Jesus our Passover Lamb

1. The Lord's Passover

a. After Pharaoh and his people were warned about the coming final plague, the Lord gave Moses special instructions for the Israelites to escape the killing of all first-borns.

Exodus 12:1-14 *The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, [2] "This month is to be your beginning of months; it will be your first month of the year. [3] Tell the whole community of Israel, 'On the tenth day of this month they each must take a lamb for themselves according to their families—a lamb for each household. [4] If any household is too small for a lamb, the man and his next-door neighbour are to take a lamb according to the number of people—you will make your count for the lamb according to how much each one can eat. [5] Your lamb must be perfect, a male, one year old; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats. [6] You must care for it until the fourteenth day of this month, and then the whole community of Israel will kill it around sundown. [7] They will take some of the blood and put it on the two side posts and top of the doorframe of the houses where they will eat it. [8] They will eat the meat the same night; they will eat it roasted over the fire with bread made without yeast and with bitter herbs. [9] Do not eat it raw or boiled in water, but roast it over the fire with its head, its legs, and its entrails. [10] You must leave nothing until morning, but you must burn with fire whatever remains of it until morning. [11] This is how you are to eat it—dressed to travel, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. You are to eat it in haste. It is the Lord's Passover.[12] 'I will pass through the land of Egypt in the same night, and I will attack all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both of humans and of animals, and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment. I am the Lord. [13] The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are, so that when I see the blood I will pass over you, and this plague will not fall on you to destroy you when I attack the land of Egypt. [14] 'This day will become a memorial for you, and you will celebrate it as a festival to the Lord—you will celebrate it perpetually as a lasting ordinance.*

b. The first thing we need to note is that Passover is not a man initiated event – God clearly laid out the details and declared *"It is the Lord's Passover".* He also made it clear that this event would mark the beginning of a new era for His people by making it the first month of the year.

c. As we have seen in previous passages our God is very intentional in the way he unfolds history. He is laying the foundations for the greatest event in human history – God taking on human flesh to dwell amongst men and then to offer up His life as the necessary sacrifice. An event which marked the beginning of a new era living under a New Covenant.

2. Freedom from captivity

a. Egypt took captive God's firstborn, Israel (Jeremiah 31:9). And God would not let that continue any further. God made a way so His people can be liberated. In the most unassuming and incredible way that only God could have designed, He saved a nation through a lamb. The sacrifice of an innocent and spotless lamb delivered a whole nation from the most powerful empire back then. The Passover lamb was the way God showed mercy and grace to His people.

b. Egypt had enslaved God's people - Egypt can well represent the oppression and slavery that sin can cause us. In that time, we see a physical kind of slavery that tortured God's people. We need to understand that sin does the same to us in a more spiritual way. Sin takes hold of us, then enslaves us and brings destruction and death to our lives.

John 8:34 *"Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin."*

James 1:15 *Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.*

c. This is why we need a Passover lamb too. Sin brings addiction, misery, and ruin. And we have no way in and of ourselves to escape it. But God offers us a deliverance. God offers to us His grace and a greater Lamb who frees us from anything that enslaves us. We are no longer slaves, but because of this greater Lamb's sacrifice, we are now children of God.

3. The Start of All Things New

Ex.12:1-2 *The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, [2] "This month is to be your beginning of months; it will be your first month of the year*

a. The first thing we see is something very interesting. God changed their calendar! And it has remained changed to this very day. Everything begins with the Passover. Jesus' death on the cross is the beginning of the New Covenant of grace; it is the beginning of the New Creation and it is, once a person places their faith in Jesus, the beginning of real life as God had intended it to be.

b. A person's life doesn't amount to anything until they get to this point. They may have all the money, all the intelligence, all the beauty in the world, but if they haven't come to believe in the death of Jesus for their sins then they haven't even begun. They are not even at the starting line!

c. In the same way that Passover marked the beginning of a new era for the Israelites so the crucifixion marks the beginning of the New Covenant for those who apply the blood of Christ to their lives.

