

---

# Penalty and Passover

## Exodus 11:1-12:28

**Introduction** Who can stand against the God of heaven?

What final judgment will break the stubborn will and hardened heart of Pharaoh?

What mighty saving acts of God redeem His people?

## The Warning of the Coming Judgment (11:1-12)

The LORD said to Moses, "Yet one plague more I will bring upon Pharaoh and upon Egypt. Afterward he will let you go from here. When he lets you go, he will drive you away completely. <sup>2</sup> Speak now in the hearing of the people, that they ask, every man of his neighbor and every woman of her neighbor, for silver and gold jewelry." <sup>3</sup> And the LORD gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians. Moreover, the man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh's servants and in the sight of the people.

<sup>4</sup> So Moses said, "Thus says the LORD: About midnight I will go out in the midst of Egypt, <sup>5</sup> and every firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne, even to the firstborn of the slave girl who is behind the handmill, and all the firstborn of the cattle. <sup>6</sup> There shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there has never been, nor ever will be again. <sup>7</sup> But not a dog shall growl against any of the people of Israel, either man or beast, that you may know that the LORD makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel. <sup>8</sup> And all these your servants shall come down to me and bow down to me, saying, 'Get out, you and all the people who follow you.' And after that I will go out." And he went out from Pharaoh in hot anger. <sup>9</sup> Then the LORD said to Moses, "Pharaoh will not listen to you, that my wonders may be multiplied in the land of Egypt."

<sup>10</sup> Moses and Aaron did all these wonders before Pharaoh, and the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let the people of Israel go out of his land.

### One Last Plague (v.1-3)

God announces to Moses that one last plague is about to fall. It will be of such severity that Pharaoh will eject the people of God from Egypt. Meanwhile, the Israelites were to talk with their Egyptian neighbors and to ask them for gold and silver jewelry. The Egyptian's response would not be out of the threat of further problems as though Israel were extorting the riches from them. Rather, God would move in their hearts to give the Israelites favor in the Egyptians eyes. As a result of all that has happened, Moses has a very high standing in the palace and among the people.

### One Last Warning (v.4-9)

This one last warning is spoken through Moses to Pharaoh (v.8b). About midnight, God would go throughout the land and kill all the firstborn. No one, no matter how exalted or how lowly will be exempt. It would even extend to the livestock. But God will make a distinction with Israel. We will learn that Israel had to do something, had to actively respond to the LORD in order to be protected in this final catastrophe. And Pharaoh would eject God's people. This message was not delivered in a loving, plaintive, pleading voice. Now Moses was angry. He was angry at the Pharaoh because God was. He was incarnating the anger of God. God's purpose is reiterated. Pharaoh will not listen. He will harden His heart because God has determined to display His wonders for all to see.

### One Last Hardening (v.10)

The Lord hardens Pharaoh's heart one last time. He has purposed to bring the full set of plagues so as to demonstrate His greatness. This final plague will come to pass for God had planned it as a type of His redemptive work. All these events are being orchestrated by God. There are the immediate actors in the drama. There are the people of God as the initial audience of the narrative. But there is

also, by design, the events and their story that are for us, for our instruction and for our illustration.

The hardening of Pharaoh's heart raises a question that is difficult for many. How is it right for God to harden Pharaoh's heart and turn right around and judge Pharaoh for having a hardened heart? This is the question of Romans 9. The answer lies in the sovereign independence of God and the saving purposes and plans of God. God is free to do anything He likes. He will do what is right and just. The freedom to choose to harden or not harden lies with God. No matter how you slice it, Pharaoh is judged for having a hardened heart, some of which he does and all of which God does. *That fact that this is so means that it is just to do so.* God is not accountable to man or even to some external law. We must not sit in human judgment on His ways lest we find Him sitting in Divine judgment on ours.

### **The Provision for the Believing People (12:1-13)**

The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, <sup>2</sup> "This month shall be for you the beginning of months. It shall be the first month of the year for you. <sup>3</sup> Tell all the congregation of Israel that on the tenth day of this month every man shall take a lamb according to their fathers' houses, a lamb for a household. <sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup> Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male a year old. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats, <sup>6</sup> and you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month, when the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill their lambs at twilight.

