyes in wilful blindness as we may. By our wisdom or our folly, day by day, we ourselves determine our own destiny.

God had warned Egypt from the beginning (Ex. 4:22-23)—

“*Israel is My son, My firstborn: let him go!—or I will slay thy firstborn.*”

Egypt had cruelly oppressed God’s people, and had decreed the death of the male children. Now was the inevitable day of reckoning.

Why firstborn of beasts? This verse says the judgments were against the gods of Egypt: to show their utter meaninglessness and powerlessness—those false, non-existent deities to whom they attributed their power and performed their licentious abomination of worship; and in whose name they oppressed Israel.

We are all well aware from archeological reproductions that all the gods of Egypt were animals. Their idols were all animal-headed. It was a vile, debased pantheon of fleshly abominations. The entire series of plagues were humiliating judgments on powerless beast-gods, but this final one was the climax.

Verse 13: When God saw the blood on the door, He would *pass over* that house. Here is the meaning and origin of the name. The blood of the lamb, applied in faith, shielded them from the Angel of Death.

Verse 14: The Passover was to be “a memorial for ever” in all their generations. It pointed forward to Christ, and was fulfilled in him. Since then, the memorial ordinance of Bread and Wine has taken its place. But the Jewish nation still keeps it, three thousand five hundred years after it was first ordained. Blindness, truly—but what a wonderful witness to the Truth!

Verse 15: “*Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread.*” This is really a separate feast, though related and connected. The Passover was the fourteenth of Abib. The seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread was from the fifteenth to the twenty-first. Seven is the full cycle: completeness of time. That is, leaven, or malice and wickedness, must be put away for ever. Not a trace of it may be found in the House for the whole period, or the offending soul is “*cut off from the congregation.*” We are dealing with very holy things.

In the natural type, it is a Jewish tradition—possibly in this case true—that it was seven days from the Passover till they crossed the Red Sea to freedom from Egyptian bondage, and that the unleavened dough they took with them lasted those seven days.

Verse 16: The first and seventh days were “holy convocations.” This is the first appearance of this word, and the first mention in the Bible of an assembly especially for religious worship: again very significant in connection with the Passover. The word (*mikrah*) means “called out,” the same as *ecclesia* in the Greek.

No work was to be done for self. The days of holy convocation were completely devoted to the work of God—the first and last days, from beginning to end in symbol. This is a type of what God requires of us all our lives: nothing for self; all for the glory and service of God.

Nine times in the six verses from 15 to 20, the law and lesson of the leaven is solemnly repeated. This was *very* important.

Verse 22: The blood is to be sprinkled on the doorway by the use of *hyssop*. Hyssop is a symbol of cleansing (and we bear in mind that all *symbolic and typical* cleansing points to and emphasizes the divine requirement of a real and actual cleansing of the heart and mind and life).

Hyssop was used in the cleansing of the leper (Lev. 14), and the preparation of the red-heifer Water of Purification (Num. 19). And David, after his great sin, prayed with strong crying and tears—

*“Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean”*  
(*Psa. 51:7*).

As hyssop is divinely introduced here in the first Passover, we find that in the same divine providence it appears in the *last* Passover upon Calvary, when a common, nameless Roman soldier—all unknowing of the part he played in the Play of the Ages, gave Christ vinegar upon hyssop (Jn. 19:29), at the completion of his dreadful ordeal for mankind.

*“None shall go out of the door of the house until morning.”*

Another striking injunction with an obvious meaning. Only inside the blood-sprinkled door is safety and obedience. “Abide IN me,” Jesus exhorts in the beautiful parable of the Vine (Jn. 15), and he makes it quite clear therein that it is tragically possible to *not* abide in him, even though we thoughtlessly think we are. To “*abide in him*” is to give the life to holiness and the love and service of God, as he commands.

