



God's Old Testament Gospel

TEXT: Exodus 11:1 - 13:16

Big Idea: The blood of the Lamb is our only hope.

STUDY

*** Before interacting with this guide, all leaders should study the referenced texts using the HEAR Method. It's also important to encourage your group members to read the text using the HEAR Method. ***

H: Highlight, or take note of, things in the passage that stick out to you as you read.

E: Explain what the passage means by asking simple questions of the text:

- **Why was this written?**
- **To whom was it originally written?**
- **How does it fit with the verses before and after it?**
- **Why did the Holy Spirit include this passage in the book?**
- **What is He intending to communicate through this text?**

A: Apply the text to your life. What does God want you to learn from this text?

R: Respond to God in prayer.



Text

Read the scripture below. Use this copy to make observations, ask questions, and ask how God might be challenging you to move in response to his word.

A Final Plague Threatened

11 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. 2 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.” 3 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.

4 So Moses said, “Thus says the Lord: ‘About midnight I will go out in the midst of Egypt, 5 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. 6 There shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there has never been, nor ever will be again. 7 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.’ 8 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. 9 Then the Lord said to Moses, “Pharaoh will not listen to you, that my wonders may be multiplied in the land of Egypt.”

10 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.



The Passover

12 The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, 2 “This month shall be for you the beginning of months. It shall be the first month of the year for you. 3 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. 4 And if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his nearest neighbor shall take according to the number of persons; according to what each can eat you shall make your count for the lamb. 5 Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male a year old. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats, 6 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.

7 “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. 8 They shall eat the flesh that night, roasted on the fire; with unleavened bread and bitter herbs they shall eat it. 9 Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted, its head with its legs and its inner parts. 10 And you shall let none of it remain until the morning; anything that remains until the morning you shall burn. 11 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. 12 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. 13 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.

14 “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. 15 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. 16 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. 17



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. 18 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. 19 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. 20 You shall eat nothing leavened; in all your dwelling places you shall eat unleavened bread.”

21 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. 22 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. 23 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. 24 You shall observe this rite as a statute for you and for your sons forever. 25 And when you come to the land that the Lord will give you, as he has promised, you shall keep this service. 26 And when your children say to you, ‘What do you mean by this service?’ 27 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.

28 Then the people of Israel went and did so; as the Lord had commanded Moses and Aaron, so they did.

The Tenth Plague: Death of the Firstborn

29 At midnight the Lord struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of the livestock. 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 someone was not dead. 31 Then he summoned Moses and Aaron by night and said, "Up, go out from among my people, both you and the people of Israel; and go, serve the Lord, as you have said. 32 Take your flocks and your herds, as you have said, and be gone, and bless me also!"

The Exodus

33 The Egyptians were urgent with the people to send them out of the land in haste. For they said, "We shall all be dead." 34 So the people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneading bowls being bound up in their cloaks on their shoulders. 35 The people of Israel had also done as Moses told them, for they had asked the Egyptians for silver and gold jewelry and for clothing. 36 And the Lord had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have what they asked. Thus they plundered the Egyptians.

37 And the people of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides women and children. 38 A mixed multitude also went up with them, and very much livestock, both flocks and herds. 39 And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough that they had brought out of Egypt, for it was not leavened, because they were thrust out of Egypt and could not wait, nor had they prepared any provisions for themselves.

40 The time that the people of Israel lived in Egypt was 430 years. 41 At the end of 430 years, on that very day, all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt. 42 It was a night of watching by the Lord, to bring them out of the land of Egypt; so this same night is a night of watching kept to the Lord by all the people of Israel throughout their generations.

Institution of the Passover



43 And the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "This is the statute of the Passover: no foreigner shall eat of it, 44 but every slave that is bought for money may eat of it after you have circumcised him. 45 No foreigner or hired worker may eat of it. 46 It shall be eaten in one house; you shall not take any of the flesh outside the house, and you shall not break any of its bones. 47 All the congregation of Israel shall keep it. 48 If a stranger shall sojourn with you and would keep the Passover to the Lord, let all his males be circumcised. Then he may come near and keep it; he shall be as a native of the land. But no uncircumcised person shall eat of it. 49 There shall be one law for the native and for the stranger who sojourns among you."

50 All the people of Israel did just as the Lord commanded Moses and Aaron. 51 And on that very day the Lord brought the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt by their hosts.

13 The Lord said to Moses, 2 "Consecrate to me all the firstborn. Whatever is the first to open the womb among the people of Israel, both of man and of beast, is mine."

The Feast of Unleavened Bread

3 Then Moses said to the people, "Remember this day in which you came out from Egypt, out of the house of slavery, for by a strong hand the Lord brought you out from this place. No leavened bread shall be eaten. 4 Today, in the month of Abib, you are going out. 5 And when the Lord brings you into the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, which he swore to your fathers to give you, a land flowing with milk and honey, you shall keep this service in this month. 6 Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a feast to the Lord. 7 Unleavened bread shall be eaten for seven days; no leavened bread shall be seen with you, and no leaven shall be seen with you in all your territory. 8 You shall tell your son on that day, 'It is because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt.' 9 And it shall be to you as a sign on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes, that the law of the Lord may be in your mouth. For with a strong hand the



Lord has brought you out of Egypt. 10 You shall therefore keep this statute at its appointed time from year to year.

11 “When the Lord brings you into the land of the Canaanites, as he swore to you and your fathers, and shall give it to you, 12 you shall set apart to the Lord all that first opens the womb. All the firstborn of your animals that are males shall be the Lord's. 13 Every firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb, or if you will not redeem it you shall break its neck. Every firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem. 14 And when in time to come your son asks you, ‘What does this mean?’ you shall say to him, ‘By a strong hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt, from the house of slavery. 15 For when Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the Lord killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of animals. Therefore I sacrifice to the Lord all the males that first open the womb, but all the firstborn of my sons I redeem.’ 16 It shall be as a mark on your hand or frontlets between your eyes, for by a strong hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt.”



Lesson

The Passover puts God and His glory on display in a way that few other biblical events do.

Consider:

The Righteous Judgment Of God

The tenth plague is a display of God's righteousness as he pours out his wrath and justice. We cannot forget that the people who suffered under the tenth plague were sinners, deserving of punishment, as we all are.

Through nine plagues, God had called out to anyone who would witness the disasters to turn to him. He had offered a chance to turn from sin and run toward rescue.

The chance for turning away was now over, God was about to execute judgment, and this judgment shows the extent of his righteousness.

He is so righteous that all sin must be punished. He is so righteous that no sinner can be spared. He is so righteous that no sin can be overlooked. He is so righteous that someone must pay for sin.

This is the reason for the tenth plague, to show that our God is a God of righteous judgment.

The Grace of God

We see more than just judgment in the tenth plague. We also see the grace of God.

God comes with a message for Israel, if you want to be spared judgment you will need the blood of a lamb.



This is a big deal. The people of Israel do not deserve such a gift. They were not worthy of such a rescue. Yet, God in his grace comes and offers an escape.

This is the God we serve, a God of wrath against sin, a God of righteous judgment, a God who offers sinners grace in the face of judgment.

The Sovereignty of God

The power of God is now without question after the 10th plague. God has defeated all Egyptian gods and left even the Pharaoh in grief.

The point is clear: There is one God. The Egyptian gods are weak in the face of a God who controls everything, even life and death.

The Plan of God

God shows his hand a little early here. The blood of the lamb is not just God's plan to deliver people in Exodus. God plans to use the blood of the lamb to deliver the people of God from sin too.

This first time, the lamb was literal.

The second time, the lamb of God was to be a man, a perfect man named Jesus.

This is why John was so excited to see Jesus in John 1. He shouted:

“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!

The Passover put on display for us a powerful, righteous, graceful God who has a plan to save in the Exodus and in Jesus. The Passover should teach us to worship!



Leader Guide

Summary

These plagues are drawing to an end. Even Pharaoh has had enough. Pharaoh tells Moses that if he ever comes before his throne again, he will have Moses killed.

Moses seems to get the picture so he speaks his peace and then leaves, but the final message he lives with Pharaoh is not a good one. God has one more plague. This one will be worse than all the others. This plague will be one of death and destruction. The Lord himself will visit Egypt and when he comes he will kill all of the firstborn sons.

This is a plague of unprecedented proportions. God had proved his supremacy thus far by the elements. Hail, the Nile, sickness, flies, etc.

This is different. God will attack the Egyptians personally. He will kill them. This is a plague of judgment.

God is executing judgment on Egypt. The Egyptians had killed the Israelites. The Egyptians had worshiped other Gods. The Egyptians had sinned. Now, the Egyptians would be judged.

It's important to note though, the punishment does not stop at just the Egyptians. God will come down and judge everyone! This is not a plague limited to the Egyptians. This plague would affect Israel too.

We may forget, but the Israelites were sinners in need of Judgment as well. They had oftentimes bought into the lies of the Egyptian gods. They had rejected God's prophet Moses when he came back into the land. The Israelites stood condemned as well.

Nevertheless, God does offer one hope of rescue. If the Israelites were to be spared judgment, they were to put the blood of a spotless lamb over their door post. The blood of the lamb would be payment for their sins and God would pass over their house.



The point is crystal clear: the blood of the lamb is the only hope of rescue.

What was true for Israel is even more true for us. We are sinners. We stand condemned. If we are to be redeemed we need the blood of a spotless lamb to cover our sin.

So, we thank God that John the Baptist saw Jesus and yelled, “Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world”

Commentary

Tyndale Old Testament Commentary

[11:1–3](#). Egyptian jewelry. It is clear from the start that this is to be the last plague: so from now on preparation for Israel’s departure will be made. Apparently this ‘spoiling of the Egyptians’ will not actually take effect till passover night ([12:35](#)).

2. *Jewelry*: the Hebrew word is as vague as English ‘things’. It takes on something of the meaning of ‘jewelry’ only because of the precious materials mentioned (*silver* and *gold*). To introduce the question of dishonesty is out of place. Egypt is glad to see the last of them ([12:33](#)), and gladly gives whatever is asked as the price of departure. Not until after the episode of the golden calf ([Exod. 33:6](#)) will it be ‘taboo’ for Israel’s men to wear such ornaments.

3. *Moses was very great*. Moses’ influence may have been because of the performance of these ‘signs’, or because of the memory of his royal upbringing. He himself is described in [Numbers 12:3](#) as ‘meek’ or ‘humble’: that is to say, without ambition for himself. It does not mean that he was not of great stature; indeed, by the New Testament rule, it proves it ([Luke 9:48](#)).