<sup>7</sup> "Then they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. <sup>8</sup> They shall eat the flesh that night, roasted on the fire; with unleavened bread and bitter herbs they shall eat it. <sup>9</sup> Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted, its head with its legs and its inner parts. <sup>10</sup> And you shall let none of it remain until the morning; anything that remains until the morning you shall burn. <sup>11</sup> In this manner you shall eat it: with your belt fastened, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. And you shall eat it in haste. It is the LORD's Passover. <sup>12</sup> 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. <sup>13</sup> 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.

Moses goes on to relate God's instructions to him and Aaron and their relaying those instructions to the people. In order for God's people, whether Israelites or Egyptians, not to be affected by the killing of the first born, they had to believe what God said. They had to believe what God said about the coming judgment and what must be done and do exactly what He said. Those who did not follow the instructions simply either did not believe the judgment would actually happen or did not believe that careful attention to the instructions was required. So God made provision for His people that had to be appropriated by believing God in an obeying way.

## **The Start of the New (v.1-2)**

Moses is careful to note that the new year begins while they are still in Egypt (v.1) The Passover event and its celebration were the launch of a new age as the first week of the year. From then on, Israel would set its calendar by the Passover Celebration. The new year begins at Passover.

The Passover, as a type of the cross, then shows us that the death and resurrection of the Lamb launch the new age/creation while we are still in Egypt or the world. Do you see this? They participated in the Passover while still in Egypt. So, the people of God have experienced the redemptive work of God *while still in the world*. The new creation and all that it entails has already begun *while we are still in the flesh, in this fallen world, in what Egypt is type of*.

## **The Selection of the Lamb (v.3-4)**

Also, each household was to select a lamb *ACCORDING TO THE PEOPLE* (v.3-4). There is one lamb for each household. The point here is not to launch some “household” salvation but to show that the sacrifice was substitutionary and corporate. Households could join together to obey God by faith. But the lamb they sacrificed had to be enough for all in the household to eat.

The lamb was to be selected *ACCORDING TO ITS PURITY* (v.5). Here is the first detailed description in the Bible of the requirements of purity for the animal being sacrificed. It is to be without blemish. It is a male. It is a year old. It was selected and set aside from the 10<sup>th</sup> of the month until the 14<sup>th</sup> of the month.

Christ was sacrificed for His people. The act of sacrifice and the appropriation of the sacrifice were for those who believed. The application of the sacrifice was exactly as wide as the obedient action. Further, the sacrifice had to be certified as perfect. The Lord Jesus lived a holy life, publicly certified as blameless before God on numerous occasions.

## **The Sacrifice of the Lamb (v.6)**

God’s provision for His people was in the sacrifice of the selected lambs. But that sacrifice had to occur at the right time and in the right way. The lamb was to be slaughtered at sunset. Remember that the Jewish day ends and a new day begins at sunset, not at sunrise as we tend to think. So, the slaughter of the lambs at sunset is the ending of the old calendar, the old day, the old age and it is the beginning of the new calendar, the new day, the new age.

## **The Sharing of the Lamb (v. 7-11)**

The provision for God’s people is finally in the sharing of the lamb. First, it is used with its application to the doorposts and the lintel of the house’s main door (v.7). This is very precise instruction that is to be believed and followed carefully. If anyone followed all the instructions but decided that only putting the blood in the lintel was necessary, then their firstborn died. Every one who believed in the Lord and listened to His commands splashed warm, sacrificed lamb’s blood on the whole door frame.

The lamb is also shared in its eating (v.8-10). The Passover meal was very simple and very plain. The sacrificed lamb was to be roasted, that is, cooked over a fire.

It could not be boiled or cooked in any other way. It was to be cooked whole. It was to be eaten by all. It was all to be eaten by dawn with any remnants burned up. It was to be eaten with unleavened bread and with bitter herbs. Many of you have seen the reenactment of a Passover Seder. There have been so many traditions added to the Passover that were not included in the original instructions. This is the tendency of man; to encumber and to encrust the simple and plain instructions of God's Word with all sorts of additional man-made traditions.

