

03

SESSION THREE

The Passover Lamb

SESSION SUMMARY

The Passover story gives us a beautiful picture of God’s judgment as well as God’s salvation. We see the severity of God’s judgment as He warns and then unleashes His wrath upon the Egyptians. But we also see the beauty of God’s grace as He provides a substitute in order to protect His people from His wrath and free them to worship Him with full and grateful hearts. As God’s “passed-over” people, we now celebrate His salvation with joy.

SCRIPTURE

Exodus 11:4-8; 12:1-13,29-32

THE POINT

Even in His righteous judgment, God offers salvation through the sacrifice of a substitute.

INTRO/STARTER 5-10 MINUTES

Option 1

Briefly review the discussion from the previous session, reminding students that when Moses went to Pharaoh to seek the release of the Israelites, he was denied. Pharaoh didn't want to free over a million people. They were Egypt's field slaves and laborers. Who would do all the work? Because of Pharaoh's hardened heart, God made things so difficult in Egypt that Pharaoh would have to give up and let them go. The first nine plagues hit the country. They were bad, but not enough to make Pharaoh change his mind. The tenth plague changed everything.

Invite students to call out each of the plagues as you list them on the board or on a large sheet of paper. Then ask:

- **Do you think the Egyptians deserved what happened to them?**
- **Does the thought of God as judge scare you or comfort you? Why?**

Emphasize that because of Jesus, our Passover Lamb, and the blood He shed on the cross, followers of Christ have nothing to fear. Just as the death angel passed over the houses that demonstrated their faith by the blood on their doorposts, God sees His children through the blood of Jesus.

Option 2

Every Good Boy Does Fine, ROY G. BIV, Please Excuse My Dear Aunt Sally ... any of these sound familiar? These techniques, called *mnemonics*, aid in memorization. Such memory devices do not state outright what is being remembered, but help recall information.

Share the following information about the Passover: In Exodus 12:14-28, Moses conveyed God's instructions to the Israelites concerning the Passover. The liberation of God's people took place with the slaying of a lamb and the smearing of its blood on the doorposts. God commanded Moses to commemorate this event annually.

- **Why was it important for the Israelites to remember this event?**
- **What event does taking the Lord's Supper help Christians recall today?**

As the Passover celebration recalled God's faithfulness to the Israelites, the Lord's Supper reminds us of God's faithfulness in sending His Son to die for our sins.

HIS STORY

15-20 MINUTES

THE POINT

Even in His righteous judgment, God offers salvation through the sacrifice of a substitute.

CHARACTERS

- **The Triune God:** Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
- **Moses:** biblical patriarch; chosen by God to lead His people out of captivity and to the promised land
- **Pharaoh:** ruler over Egypt

PLOT

In the previous sessions we saw God response to Pharaoh's refusal to let His people go. However, the plagues God sent only served to harden Pharaoh's heart even more. By now, nine plagues have passed and Pharaoh has still refused to part with the Hebrew people. As we will see, this refusal to listen to God would cost him something very dear in the end.

In this session we take a look at the tenth and final plague, the one that started the Passover tradition. The Passover story gives us a beautiful picture of both God's judgment and God's salvation. We see the severity of God's judgment as He warns and then unleashes judgment upon the Egyptians. We see the beauty of His grace as He provides a substitute in order to protect His people from His wrath and free them to worship Him with full and grateful hearts. As God's "passed-over" people, we now celebrate His salvation with joy.

TIMELINE

JUDGE AND SAVIOR

Even in the midst of His judgment, God provides a means of salvation.

THE RED SEA

God continues to provide for His people by parting the Red Sea.

THE WILDERNESS

Israel is to walk in faith and follow after God on their way to the promised land.