[11:4–10](#). Prediction of the last blow. The form of these words suggests that they were a final warning delivered to pharaoh, perhaps before the final breach recorded in [10:29](#). Chapter 12, on the other hand, contains the instructions given to Israel herself for keeping the passover.



4. *About midnight.* Passover was the only night festival known to Israel (cf. [Ps. 134:1](#)). For the thought, see [Daniel 5:30](#), where Belshazzar dies at night. ‘About’ in modern English suggests vagueness of time; but there is no vagueness in the Hebrew, so translate ‘at midnight’.

5. *All the first-born.* The Bible certainly stresses both the universality of this plague and its indiscriminate nature (‘duke’s son, cook’s son’, as the English proverb says). To sit ‘behind the two mill stones’ (so the Hebrew reads literally) is to do the work of the lowest woman slave in the household, grinding corn ([Isa. 47:2](#)). Is ‘all’ meant literally, or is it to be understood in a general sense here, as in [9:6](#) and elsewhere? Or should we translate Hebrew *bēkōr*, ‘first-born’, in a metaphorical sense as ‘the flower of the youth’ or ‘the cream of the land’? Normally, however, this would be expressed by some form of the different root *bāḥar*. It was some blow by which the very choicest of Egypt’s youth were suddenly laid low, including the heir to the throne himself (the first-born of pharaoh). Nothing less than this would explain pharaoh’s reaction. Perhaps God used some such plague as that by which he punished David ([2 Sam. 24](#)). At one and the same time, this too can be described as a pestilence and as the activity of the ‘angel of YHWH’. Egypt and Philistia were famous as regions where plague was endemic ([Exod. 15:26](#)). Both bubonic plague and poliomyelitis (the latter as attacking the young) have been suggested as possibilities.

6. *A great cry.* This is another motif of the book. Israel had ‘cried’ to YHWH for deliverance ([2:23](#)), they had ‘cried’ in vain to pharaoh in their anguish ([5:15](#)). Now it is the Egyptians who will ‘cry’ in anguish at God’s judgment.

7. *Not a dog shall growl:* the Hebrew has the obscure ‘sharpen its tongue’, perhaps implying the lolling tongue of a panting dog, or else the similarity between deep growls in the throat and the noise made by sharpening a blade on a stone wheel. Compare [Joshua 10:21](#), where the same phrase is used of men, not dogs. [neb](#) has the rather curious translation ‘not a dog’s tongue shall be so much as scratched’. However, though the exact meaning of the words may be still obscure, the general sense is plain: not the slightest harm will be done to Israel.

2. EXODUS TO SINAI ([12:1–18:27](#))



a. Passover and escape ([12:1–13:22](#))

[12:1–13](#). Preparation for the passover. This passage tells of the preparation for the passover, which must begin four days before the actual sacrifice, with the choice of the sacrificial victim; [12:21–27](#) will describe in detail some of the ritual to be used during the ceremony itself.

1. *In the land of Egypt*. The rest of Israel's law was given at Sinai, but it emphasized here that passover and the feast of unleavened bread were instituted in Egypt, before Sinai. Sometimes in recent years the question has been asked whether the passover was not itself the 'pilgrimage feast' which Moses had wanted to keep originally either at Mount Sinai or at 'three days' journey in the desert' ([3:18](#)), if these are indeed two separate destinations. Owing to pharaoh's intransigence (they say), Moses finally kept the feast in Egypt. Those who hold this view feel that the date (the spring moon) was already fixed, and that this accounts for the increasing urgency of Moses' demands for Israel's release. In their view, Moses feared that, unless they kept the festival, God might attack them with some plague ([5:3](#)). This is exactly what he does to the Egyptians, and would presumably have done to Israel had they not been 'covered' by the blood of the sacrifice ([12:13](#)). This is ingenious, but does not seem to accord altogether with biblical evidence. It also involves the view, held by some scholars, that passover was kept by Israel's ancestors long before the exodus, and only later associated with that event as a memorial (unless the desert festival, contemplated in [3:18](#), was to be something totally different from the passover—perhaps the covenant sacrifice at Sinai).

Israel possibly did have 'new moon sacrifices' long before Sinai, for, although they are commanded in the law of Moses ([Num. 28:11](#)), there is no suggestion that this is a new observance, and the custom was widespread in the ancient world. There is no theological objection to such a view: circumcision ([Gen. 17:10](#)) and apparently sabbath ([Gen. 2:3](#)) were also part of Israel's religious tradition long before the law. But, while there may well also have been regular sacrifice of a lamb at the full moon, Israel's 'passover' was a special instance and had a special significance (cf. verses [11–14](#)). The question of the origin of these Israelite festivals is just as irrelevant as is the question of the origin of circumcision, which certainly existed as a rite widely used for countless ages before Abraham. The real question is what this festival meant to Israel, and what historical act of God it commemorated in later days; and of this there is no doubt.



2. *The first month of the year.* The month is called here by its Canaanite name *'ābīb*, 'newly ripened corn' ([Exod. 13:4](#)) and later by the Babylonian name Nisan ([Neh. 2:1](#)). It corresponded to March–April of the Western calendar. Passover was thus both a spring festival and a new year festival, although there is no need to read into either of these feasts the innuendoes of some scholars of comparative religion. In the Bible, passover is a spring festival only because Israel actually escaped from Egypt in the spring ([Exod. 13:4](#)). It was therefore purely a matter of commemoration of a historical event. Exodus also states bluntly that the new year was henceforth counted from this month simply because the exodus (which took place then) was the beginning of Israel's life as a nation. Like all of Israel's festivals, its observance was thus firmly grounded in Israel's history and God's saving acts. [Exodus 23:16](#) and [34:22](#) probably preserve the memory of an earlier Semitic tradition by which the agricultural year ended (and therefore presumably began) in the autumn, i.e. October. If the 'dead' winter months were not counted at all, either autumn or spring could be considered as the beginning of the year: but this seems unlikely, although similar instances are known from other agricultural countries.

3. *All the congregation of Israel.* This is the first occurrence in the Pentateuch of what was to become a technical term, describing Israel in its religious sense (*'ēdā* occurs very frequently in this sense: Deuteronomy, with later books, prefers *qāhāl*) and which underlies the New Testament use of *ekklēsia*, 'church'. The word 'congregation' is not an abstraction: it implies the physical meeting together of Israel, usually for a religious purpose. *On the tenth day.* It is probable that the early Hebrews, like the Chinese, divided the month into three sections of ten days each, the first being 'entering' and the last 'departing'. The old English concept of 'waxing' and 'waning' moons is similar, but based on a twofold division of the month. The Day of Atonement fell likewise on the tenth of a month ([Lev. 23:26, 27](#)). This explanation seems preferable to the assumption here of any specific sacredness in the number ten. The evening of the fourteenth day (when the lamb was to be killed, verse 6) would thus be exactly halfway through the month, when presumably the moon would be full.

A lamb. The Hebrew *śeh* is quite a neutral word and should be translated 'head of (small) stock', applying equally to sheep and goats of any age. The Hebrews, like the Chinese, seem to have regarded any distinction between sheep and goats as a minor subdivision. Probably because of this, to 'separate the sheep from the goats' is proverbial of God's discernment in New Testament times ([Matt. 25:32](#)). Those who know the small black or brown sheep of Asia, with short curly fleeces, will appreciate the difficulty of distinguishing them, except by their tails.



Also the *seh* may be of any age: verse 5 says it is to be ‘son of a year’, which may mean ‘of the first year’, i.e. ‘born within the year’. So the Rabbis understood it at all events. Modern translators, with ‘one year old’, are probably pushing European ideas of chronology on to an Asian text. But, in either case, it is only this description of its age that shows us that the sacrifice is a ‘lamb’ and not a full-grown ‘sheep’. *For a household*. Passover was a domestic and family festival, and thus shows its early origin. It has here no temple, no meeting-tent, no altar and no priest: but representation, if not substitution, is clearly implied.

4. *Make your count*. In later days, the minimum ‘count’ of persons for eating one lamb was ten adults: but this figure was reached by artificial exegesis. In early days, it seems to have been a question either of appetite, or the size of the sheep, rather than of theology.

5. *A male a year old*. It was to be a young unblemished male, as usual in sacrifices, presumably as representing the perfection of the species. If it was already *a yearling* (*neb*), then it was fully grown as well.

6. *In the evening*: literally ‘between the two evenings’. Jewish scholars are not agreed as to the exact meaning. The phrase is also used of the time for the regular evening sacrifice ([Exod. 29:39](#)) and of the time for lighting the lamps in the meeting-tent ([Exod. 30:8](#)). The orthodox piety of Pharisaic Judaism understood the meaning as being between the time in the afternoon when the heat of the sun lessens (say 3 or 4 p.m.) and sunset. Other groups preferred the time between sunset and dark, or other similar explanations.

7. *The blood*. Passover was scarcely a sacrifice in the later sense of the word. It was not directly connected with sin, although it was ‘apotropaic’ in the sense of averting God’s ‘stroke’, and a blood ritual was therefore associated with it. The fact that there is a blood ritual is not remarkable: what is remarkable is that there is no association of priests with a rite of a type later strictly limited to them. Therefore it is clear that this festival arose before the establishment of ‘professional’ priesthood in Israel. As presumably in patriarchal times, the head of the family is to act as its priest. But, in spite of this patriarchal relic, the *doorposts and the lintel* suggest settled life, such as Israel had in Goshen. Although, strictly speaking, there is no thought of ‘atonement’ here, the rationale of the blood ritual is the same: it represents a life laid down ([Lev. 17:11](#)).



8, 9. *Roasted*: ‘barbecued’, roasted over an open fire in a pit. That the sheep was eaten at all shows that it was not thought of as a sin-offering ([Exod. 29:14](#)). The ‘roasting’ is probably another archaic feature of nomadic life (see [Hyatt](#), p. 26). It has also been suggested that roasting would deal with both blood and fat, forbidden to Israel ([Gen. 9:4](#); [Exod. 29:13](#)). Presumably the prohibition against eating it *raw* would either refer to earlier customs still, or perhaps to magical practices of the Canaanites. *Boiled* would represent more sophisticated later cooking methods ([1 Sam. 2:15](#)). Roasting the animal whole, with head and intestines, was also very archaic. In modern Jewish observance of passover, a shank of lamb can represent the whole beast. The accompanying *unleavened bread* (Australian ‘dampers’) will be considered below (see commentary on [12:14–20](#)). The *bitter herbs* (variety unspecified, so probably general: wild lettuce could be meant) were probably a primitive condiment, though later Jews saw them as symbolizing the bitterness of Israel’s bondage. The Evangelist may have seen in this the key to the bitter ‘myrrh’ mixed with Christ’s drink at the cross ([Mark 15:23](#)), especially since he was seen as the passover victim ([1 Cor. 5:7](#)).