The meal was to be eaten with their readiness (v.11). They were to be dressed for the road. They were to have their belongings packed. They were to have their shoes on, which would have been very unusual in their culture. They were to eat with their walking sticks and shepherd's staves in their hands. They were to eat in haste. Their participating in the sacrificial provision by God required them to be ready to go out of Egypt. Redemption is not only a provision to defend us from the wrath of God, but also it is a power to deliver us from the world.

### **The Striking of the First Born (v. 12-13)**

At midnight, God would move to strike down all the first born children in Egypt. As was common in their culture and deeply embedded in their religion, first born sons had special status and standing. The Pharaoh, even if he was not a first born in his family (as this Pharaoh was not), they were considered the first born of the gods. God thus completes His victorious assault on the Egyptian pantheon. His name and reputation are vindicated.<sup>7</sup>

But God has provided a way of safety, a way to avoid His wrath and the plague that is an expression of it. The blood of the sacrifice was splashed onto the doorway of the household. This blood has no magic or spiritual power in itself. It itself is not defending against the destroyer. In the Bible and specifically here, the blood is a sign. It declares that something has transpired. It announces that a death has taken place; a life has been poured out. The blood on the door post is the sign that the sacrificial lamb has been slain. God sees the sprinkled blood, knows the sacrifice has poured out its life, and He is satisfied.

This lesson here, and all the bloody sacrifices of Leviticus and Deuteronomy all say the same thing. Sprinkled (that is applied) blood is a sign that the sacrifice has been slain. It is the death of the sacrifice that will be effectual for salvation. Jesus' own shed blood and its application to us is a sign that the sacrifice has taken place. The sentiments often expressed in preaching and in Christian songs are helpful *only to the degree to which we understand this*. We are saved by the blood as shed, as poured out. That very pouring out is a sign that the sacrifice has been made. The blood pouring from Jesus spear riven side demonstrates that he has died. When we sing about the blood, we should be singing about the testimony to a death, an outpoured life, which has purchased our redemption.

---

<sup>7</sup> While the commentators often are very concerned about the justice or fairness of this, I am not going to interact with all their concerns. While getting the text right is important, being concerned that what is clearly in the text doesn't fit our sensibilities is simply unbelief. The point of the plagues is to cause people to bow to the one and only Sovereign God, who *is the God of the plagues*.

For Israel and all of God's people, Moses writes to drive home the lesson that animal sacrifices are not the saving reality. The sacrificial lamb takes the place of a first born. As when Abraham went up to Mt. Moriah to obey God's command to sacrifice his only son, the ram took the place of a first-born son, Isaac. Thus, through these two critical events and the narration of them, all believing Israel knows that sacrifices are a substitute. The sacrificial lamb is a substitute for them the offerer. The sacrificial lamb will one day be replaced by the Lamb of God, the only begotten, the first-born son of God.

## **The Memorial of the Passover Deliverance (12:14-20)**

This next section interweaves the material in such a way that I want to pick out and follow each separate theme as Israel is commanded to commemorate their great Passover deliverance.

<sup>14</sup> "This day shall be for you a memorial day, and you shall keep it as a feast to the LORD; throughout your generations, as a statute forever, you shall keep it as a feast. <sup>15</sup> Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall remove leaven out of your houses, for if anyone eats what is leavened, from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel. <sup>16</sup> On the first day you shall hold a holy assembly, and on the seventh day a holy assembly. No work shall be done on those days. But what everyone needs to eat, that alone may be prepared by you. <sup>17</sup> And you shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread, for on this very day I brought your hosts out of the land of Egypt. Therefore you shall observe this day, throughout your generations, as a statute forever. <sup>18</sup> In the first month, from the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread until the twenty-first day of the month at evening. <sup>19</sup> For seven days no leaven is to be found in your houses. If anyone eats what is leavened, that person will be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he is a sojourner or a native of the land. <sup>20</sup> You shall eat nothing leavened; in all your dwelling places you shall eat unleavened bread."

### **Its Agenda: a Memorial Celebration**

All through here God's people are reminded that this annual celebration, launching the New Year, is a memorial. It is done as a symbolic reenactment. It looks back to a one-time event. The Passover was a one-time, once-for all event in history. What they do is a memorial celebration, a feast. For one week, the house was prepared for the final feast by removing all leaven.

