# The Passover

## Bible Stories Anthology — Exodus 12

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Author: John Lobota

Research Assistant: Claude Cowork

papertiq@bellsouth.net

> **Romans 15:4** *For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.*

## Why These Stories Were Written — Romans 15:4

Paul had just quoted a thousand-year-old psalm and applied it to Christ (Romans 15:3, quoting Psalm 69:9), and then he explained why he could: *whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning*. **Written aforetime** — the scriptures that already stood before this present age of grace opened at Pentecost: the record God gave through Moses, the prophets and the writings, along with the Gospel accounts of Christ's earthly ministry, which belong to that same time before Pentecost. (When Paul wrote these words, the scriptures he had in hand were the Hebrew scriptures; the Gospels had not yet been written down.) **Written for our learning** — "learning" is the Greek word for *teaching*, the very word rendered "doctrine" in 2 Timothy 3:16. These are not quaint tales; they are doctrine in narrative form. Adam, Ruth and David never knew us, but God did, and He had their lives recorded with us in mind — written *for* us, though not all of it written *to* us, which is why we read Israel's history as our instruction and not as our marching orders. **Through patience and comfort of the scriptures** — "patience" is literally *remaining under*, the staying power we gain from watching men and women stay under a load; "comfort" is a *calling alongside*, the strength God brings when He meets them there, which is why Paul calls Him "the God of patience and consolation" in the very next verse. **That we might have hope** — not a wish, but confident expectation: the return of Jesus Christ and everlasting life with Him. That is why these accounts exist, and it is how they should be read.

## When I See the Blood

It is midnight in Egypt. In every house in the land, from the palace of Pharaoh to the cell of the lowest prisoner, a cry goes up. In every house, the firstborn son lies dead.

In every house but some.

On those houses, the doorframes are stained with blood. Inside, families stand fully dressed, sandals on their feet, walking sticks in their hands, eating roast lamb and flat bread and bitter herbs as fast as they can. They have been told not to step outside until morning. They do not know exactly what is passing through the streets. They know only what God said: "when I see the blood, I will pass over you."

By morning, a nation of slaves is walking out of Egypt.

Of all the pictures of the Messiah in the Old Testament, the Passover is the clearest and the most complete. Fifteen hundred years later, on the very day the Passover lambs were being slain in Jerusalem, Jesus Christ died on a cross outside its walls, and Paul could write six words that sum up this whole story: "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us" (1 Corinthians 5:7).

## The Setting

**When.** About four hundred years after Joseph brought his family down into Egypt. Moses was eighty years old (Exodus 7:7). It was spring, in the month the Hebrews called *Abib*, "green ears," when the barley was ripening (Exodus 13:4). Later, after the exile, the same month would be called *Nisan*.

**Where.** Egypt — specifically the land of Goshen in the eastern Nile delta, where Israel had lived since Joseph's day, and the city of Rameses, one of the store cities the Hebrew slaves had built for Pharaoh (Exodus 1:11).

**Who.** Moses and his brother Aaron; the elders and families of Israel; Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, whose name scripture does not give; the people of Egypt; and the LORD God.

**The situation.** The family of seventy souls that came down to Egypt in Joseph's day had grown into a nation. And a new king "which knew not Joseph" (Exodus 1:8) had turned them into slaves. "They made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in morter, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field" (Exodus 1:14). When that was not enough, Pharaoh ordered every Hebrew baby boy thrown into the Nile (Exodus 1:22).

God had not forgotten. He had told Abraham centuries before: "thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance" (Genesis 15:13-14). Now the time had come. God called Moses at a burning bush and sent him back to Egypt with a message for Pharaoh — and with a warning, given before the first plague was ever sent:

> **Exodus 4:22** *And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, even my firstborn:*
>
> **Exodus 4:23** *And I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me: and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy firstborn.*

Remember that warning. Everything in Exodus 12 is its fulfilment. Pharaoh had spent a generation killing Israel's sons. God called Israel His own firstborn son, and told Pharaoh plainly, at the very start, what refusing would cost.

Pharaoh refused. Nine times God struck Egypt with plagues — the river turned to blood, frogs, lice, flies, the death of the cattle, boils, hail, locusts, and three days of darkness you could feel. Nine times Pharaoh either refused outright or promised to let the people go and then took it back. Now there was one plague left.