4. It's personal

a. God made the whole thing very personal. He could have just had one lamb killed for the entire nation if He had so wished. But He didn't! He wanted every household in Israel to identify itself with the lamb. They each had to take a lamb, they each had to inspect the lamb, and they each had to kill the lamb. Talk about getting your hands dirty!

b. It reminds us of course of how personal the cross is. Just as each Israelite household had to kill their lamb, so our own personal sin was responsible for Jesus going to the cross and each of us has to make that personal decision to repent and accept the sacrifice He made for us. His great sacrifice was for each of us individually!

Gal.2:20 *So the life I now live in the body, I live because of the faithfulness of the Son of God,* ***who loved me and gave himself for me****.*

5. The Totally Unique, Spotless Lamb of God

Ex.12:5-6 *[5] Your lamb must be perfect, a male, one year old; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats. [6] You must care for it until the fourteenth day of this month, and then the whole community of Israel will kill it around sundown.*

a. Jesus lived 33 years on this earth facing the same and even greater temptations that we do. He also faced far more trials than we could ever cope with. Yet He was without sin! People tried to trap Him with their questions and yet, one answer from the Lord would have their

mouths shut for the rest of day! They couldn't trap Him, trick Him or tempt Him to sin. He was and is, the spotless Lamb of God without defect!

b. They were to take the lamb on the 10th of the month and keep it until the fourteenth of that same month, where it was to be slain at twilight. The Bible Knowledge commentary says that 'twilight' is between the suns decline and sunset (3-5pm). Historical evidence shows us that it is very likely that Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey on the 10th of Nisan - the very day when the spotless lamb was to be chosen!

c. In fulfilment of the Old Testament type, for the next 4 days Jesus presented Himself to the people in Jerusalem, showing Himself to be the spotless lamb without defect. On the fourteenth of that month, around 3 o'clock in the afternoon (twilight), while all throughout Israel different households were starting to kill their lambs, Jesus died on a cross. And they didn't understand!

6. Roasted Lamb

Ex.12:7-10 *[7] They will take some of the blood and put it on the two side posts and top of the doorframe of the houses where they will eat it. [8] They will eat the meat the same night; they will eat it roasted over the fire with bread made without yeast and with bitter herbs. [9] Do not eat it raw or boiled in water, but roast it over the fire with its head, its legs, and its entrails. [10] You must leave nothing until morning, but you must burn with fire whatever remains of it until morning.*

a. Pretty exact cooking instruction wouldn't you say? God didn't want it boiled, it had to be roasted over a fire. There is a reason for this - fire, in this sense, speaks of God's judgement (Mal 3:1-5, 4:1-3, Matt 3:12). Just as the spotless lamb had to be cooked by fire and anything that they didn't eat was burnt up, so Jesus was fully judged for our sin while on the cross.

b. Other cooking instructions included always adding bitter herbs and unleavened bread. The bitter herbs were to be a reminder of the bitterness that accompanied their life down in Egypt. And in like manner it is good for us, when thinking of the cross, to remember the bitterness and bondage that God has rescued us from. Leaven in the Bible speaks of sin (1 Cor 5:7-8) and this reminds us that in view of the cross, and through God's strength, we are called to live a righteous life.

7. The Significance of a Passover Lamb

Exodus 12:13 *The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are, so that when I see the blood I will pass over you, and this plague will not fall on you to destroy you when I attack the land of Egypt.*

Exodus 12:23 *For the Lord will pass through to strike Egypt, and when he sees the blood on the top of the doorframe and the two side posts, then the Lord will pass over the door, and he will not permit the destroyer to enter your houses to strike you.*

a. The Passover Lamb was given to the Israelites to save them from death when the Lord would send the destroyer to Egypt to take the life of the firstborn. In Pharaoh's refusal to acknowledge God, the Lord sent the direct judgment to show who the true God is. Yahweh is a God who will defend and deliver His people.

b. We see that the Lord will "pass through" to strike the Egyptians but "pass over" the door of the Israelites' houses. He will not allow the destroyer to come inside the house. The word pass over was first used here, and in Hebrew, it is pronounced "pesakh." According to

Charles Ellicot, a bible commentator, this word carries "the idea of a spreading out of wings, to protect." So, it's not God just passing by; it's more like a bird passing over its babies and protecting them from any predators.