The memorial of the Passover culminates in the Feast of Unleavened bread. What does this mean? Is Moses just piecing together disjointed fragments and forgets his flow? No, not at all. The age that begins with the final Passover, the death of Christ, will consummate with the removal of all sin and a celebration feast. Paul associates the feast of unleavened bread with our progressive transformation in 1 Corinthians 5:8. And, it seems to me that we are living during the week of Passover. The feast of unleavened bread is also yet future. We will one day sit around the banqueting table and there will be no leaven, no sin. We will be the pure and holy people the death and resurrection of Jesus purchased us to be.

### **Its Activity: a Holy Meal**

The memorial celebration is a week of making things holy culminating in a holy meal. They sit down to a Passover meal at the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Later on, more specific instructions will be given in the Mosaic Law that will codify

the specifics of this celebration. For now, for them at this point, it was important for them to understand that their being redeemed was for the sake of holiness. Every time it was celebrated, God's delivering work and God's holy demands were being highlighted.

I cannot but note, in the dire decline of true gospel holiness in the church today that we have not understood this. I am not talking about legal holiness. I am talking about plain, grace, gospel holiness. The holiness of speaking right, of paying our debts, of caring for one another, of rearing our children in God's pleasing ways. I spoke to a pastor this week who told me he knows of a 600 member church in his community in Dayton where at least half the couples are shacking up, are living together not married and unchallenged. We are in desperate need of what Paul called for, the continual life celebration of our Passover Lamb through public and private godliness and holiness.

### **Its Aim: a Grateful Remembrance**

The aim of the Passover celebration was to remind and to instruct. It was to remind all of God's people of what their salvation cost and what they were redeemed from. It was also a teaching tool that was to be used to instruct the children as to what God's saving acts were and what they meant.

The Lord's Table is the New Covenant memorial. We do not celebrate the passing over of our sin, or the covering of our sin; we celebrate the full, final, and free payment for all our sin. It is a celebration by the church for those who have publicly professed Christ. It is a time to instruct our children in the gospel and in their need, having confessed Christ privately, to take this first step of obedience. Do you do this? Do you use the Lord's Table as instruction? What about after the serving of the table, as you sit with your family, asking "What do you think these things mean?" And in the answer give the gospel.

## **The Giving of the Divine Instructions (12:21-28)**

<sup>21</sup> Then Moses called all the elders of Israel and said to them, "Go and select lambs for yourselves according to your clans, and kill the Passover lamb. <sup>22</sup> Take a bunch of hyssop and dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and touch the lintel and the two doorposts with the blood that is in the basin. None of you shall go out of the door of his house until the morning. <sup>23</sup> For the LORD will pass through to strike the Egyptians, and when he sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the LORD will pass over the door and will not allow the destroyer to enter your houses to strike you. <sup>24</sup> You shall observe this rite as a statute for you and for your sons forever. <sup>25</sup> And when you come to the land that the LORD will give you, as he has promised, you shall keep this service. <sup>26</sup> And when your children say to you, 'What do you mean by this service?' <sup>27</sup> you shall say, 'It is the sacrifice of the LORD's Passover, for he passed over the houses of the people of Israel in Egypt, when he struck the Egyptians but spared our houses.'" And the people bowed their heads and worshiped.

<sup>28</sup> Then the people of Israel went and did so; as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron, so they did.

These verses are part of the pattern of how God instructs His people. He gives His Word to His preachers. They stand and preach to God's people. God's people respond in worship and work.

## **The Word in the Preaching to the People (v.21-27a)**

Moses as God's prophet calls together the elders and transmits God's instructions to them. He not only gives what God says, but also gives practical instruction that will later be enfolded into the Law. We will save the discussion the hyssop for then. He makes sure the elders understand the Word God has given so that they will faithfully discharge their responsibility to instruct the people. If Moses is not clear and the elders are not faithful, God's people will not know what is required.

Also notice that what the people learned and what they did year after year also was to be taught to their children. At the Chapel, we who serve in the Spiritual Formation Ministry with children are not here to substitute for you. You cannot delegate what you ought to be doing in the Bible teaching and spiritual instruction of your children to us. We are here to support and supplement, as able, to sustain you in *your responsibility to explain to your sons and daughters what these things mean.*

## **The Worship in the Bowing of the People (v.27b)**

Here is the Old Covenant work of the Word of God that is a shadow of the work of the gospel in the New Covenant. They hear of the awful wrath of God and the impending doom. Judgment is due to all. But God has provided a lamb. In the very same event we see the severity of wrath of God and the sweetness of the mercy of God. Our response ought to be bow and worship. Our response ought not to challenge God who would do such a terrifying thing as killing all the first born at midnight. We worship in holy fear and in joyful gratitude for grand illumination of His mercy against the backdrop of the darkness of His wrath.