In the great ages of God's dealings with mankind, called **administrations**, this is still the **Patriarchal** administration, in which a person stood right with God by faith and there was no written Law. The Law would be given at Sinai only weeks after this night. The Passover stands right at the doorway between the two — the last great act of God before the Law, and the one the Law would command Israel to remember every year.

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## The Story, Told Faithfully

### A New Beginning of Months

> **Exodus 12:1** *And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying,*
>
> **Exodus 12:2** *This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you.*

Before God told Israel what to do, He told them what time it was. Until then, the year had been reckoned from the autumn, at the end of the harvest. Now God reset the calendar. From this night on,

Israel's religious year would begin in the spring, with this month. A nation's life would be counted from the night God redeemed it.

That is a picture every believer can understand. A person's real life with God does not begin at birth. It begins at redemption.

## A Lamb for a House

> **Exodus 12:3** *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:*
>
> **Exodus 12:4** *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.*
>
> **Exodus 12:5** *Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats:*

"A lamb for an house." God's rescue came one household at a time. Every family needed its own lamb — and if a family was too small to eat a whole lamb, it joined its neighbour's. Nobody was too small to be included, and nobody was left without a lamb for lack of means.

"Without blemish" — no defect, no injury, no sickness. It had to be perfect. "A male of the first year" — a young male in its prime. And notice: "from the sheep, or from the goats." The Hebrew word, *seh*, means one of the flock, either a lamb or a kid. The animal that died in Egypt did not have to be a sheep. It had to be perfect.

> **Exodus 12:6** *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.*

Chosen on the tenth day, kept until the fourteenth. "Keep it up" means *keep it under watch*. For four days, the lamb lived with the family, in the house, where every flaw would show. By the fourteenth day, everyone in the house knew it was without blemish — and everyone in the house knew this particular lamb, which was about to die in their place.

As this series understands it, it is no accident that in the last days before His death, Jesus was examined over and over — by the chief priests, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the lawyers, Herod and Pilate — and that at the end of it all Pilate had to say, "I find no fault in this man" (Luke 23:4). The Lamb of God was examined in public, and found without blemish.

"The whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill *it*." Thousands of households, thousands of lambs — and yet God speaks of "it," one lamb. Some readers have seen in this singular a hint of the One Lamb all the others pointed to. Whether or not the grammar was meant to carry that, the lesson is true: in the end, there would be one Lamb for all.

"In the evening" — literally, in Hebrew, *between the two evenings*. The Jewish historian Josephus, writing in the first century, records that in his day the Passover lambs were slain at the temple "from the ninth hour till the eleventh" — from about three in the afternoon until about five. Keep that hour in mind.

## The Blood on the Door

> **Exodus 12:7** *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.*

The lamb's death was not enough on its own. The blood had to be *applied*. A family could have chosen a perfect lamb, kept it four days, killed it at the right hour — and left the blood in the basin. If they did, the lamb had died for nothing. The blood had to go on the door.

Moses later told the elders how to do it:

> **Exodus 12:22** *And ye shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is in the bason, and strike the lintel and the two side posts with the blood that is in the bason; and none of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning.*

Hyssop was a small bushy plant with many stems, ideal for a brush. It became the plant of cleansing in Israel: "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean," David prayed (Psalm 51:7). And at the cross, when Jesus was given vinegar to drink, it was lifted to His mouth "upon hyssop" (John 19:29).

"None of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning." Safety was inside the house marked by blood — and only there.

## Roast, Unleavened, Bitter

> **Exodus 12:8** *And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it.*
>
> **Exodus 12:9** *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.*
>
> **Exodus 12:10** *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.*

Every detail of the meal meant something.

**Roast with fire.** Not raw, and not boiled ("sodden… with water"). The lamb was to be roasted whole, "his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof" — the inner parts included. It was not cut up. The whole lamb went through the fire.

**Unleavened bread.** Bread made without yeast. The story will tell us the practical reason: there was no time to let the dough rise (12:34, 39). But leaven, which spreads silently through a whole lump of dough, also became a picture throughout scripture of corruption and sin working its way through the whole: "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" (1 Corinthians 5:6); "beware of the leaven of the Pharisees" (Matthew 16:6).

**Bitter herbs.** A taste of what slavery had been. "They made their lives bitter with hard bondage" (Exodus 1:14). Every Passover afterward, Israel would taste the bitterness again, so that they would never forget what God had saved them from.