10. *Let none of it remain*. As well as being ‘apotropaic’ in averting God’s stroke, the passover was also a communion meal. As such, it was to be eaten ceremonially in God’s presence: nothing might remain over, nor be taken away ([Exod. 23:18](#)). This was either to prevent profanation, or to discourage magical practices.

11. *In this manner*. Uniquely among Israel’s communion sacrifices, they are to eat it fully prepared for instant departure. Some scholars explain this as the usual custom of nomads: but that would not account for the *haste* literally, perhaps, ‘anxious haste’) with which they are to eat it (cf. [Isa. 52:12](#), where the ‘new exodus’ from the Babylonian captivity will not be in this ‘anxious haste’). This can be explained only in terms of the mingled dread and anticipation of God’s visitation on this first passover night.

It is YHWH’s passover. Probably the word *pesah*, ‘passover’, in itself referred primarily to the victim, and secondarily to the feast in which the victim was the central feature. Literally we should translate ‘it is a passover victim for YHWH’. The meaning of the word itself is explained in verse 13. Others, however, feel that the addition of ‘YHWH’ means that the word *pesah* could be used originally to describe a wider range of festivals; this feast however is peculiarly YHWH’s, and is so described.



12. *I will smite all the first-born.* ‘Smite’ usually means ‘kill’ in Hebrew, and here the context makes it clear. Rameses II had a very long reign, and Merneptah, who succeeded him, was not his eldest son. Perhaps then it was Merneptah’s elder brother who died on this night. As we shall see below (see commentary on [14:18](#)), there is no biblical reason to assume that a pharaoh died at the crossing of the Sea of Reeds.

All the gods of Egypt, like the Egyptians, will be the object of God’s acts of righteous judgment. This may refer to the way in which the plagues affected the Nile and the various animal symbols of the gods of the Egyptians, or it may refer to the defeat of the spiritual powers that stand behind these symbols. No doubt the Egyptians used to pray to their gods for the safety of their first-born.

13. *I will pass over you.* The cognate verb is used here to explain the noun that gives its name to the festival. The verb itself is in turn partially explained by the second half of the verse: no *plague* or ‘blow’ will fall on them. In [1 Kings 18:21](#) this verb means ‘to limp’, and the cognate adjective means ‘lame’ frequently in the Old Testament. Because of this, editors have made wild guesses that the original meaning was a ‘limping dance’. But this verse is the only explanation of the name of this festival given in the whole of the Old Testament (cf. what was said of the meaning of the YHWH, above) and must therefore be taken seriously. Whether it was correct etymology or a pun, *pesah* to Israel meant ‘a passing-over’ or ‘a leaping over’ and was applied to God’s act in history on this occasion, in sparing Israel.

[12:14–20](#). Preparation for unleavened bread. The connection between the redemption of the first-born and passover has been seen. The connection between passover and the feast of ‘unleavened bread’ is equally close, so that they are normally considered one festival, not two ([Exod. 23:15](#)) and apparently called together ‘unleavened bread’. Many scholars have seen this feast as originating in the settled agricultural life of Canaan, as they have seen passover originating in the pastoral life of Israel’s nomadic ancestors. They therefore see the final united festival as an amalgamation of the two, after settlement in Canaan. There is no need to remind the reader that this runs counter to biblical evidence. Earlier eating of ‘unleavened bread’ there may well have been, either in the desert (where ‘dampers’ are usually cooked and eaten) or in Canaan: but this would simply be the outer form of the festival. In Israel this feast, like all others, commemorated God’s saving acts, and had a historical not agricultural significance.



14. *This day*: that is, the evening of the 14th day (verse 18), remembering that the Hebrews counted from sunset to sunset (see [neb](#), ‘from the evening which begins the fourteenth day’). This marked also the beginning of the ‘week’ of unleavened bread. We have seen from verse 8 above that the eating of ‘unleavened bread’ formed a part of the passover ritual itself: this eating is now extended to cover the following week.

15. *Seven days* is the holy number, symbolizing completeness. It was therefore quite common for sacred periods to last for a week. *Leaven* seems to be a biblical symbol of corruption, as well as of pervasive spread (by fermentation), though the equations are not specifically made until the New Testament ([Matt. 16:6](#); [1 Cor. 5:6–8](#)). Another symbol was fermentation of wine, which presumably accounts for its avoidance by Nazirites ([Amos 2:12](#)) and Rechabites ([Jer. 35:6](#)), unless this is a pure archaism, dating from desert days, when the vine was unknown. Usually the ‘leaven’ was a pinch of the old fermented dough, kept beside the oven to ‘raise’ a new batch of bread by mixture with new dough. Some scholars have seen this rule as a hygienic principle, the starting of the process again from zero once a year, and the scraping out of the old kneading troughs, which, if made of wood, must have become stale and offensive, if not dangerous to health. Others have seen it as a nomad’s need to bake such unleavened ‘biscuits’ in large numbers before a desert march, rather like the ‘ship’s biscuits’ of a later age of travellers. Today such ‘unleavened bread’ may be bought in packets in any Jewish shop at passover time (usually called ‘Matzos’ in English). But the biblical explanation is simple: Israel left in such haste that their dough had no time to rise. Of course, the later feast was a memorial of this historical happening, not an exact copy of the happening itself. For instance, the Israelites, in hurried exodus, could not possibly have observed the virtual ‘sabbath’ on the first or seventh day (verse 16).

Cut off from Israel refers to the expulsion from the physical community of God’s people, which might well be fatal if, in the desert, a man were driven out of Israel’s camp. In itself, it is not necessarily a death penalty, but there may be an accompanying expectation of God’s judgment. The attitude of the Essene community towards offenders, as depicted in the Dead Sea scrolls, is exactly the same, involving physical expulsion. For the early Christian attitude, see [1 Corinthians 4:4, 5](#).

16. *What every one must eat*. This ‘sabbath’, with which the feast of unleavened bread begins and ends, is not as sacred as weekly sabbath, or atonement day. Cooking may still be done, unlike stricter ‘sabbaths’.



19. *A sojourner or a native.* This, like the moral law, was as binding on ‘resident alien’ as true-born Israelite. As the price of their settlement, aliens were expected to keep the law of the land, while they were never compelled to worship YHWH. This is an important theological principle.

20. *Nothing leavened.* In later Judaism, the hunt for leaven all through the house has become a symbolic ritual. Here it is simply a practical exclusion.

12:21–28. Ritual of the passover. This adds a few details not included in the account above, but in the main it is repetition.

22. *Hyssop:* the herb ‘marjoram’, by ancient tradition, although this will hardly suit the reference in [John 19:29](#). Its use is purely utilitarian: it is a common Palestinian herb which, when fastened in a bunch, would make a good sprinkler. Perhaps nomads already used it for sprinkling or dusting their tents. It was used for purificatory rites under the law (see [Num. 19:6](#)). Some, however, see another reason for its use as being the strongly aromatic nature of the herb. *Basin.* Most modern commentators translate thus, rather than ‘threshold’, which would not make such good sense (unless the lamb has been slaughtered on the threshold, but, if so, there has been no reference to this). The Hebrew word *sap* has both meanings: [lxx](#) supports ‘threshold’, but the Syriac prefers ‘basin’.

None of you shall go out. The Israelites must not leave the protection of the blood till morning, just as the fugitive must not leave the ‘refuge-city’ ([Num. 35:28](#)). This detail must have been intended to be part of the later, not the contemporary, ritual: for during passover night Israel left their houses and fled from Egypt, although admittedly it was after God’s ‘stroke’ had fallen.

23. *The destroyer:* i.e. the destroying angel sent by God, or else the angel of death (cf. David’s vision in [2 Sam. 24](#)). Israel knows no dualism; this ‘destroyer’ is no demonic power uncontrolled by God. Death is part of his judgment on Egypt, as death is the universal judgment on sin ([Gen. 2:17](#)).

26. *When your children say.* This question has nowadays become a deliberate and conscious part of the passover ritual: but it does not follow (with some scholars) that therefore the whole story was written and the ritual composed to answer a typical child’s question. The child could only question the meaning of a ritual that was already in existence: otherwise, there would be



nothing to question. It does not need a very deep knowledge of child psychology to recognize that, given any such symbolic ritual, children's questions are inevitable.

27. *You shall say.* Many scholars today see the passover, and the historical recital which accompanies and enshrines it, as the core of the book of Exodus, and indeed of the whole Pentateuch. Nobody would deny that the deliverance of Israel from Egypt is central to the Torah. However, in the action of the book, the passover is certainly not the only climax. Passover itself is not the redemption, but only the dawn of redemption. Either the crossing of the Red Sea or the making of the covenant at Sinai might justly be seen as the true climax of Exodus. Nevertheless, as passover was one of the three great festivals to be observed at the central sanctuary ([Exod. 23:14](#)), it is possible that the observance of the festival was a powerful aid to the preservation of the traditions of Israel's deliverance from Egypt, and an opportunity for proclamation of the saving acts of God.

[12:29–51](#). The midnight exodus. This passage describes the actual happening of the first passover night, already foreshadowed. It also includes the reason for observance of 'unleavened bread', various statistics and further ritual regulations about the passover.

29. *The captive who was in the dungeon:* literally, the 'pit-house'. Pits were a common prison. Here the opposite pole to pharaoh is not the 'mill girl' ([11:5](#)), but the prisoner of war in the dungeon. It may have been that the story of Joseph was in the narrator's mind ([Gen. 37:24](#)).

31. *Go forth.* When it is now too late to save pharaoh from judgment, there comes the full permission awaited so long in vain. *As you have said* must include women, children, flocks, herds, and journey to the desert. The next verse amplifies this.

32. *Bless me also!* [Driver](#) sees this as referring to the coming festival. Surely, however, the desire is for a farewell blessing, instead of the curse which has been clinging to Egypt. In the Bible 'curse' and 'bless' are used primarily with reference to the practical results which they produce.