## **The Work in the Obeying by the People (v.28)**

Hearing the Word must be followed by heeding the Word. Bowing in worship is how one hears the Word poised to heed the Word. When our hearts are in awe of God and the Word comes to us, then we will become and will do what the Word requires. The people of Israel went and did so. They did as the Lord had commanded through Moses and Aaron. This is emphasized for the sake of the first hearers and all hearers later. We are in grave danger when the Word we hear neither lands in a bowed heart nor on a will inclined to obey. But what grace is experienced by those who come to Word as the Israelites did here.

Christ our Passover Lamb was sacrificed for us (1 Corinthians 5:6-8). This is what **Conclusion**  
Paul wrote to the Corinthian church over their incomplete discipline of a willfully sinful and unrepentant member.

<sup>6</sup> Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? <sup>7</sup> Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. <sup>8</sup> Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

The Passover lamb pointed to and was fulfilled by Christ. He is our Passover lamb. He was slain for us. And we are celebrating in life the memorial of that



death both at the Lord's Table and in our walk. But this fact, this indicative, yields an imperative. We ought to live in an "unleavened" way. We ought to leave aside the old leaven of malice and evil. We ought to celebrate by living in sincerity and truth.

The Passover substituted lambs for first-born sons. At the cross, the first-born son was slain ending the need for lambs. I can put it no better than the following:

It is theologically significant that Jesus was crucified right at the time of the Passover feast (see John 13:1; 18:28). This helps us see the connection between the first Passover and the final Passover—the Passion of Christ. The day that Jesus made his triumphal entry into Jerusalem was the very day that the Passover lambs were driven into the city, and when Jesus celebrated the Last Supper with his disciples, he was celebrating the Passover (Matt. 26:17). He said, "This is my body.... This is my blood" (vv. 26–28). His disciples didn't understand it at the time, but Jesus was really saying, "The Passover is all about me. I am the sacrificial lamb."

Then Christ was crucified. It was late in the afternoon on the eve of Passover. At twilight, lambs would be sacrificed by every household, according to the Law of Moses. All over the city fathers were getting ready to make the offering, gathering their families together and saying, "God has provided a lamb for us." Over at the temple the high priest was also preparing a lamb to present as an atonement for Israel's sin. Then there was Jesus, hanging on the cross, with the sacrificial blood flowing from his hands and side. He was the Lamb of God taking away the sins of the world. [P. Ryken]<sup>8</sup>

What about you? In hearing these words this morning is your heart stirred to rise up and leave the world, to go away from your sin and turn to the One and True God? There is an awful wrath to come with unimaginable suffering in the eternal darkness of hell. But there is our Redeemer, our Passover Lamb, who invites you to believe the gospel, trusting in Christ and bowing to Him. Call on Him today.

At the Lord's Table, we celebrate the one-time substitutionary sacrifice of the Lamb of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a memorial where we together remember the price that was paid and the redemption that was provided. As we depart from the communion table, we talk with one another and with our sons and daughters to ask, "Do you understand all these things?" And we go out into the world to live without malice or evil and with a genuine faith and life marked and measured by truth.

---

<sup>8</sup>Philip Graham Ryken and R. Kent Hughes, *Exodus : Saved for God's Glory*, Includes Bibliographical References (P. [1165]-1202) and Indexes. (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 2005), 330.

At the Marriage Supper, the final celebration in the union of the bride and groom, as all God' people enter the Promised Land at last. Listen to the description of the feast on that day from Revelation 19:5-9 and be glad.

Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out,

Hallelujah!  
For the Lord our God  
the Almighty reigns.  
Let us rejoice and exult  
and give him the glory,  
for the marriage of the Lamb has come,  
and his Bride has made herself ready;  
it was granted her to clothe herself  
with fine linen, bright and pure"—  
for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are the true words of God." [ESV]