**Nothing left until morning.** The whole lamb was eaten that night, and anything left over was burned. The Passover was not something to be saved for later. It was for that night.

And one more rule, given later in the chapter:

> **Exodus 12:46** *In one house shall it be eaten; thou shalt not carry forth ought of the flesh abroad out of the house; neither shall ye break a bone thereof.*

Not a bone of the Passover lamb was to be broken. Keep that too in mind.

## Dressed to Leave

> **Exodus 12:11** *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.*

In the East, men wore long, loose robes. To "gird the loins" was to pull the robe up and tuck it into the belt, freeing the legs to walk, run or work. Indoors, sandals were taken off. A staff was for the road. So God was telling them: eat this meal dressed for a journey. Your belt is tight, your sandals are on, your walking stick is in your hand. You are not staying.

They were to eat it "in haste." The word means with the hurried alarm of people who must leave at any moment. They were slaves that evening. God told them to eat like free men who were about to walk out.

"It is the LORD's passover." This is the first time the word appears. The Hebrew word is *pesach*. We will see in a moment what it means.

## Against All the Gods of Egypt

> **Exodus 12:12** *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.*
>
> **Exodus 12:13** *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.*

"Against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment." Egypt was a land of many gods — gods of the Nile, of the sun, of the fields, of the cattle, of birth and death. The plagues had struck at the very things those gods were supposed to govern: the river, the land, the livestock, the sky, the sun. And the last plague struck at Egypt's deepest claim of all. Egypt's kings were honoured as sons of the sun-god. When the firstborn son of Pharaoh died, the "divine" royal line of Egypt was shown to have no power to protect even its own heir. Scripture says it plainly afterward: "upon their gods also the LORD executed judgments" (Numbers 33:4).

**"When I see the blood."** Here is the heart of the chapter. God did not say, "When I see how good you have been." He did not say, "When I see that you are an Israelite." He said, "When I see the blood." Safety that night did not depend on the worthiness of the family inside. It depended entirely on the blood on the door. An Israelite house without blood would have lost its firstborn. An Egyptian house that believed God and put blood on its door would have been spared.

The word "token" is the same word used of the rainbow: "the token of a covenant" (Genesis 9:13). A token is a sign God Himself looks at. Of the rainbow God said, "I will look upon it, that I may remember." Of the blood He said, "When I see the blood." In both cases, the sign was not mainly for the people. It was for God — and God keeps faith with His own signs.

**“I will pass over you.”** The Hebrew verb is *pasach*, from which comes *pesach*, Passover. It is usually taken to mean *to pass by*, *to skip over*. But it carries more than that. Isaiah uses the same word in a striking picture:

> **Isaiah 31:5** *As birds flying, so will the LORD of hosts defend Jerusalem; defending also he will deliver it; and passing over he will preserve it.*

“As birds flying” — like a mother bird hovering over her nest. “Passing over he will preserve it.” Here the word does not mean simply to move on by. It means to stand over something and protect it. As this series understands it, that is the fuller picture of the Passover. God did not merely walk past the houses marked with blood. He stood over them, and guarded the door.

## The LORD and the Destroyer

Moses explained it all to the elders of Israel, and in doing so he added a detail the earlier verses do not mention:

> **Exodus 12:23** *For the LORD will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when he seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, the LORD will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you.*

Read the verse slowly. There are two parties in it. There is the LORD. And there is “the destroyer.” The LORD passes over the door. The destroyer is the one who would “come in unto your houses to smite you” — and the LORD “will not suffer” him to. At every door marked with blood, the LORD stood between the destroyer and the family inside.

Yet the same chapter says plainly, “at midnight the LORD smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt” (12:29). How can the LORD smite, and a destroyer smite, both at once? Scripture often speaks this way. What God permits, and what He sets the bounds of, is credited to Him as the Judge over it, while the one who carries it out is named separately. This is a well-known Hebrew idiom, and it is how scripture can say both that “the LORD smote” and that there was a “destroyer” whom the LORD held back. Hebrews, looking back on this night, speaks only of the agent: Moses kept the Passover “lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them” (Hebrews 11:28).

Who is the destroyer? Exodus does not name him, and it is only honest to say so. Some read him as an angel of judgment acting on God’s commission. As this series understands it, he is the adversary himself — the one who “had the power of death” (Hebrews 2:14), whose name in Revelation is Abaddon and Apollyon, “the destroyer” (Revelation 9:11). That night, God let him go where there was no blood, and barred him from every door where there was. Either way, the point of the verse is the same: the LORD’s recorded act at the door of every believing household was to keep death out.