GOD WARNS OF JUDGMENT

The first nine plagues had wreaked havoc on the Egyptians, and God had manifested His glory in unleashing judgment upon the empire that stood against Him and His people. One final plague remained—one that would be worse than all the others. And through Moses, God chose to warn Pharaoh of the judgment to come:

So Moses said, “This is what Yahweh says: ‘About midnight I will go throughout Egypt, and every firstborn male in the land of Egypt will die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne to the firstborn of the servant girl who is behind the millstones, as well as every firstborn of the livestock. Then there will be a great cry of anguish through all the land of Egypt such as never was before, or ever will be again. But against all the Israelites, whether man or beast, not even a dog will snarl, so that you may know that Yahweh makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel. All these officials of yours will come down to me and bow before me, saying: Leave, you and all the people who follow you. After that, I will leave.’” And he left Pharaoh’s presence in fierce anger. (Ex. 11:4-8)

In this threat of judgment, Moses didn’t ask Pharaoh to “let the people go.” He knew that Pharaoh’s hardened heart would lead to awful consequences. The plagues were coming to a horrible end.

Moses foretold that the “firstborn” of both man and animals would be killed (Ex. 11:5). Earlier in the Exodus story, God referred to Israel as His firstborn (4:22) and indicated that Pharaoh would pay with his firstborn (4:22-23). Now the time had come for this hard-hearted Egyptian ruler. This judgment was going to be severe.

- **List some techniques your parents used when you were younger (or still use) to warn you that you were about to get into trouble? (for example: count to three; call you by your middle name; etc.) What did it take for your parents to get your attention? (p. 22, PSG)**
- **What warnings might we receive from God today when we refuse to listen to His instruction? What does it take for God to get your attention? (p. 22, PSG)**

Take another look at verse 8. Moses first told how Pharaoh’s officials would bow to him and say, “Leave.” In light of God’s judgment, Pharaoh’s closest leaders would be totally humiliated before Moses, and ultimately before Moses’ God. They would bow to Moses instead of Pharaoh.

99 ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES

Sin and Death

The ultimate consequence for sin is death—physical death, spiritual death, and eternal death (Rom. 6:23). God was clear to Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden that if they ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they would surely die (Gen. 2:17). The type of death that would result from the fall in the garden of Eden wasn't only physical death, but spiritual death—separation from God. Spiritual death continues in a permanent state when someone dies apart from the reconciling work of Christ, who defeated death through His own sacrifice on the cross and subsequent resurrection.

GOD OFFERS PROTECTION THROUGH A SACRIFICE

In the United States, significant events are marked by scheduled holidays. We take time each year to celebrate Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Veterans Day, and many more. These days are a time to remember what has happened in the past.

In Exodus 12, we find God doing something on a much grander scale. God changes the calendar of the Israelites so that they celebrate the Passover. He tells Moses and Aaron that there will be a new calendar (vv. 1-2), and it will be a sign of a new beginning. God establishes their calendar based on theology. At the beginning of each year, they will remember God's great salvation. God must be at the forefront of their lives and be central to all that they do.

The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt: “This month is to be the beginning of months for you; it is the first month of your year. Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month they must each select an animal of the flock according to their fathers’ households, one animal per household. If the household is too small for a whole animal, that person and the neighbor nearest his house are to select one based on the combined number of people; you should apportion the animal according to what each person will eat. You must have an unblemished animal, a year-old male; you may take it from either the sheep or the goats. You are to keep it until the fourteenth day of this month; then the whole assembly of the community of Israel will slaughter the animals at twilight. They must take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses where they eat them. [...] “I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night and strike every firstborn male in the land of Egypt, both man and beast. I am Yahweh; I will execute judgments against all the gods of Egypt. The blood on the houses where you are staying will be a distinguishing mark for you; when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No plague will be among you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt. (Ex. 12:1-7,12-13)

The people were to take a lamb on the tenth day of this month for each household, or for the number of people who could eat a lamb. The lamb served as a substitute. However, the lamb was only acceptable if it was a one-year-old male without blemish. In Deuteronomy 17:1, God said that a blemished animal used for a sacrifice was an abomination. Israel needed a perfect substitute, a perfect sacrifice.