34. *The people took their dough before it was leavened.* It had not yet 'risen', as a housewife would say. If leaven was in it, it would of course continue to ferment; but not if wrapped up in wet cloth where no air could get to it, as here. The thought seems to be that they had not as yet added the pinch of old dough to it.



36. *Thus they despoiled the Egyptians* describes the practical result. They left Egypt like a victorious army, loaded with enemy spoils (see verse 41 for the army metaphor again). The very wording is designed to recall the promise of 3:22 (see especially the last clause). Exodus is full of such internal echoes.

37. *Succoth*: probably Egyptian *tkw*, which is just a transliteration of what is a Semitic name meaning ‘cattle sheds’ (cf. Gen. 33:17, not of course the same place). It seems to be at or near the ruin Tell el-Maskhuta, near Lake Timsah, at the eastern end of the Wadi Tumilat. The Israelites would then have marched the length of Goshen eastwards, if identifications are correct. *Six hundred thousand*. Numbers 11:21 gives the same figure, which seems very high, as it would imply a total of at least two or three million with women and children. Some modern scholars understand these figures as being those of the census of David’s day (2 Sam. 24) or later, when they would be quite possible, but where we already have a completely different set of figures given in the text. We may assume, if we like, that the figures have been wrongly preserved in the manuscripts (perhaps in earlier days having been written in cipher, not in full), or we may follow Petrie in his belief that ‘*elep*, ‘thousand’, really meant ‘clan’ in early days. In either case, we really have no idea of the exact number involved. It was great enough to terrify the Moabites (Num. 22:3), yet small enough to be based on the oases around Kadesh-barnea (Deut. 1:46). No theological point depends on the exact numbers, and so the question is unimportant. Whether there were six thousand or six hundred thousand, their deliverance was a miracle. By the time they reached Canaan they were certainly a sizable horde (to use the historian’s term), to judge from the archaeological impact on Canaanite civilization.

38. *A mixed multitude*. The Hebrew says ‘swarm’, from the same root as that used in 8:21 to describe the plague of gadflies. These people would either be the result of intermarriage, or else kindred Semitic groups who seized the opportunity to escape. Numbers 11:4 uses a different derogatory word to describe the same people. On various occasions in the Pentateuch (as in this instance from Numbers) this group is seen as the occasion of various sins within Israel. If they have no real roots in Israel’s religious traditions, this would not be surprising.

41. *On that very day* may not mean ‘430 years to the day’. It may only stress the end of the period, and the reality of the exodus on that particular day. Alternatively it might mean ‘on the very day of the festival’ which had just taken place. The length of Israel’s stay in Egypt has already been discussed; possibilities range from 430 years (as here) through 400 years (Gen. 15:13) to 215 years (lxx and Syriac, which make the 430 years cover the patriarchal as well as



the Egyptian period).¹ The ‘four generations’ of [Genesis 15:16](#) is probably only a rough equivalent of 400 years. Again, the exact length of the stay is immaterial: what is important is that God delivered Israel at the end of it. That the above figures all remain open possibilities shows how little stress Israel laid on the actual number: if we wish to harmonize, we may put it as ‘four generations’, reckoned as of different lengths. (For discussion, see [Hyatt ad loc.](#), and also in his Introduction.)

42. *A night of watching.* At once a play on words and an attempt to explain why passover was uniquely a night festival. Paraphrase as ‘it is a watchnight service, for YHWH watched that night ...’

43. *No foreigner.* No ‘stranger’s son’ can join in the passover meal, nor can the hired servant. But a *gēr*, ‘protected resident alien’, may eat the passover, if he and all his are circumcised (verse 48). A slave born in the house would naturally be circumcised, and thus eligible. Even a slave ‘bought for money’ may eat it if circumcised, because, as a possession, he is part of the family. This at one and the same time reiterates the essential ‘family’ nature of the passover, and is part of the Israelite concept of ‘symbiosis’, which allowed a lamb from a man’s own flock to represent him as a sacrifice, and also demanded the stoning of his household, slaves and animals, if he himself had sinned ([Josh. 7:24, 25](#)).

46. *In one house.* [Driver](#), perhaps rightly, sees the three regulations of this verse as emphasizing the unity of the passover. One lamb is to be eaten in one house, and no bone is to be broken (presumably to prevent part of the lamb being carried out). [John 19:36](#) sees this last as fulfilled at the cross: the same unity aspect is stressed in [John 17:11](#).

[13:1–16](#). Consecration of the first-born. In this passage, verses [1–2](#) and [11–16](#) deal directly with the question of the consecration of the first-born to God. Verses [3–10](#) appear at first sight to be unconnected, but closer examination will show the link with the ‘first-born’ theme. They deal with the feast of unleavened bread, which is virtually the same as the passover. This in turn is linked in thought with the death of Egypt’s first-born and the preservation of Israel’s first-born sons. There is a possible further link, mentioned below.

2. *Consecrate* could mean either ‘sacrifice’ or merely ‘consider as belonging to God’. Instances of both meanings could be found in the Pentateuch, although not all referring to humans. The ‘first-born’ is explained here as the ‘womb-opener’, which is a technical word:



when so defined, ‘first-born’ certainly cannot be translated ‘flower’ or ‘cream’ of the population, as suggested above (see commentary on [11:5](#)).

3. *YHWH brought you out.* This associates the feast of the unleavened bread with the deliverance from Egypt. Not only so but (verse 8), like passover, it is to be associated with instruction given by father to son, presumably the first-born son. As he is the one peculiarly concerned, there is a double link with the context.

9. *A sign on your hand.* Later Jews interpreted this, like the phrase *a memorial between your eyes*, quite literally, as applied to the law of Moses. They wrote short sections of the law and bound them with thongs on the arm and forehead (the so-called phylacteries). But the very fact that language like this can be used of the feast of unleavened bread shows it to be pure metaphor. Over-literalism has always been one danger of the Christian, as of the Jewish, church.

12. *That are males.* Only the male first-born animals are involved in the law as to the offering of the first-born. Usually males alone were eligible for sacrifice on the altar. For *set apart* translate ‘make them pass over’ (i.e. by fire) and understand the meaning as ‘offer up as a whole burnt offering.’² This is the sinister phrase which is used in [2 Kings 16:3](#) of Ahaz sacrificing his own son ‘to Molech’, or ‘to the King’ or ‘as a burnt offering’, whatever the phrase may mean in detail. In Canaan this might be done to first-born sons: in Israel it might only be done to first-born animals, sacrificed to YHWH.

13. *Redeem.* The above is the basic principle, but it is modified in two important ways. The offspring of beasts that are ceremonially unclean cannot be sacrificed to God, and the offspring of a human being must not be so sacrificed. The latter had been made clear to Israel’s ancestors long before ([Gen. 22](#)). The donkey is mentioned as being the one unclean beast that was both common and domestic in Israel: thus it was a recurring problem. Pigs were an object of sacrifice elsewhere, but were regarded as ‘unclean’ in Israel, and so presumably not kept, as among Muslims, while dogs were mere scavengers, like kites and ravens. The donkey appears to have been a sacrificial animal in Amorite culture (e.g. Mari); so that there could also have been a religious reason for its exclusion from YHWH’s altars. In extreme emergency, as [2 Kings 6:25](#) shows in time of siege, donkey meat was eaten and there seem to be references to donkey’s milk in places ([Gen. 49:12](#)). If this was never drunk, it is hard to see why such large herds of she-asses were kept, unless for breeding purposes ([Job 1:3](#)). Perhaps the odour of the milk and meat was considered offensive; perhaps it was because of the sacred nature of the beast in other cultures;



or perhaps because of the symbolism of the ass in fertility cults. Though such an animal could not be sacrificed, it still must be ‘devoted’ to God by being destroyed, unless it is redeemed by a sheep, which might be sacrificed in its place. The verb *pādā*, ‘redeem’, is used, either of the donkey foal which may be redeemed by the substitution of another victim, or of the baby boy, who must be redeemed. *Pādā* seems to mean ‘to buy back for a price’: [Deuteronomy 9:26](#) shows its application God’s redemption of Israel from Egypt.

15. *The first-born of cattle.* Israel’s ‘devotion’ of first-born animals to YHWH is seen as analogous to the death of the first-born (animal and human) in Egypt. Likewise the ‘redemption’ of the first-born son is seen as the memorial of Israel’s ‘redemption’ from Egypt. Like all of Israel’s religious customs, it is interwoven with the history of salvation: henceforth, it will commemorate a historical event. In origin, no doubt, the offering of the first-born to God was the equivalent of the offering of any other ‘first-fruits’ ([Exod. 23:19](#)). This latter harmless custom was always allowed, and even enjoined, in Israel. Perhaps the idea was similar to that which seems to have underlain the offering of the ‘tithe’: the whole is consecrated to God by the offering of the part.

All the first-born of my sons I redeem. The sacrifice of first-born sons as burnt offerings to God ceased to be after the time of Abraham (if it had ever existed among Israel’s ancestors: archaeology can prove the existence of the custom only in Canaan). That is clearly the point of [Genesis 22](#), with the substitution of the ram for Isaac. Henceforth, if child-sacrifice occurred in Israel, as at times it certainly did, it was due to ignorance (as in the case of Jephthah, [Judg. 11:39](#)) or wilful apostasy (as in the case of Ahaz, [2 Kgs 16:3](#)). For the rest, [Numbers 3:11–13](#) says that YHWH chose the Levites for himself in place of all Israel’s first-born: they represent all the first-born of Israel, as a lamb might represent one particular first-born son.



Chapter 11

Pharaoh had told Moses to get out of his presence (ch. 10:28), and Moses had promised this should be the last time he would trouble him, yet he resolves to say out what he had to say, before he left him; accordingly, we have in this chapter, I. The instructions God had given to Moses, which he was now to pursue (v. 1, 2), together with the interest Israel and Moses had in the esteem of the Egyptians (v. 3). II. The last message Moses delivered to Pharaoh, concerning the death of the firstborn (v. 4–8). III. A repetition of the prediction of Pharaoh’s hardening his heart (v. 9), and the event answering to it (v. 10).