This is also where the question of God’s goodness must be faced directly, as every reader faces it here. How can a good God allow the death of every firstborn in Egypt? Scripture gives the answer in its own order. Egypt had enslaved God’s people for generations and drowned their baby sons in the Nile. God warned Pharaoh, before the first plague, exactly what refusal would cost (Exodus 4:22-23). He sent nine plagues first, each one a further warning, each one an open door. And He provided a way of escape that anyone could use — blood on a doorframe. The judgment fell only where that way was refused. “I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live” (Ezekiel 33:11).

## A Memorial for Ever

> **Exodus 12:14** *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.*

Before the night had even come, God told Israel to remember it — every year, for all their generations. The Passover on the fourteenth day was followed by seven days of the **Feast of Unleavened Bread**, from the fifteenth to the twenty-first (12:15-20), during which no leaven was allowed in any Israelite house. Families searched their homes and removed every trace of it before the feast began.

And the remembering was built around questions:

> **Exodus 12:26** *And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service?*
>
> **Exodus 12:27** *That ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the LORD's passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses. And the people bowed the head and worshipped.*

God designed the Passover to make children ask. The strange food, the bitter herbs, the unleavened bread, the whole family gathered at night — every child would want to know why. And every father would have to answer with the story of what God did. The Passover was a lesson taught at the family table, generation after generation.

"And the people bowed the head and worshipped." They had not yet been delivered. The lambs had not yet been killed. But they believed God's word, and they worshipped before they saw it.

> **Exodus 12:28** *And the children of Israel went away, and did as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron, so did they.*

## Midnight

> **Exodus 12:29** *And it came to pass, that at midnight the LORD smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the firstborn of the captive that was in the dungeon; and all the firstborn of cattle.*
>
> **Exodus 12:30** *And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he, and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt; for there was not a house where there was not one dead.*

"From the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the firstborn of the captive that was in the dungeon." This is a figure of speech — a deliberate departure from the plain, ordinary way of saying something, used to add emphasis. This one names the two extremes of a whole to include everything between them: from the highest seat in the land to the lowest cell. It is called **merism**. No house in Egypt was high enough or low enough to escape.

"There was a great cry in Egypt." A generation earlier, Egypt had heard the cries of Hebrew mothers whose sons were thrown into the river. Now the cry was Egypt's own. The judgment Pharaoh had been warned of from the beginning had come — measure for measure, a firstborn for a firstborn.

## Go

> **Exodus 12:31** *And he called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, Rise up, and get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel; and go, serve the LORD, as ye have said.*
>
> **Exodus 12:32** *Also take your flocks and your herds, as ye have said, and be gone; and bless me also.*
>
> **Exodus 12:33** *And the Egyptians were urgent upon the people, that they might send them out of the land in haste; for they said, We be all dead men.*

For months Pharaoh had bargained: go, but not far; go, but leave the children; go, but leave the flocks. Now, in the middle of the night, he surrendered everything. Go — all of you, with everything you own. And then, astonishingly: "and bless me also." The king of Egypt, who had called himself a god, asked the slaves' God for a blessing.

The Egyptians could not get Israel out fast enough. "We be all dead men."

> **Exodus 12:34** *And the people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneadingtroughs being bound up in their clothes upon their shoulders.*

There was no time for bread to rise. They wrapped the unrisen dough, still in the mixing bowls, in their cloaks, slung it over their shoulders, and walked out. On the road they baked it flat (12:39). The unleavened bread of every Passover afterward remembered this: the night God moved so fast there was no time for the bread to rise.

## Spoiling the Egyptians

> **Exodus 12:35** *And the children of Israel did according to the word of Moses; and they borrowed of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment:*
>
> **Exodus 12:36** *And the LORD gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they lent unto them such things as they required. And they spoiled the Egyptians.*

The English word "borrowed" has troubled many readers, as though Israel borrowed things it never meant to return. The Hebrew verb, *sha'al*, simply means *to ask*. It is the ordinary word for asking for something, used of Hannah asking God for a son (1 Samuel 1:20). Israel asked, and the Egyptians — who by now wanted them gone at any price — gave. "They lent unto them" is the same verb in another form: *they let them have what they asked*.

