

International Sunday School Lesson Study Notes

Lesson Text: Exodus 12:1-14

Lesson Title: Beginning of Passover

Introduction

The Passover marked the birth of the nation of Israel. It was the first of the religious festivals to be established by God for the Israelites. It is first mentioned in Exodus and can be traced in Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, and 2 Chronicles. It referred to the sacrifice of a lamb in Egypt when the people of Israel were still slaves. The Hebrew slaves took the blood of a slain lamb and spread it on the doorposts of their homes as a sign to God that He should "pass over" their houses when the plague of the death of the firstborn was brought upon Egypt (Exodus 12:27).

The Passover was also called the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Exodus 34:18). On the fourteenth day of Nisan (our April), the Passover itself was celebrated. The Passover along with the other religious feasts and festivals for the Israelites taught the people and their children historical and spiritual lessons. It also is a reminder that we cannot be a people of faith without consistency of remembrance. The ritual of Passover holds a special place in the heart of the believer and gives us one of the most powerful foreshadows of the work of Christ found in the Old Testament. Certainly there are other pictures of the sacrificial work of Christ throughout the Old Testament, yet the Passover is that one single picture of the blood of the Lamb satisfying God's demands for substitution for sin and death (John 1:29; 1 Peter 1:18-19).

The Passover and Instructions (Exodus 12:1-2)

Verse 1-2

"And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you."

"And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron" makes it very clear that the Passover was not something that Moses or the people established. God gave detailed instructions that were to be followed by His people at this most crucial moment in their history. This was God's chosen feast, instituted and designed especially for His people. God is not delivering all slaves everywhere in the world; He is delivering His chosen people from the hands of Pharaoh in Egypt.

When the Lord told Moses, "This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you," He was making a significant statement. God was inaugurating a new calendar for Israel. This was to remind the people that their life as the people of God was forever connected to their historical deliverance from Egypt.

What God was about to do would be a "beginning of month" or as "the first month of the year" to the Israelites. *Literally* speaking, the Jewish nation in the Old Testament had two calendars, a civil calendar that began in our September or October, and a religious calendar that began in our March or April. New Year's Day for the Israelites in the civil year was Rosh Hashana, which means "beginning of the year." Rosh Hashana, fell in the seventh month of the religious calendar and ushered in the special events in the month of Tishri: the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles. But Passover marked the beginning of the religious year, and at Passover, the focus is on the lamb. *Spiritually* speaking, the Passover was also a time of new beginning. Just as the Passover changed Israel's calendar, salvation changed the sinner's life as well. *"Old things are passed away; behold all things are become new"* (2 Corinthians 5:17).

The Passover and Substitution (Exodus 12:3-10)

Verse 3-4

"Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house: And if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb."

"Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel" may seem like simple words of instruction but there is a message in those words. You and I may be familiar with the Passover story but put yourself in the sandals of those Hebrews enslaved in Egypt. They were about to hear some important words about a substitute that would keep their firstborn from dying and about a deliverance that was about to

take place. Remember, these Hebrews had never *heard* anything like this before and they had never *done* anything like this before.

Everything about the "lamb" in our lesson text points us to and reminds us of our Savior Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God (John 1:29). Again, keep in mind these Hebrews did not have a completed Bible as you and I to know and understand all the ramifications and types their actions and obedience were foreshadowing. According to God's instructions to Moses, "every man" was to "take...a lamb for his house" and family. Although the word translated "lamb" in this text can mean the young of a goat, it is commonly agreed by scholars that sheep were almost always used.

First, a "lamb" was to be selected on "the tenth day of this month." While this "lamb" was to be selected on "the tenth day of this month," our "Lamb," Jesus Christ, was selected before the foundation of the world (1 Peter 1:20). Our deliverance from sin was not an afterthought with God! Second, "if a particular household was too little for the lamb," or if there was a small family which could not possibly consume the lamb, any other large family could help eat the remaining meat of the lamb. The point is that no family large or small is to be excluded from partaking of the "lamb." The slaying and eating of the Passover "lamb" is about inclusion, not exclusion.

Verse 5-6

"Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats: And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening."

Third, the "lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year." That means the lamb was one year old and the body of the "lamb" was not to be marred in any shape, fashion, or form." A "male of the first year" would be strong, in the prime of life. This is symbolic of the perfect sacrifice of Jesus, the Lamb of God, for the sins of the world (1 Peter 1:19-20; Hebrews 4:15; 7:26; 9:14). Christ, who was offered as our substitute for sin was around 33-34 years of age, certainly in the prime of life. He had no sin and knew no sin. He was "without blemish." Fourth, the "lamb" was to be kept "until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation shall kill it in the evening." From the "tenth day of this month" until the "fourteenth day of the same month" the people watched the lamb. So it was with Christ during His earthly ministry. It was Pilate who said, "...I

find in him no fault at all" (John 18:38). It was God the Father who said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (2 Peter 1:17).