Verses 1–3

Here is, I. The high favour Moses and Israel were in with God. 1. Moses was a favourite of Heaven, for God will not hide from him the thing he will do. God not only makes him his messenger to deliver his errands, but communicates to him his purpose (as the man of his counsel) that he would bring one plague more, and but one, upon Pharaoh, by which he would complete the deliverance of Israel, v. 1. Moses longed to see an end of this dreadful work, to see Egypt no more plagued and Israel no more oppressed: “Well,” says God, “now it is near an end; the warfare shall shortly be accomplished, the point gained; Pharaoh shall be forced to own himself conquered, and to give up the cause.” After all the rest of the plagues, God says, *I will bring one more*. Thus, after all the judgments executed upon sinners in this world, still there is one more reserved to be brought on them in the other world, which will completely humble those whom nothing else would humble. 2. The Israelites were favourites of Heaven; for God himself espouses their injured cause, and takes care to see them paid for all their pains in serving the Egyptians. This was the last day of their servitude; they were about to go away, and their masters, who had abused them in their work, would not have defrauded them of their wages, and have sent them away empty; while the poor Israelites were so fond of liberty that they would be satisfied with that, without pay, and would rejoice to get that upon any terms: but he that *executeth righteousness and judgment for the oppressed* provided that the labourers should not lose their hire, and ordered them to demand it now at their departure (v. 2), *in jewels of silver and jewels of gold*, to prepare for which God, by the plagues, had now made the Egyptians as willing to part with them upon any terms as, before, the Egyptians, by their severities, had made them willing to go upon any terms. Though the patient Israelites were content to lose their wages, yet God would not let them go without them. Note, One way or other, God will give redress to the



injured, who in a humble silence commit their cause to him; and he will see to it that none be losers at last by their patient suffering any more than by their services.

II. The high favour Moses and Israel were in with the Egyptians, v. [3](#). 1. Even the people that has been hated and despised now came to be respected; the wonders wrought on their behalf put an honour upon them and made them considerable. How great do they become for whom God thus fights! Thus *the Lord gave them favour* in the sight of the Egyptians, by making it appear how much he favoured them: he also changed the spirit of the Egyptians towards them, and made them to be pitied of their oppressors, [Ps. 106:46](#). 2. *The man Moses was very great*. How could it be otherwise when they saw what power he was clothed with, and what wonders were wrought by his hand? Thus the apostles, though otherwise despicable men, came to be magnified, [Acts 5:13](#). Those that honour God he will honour; and with respect to those that approve themselves faithful to him, how meanly soever they may pass through this world, there is a day coming when they will look great, very great, in the eyes of all the world, even theirs who now look upon them with the utmost contempt. Observe, Though Pharaoh hated Moses, there were those of Pharaoh's servants that respected him. Thus in Caesar's household, even Nero's, there were some that had an esteem for blessed Paul, [Phil. 1:13](#).

Verses [4–10](#)

Warning is here given to Pharaoh of the last and conquering plague which was now to be inflicted. This was the *death of all the first-born in Egypt* at once, which had been first threatened (ch. [4:23](#), *I will slay thy son, thy first-born*), but is last executed; less judgments were tried, which, if they had done the work would have prevented this. See how slow God is to wrath, and how willing to be met with in the way of his judgments, and to have his anger turned away, and particularly how precious the lives of men are in his eyes: if the death of their cattle had humbled and reformed them, their children would have been spared; but, if men will not improve the gradual advances of divine judgments, they must thank themselves if they find, in the issue, that the worst was reserved for the last. 1. The plague itself is here particularly foretold, v. [4–6](#). The time is fixed—about midnight, the very next midnight, the dead time of the night; when they were all asleep, all their first-born should sleep the sleep of death, not silently and insensibly, so as not to be discovered till morning, but so as to rouse the families at midnight to stand by and see them die. The extent of this plague is described, v. [5](#). The prince that was to succeed in the throne was not too high to be reached by it, nor were the slaves at the mill too low



to be taken notice of. Moses and Aaron were not ordered to summon this plague; no *I will go out, saith the Lord*, v. 4. *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*; what is hell but this? 2. The special protection which the children of Israel should be under, and the manifest difference that should be put between them and the Egyptians. While angels drew their swords against the Egyptians, there should not so much as a dog bark at any of the children of Israel, v. 7. An earnest was hereby given of the difference which shall be put in the great day between God's people and his enemies: did men know what a difference God puts, and will put to eternity, between those that serve him and those that serve him not, religion would not seem to them such an indifferent thing as they make it, nor would they act in it with so much indifference as they do. 3. The humble submission which Pharaoh's servants should make to Moses, and how submissively they should request him to go (v. 8): *They shall come down, and bow themselves*. Note, The proud enemies of God and his Israel shall be made to fall under at last ([Rev. 3:9](#)), and shall be found liars to them, [Deu. 33:29](#). When Moses had thus delivered his message, it is said, *He went out from Pharaoh in a great anger*, though he was the meekest of all the men of the earth. Probably he expected that the very threatening of the death of the firstborn would have induced Pharaoh to comply, especially as Pharaoh had complied so far already, and had seen how exactly all Moses's predictions hitherto were fulfilled. But it had not that effect; his proud heart would not yield, no, not to save all the firstborn of his kingdom: no marvel that men are not deterred from vicious courses by the prospects given them of eternal misery in the other world, when the imminent peril they run of the loss of all that is dear to them in this world will not frighten them. Moses, hereupon, was provoked to a holy indignation, being grieved (as our Saviour afterwards) for the *hardness of his heart*, [Mk. 3:5](#). Note, It is a great vexation to the spirits of good ministers to see people deaf to all the fair warnings given them, and running headlong upon ruin, notwithstanding all the kind methods taken to prevent it. Thus Ezekiel went in *the bitterness of his spirit* ([Eze. 3:14](#)), because God had told him that the house of Israel would not hearken to him, v. 7. To be angry at nothing but sin is the way not to sin in anger. Moses, having thus adverted to the disturbance which Pharaoh's obstinacy gave him, (1.) Reflects upon the previous notice God had given him of this (v. 9): *The Lord said unto Moses, Pharaoh shall not hearken to you*. The scripture has foretold the incredulity of those who should hear the gospel, that it might not be a surprise nor stumbling-block to us, [Jn. 12:37, 38](#); [Rom. 10:16](#). Let us think never the worse of the gospel of Christ for the slights men generally put upon it, for we were told before what cold entertainment it would meet with. (2.) He recapitulates all he had said before to this purport (v. 10), that Moses did all these wonders, as they are here related, before Pharaoh (he himself was an eye-witness of them), and yet he could not prevail, which was a



certain sign that God himself had, in a way of righteous judgment, hardened his heart. Thus the Jews' rejection of the gospel of Christ was so gross an absurdity that it might easily be inferred from it that *God had given them the spirit of slumber*, [Rom. 11:8](#).

Chapter 12

This chapter gives an account of one of the most memorable ordinances, and one of the most memorable providences, of all that are recorded in the Old Testament. I. Not one of all the ordinances of the Jewish church was more eminent than that of the passover, nor is any one more frequently mentioned in the New Testament; and we have here an account of the institution to it. The ordinance consisted of three parts:—1. The killing and eating of the paschal lamb (v. [1–6](#), [8–11](#)). 2. The sprinkling of the blood upon the door-posts, spoken of as a distinct thing ([Heb. 11:28](#)), and peculiar to this first passover (v. [7](#)), with the reason for it (v. [13](#)). 3. The feast of unleavened bread for seven days following; this points rather at what was to be done afterwards, in the observance of this ordinance (v. [14–20](#)). This institution is communicated to the people, and they are instructed in the observance, (1.) Of this first passover (v. [21–23](#)). (2.) Of the after passovers (v. [24–27](#)). And the Israelites' obedience to these orders (v. [28](#)). II. Not one of all the providences of God concerning the Jewish church was more illustrious, or is more frequently mentioned, than the deliverance of the children of Israel out of Egypt. 1. The firstborn of the Egyptians are slain (v. [29](#), [30](#)). 2. Orders are given immediately for their discharge (v. [31–33](#)). 3. They begin their march. (1.) Loaded with their own effects (v. [34](#)). (2.) Enriched with the spoils of Egypt (v. [35](#), [36](#)). (3.) Attended with a mixed multitude (v. [37](#), [38](#)). (4.) Put to their shifts for present supply (v. [39](#)). The event is dated (v. [40–42](#)). Lastly, A recapitulation in the close, [1.] Of this memorable ordinance, with some additions (v. [43–49](#)). [2.] Of this memorable providence (v. [50](#), [51](#)).

Verses [1–20](#)

Moses and Aaron here *receive of the Lord* what they were afterwards to *deliver to the people* concerning the ordinance of the passover, to which is prefixed an order for a new style to be observed in their months (v. [1](#), [2](#)): *This shall be to you the beginning of months*. They had hitherto begun their year from the middle of September, but henceforward they were to begin it from the middle of March, at least in all their ecclesiastical computations. Note, It is good to



begin the day, and begin the year, and especially to begin our lives, with God. This new calculation began the year with the spring, which *reneweth the face of the earth*, and was used as a figure of the coming of Christ, [Cant. 2:11, 12](#). We may suppose that, while Moses was bringing the ten plagues upon the Egyptians, he was directing the Israelites to prepare for their departure at an hour's warning. Probably he had by degrees brought them near together from their dispersions, for they are here called *the congregation of Israel* (v. 3), and to them as a congregation orders are here sent. Their amazement and hurry, it is easy to suppose, were great; yet now they must apply themselves to the observance of a sacred rite, to the honour of God. Note, When our heads are fullest of care, and our hands of business, yet we must not forget our religion, nor suffer ourselves to be indisposed for acts of devotion.

I. God appointed that on the night wherein they were to go out of Egypt they should, in each of their families, *kill a lamb*, or that two or three families, if they were small, should join for a lamb. The lamb was to be got ready four days before and that afternoon they were to *kill it* (v. 6) as a sacrifice; not strictly, for it was not offered *upon the altar*, but as a religious ceremony, acknowledging God's goodness to them, not only in preserving them from, but in delivering them by, the plagues inflicted on the Egyptians. See the antiquity of family-religion; and see the convenience of the joining of small families together for religious worship, that it may be made the more solemn.

II. The lamb so slain they were to eat, roasted (we may suppose, in its several quarters), with unleavened bread and bitter herbs, because they were to eat it *in haste* (v. 11), and to leave none of it until the morning; for God would have them to depend upon him for their daily bread, and not to take thought for the morrow. He that led them would feed them.