In verses 6-7, we see what was to happen to this unblemished lamb. It was to be killed at twilight. The slain lamb would be a vivid reminder to everyone that all deserve judgment. (See Rom. 3:23.) Consequently, a blameless life had to be sacrificed in the place of the guilty people who needed salvation. The blood of the lamb was to be applied to their doorposts (v. 7). The obedience of placing the blood on their doorposts showed that they believed God would keep His word and pass over, sparing that house from judgment. So, Israel escaped judgment through this sacrifice, and salvation was accomplished by faith in the work of the substitute. The blood on their doors served as a sign that judgment had already fallen at that house. Just as the plagues were a sign to Egypt of God's justice and judgment, now the Passover was a sign of God's mercy to Israel.

Thus, we see God continue to keep the promise of Genesis 3:15 and the Abrahamic covenant. In the midst of looming judgment, God provided. He protected Israel from slavery and death for future salvation. In accomplishing this, He said, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you. No plague will be among you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt." God accepted the blood of the sacrifice and passed over their sin.

Now at midnight the LORD struck every firstborn male in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the prisoner who was in the dungeon, and every firstborn of the livestock. During the night Pharaoh got up, he along with all his officials and all the Egyptians, and there was a loud wailing throughout Egypt because there wasn't a house without someone dead. He summoned Moses and Aaron during the night and said, "Get up, leave my people, both you and the Israelites, and go, worship Yahweh as you have asked. Take even your flocks and your herds as you asked and leave, and also bless me." (Ex. 12:29-32)

In this passage we see God's redeeming power displayed in a "great reversal." God began by striking down the firstborns of Egypt. He would end the debates with one cataclysmic sign. He judged all of Egypt without distinction, from rich to poor, good to bad. The cries in the land extended to all peoples. The destroyer would go through the mightiest nation in the world, like a knife through butter.

Earlier we read God's word to Moses, "Then you will say to Pharaoh: This is what Yahweh says: Israel is My firstborn son. I told you: Let My son go so that he may worship Me, but you refused to let him go. Now I will kill your firstborn son!" (Ex. 4:22-23). Here we see that God kept His word.

TIMELINE

THE GOLDEN CALF

Israel commits idolatry against God.

THE COMMANDMENTS (PART I)

God gives Israel instructions on how to relate to Him.

THE COMMANDMENTS (PART II)

God gives Israel instructions on how to relate to others.

GOING FURTHER WITH THE STORY

Through the tenth plague, God turned evil on its head. Pharaoh had enacted an unrighteous judgment on Hebrew boys by throwing them into the Nile. Now, God enacted a righteous judgment on the Egyptians. Pharaoh's judgment came back on his head. In addition, by striking down the "gods" of Egypt, in particular Pharaoh's son, God tells Pharaoh that he isn't God, and neither is his son. There's only one true God! This blow hurts Egypt not only personally through the loss of the son of succession, but also theologically as God's power over their gods is displayed.

CHRIST CONNECTION

This need for a perfect sacrifice reminds us of our own state. We, being corrupted by our sin, cannot save ourselves. Our good works are like the blemished lamb—unworthy before a holy God. We need one who serves as a substitute on our behalf. Jesus is the Lamb for the household of God. Only through faith in Him are our sins covered. He alone is our hope. Paul says, "for Christ our Passover has been sacrificed" (1 Cor 5:7b).

Similarly, those who have been born again have Christ's blood covering them. God sees Christ's blood on us and passes over our sin. He forgives our trespasses and accepts Christ's righteousness as our own.

So how do we respond to this story of the Passover? First, we must remember that true freedom comes in Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). He's the Lamb who provides us with total protection from God's judgment (1 John 2:2; 3:10). He was the spotless, unblemished Lamb, chosen before the foundation of the world (1 Pet. 1:19-20). He was the Lamb whose bones were not broken (John 19:33-36); the ultimate Lamb, crucified during Passover (Matt. 26:26-32). This Lamb will apply His blood to our account (2 Cor. 5:21). So trust in Him alone for salvation.

Second, we must worship the Lamb. If you have come to Him by faith, then you can sing the song of the redeemed (Rev. 5:11-14). Our Savior is worth all of our praise—both our verbal praise and the praise that comes through an obedient life.