God had promised this long before. To Abraham: "afterward shall they come out with great substance" (Genesis 15:14). To Moses at the burning bush: "when ye go, ye shall not go empty" (Exodus 3:21). After four hundred years of unpaid labour, Israel walked out of Egypt with its wages. And much of that gold and silver, given freely to Israel that night, would be given freely back to God at Sinai to build the tabernacle (Exodus 35:22).

## The Selfsame Day

> **Exodus 12:37** *And the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand on foot that were men, beside children.*
>
> **Exodus 12:38** *And a mixed multitude went up also with them; and flocks, and herds, even very much cattle.*

Six hundred thousand men, besides women and children — a nation of perhaps two million people on the move. And "a mixed multitude went up also with them." Not all who left Egypt were Israelites. Some Egyptians and other foreigners, having seen what the God of Israel had done, chose to go with His people.

> **Exodus 12:40** *Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years.*
>
> **Exodus 12:41** *And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt.*
>
> **Exodus 12:42** *It is a night to be much observed unto the LORD for bringing them out from the land of Egypt: this is that night of the LORD to be observed of all the children of Israel in their generations.*

"The selfsame day." God keeps time. Four hundred and thirty years, to the day. (How the 430 years are counted is a question careful readers still discuss; Paul counts 430 years from God's promise to Abraham to the giving of the Law, Galatians 3:17. The point Exodus makes is the same either way: God's appointed time did not slip by a single day.)

"A night to be much observed." Literally, *a night of watching*. God watched over Israel that night. Israel would keep watch on that night every year after.

## Who May Eat It

> **Exodus 12:48** *And when a stranger shall sojourn with thee, and will keep the passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as one that is born in the land: for no uncircumcised person shall eat thereof.*
>
> **Exodus 12:49** *One law shall be to him that is homeborn, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among you.*

The Passover was not a matter of blood descent. A foreigner who wanted to keep the Passover to the LORD could do it — by joining the covenant. And once he did, "he shall be as one that is born in the land." "One law" for the native-born and for the stranger. Even here, on the night God redeemed Israel, the door was open to outsiders who came in God's way.

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## Where the Story Leads

## To the Messiah

The New Testament does not leave us to guess what the Passover pointed to. It says it outright:

> **1 Corinthians 5:7** *Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us:*

Set the two side by side:

- **A lamb without blemish.** "Your lamb shall be without blemish." "The precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:19). "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

- **Examined and found faultless.** The lamb was kept under watch from the tenth to the fourteenth. Jesus was questioned by every authority in Jerusalem, and Pilate said, “I find no fault in this man.”
- **The last supper.** On the evening before He died — the evening before the Passover lambs were slain — Jesus sat at a last supper with His disciples and said: “With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer” (Luke 22:15). Hebrew days begin at sunset, so that evening meal and the next afternoon’s death fell on the same day, the fourteenth, “the preparation of the passover” (John 19:14). John says plainly that the supper came “before the feast of the passover” (John 13:1), and the Gospels never mention a lamb at that table. The Lamb was at the table. He took the bread and said, “This is my body which is given for you”; He took the cup and said, “This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you” (Luke 22:19-20). Before the lambs were slain the next afternoon, He Himself would be slain as “our passover” (1 Corinthians 5:7).
- **The day and the hour.** John records that Jesus was sentenced on “the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour” (John 19:14) — the day the lambs were made ready. Darkness covered the land from the sixth hour to the ninth, and “about the ninth hour” Jesus cried out and died (Matthew 27:45-50). The ninth hour, about three in the afternoon, is the very hour Josephus says the Passover lambs began to be slain at the temple.
- **Hyssop.** The Passover blood was applied with hyssop. At the cross, the vinegar was lifted to Jesus’ mouth “upon hyssop” (John 19:29).
- **Not a bone broken.** “Neither shall ye break a bone thereof.” When the soldiers came to break the legs of the crucified men, so the bodies could be taken down before the high day, they broke the legs of the two thieves — “But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs… For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken” (John 19:33, 36).
- **Blood that saves.** “When I see the blood, I will pass over you.” “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins” (Ephesians 1:7). “Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him” (Romans 5:9).
- **Out of bondage.** The Passover brought Israel out of slavery in Egypt. Christ “hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son” (Colossians 1:13).