Verses 26-27 indicate that this foundation ordinance and its meaning must be faithfully *taught to their children*, as must all the Law that followed (Deut. 11:19). There are many indications in Scripture that children must be diligently and thoroughly taught God’s law, and carefully drawn into association with the activities of the service of God at an early age—trained to take an intelligent interest; patiently and lovingly answered in all questions and enquiries, as one would so assiduously nurture the first hopeful buddings of a tender plant. They are not to be brushed aside as unimportant, or allowed to loiter vacantly in an anteroom. They are the building-blocks of the future of the *ecclesia* of God; and the younger the training, the more deeply it is rooted, and the more thoroughly it transforms the fleshly mind. It is a tragedy in the Truth when parental neglect of these divine commands leads to a new generation drifting off into the world. It is a tremendous responsibility and lifelong obligation to bring living creatures into the world.

And clearly the ordinances, and all the activities of the assembly—and all the activities *outside* the assemblies—must be performed with joyful holiness and rigid consistency, so that the growing child will be impressed, and will ask with interest and desire, “What mean ye by this service?” (v. 26). Children are quickly disillusioned and turned off by a double standard of official and actual “righteousness.” How many children have been turned from the Truth in sorrow or disgust by the unholiness and unChristlikeness of their elders!

Verse 27: As this instruction of God through Moses was relayed to the people, they “bowed the head, and worshiped.” They were impressed, and they were thankful. They rejoiced in faith of the promised deliverance. Yea, they went further—

Verse 28: “*They DID as the Lord had commanded Moses.*” They worshiped, and they were *obedient*. This is very important; it is an essential part of the picture—literally, typically, and antotypically. It is the key to all.

Verse 29: At midnight, as forewarned, the dreadful blow fell upon all the land of Egypt. Every firstborn died, of man and of beast. The unerring selectivity would add immeasurably to the impact and the terror; *every* firstborn, and *only* the firstborn.

Egypt had brazenly defied God; and had cruelly abused His people through whom He had in earlier days saved and blessed Egypt. They had decreed the death of the nation in the murder of all male babies. God is not mocked. The judgment day had come.

Verses 30-31: Pharaoh immediately rose up in the night, and sent word to Moses that Israel must depart, adding, like the profane Esau when it was too late: “Bless me also!” Pitiful indeed, in its so tardy folly.

Verse 33: The Egyptians as a body were now *urgent* upon Israel to get out of the land. This, too, would be providential, and would greatly aid and expedite Moses’ gigantic task of rounding up and moving two million souls on short notice. We know how difficult it is to get just a few to move quickly and orderly together. And we know how naturally stiff-necked and obstinate Israel was. They had, of course, been warned, and were generally prepared, but the actual signal to move came with very urgent suddenness, *just as it will to us*.

Verse 35: “*And Israel borrowed of the Egyptians jewels of silver and gold, and raiment.*” “Borrow” is a completely wrong word here, and is corrected in the Revised Version. It occurs nearly two hundred times, and is only three times rendered “borrow” other than in this case. It is usually translated “ask,” but often “require” or “demand,” as when God said to Job—

*“I will demand of thee”* (Job 38:3; 40:7).

There was no thought of borrowing, on either side. This was the “great substance” that God promised Abraham the people would come forth with from their bondage (Gen. 15:14). This was a just and righteous demand for payment for the long years of toil and bondage they had endured. And God moved the Egyptians with fear to pay up, and they “spoiled the Egyptians” (v. 36). That is, they collected up all Egypt’s negotiable and portable wealth. It was customary for men in those days to keep their wealth in the form of jewelry and precious stones and metals. It still is, or was till recently, in that part of the world.

Thus were providentially provided the riches and precious metals that the people later gave in joyful willingness to glorify and beautify the Tabernacle of God.

Verse 37: “*600,000 men.*” That would indicate about two million people altogether. There’s no difficulty about Jacob’s family attaining this number in the two hundred fifteen years sojourn in Egypt. We are told many times that God made them especially prolific in Egypt. World population today doubles in less than twenty-five years, despite all efforts to control it. Some countries are doubling in less than twenty years.

Jacob’s total household must have been at least one thousand persons, judging from Abraham being able to muster over three hundred able-bodied men born in his own house (Gen. 14:14). This household would be passed on to Isaac and Jacob, with increases. One thousand, doubled every twenty years, would be two million in two hundred twenty years. But Israel’s rate of growth was supernaturally increased (Ex. 1:7; Psa. 105:24); so even Jacob’s seventy-five blood descendants, plus all their wives, could easily become two million in that period.