The "lamb" was to be slain before or at sunset on the "fourteenth day" (Deuteronomy 16:6). Pause for a moment and think about the words "kill it." A family representative was to "kill" the lamb. To "kill" or slay means to "butcher." This is not a pretty picture! The prophet Isaiah wrote about Christ, our Lamb, *"...he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb"* (Isaiah 53:7). John the Apostle saw Him in his heavenly vision as *"...a Lamb as it had been slain"* (Revelation 5:7). And in that same scene the heavenly choir declared *"...Thou art worthy...for thou was slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood"* (Revelation 5:9). This scene of death is significant to the beginning of Passover and to our salvation.

Verse 7-8

"And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it. And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it."

The one year old lamb without a blemish must have been a beautiful thing to behold from the "tenth day of the month" until the "fourteenth day of the same month." But God's people were not protected by a living lamb separated from the other lambs and sheep. Neither are we delivered from eternal death and delivered from bondage to spiritual freedom by Christ's living example. We are saved by His death and the shedding of blood (Hebrews 9:22).

The "blood" was to be spread on the doorframes of the house where the "lamb" was eaten. The purpose for placing the "blood" upon the door post is expanded upon in verse 13. The "flesh" of the lamb was to be "roasted over fire" and eaten hastily. The "unleavened bread" and "bitter herbs" was to accompany the meat. The "bread" was to be "unleavened" or not include any yeast because they were to leave Egypt in a hurry and did not have time to wait on the bread to rise (see verse 11). The "bitter herbs" served as a reminder of the bitterness of life they had lived in Egypt, from which the Lord was now delivering them.

Verse 9-10

"Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof. And ye shall let nothing of it remain until

the morning; and that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire."

The meat was to be cooked thoroughly. All the meat was to be "roasted with fire." There was to be no "blood" left in it because "blood" is life and that is sacred to God (Genesis 9:4). "Purtenance" refers to the inner organs of the lamb. "And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning" means everything had to be eaten in one sitting. Anything left over was to be "burned with fire."

The Passover and Preparation (Exodus 12:11-13)

Verse 11

"And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the LORD'S passover."

As the Israelites were eating the Passover meal they were to be ready for exodus and travel. "Loins girded" meant their clothing must be tucked in so as not to get in the way of walking. They are about to put off their old slave clothes and dress up in new garments of salvation. "Shoes on your feet" meant they are now ready to walk with the Lord out of a life of bondage and into a glorious new life of redemption. "Staff in your hand" is a sign that the Israelites are now in a pilgrimage as they start their journey to the Promised Land. "Staff" in "hand" signifies that as they journeyed they were to lean on something outside of themselves.

The Passover was to be "eaten in hast" because the Lord could come and call for them to leave at any moment. This is "the LORD'S Passover."

Verse 12

"For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite 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."

The actual word "Passover" is difficult to define by a specific Hebrew word. However, it is more than just "passing by the houses of the Israelites." The word means "to spread over" or "to protect." What is happening here on this night to be remember is God passing through Egypt in judgment, but at the same time He is "spreading protection" over those who have the "blood of the lamb" applied.

The Passover was not only a memorial of the redemptive price paid for Israel's deliverance from Egypt, it was also a special revelation of the impotence of "all the gods of Egypt." The "gods of Egypt" were powerless to protect the firstborn of animal and man from death. When this night to be remembered was over, Egypt and all the world would know that "I am the LORD."

Verse 13

"And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt."

"And the blood shall be to you..." are words for meditation and worship. For the Israelites the blood of the slain lamb was for them "a token" or fully sufficient for their salvation and protection. The Lord promised Moses and the people, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt." What a glorious promise! Death cries were heard all throughout Egypt on this night but not one tear was shed in the homes where the blood had been applied.

The Passover and Reflection (Exodus 12:14)

Verse 14

"And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever."

"And this day shall be unto you for a memorial" means the Passover meal was to serve as a reminder for ages to come how God judged Pharaoh and the Egyptians and spared the Israelites. They must "keep it a feast to the LORD" and an "ordinance for ever" for all "generations." If the nation of Israel is to be God's people they must remember His redeeming grace through the "memorial" and "ordinance" of "Passover."

Sadly, the Jews failed to keep the Passover throughout their history. In fact, scripture records just seven times when this feast was kept (Exodus 12; Numbers 9; Joshua 5; 2 Chronicles 30; 2 Chronicles 35; Ezra 6; Luke 22:15). In that last Passover in Luke 22:15, the true Lamb of God is revealed. The Apostle Paul said, *"For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us"* (1 Corinthians 5:7).

Conclusion

The Passover marked a new beginning in Israel's history. Is that not our experience in Jesus Christ? To know Christ as Lord and Savior is to begin a brand new life. In fact, we never knew what life and freedom was about until by faith we trusted the shed blood of Jesus Christ for our salvation.

Two words that seem to stand out in our lesson text are the words "kill" (verse 6) and "keep" (v.14). Our "Lamb," our Substitute, Sacrifice and Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ was "slain" on the cross. We must "keep." We must remember. We must never forget His sufferings for our salvation. How do we "keep" the Passover? First, by placing our faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. Second, we remember His redeeming grace by worshipping Him and serving Him. Third, we partake of the Lord's Supper with the local church and when we eat the bread and drink the cup "*...ye do shew the Lord's death till he come*" (1 Corinthians 11:26).

Amen.