And the story did not end at the cross. As Jonah was three days and three nights in the fish, so the Son of man was “three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” (Matthew 12:40), and then God raised Him from the dead. He was taken up into heaven, and John saw Him there: “in the midst of the throne… stood a Lamb as it had been slain” (Revelation 5:6). The Lamb who died is the Lamb who lives and reigns.

## To the Grace Administration

**One Lamb, once for all.** Israel killed a lamb every year, and the next year needed another. The believer under grace looks to one sacrifice that never needs repeating: “we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Hebrews 10:10).

**Safety rests on the blood, not on our worthiness.** On Passover night, the only question at every door was: is the blood there? It is the same under grace. We are “justified by his blood” (Romans 5:9), “made nigh by the blood of Christ” (Ephesians 2:13) — not by how good our house is.

**Strangers brought near.** The Passover allowed a stranger to join and become “as one that is born in the land.” Under grace, the door is opened far wider. Gentiles who were once “aliens from the

commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world," are now "made nigh by the blood of Christ" (Ephesians 2:12-13).

**Keep the feast — without the old leaven.** Paul does not tell believers to keep the Jewish Passover. He tells them what the Passover taught: "Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Corinthians 5:8). Christ our Passover has been sacrificed. So put the old leaven out of the house.

**Remembering Him.** Israel kept the Passover to remember their deliverance. The believer remembers his: "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come" (1 Corinthians 11:26). "Till he come" — the Passover points forward still, to the day He returns.

**Dressed for the road.** Israel ate that first Passover with belts tight and sandals on, ready to leave at God's word. Peter uses the same picture for believers now: "gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:13). We live in this world, but we are ready to go.

## To the Topic of Faith and Obedience

Nothing about blood on a doorframe made sense in ordinary terms. It could not lock a door or stop an intruder. It worked because God said it would. "Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them" (Hebrews 11:28). Israel's part was simple: believe what God said, and do it — choose the lamb, apply the blood, stay inside, and be ready to go. "And the children of Israel went away, and did as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron, so did they" (12:28).

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## The Main Takeaway

**When God sees the blood, He passes over — and the blood that saves us is the blood of Christ, our Passover.**

- **Your safety rests on the Lamb, not on yourself.** "When I see the blood" — not your record, your family, or your effort.
- **The blood must be applied.** A lamb in the pen saved no one. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and His sacrifice is yours.
- **Stay under the blood.** "None of you shall go out at the door… until the morning."
- **Put out the old leaven.** Christ has been sacrificed for you; live in "sincerity and truth."
- **Teach your children.** God built the Passover around a child's question. Answer it with the story of what God has done.
- **Be ready to go.** Loins girded, shoes on, staff in hand — living in hope of His coming.

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## For Our Learning — The People

- **Moses.** Eighty years old, once a prince of Egypt and a shepherd in Midian, now God's messenger to Pharaoh. He received the Passover instructions and taught them to the elders, and "through faith he kept the passover" (Hebrews 11:28).

- **Aaron.** Moses' older brother and spokesman, who stood with him before Pharaoh and received the Passover command with him.
- **The elders and families of Israel.** Slaves who believed God's word, chose their lambs, applied the blood, "bowed the head and worshipped" before deliverance came, and walked out of Egypt the next day.
- **Pharaoh.** The king of Egypt, unnamed in scripture, who enslaved Israel, refused God nine times, lost his own firstborn son, and at last begged Israel to go — "and bless me also."
- **The Egyptians.** The people of a land of many gods, who gave Israel their silver, gold and clothing, and cried, "We be all dead men."
- **The mixed multitude.** Non-Israelites who left Egypt with Israel, having seen what the God of Israel did.
- **The destroyer.** The one who struck the firstborn where there was no blood, and whom the LORD would "not suffer" to come in where there was. As this series understands it, the adversary, who "had the power of death" (Hebrews 2:14).
- **The LORD God.** He warned Pharaoh from the beginning, sent nine plagues as warnings, provided a lamb for every house, stood over every door marked with blood, judged the gods of Egypt, and brought His firstborn son, Israel, out of bondage "the selfsame day" He had promised.