Verse 38: “*And a mixed multitude went with them.*”

There would be many who, for various reasons, would desire to leave Egypt and be joined to Israel. They must have had some faith, based on the mighty manifested hand of God on Egypt, to set out on such a journey with no provisions or knowledge of what lay before them. They turned out to be a problem and burden for Moses and Israel, but Moses allowed them to come. Throughout the Scripture record, we see the principle of God accepting believing Gentiles into Israel. It comes out even more clearly later in the chapter. Paul calls the Jews’ attention to this factor throughout the whole Old Testament, as in Romans 10: 18-20, etc.

Verse 39: “*They baked unleavened cakes of the dough which they brought.*” This seems to have been about all they had, for the latter part of the verse says they had not prepared any food for the journey. Complaints of lack of water began early, but there is no record of complaint about hunger until they were a month on the way (Ex. 16:1-3). The land they were leaving was very fertile, and doubtless God enabled them to find food by the way until they began to get into the barren wilderness.

Verse 40: “*The sojourning of Israel was four hundred and thirty years.*” Paul’s statement (Gal. 3:17) that the Law of Moses was four hundred and thirty years after the Promise to Abraham makes it quite certain that the four hundred and thirty of this verse refers to the entire pilgrimage period, and not just the stay in Egypt—just half of it actually being in Egypt. This fits in with the general Biblical

chronological picture, and has been the accepted view till modern times. Modern views do not give much weight to the Word of God.

Verse 41: At the end of the four hundred and thirty years—“*even the selfsame day*”—the hosts of the Lord went out of Egypt. This is very striking and interesting. This puts the solemn sacrificial confirmation of the Covenant to Abraham (Gen. 15) on exactly the same date as the Passover and Crucifixion, adding another link to a very precise divine chain.

Verse 42: “*It is a night to be much observed.*” It would rather seem that this should be “*It is a night of careful vigil or watching*”—a reference to the importance of care and diligence during the long night of waiting.

Verses 43-49 repeat or give added details of the Passover ordinance.

Verse 46: None of the Passover lamb could be carried out of the house to anyone elsewhere. It was not efficacious outside the house. All who partook had to be *in* the house, and *stay* in the house.

“Neither shall ye break a bone thereof.”

John refers to this (19:33-36) as fulfilled in Christ’s death: no bones broken; no corruption. Though persecuted even unto death, the Christ-Body remains intact and pure.

Verse 47: *All* Israel, without exception, *must* keep this ordinance: no exceptions, nothing optional. It was vital to their continuing to remain in, and be part of, the congregation of the Lord.

Verse 48: A stranger who is circumcised and submits in all respects to the law of God may partake of the Passover Lamb of God’s deliverance. Here is a provision, at the very inauguration of the Mosaic dispensation, for faithful Gentiles to enter the Divine Covenant, even at a time when God’s dealings were exclusively with Israel.

Verse 49: “*ONE law for homeborn and for stranger.*” There is no respect of persons with God. Here, in this very *first*, and *most fundamental* ordinance given through Moses—even before the beginning of the Law itself (which was fifty days later, at Pentecost)—this glorious and gracious provision is made for any one of mankind who sought God: foreshadowing the later, full opening of the door of faith to the Gentiles “*in the fullness of times*” after the true, anti-typical Passover of Christ.

“One LAW.” Except for one previous occurrence—appropriately to Abraham himself (Gen. 26:5)—this is the first appearance in Scripture of this word “law”—*torah*—which occurs so often thereafter. It is here applied to the Passover ordinance. The Spirit of Christ in the Psalms says—

“*O how love I Thy Law (Torah): it is my meditation all the day!*” (Psa. 119:97).

“*CHRIST OUR PASSOVER IS SACRIFICED FOR US.*”

Brethren and sisters, above all things, let us cleanse from our hearts and lives any fleshly leaven that will cut us off at last from the Holy Convocation of God in Christ Jesus.

(Taken from “Be Ye Transformed” Volume 2 Pages 13-23 by Bro. Growcott)