III. Before they ate the flesh of the lamb, they were to sprinkle the blood upon the doorposts, v. 7. By this their houses were to be distinguished from the houses of the Egyptians, and so their first-born secured from the sword of the destroying angel, v. 12, 13. Dreadful work was to be made this night in Egypt; all the first-born both of man and beast were to be slain, and judgment executed upon the gods of Egypt. Moses does not mention the fulfillment, in this chapter, yet he speaks of it [Num. 33:4](#). It is very probable that the idols which the Egyptians worshipped were destroyed, those of metal melted, those of wood consumed, and those of stone broken to pieces, whence Jethro infers (ch. 18:11), *The Lord is greater than all gods*. The same angel that destroyed their first-born demolished their idols, which were no less dear to them. For the protection of Israel from this plague they were ordered to sprinkle the blood of the lamb upon the



door-posts, their doing which would be accepted as an instance of their faith in the divine warnings and their obedience to the divine precepts. Note, 1. If in times of common calamity God will secure his own people, and set a mark upon them; they shall be hidden either in heaven or under heaven, preserved either from the stroke of judgments or at least from the sting of them. 2. The blood of sprinkling is the saint's security in times of common calamity; it is this that marks them for God, pacifies conscience, and gives them boldness of access to the throne of grace, and so becomes a wall of protection round them and a wall of partition between them and the children of this world.

IV. This was to be annually observed as a feast of the Lord in their generations, to which the *feast of unleavened bread* was annexed, during which, for seven days, they were to eat no bread but what was unleavened, in remembrance of their being confined to such bread, of necessity, for many days after they came out of Egypt, v. 14–20. The appointment is inculcated for their better direction, and that they might not mistake concerning it, and to awaken those who perhaps in Egypt had grown generally very stupid and careless in the matters of religion to a diligent observance of the institution. Now, without doubt, there was much of the gospel in this ordinance; it is often referred to in the New Testament, and, in it, to us is *the gospel preached*, and *not to them only*, who *could not stedfastly look to the end of these things*, Heb. 4:2; 2 Co. 3:13.

1. The paschal lamb was typical. Christ is *our Passover*, 1 Co. 5:7. (1.) It was to be a *lamb*; and Christ is *the Lamb of God* (Jn. 1:29), often in the Revelation called the *Lamb*, meek and innocent as a lamb, dumb before the shearers, before the butchers. (2.) It was to be a *male of the first year* (v. 5), in its prime; Christ offered up himself in the midst of his days, not in infancy with the babes of Bethlehem. It denotes the strength and sufficiency of the Lord Jesus, on whom our help was laid. (3.) It was to be *without blemish* (v. 5), denoting the purity of the Lord Jesus, a *Lamb without spot*, 1 Pt. 1:19. The judge that condemned him (as if his trial were only like the scrutiny that was made concerning the sacrifices, whether they were without blemish or no) pronounced him innocent. (4.) It was to be set apart four days before (v. 3, 6), denoting the designation of the Lord Jesus to be a Saviour, both in the purpose and in the promise. It is very observable that as Christ was crucified at the passover, so he solemnly entered into Jerusalem four days before, the very day that the paschal lamb was set apart. (5.) It was to be *slain*, and *roasted with fire* (v. 6–9), denoting the exquisite sufferings of the Lord Jesus, even unto death, the death of the cross. The wrath of God is as fire, and Christ was made a curse for us. (6.) It was



to be killed by the whole congregation between the two evenings, that is, between three o'clock and six. Christ suffered in the *end of the world* ([Heb. 9:26](#)), by the hand of the Jews, the whole multitude of them ([Lu. 23:18](#)), and for the good of all his spiritual Israel. (7.) Not *a bone of it must be broken* (v. 46), which is expressly said to be fulfilled in Christ ([Jn. 19:33, 36](#)), denoting the unbroken strength of the Lord Jesus.

2. The sprinkling of the blood was typical. (1.) It was not enough that the blood of the lamb was shed, but it must be sprinkled, denoting the application of the merits of Christ's death to our souls; we must *receive the atonement*, [Rom. 5:11](#). (2.) It was to be sprinkled with *a bunch of hyssop* (v. 22) *dipped in the basin*. The everlasting covenant, like the basin, in the conservatory of this blood, the benefits and privileges purchased by it are laid up for us there; faith is the bunch of hyssop by which we apply the promises to ourselves and the benefits of the blood of Christ laid up in them. (3.) It was to be sprinkled upon the *door-posts*, denoting the open profession we are to make of faith in Christ, and obedience to him, as those that are not ashamed to own our dependence upon him. The mark of the beast may be received on the forehead or in the right hand, but the seal of the *Lamb* is always *in the forehead*, [Rev. 7:3](#). There is a back-way to hell, but no back-way to heaven; no, the only way to this is a high-way, [Isa. 35:8](#). (4.) It was to be sprinkled upon the *lintel* and the *sideposts*, but not upon the *threshold* (v. 7), which cautions us to take heed of trampling under foot the blood of the covenant, [Heb. 10:29](#). It is precious blood, and must be precious to us. (5.) The blood, thus sprinkled, was a means of the preservation of the Israelites from the destroying angel, who had nothing to do where the blood was. If the blood of Christ be sprinkled upon our consciences, it will be our protection from the wrath of God, the curse of the law, and the damnation of hell, [Rom. 8:1](#).

3. The solemnly eating of the lamb was typical of our gospel-duty to Christ. (1.) The paschal lamb was killed, not to be looked upon only, but to be fed upon; so we must by faith make Christ ours, as we do that which we eat, and we must receive spiritual strength and nourishment from him, as from our food, and have delight and satisfaction in him, as we have in eating and drinking when we are hungry or thirsty: see [Jn. 6:53–55](#). (2.) It was to be all eaten; those that by faith feed upon Christ must feed upon a whole Christ; they must take Christ and his yoke, Christ and his cross, as well as Christ and his crown. *Is Christ divided?* Those that gather much of Christ will have nothing over. (3.) It was to be eaten immediately, not deferred till morning, v. 10. *To-day* Christ is offered, and is to be accepted while it is called to-day, before we sleep the sleep of death. (4.) It was to be eaten *with bitter herbs* (v. 8), in remembrance of the bitterness of their



bondage in Egypt. We must feed upon Christ with sorrow and brokenness of heart, in remembrance of sin; this will give an admirable relish to the paschal lamb. Christ will be sweet to us if sin be bitter. (5.) It was to be eaten in a departing posture (v. 11); when we feed upon Christ by faith we must absolutely forsake the rule and dominion of sin, shake off Pharaoh's yoke; and we must sit loose to the world, and every thing in it, forsake all for Christ, and reckon it no bad bargain, [Heb. 13:13, 14](#).

4. The feast of unleavened bread was typical of the Christian life, [1 Co. 5:7, 8](#). Having received Christ Jesus the Lord, (1.) We must keep a feast in holy joy, continually delighting ourselves in Christ Jesus; no *manner of work must be done* (v. 16), no care admitted or indulged, inconsistent with, or prejudicial to, this holy joy: if true believers have not a continual feast, it is their own fault. (2.) It must be a feast of unleavened bread, kept in charity, without the leaven of malice, and in sincerity, without the leaven of hypocrisy. The law was very strict as to the passover, and the Jews were so in their usages, that no leaven should be *found in their houses*, v. 19. All the old leaven of sin must be put far from us, with the utmost caution and abhorrence, if we would keep the feast of a holy life to the honour of Christ. (3.) It was by an *ordinance for ever* (v. 17); as long as we live, we must continue feeding upon Christ and rejoicing in him, always making thankful mention of the great things he has done for us.

Verses [21–28](#)

I. Moses is here, as a faithful steward in God's house, teaching the children of Israel to *observe all things which God had commanded him*; and no doubt he gave the instructions as largely as he received them, though they are not so largely recorded. It is here added,

1. That this night, when the first-born were to be destroyed, no Israelite must *stir out of doors till morning*, that is, till towards morning, when they would be called to march out of Egypt, v. 22. Not but that the destroying angel could have known an Israelite from an Egyptian in the street; but God would intimate to them that their safety was owing to the *blood of sprinkling*; if they put themselves from under the protection of that, it was at their peril. Those whom God has marked for himself must not mingle with evil doers: see [Isa. 26:20, 21](#). They must not go out of the doors, lest they should straggle and be out of the way when they should be summoned to depart: they must stay within, to *wait for the salvation of the Lord*, and it is good to do so.



2. That hereafter they should carefully teach their children the meaning of this service, v. 26, 27. Observe,

(1.) The question which the children would ask concerning this solemnity (which they would soon take notice of in the family): “*What mean you by this service?* What is the meaning of all this care and exactness about eating this lamb, and this unleavened bread, more than about common food? Why such a difference between this meal and other meals?” Note, [1.] It is a good thing to see children inquisitive about the things of God; it is to be hoped that those who are careful to ask for the way will find it. Christ himself, when a child, *heard and asked questions*, [Lu. 2:46](#). [2.] It concerns us all rightly to understand the meaning of those holy ordinances wherein we worship God, what is the nature and what the end of them, what is signified and what intended, what is the duty expected from us in them and what are the advantages to be expected by us. Every ordinance has a meaning; some ordinances, as sacraments, have not their meaning so plain and obvious as others have; therefore we are concerned to search, that we may not offer *the blind for sacrifice*, but may do a reasonable service. If either we are ignorant of, or mistake about, the meaning of holy ordinances, we can neither please God nor profit ourselves.

(2.) The answer which the parents were to return to this question (v. 27): *You shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord’s passover*, that is, “By the killing and sacrificing of this lamb, we keep in remembrance the work of wonder and grace which God did for our fathers, when,” [1.] “To make way for our deliverance out of bondage, he slew the firstborn of the Egyptians, so compelling them to sign our discharge;” and, [2.] “Though there were *with us, even with us, sins against the Lord our God*, for which the destroying angel, when he was abroad doing execution, might justly have destroyed our first-born too, yet God graciously appointed and accepted the family-sacrifice of a lamb, instead of the first-born, as, of old, the ram instead of Isaac, and in every house where the lamb was slain the first-born were saved.” The repetition of this solemnity in the return of every year was designed, *First*, To look backward as a memorial, that in it they might remember what great things God had done for them and their fathers. The word *pesach* signifies a *leap*, or *transition*; it is a passing over; for the destroying angel passed over the houses of the Israelites, and did not destroy their first-born. When God brings utter ruin upon his people he says, *I will not pass by them any more*([Amos 7:8](#); [8:2](#)), intimating how often he had passed by them, as now when the destroying angel passed over their houses. Note, 1. Distinguishing mercies lay under peculiar obligations. When *a thousand fall at our side, and ten thousand at our*



right hand, and yet we are preserved, and have our lives given us for a prey, this should greatly affect us, [Ps. 91:7](#). In war or pestilence, if the arrow of death have passed by us, passed over us, hit the next to us and just missed us, we must not say it was by chance that we were preserved but by the special providence of our God. 2. Old mercies to ourselves, or to our fathers, must not be forgotten, but be had in everlasting remembrance, that God may be praised, our faith in him encouraged, and our hearts enlarged in his service. *Secondly*, It was designed to look forward as an earnest of the great sacrifice of the Lamb of God in the fulness of time, instead of us and our first-born. We were obnoxious to the sword of the destroying angel, but *Christ our passover was sacrificed for us*, his death was our life, and thus he was the *Lamb slain from the foundation of the world*, from the foundation of the Jewish church: Moses kept the passover by faith in Christ, for Christ was *the end of the law for righteousness*.