Finally, we must tell the world about the Lamb. We should tell everyone about the judgment that is to come, and offer to everyone the good news of salvation through Jesus, our substitute Lamb. Many around the world have yet to hear about the good news.

YOUR STORY 10-15 MINUTES

GROUP QUESTIONS

God's Story has always been designed to connect with your story. It is because of His Story that our stories make sense, have meaning, and carry on into eternity. Use the questions below to help think through how His Story connects with your own.

- **Why was it important for the sacrificial lamb to be spotless? What did being spotless signify?** *Being spotless meant being without blemish, and it signified that the lamb was a perfect sacrifice.*
- **The blood on the door was a public statement for all to see. How does this influence the way we think of our Christian faith? What characteristics should distinguish your life from the lives of others?** *The blood on the doorposts were outward expressions of an internal belief that God would spare those who trusted Him. It was a sign of identification, showing everyone that the members of that household were trusting in God. Help students think of similar ways that their inner trust and faith is outwardly displayed to those around them.*
- **What does the Passover event communicate about our sin?** *At the very least, it tells us that we are all guilty, both Jew and Gentile. No one is without sin, and everyone needs God's free gift of a perfect sacrifice to die in our place.*
- **How has this session challenged you when thinking about God's judgment and grace?** *Answers to this question will vary.*

HIS STORY

God's Story of Redemption through His Son, Jesus Christ.

YOUR STORY

Where your story meets His.

YOUR MISSION 10-15 MINUTES



HEAD

This story causes us to remember the severity and mercy of God. When we think about it, we all will have to admit that we deserve this kind of judgment. We are all like Pharaoh. Some think they will never be judged. They think that they can spend their life piling up pyramids full of stuff, chasing fame, and refusing to bow down to the true God. Sadly, they will end up much like Pharaoh unless they look to God alone for mercy.

- **Why do you think God gave Pharaoh advance notice of the coming plague instead of simply unleashing His wrath? What “advance notice” has God given humanity regarding His judgment?** *Answers to this question will vary.*
- **How should the severity of God’s judgment and the magnitude of His mercy affect the way we live?** *We serve a God who, because of His holiness, must judge sin accordingly. However, we also serve a God who has provided mercy for those who would turn to Him in repentance, and who has born the wrath we deserve in Himself through the death of His Son.*



HEART

In Exodus 12:27b-28, notice the people’s reaction to the Passover instructions: worship and obedience. They “bowed down and worshiped. Then the Israelites went and did this; they did just as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron.” This theme of worship and obedience runs right through Exodus. By remembering who God is and what He has done, they give God praise and obedience.

- **What is the connection between our worship of the Lamb and our witness to the gospel?** *Similar to the Israelites’ pattern of worship and obedience, when we recognize what Christ has done for us through His death and resurrection, we ought to naturally respond in obedience in sharing the good news of the gospel with others.*
- **Share of a time when you responded in obedience as a result of God’s goodness in your life.** *Answers to this question will vary.*



HANDS

God calls us to warn others of His coming judgment and to offer the good news of salvation through Jesus, the substitute Lamb.

- **Do you find it difficult to talk about the coming judgment of God? If so, why?** *Answers to this question will vary.*
- **What difference does it make in talking about judgment knowing that Jesus bears the wrath of judgment in our place through faith in Him?** *Answers to this question will vary.*

▶ ADDITIONAL INFO

LEADER PACK

For this session, point out items #1 and #2 to the students, which contain all of the essential doctrines and key figures students will encounter throughout the quarter of study.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Check out the following additional resources:

- **Leader Training Videos**
- **One Conversations**
- **Midweek Studies (to access your Midweek Study, go to lifeway.com/storystart15)**
- **Circular Timeline Poster**
- **App (for both leader and student)**



Additional suggestions for specific groups are available at

GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources

And for ***free online training*** on how to lead a group visit

MinistryGrid.com/web/TheGospelProject