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## For Our Learning — Customs and Orientalisms

- **The month Abib.** "Green ears," the spring month of ripening barley, made "the beginning of months" at the Passover; later called Nisan.
- **The lamb (*seh*).** One of the flock — a lamb or a kid of the goats — male, a year old, without blemish.
- **Kept under watch.** Chosen on the tenth day, kept in the household until the fourteenth, where every flaw would show.
- **"Between the two evenings."** The time of the Passover slaughter. In Josephus's day, from the ninth hour to the eleventh, about 3 to 5 p.m.
- **Hyssop.** A small bushy plant used as a brush to apply blood or water; the plant of cleansing (Psalm 51:7).
- **The lintel and side posts.** The top beam and two uprights of the doorframe, where the blood was struck.
- **Roasting whole.** The lamb was roasted entire, head, legs and inner parts, not boiled or cut up; nothing was to be left until morning.
- **Unleavened bread and bitter herbs.** Bread made in haste without yeast; bitter herbs to remember the bitterness of slavery.
- **Girded loins.** Long robes pulled up and tucked into the belt for travel or work; sandals, normally removed indoors, kept on; staff in hand for the road.
- **The Feast of Unleavened Bread.** Seven days following the Passover, from the fifteenth to the twenty-first, with all leaven removed from the house.
- **Asking at departure.** The Hebrew "borrowed" means *asked*; the Egyptians gave freely, as God had promised Abraham and Moses.
- **Egypt's gods and Pharaoh's son.** Egypt worshipped many gods of nature, and its kings were honoured as sons of the sun-god; the death of Pharaoh's firstborn struck at that claim.

- **The stranger joining the covenant.** A foreigner could keep the Passover once his household was circumcised, and was then "as one that is born in the land."

## For Our Learning — Figures of Speech

A figure of speech is a deliberate departure from the plain, ordinary way of saying something, used by God to add emphasis and feeling. These are the ones in this story:

- **Anthropopatheia** — describing God in human terms so that we can understand Him. "When I see the blood" (12:13); "when he seeth the blood" (12:23): God as the One who looks at the sign and keeps faith with it.
- **Merism** — naming the two extremes of a whole to include everything between. "From the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the firstborn of the captive that was in the dungeon" (12:29).
- **Idiom** — an expression whose meaning comes from how a people used it. "Loins girded" (12:11) — ready for travel or work; "between the two evenings" (12:6) — late afternoon; "the LORD smote" alongside "the destroyer" (12:23, 29) — scripture's way of crediting to God what He permits and bounds, while naming the one who carries it out.
- **Metaphor** — speaking of one thing as another. "Christ our passover" (1 Corinthians 5:7); "the old leaven… the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Corinthians 5:8).
- **Simile** — a comparison using "as." "As birds flying, so will the LORD of hosts defend Jerusalem" (Isaiah 31:5), the picture behind the word *pesach*.

## What the Bible Actually Says

- **It says "the destroyer," not "the death angel."** Exodus 12:23 names "the destroyer," and says the LORD would "not suffer" him to come into houses marked with blood.
- **"Pass over" is more than "skip."** The same word is used of God hovering over and defending Jerusalem "as birds flying" (Isaiah 31:5).
- **Safety was not by nationality.** "When I see the blood" — not "when I see an Israelite."
- **The lamb could be a goat.** "From the sheep, or from the goats" (12:5).
- **Israel did not steal from Egypt.** "Borrowed" means *asked*; the Egyptians gave freely, and God had promised it to Abraham (Genesis 15:14).
- **Not everyone who left was an Israelite.** "A mixed multitude went up also with them" (12:38), and strangers could join the Passover (12:48).
- **They did not eat it relaxing at table.** The first Passover was eaten dressed for travel and "in haste" (12:11).
- **Pharaoh was warned about the firstborn before the first plague** (Exodus 4:22-23).
- **The Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread are two things joined together** — the Passover on the fourteenth, the feast from the fifteenth to the twenty-first (12:6, 18; Leviticus 23:5-6).

## God's Will and Intent

- **God hears the cry of the oppressed.** He saw Israel's bitter bondage and the murder of their sons, and He acted.
- **God warns before He judges.** Pharaoh was told at the very start what refusal would cost, and was given nine plagues of warning.
- **God provides the way of escape Himself.** A lamb for every house, and blood that anyone could apply.
- **God guards those under the blood.** He stood over every marked door and did not let the destroyer in.
- **God judges false gods.** "Against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment."
- **God keeps His appointed time.** "The selfsame day."
- **God wants His works remembered and taught.** "When your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service?"
- **God always meant the Passover to point to His Son.** "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us."