II. The people received these instructions with reverence and ready obedience. 1. They *bowed the head and worshipped* (v. [27](#)): they hereby signified their submission to this institution as a law, and their thankfulness for it as a favour and privilege. Note, When God gives law to us, we must give honour to him; when he speaks, we must *bow our heads and worship*. 2. They *went away and did* as they were commanded, v. [23](#). Here was none of that discontent and murmuring among them which we read of, ch. [5:20](#), [21](#). The plagues of Egypt had done them good, and raised their expectations of a glorious deliverance, which before they despaired of; and now they went forth to meet it in the way appointed. Note, The perfecting of God's mercies to us must be waited for in a humble observance of his institutions.

Verses [29–36](#)

Here we have, I. The Egyptians' sons, even their first-born, slain, v. [29](#), [30](#). If Pharaoh would have taken the warning which was given him of this plague, and would thereupon have released Israel, what a great many dear and valuable lives might have been preserved! But see what obstinate infidelity brings upon men. Observe, 1. The time when this blow was given: It was *at midnight*, which added to the terror of it. The three preceding nights were made dreadful by the additional plague of darkness, which might be felt, and doubtless disturbed their repose; and now, when they hoped for one quiet night's rest, at midnight was the alarm given. When the destroying angel drew his sword against Jerusalem, it was in the day-time ([2 Sa. 24:15](#)), which made it the less frightful; but the destruction of Egypt was by a *pestilence walking in darkness*, [Ps. 91:6](#). Shortly there will be an alarming cry at midnight, *Behold, the bridegroom cometh*. 2.



On whom the plague fastened—on *their first-born*, the joy and hope of their respective families. They had slain the Hebrews' children, and now God slew theirs. Thus he visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children; and he is *not unrighteous who taketh vengeance*. 3. How far it reached—from the throne to the dungeon. Prince and peasant stand upon the same level before God's judgments, for there is no respect of persons with him; see [Job 34:19, 20](#). Now the *slain of the Lord were many; multitudes, multitudes*, fall in this *valley of decision*, when the controversy between God and Pharaoh was to be determined. 4. What an outcry was made upon it: *There was a great cry in Egypt*, universal lamentation for their *only* son (with many), and with all for their *first-born*. If any be suddenly taken ill in the night, we are wont to call up neighbours; but the Egyptians could have no help, no comfort, from their neighbours, all being involved in the same calamity. Let us learn hence, (1.) To tremble before God, and to be *afraid of his judgments*, [Ps. 119:120](#). Who is able to stand before him, or dares resist him? (2.) To be thankful to God for the daily preservation of ourselves and our families: lying so much exposed, we have reason to say, "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed."

II. God's sons, even his first-born, released; this judgment conquered Pharaoh, and obliged him to *surrender at discretion*, without capitulating. Men had better come up to God's terms at first, for he will never come down to theirs, let them object as long as they will. Now Pharaoh's pride is abased, and he yields to all that Moses had insisted on: *Serve the Lord as you have said* (v. 31), and *take your flocks as you have said*, v. 32. Note, God's word will stand, and we shall get nothing by disputing it, or delaying to submit to it. Hitherto the Israelites were not permitted to depart, but now things had come to the last extremity, in consequence of which, 1. They are commanded to depart: *Rise up, and get you forth*, v. 31. Pharaoh had told Moses he should *see his face no more*; but now he sent for him. Those will seek God early in their distress who before had set him at defiance. Such a fright he was now in that he gave orders by night for their discharge, fearing lest, if he delayed any longer, he himself should fall next; and that he sent them out, not as men hated (as the pagan historians have represented this matter), but as men feared, is plainly discovered by his humble request to them (v. 32): "*Bless me also*; let me have your prayers, that I may not be plagued for what is past, when you are gone." Note, Those that are enemies to God's church are enemies to themselves, and, sooner or later, they will be made to see it. 2. They are hired to depart by the Egyptians; they cried out (v. 33), *We be all dead men*. Note, When death comes into our houses, it is seasonable for us to think of our own mortality. Are our relations dead? It is easy to infer thence that we are dying, and, in effect, already dead men. Upon this consideration they were urgent with the Israelites to be gone, which gave great



advantage to the Israelites in borrowing their jewels, v. [35](#), [36](#). When the Egyptians urged them to be gone, it was easy for them to say that the Egyptians had kept them poor, that they could not undertake such a journey with empty purses, but, that, if they would give them wherewithal to bear their charges, they would be gone. And this the divine Providence designed in suffering things to come to this extremity, that they, becoming formidable to the Egyptians, might have what they would, for asking; the Lord also, by the influence he has on the minds of people, inclined the hearts of the Egyptians to furnish them with what they desired, they probably intending thereby to *make atonement*, that the plagues might be stayed, as the Philistines, when they returned the ark, sent a present with it for a trespass-offering, having an eye to this precedent, [1 Sa. 6:3](#), [6](#). The Israelites might receive and keep what they thus borrowed, or rather required, of the Egyptians, (1.) As justly as servants receive wages from their masters for work done, and sue for it if it be detained. (2.) As justly as conquerors take the spoils of their enemies whom they have subdued; Pharaoh was in rebellion against the *God of the Hebrews*, by which all that he had was forfeited. (3.) As justly as subjects receive the estates granted to them by their prince. God is the sovereign proprietor of the earth, and the fulness thereof; and, if he take from one and give to another, who may say unto him, *What doest thou?* It was by God's special order and appointment that the Israelites did what they did, which was sufficient to justify them, and bear them out; but what they did will by no means authorize others (who cannot pretend to any such warrant) to do the same. Let us remember, [1.] That the King of kings can do no wrong. [2.] That he will do right to those whom men injure, [Ps. 146:7](#). Hence it is that the *wealth of the sinner* often proves to be *laid up for the just*, [Prov. 13:22](#); [Job 27:16](#), [17](#).

Verses [37–42](#)

Here is the departure of the children of Israel out of Egypt; having obtained their dismissal, they set forward without delay, and did not defer to a more convenient season. Pharaoh was now in a good mind; but they had reason to think he would not long continue so, and therefore it was no time to linger. We have here an account, 1. Of their number, about 600,000 men (v. [37](#)), besides women and children, which I think, we cannot suppose to make less than 1,200,000 more. What a vast increase was this, to arise from seventy souls in little more than 200 years' time! See the power and efficacy of that blessing, when God commands it, *Be fruitful and multiply*. This was typical of the multitudes that were brought into the gospel church when it was first founded; *so mightily grew the word of God, and prevailed*. 2. Of their retinue (v. [38](#)): *A mixed multitude went up with them*, hangers on to that great family, some perhaps willing to



leave their country, because it was laid waste by the plagues, and to seek their fortune, as we say, with the Israelites; others went out of curiosity, to see the solemnities of Israel's sacrifice to their God, which had been so much talked of, and expecting to see some glorious appearances of their God to them in the wilderness, having seen such glorious appearances of their God for them in the field of Zoan, [Ps. 78:12](#). Probably the greatest part of this mixed multitude were but a rude unthinking mob, that followed the crowd they knew not why; we afterwards find that they proved a snare to them ([Num. 11:4](#)), and it is probable that when, soon afterwards, they understood that the children of Israel were to continue forty years in the wilderness, they quitted them, and returned to Egypt. Note, There were always those among the Israelites that were not Israelites, and there are still hypocrites in the church, who make a deal of mischief, but will be shaken off at last. 3. Of their effects. They had with them *flocks and herds*, even *very much cattle*. This is taken notice of because it was long before Pharaoh would give them leave to remove their effects, which were chiefly cattle, [Gen. 46:32](#). 4. Of the provision made for the camp, which was very poor and slender. They brought some dough with them out of Egypt in their knapsacks, v. 34. They had prepared to bake, the next day, in order to their removal, understanding it was very near; but, being hastened away sooner than they thought of, by some hours, they took the dough as it was, unleavened; when they came to Succoth, their first stage, they baked unleavened cakes, and, though these were of course insipid, yet the liberty they were brought into made this the most joyful meal they had ever eaten in their lives. Note, The servants of God must not be slaves to their appetites, nor solicitous to wind up all the delights of sense to their highest pitch. We should be willing to take up with dry bread, nay, with unleavened bread, rather than neglect or delay any service we have to do for God, as those whose meat and drink it is to do his will. 5. Of the date of this great event: it was just 430 years from the promise made to Abraham (as the apostle explains it, [Gal. 3:17](#)) at his first coming into Canaan, during all which time *the children of Israel*, that is, the Hebrews, the distinguished chosen seed, were sojourners in a land that was not theirs, either Canaan or Egypt. So long the promise God made to Abraham of a settlement lay dormant and unfulfilled, but now, at length, it revived, and things began to work towards the accomplishment of it. The first day of the march of Abraham's seed towards Canaan was just 430 years (it should seem to a day) from the promise made to Abraham, [Gen. 12:2](#), *I will make of thee a great nation*. See how punctual God is to his time; though his promises be not performed quickly, they will be accomplished in their season. 6. Of the memorableness of it: *It is a night to be much observed*, v. 42. (1.) The providences of that first night were very observable; memorable was the destruction of the Egyptians, and the deliverance of the Israelites by it; God herein made himself taken notice of. (2.) The ordinances of that night,



in the annual return of it, were to be carefully observed: *This is that night of the Lord*, that remarkable night, to be celebrated in all generations. Note, The great things God does for his people are not to be a nine days' wonder, as we say, but the remembrance of them is to be perpetuated throughout all ages, especially the work of our redemption by Christ. This first passover-night was a night of the Lord *much to be observed*; but the last passover-night, in which Christ was betrayed (and in which the passover, with the rest of the ceremonial institutions, was superseded and abolished), was a night of the Lord *much more to be observed*, when a yoke heavier than that of Egypt was broken from off our necks, and a land better than that of Canaan set before us. That was a temporal deliverance to be celebrated *in their generation*; this is an eternal redemption to be celebrated in the praises of glorious saints, *world without end*.