Isaiah 31:5 *Just as birds hover over a nest, so the Lord of Heaven's Armies will protect Jerusalem. He will protect and deliver it; as he passes over he will rescue it.*

c. The blood of the dead lamb that covered the doorposts was the sign that God's people would be protected and spared from the death of their firstborn. God provided a way for the Israelites to be saved from death - the lamb's blood and sacrifice spared them and not anything else.

d. Because of this lamb, God passed over Israel. Because of the Greater Lamb, we have been passed over from the punishment from sin. We have been protected and spared from sure death. This death was not just physical death, but death that separates us from God forever in condemnation. Because of His mercy, we were spared and protected from hell itself.

e. Our God is a God who protects and spares us. He is the God of refuge and He continues to pass over us with love, mercy and grace.

Psalm 91:4 *He will shelter you with his wings; you will find safety under his wings. His faithfulness is like a shield or a protective wall.*

8. The Revelation of the Passover Lamb

Exodus 12:14 *This day will become a memorial for you, and you will celebrate it as a festival to the Lord—you will celebrate it perpetually as a lasting ordinance.*

a. And, so, on the night when the destroyer came to Egypt, in each household, death was everywhere. In every household was either a slain lamb or a dead firstborn son. For the Israelites, an innocent lamb took the place of their firstborn. The lamb became the substitutionary sacrifice as it died the death the Israelites couldn't possibly afford. Its blood was what saved the Israelites from ruin and led them to live.

b. During that special night, Passover was founded and instituted. Israelites had to commemorate this day every year after the event in Exodus. They would have someone, a presider, to explain and commemorate what happened during that fateful night. They had unleavened bread, wine and a roasted lamb. All are essential reminders of the first Passover. Ever since that day Jewish communities have commemorated this feast to remember the Jewish people's freedom from Egypt many centuries ago.

c. And 2000 years ago, one night in an upper room, Jesus, with His disciples, came together to celebrate Passover. This meal had all the other elements, such as the unleavened bread and the wine. But there was no lamb. Why? Tim Keller points out, "there was no lamb on the table because the Lamb was at the table." On that night, Jesus said that He is the ultimate lamb of God.

d. The lamb in Exodus points to Jesus, the greater Passover Lamb. He was innocent and blameless. He was the perfect sacrifice. He liberated us from sin that enslaved our souls. He took our place when judgment and death were what we deserved. His death was the ultimate sign of God's mercy and grace.

e. Because of His death, we were spared. Just as a lamb was enough for each Israelite firstborn in Egypt, Jesus' sacrifice was more than enough for every person on the face of the world,

for all time. His blood was shed for each person. And yet, salvation will come only to those who would let His blood cover their sins and accept His deliverance. Jesus is our Passover Lamb. He was the one that truly saved us from our sins.

f. The lamb and its blood are the covering for human beings who did absolutely nothing to earn God's favour. All they did was apply the blood to their lives. God made the provision; the human response was to accept it. According to the New Testament, that's how we are saved. God gave us Jesus; we accept Him. Then, in gratitude and faith, we follow Him the rest of our lives.

g. The Cross was not an accident or a disappointing end to Jesus' life. His earthly mission was not to teach or do miracles or set a good example. He came to die as a sacrificial Lamb for the sins of the world. To fulfil what had been initiated on a dark night in Egypt. Where rebellion and sin received their rightful judgement – death – death of a firstborn or death of a sacrificial lamb.

9. Behold the Lamb

John 1:29 *Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!*

a. When Jesus appeared before John on the banks of the Jordan John immediately directs us to Jesus' purpose in coming. He is the Lamb – the sacrifice. He tells us to "Behold" – take note, gaze upon, seek out. We need to think about the Lamb, realize the significance, and grasp the amazing truth in our hearts and lives.

b. So many things in our world can beg and crave for attention and devotion. But only the Lamb of God is worthy of our all. We need to place our full gaze upon Him. We need to behold His love. We need to behold His life and sacrifice for us. We need to continue to passionately consider who He is.

c. We need to continue to look upon Jesus intently and who He is and what He has done for us. We need to continue to let others know of this Lamb who takes the sin of the world. This is our call and privilege. Together, as a church, as a family, as a community, let us behold Jesus, our Passover Lamb.

d. One day, this Lamb will be on the throne, and we will behold Him face to face, and He will give us real living water.

Revelation 7:17 *….because the Lamb in the middle of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.*

e. We shall be beholding, gazing upon and delighting in this Lamb forever!