Verses 43–51

Some further precepts are here given concerning the passover, as it should be observed in times to come.

I. *All the congregation of Israel must keep it*, v. 47. All that share in God's mercies should join in thankful praises for them. Though it was observed in families apart, yet it is looked upon as the act of the whole congregation; for the smaller communities constituted the greater. The New-Testament passover, the Lord's supper, ought not to be neglected by any who are capable of celebrating it. He is unworthy the name of an Israelite that can contentedly neglect the commemoration of so great a deliverance. 1. No stranger that was uncircumcised might be admitted to eat of it, v. 43, 45, 48. None might sit at the table but those that came in by the door; nor may any now approach to the improving ordinance of the Lord's supper who have not first submitted to the initiating ordinance of baptism. We must be born again by the word ere we can be nourished by it. Nor shall any partake of the benefit of Christ's sacrifice, or feast upon it, who are not first circumcised in heart, Col. 2:11. 2. Any stranger that was circumcised might be welcome to eat of the passover, even *servants*, v. 44. If, by circumcision, they would make themselves debtors to the law in its burdens, they were welcome to share in the joy of its solemn feasts, and not otherwise. Only it is intimated (v. 48) that those who were masters of families must not only be circumcised themselves, but have all their males circumcised too. If in sincerity, and with that zeal which the thing required and deserves, we give up ourselves to God, we shall, with ourselves, give up all we have to him, and do our utmost that all ours may be his too. Here is an early indication of favour to the poor Gentiles, that the stranger, if circumcised, stands upon



the same level with the home-born Israelite. *One law* for both, v. 49. This was a mortification to the Jews, and taught them that it was their dedication to God, not their descent from Abraham, that entitled them to their privileges. A sincere proselyte was as welcome to the passover as a native Israelite, [Isa. 56:6, 7](#).

II. *In one house shall it be eaten* (v. 46), for good-fellowship sake, that they might rejoice together, and edify one another in the eating of it. None of it must be carried to another place, nor left to another time; for God would not have them so taken up with care about their departure as to be indisposed to take the comfort of it, but to leave Egypt, and enter upon a wilderness, with cheerfulness, and, in token of that, to eat a good hearty meal. The papists' carrying their consecrated host from house to house is not only superstitious in itself, but contrary to this typical law of the passover, which directed that no part of the lamb should be carried abroad.

The chapter concludes with a repetition of the whole matter, that the children of Israel did as they were bidden, and God did for them as he promised (v. 50, 51); for he will certainly be the author of salvation to those that obey him.

Chapter 13

In this chapter we have, I. The commands God gave to Israel, 1. To sanctify all their firstborn to him (v. 1, 2). 2. To be sure to remember their deliverance out of Egypt (v. 3, 4), and, in remembrance of it, to keep the feast of unleavened bread (v. 5–7). 3. To transmit the knowledge of it with all possible care to their children (v. 8–10). 4. To set apart unto God the firstlings of their cattle (v. 11–13), and to explain that also to their children (v. 14–16). II. The care God took of Israel, when he had brought them out of Egypt. I. Choosing their way for them (v. 17, 18). 2. Guiding them in the way (v. 20–22). And III. Their care of Joseph's bones (v. 19).

Verses 1–10

Care is here taken to perpetuate the remembrance,

I. Of the preservation of Israel's firstborn, when the firstborn of the Egyptians were slain. In memory of that distinguishing favour, and in gratitude for it, the firstborn, in all ages, were to be



consecrated to God, as his peculiars (v. 2), and to be redeemed, v. 13. God, who by the right of creation is proprietor and sovereign of all the creatures, here lays claim in particular to the firstborn of the Israelites, by right of protection: *Sanctify to me all the firstborn*. The parents were not to look upon themselves as interested in their firstborn, till they had first solemnly presented them to God, recognized his title to them, and received them back, at a certain rate, from him again. Note, 1. That which is by special distinguishing mercy spared to us should be in a peculiar manner dedicated to God's honour; at least some grateful acknowledgment, in works of piety and charity, should be made, when our lives, or the lives of our children, have been given us for a prey. 2. God, who is the first and best, should have the first and best, and to him we should resign that which is most dear to us, and most valuable. The firstborn were the joy and hope of their families. Therefore *they shall be mine*, says God. By this it will appear that we love God best (as we ought) if we are willing to part with that to him which we love best in this world. 3. It is the *church of the firstborn* that is sanctified to God, [Heb. 12:23](#). Christ is the *firstborn among many brethren* ([Rom. 8:29](#)), and, by virtue of their union with him, all that are born again, and born from above, are accounted as firstborn. There is an *excellency of dignity and power* belonging to them; and, *if children, then heirs*.

II. The remembrance of their coming out of Egypt must also be perpetuated: "*Remember this day*, v. 3. Remember it by a good token, as the most remarkable day of your lives, the birthday of your nation, or the day of its coming of age, to be no longer under the rod." Thus the day of Christ's resurrection is to be remembered, for in it we were raised up with Christ out of death's *house of bondage*. The scripture tells us not expressly what day of the *year* Christ rose (as Moses told the Israelites what day of the year they were brought out of Egypt, that they might remember it yearly), but very particularly what day of the *week* it was, plainly intimating that, as the more valuable deliverance, and of greater importance, it should be remembered *weekly*. Remember it, for *by strength of hand the Lord brought you out*. Note, The more of God and his power appears in any deliverance, the more memorable it is. Now, that it might be remembered,

1. They must be sure to *keep the feast of unleavened bread*, v. 5–7. It was not enough that they remembered it, but they must celebrate the memorial of it in that way which God had appointed, and use the instituted means of preserving the remembrance of it. So, under the gospel, we must not only remember Christ, but *do this in remembrance* of him. Observe, How strict the prohibition of leaven is (v. 7); not only no leaven must be eaten, but none must be seen, no, not in all their quarters. Accordingly, the Jews' usage was, before the feast of the passover, to cast all



the leavened bread out of their houses: they burnt it, or buried it, or broke it small and scattered it in the wind; they searched diligently with lighted candles in all the corners of their houses, lest any leaven should remain. The care and strictness enjoined in this matter were designed, (1.) To make the feast the more solemn, and consequently the more taken notice of by their children, who would ask, “Why is so much ado made?” (2.) To teach us how solicitous we should be to put away from us all sin, [1 Co. 5:7](#).

2. They must instruct their children in the meaning of it, and relate to them the story of their deliverance out of Egypt, v. [8](#). Note, (1.) Care must be taken betimes to instruct children in the knowledge of God. Here is an ancient law for catechising. (2.) It is particularly of great use to acquaint children betimes with the stories of the scripture, and to make them familiar to them. (3.) It is a debt we owe to the honour of God, and to the benefit of our children’s souls, to tell them of the great works God has done for his church, both those which we have seen with our eyes done in our day and which we have heard with our ears and our fathers have told us: *Thou shalt show thy son in that day* (the day of the feast) these things. When they were celebrating the ordinance, they must explain it. *Every thing is beautiful in its season*. The passover is appointed *for a sign, and for a memorial*, that *the Lord’s law may be in thy mouth*. Note, We must retain the remembrance of God’s works, that we may remain under the influence of God’s law. And those that have God’s law in their heart should have it in their mouth, and be often speaking of it, the more to affect themselves and to instruct others.

Verses [11–16](#)

Here we have,

I. Further directions concerning the dedicating of their firstborn to God. 1. The firstlings of their cattle were to be dedicated to God, as part of their possessions. Those of clean beasts—calves, lambs, and kids—if males, were to be sacrificed, [Ex. 22:30](#); [Num. 18:17, 18](#). Those of unclean beasts, as colts, were to be redeemed with a lamb, or knocked on the head. For whatsoever is unclean (as we all are by nature), if it be not redeemed, will be destroyed, v. [11, 13](#). 2. The firstborn of their children were to be redeemed, and by no means sacrificed, as the Gentiles sacrificed their children to Moloch. The price of the redemption of the firstborn was fixed by the law ([Num. 18:16](#)) at *five sheckles*. We were all obnoxious to the wrath and curse of God; by the blood of Christ we are redeemed, that we may be joined to the *church of the*



firstborn. They were to redeem their children, as well as the firstlings of the unclean beasts, for our children are by nature polluted. *Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?*

II. Further directions concerning the catechising of their children, and all those of the rising generation, from time to time, in this matter. It is supposed that, when they saw all the firstlings thus devoted, they would ask the meaning of it, and their parents and teachers must tell them (v. 14–16) that God's special propriety in their firstborn, and all their firstlings, was founded in his special preservation of them from the sword of the destroying angel. Being thus delivered, they must serve him. Note, 1. Children should be directed and encouraged to ask their parents questions concerning the things of God, a practice which would be perhaps of all others the most profitable way of catechising; and parents must furnish themselves with useful knowledge, that they may be ready always to give an answer to their enquiries. If ever the *knowledge of God cover the earth*, as the waters do the sea, the fountains of family-instruction must first be broken up. 2. We should all be able to show cause for what we do in religion. As sacraments are sanctified by the word, so they must be explained and understood by it. God's service is reasonable, and it is then acceptable when we perform it intelligently, knowing what we do and why we do it. 3. It must be observed how often it is said in this chapter that *by strength of hand* (v. 3, 14, 16), *with a strong hand* (v. 9), the Lord brought them out of Egypt. The more opposition is given to the accomplishment of God's purposes the more is his power magnified therein. It is a strong hand that conquers hard hearts. Sometimes God is said to work deliverance *not by might nor power* (Zec. 4:6), not by such visible displays of his power as that recorded here. 4. Their posterity that should be born in Canaan are directed to say, *The Lord brought us out of Egypt*, v. 14, 16. Mercies to our fathers are mercies to us; we reap the benefit of them, and therefore must keep up a grateful remembrance of them. We stand upon the bottom of former deliverances, and were in the loins of our ancestors when they were delivered. Much more reason have we to say that in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ we were redeemed.