

Israel was in Egypt. The severity of their slavery had only increased. God, at last, determined that he would direct a fearful blow against Egypt's king and Egypt's people, and deliver his own. And what would create that deliverance? The blood of lambs.

God was incredibly specific about this. He said that the lambs chosen for this sacrifice would need to be without blemish. A lamb with even the smallest speck of disease, the least wound, would not have been allowed for a Passover. He said, "Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year." Then it was in its prime; the young sheep was just ripening into maturity.

Already the preview is forming, isn't it? A male in his prime, without blemish, is to be set aside for the purpose of deliverance. What was to happen to this kind of lamb?

It was to be slaughtered, and its blood caught in a basin--usually a golden basin. Then, as soon as it was taken, the priest standing by the altar, threw the blood on the fire or cast it at the foot of the altar. You can guess what a scene that was. Next, the lamb was to be roasted; but it was not to have a bone of its body broken.

Last week I drew a direct line between this command of the Passover to Jesus on the cross. But that makes it sound like I'm taking credit for discovering the connection, which is silly. John the gospel-writer is the one who makes the connection. After he reports that the Roman soldiers did not break Jesus's legs, but instead opened his side with a spear, he writes, "...these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled, "Not one of his bones will be broken." This is a wonderfully understated way of saying that Jesus is the Passover Lamb to which every other unblemished Passover lamb had pointed. And your faith can receive great strength from the fact, that you see Jesus as the fulfilment of the preview.

I invite you today to see Jesus' blood sprinkled on the doorpost of your life; to see his bones unbroken; to see him roasted in the fire; and by seeing that, to believe that he was roasted for you. This was the price of your deliverance—and mine.

But for a few moments, let's return to the preview. It is evening. The father of the Hebrew household takes his lamb, and examining it once more, looks it over from head to foot, to see if it has a blemish. He finds none. "My son," he says to one of them, "bring me a basin." It is held. He stabs the lamb, and the blood flows into the basin. Father tells Mother to roast the lamb in the fire! "Take care," he says, "that not a bone is broken." Do you see her anxiety, as she puts it down to roast, so gently? Now, says the father, "bring a bunch of hyssop." A child brings it. The father dips it into the blood. "Come here and see what I am about to do." He takes the hyssop in his hands, dips it in the blood, and sprinkles it across the lintel and the doorpost. His children say, "What are you doing?" He answers, "This night the Lord God will pass through to smite the Egyptians, and when he sees the blood upon the lintel and on the two side posts, the Lord will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come into your houses to smite you." It is done; the lamb is cooked; the guests are set down to it; the father of the family has

prayed a blessing; they are sitting down to feast upon it. Look at how the father carefully divides joint from joint, lest a bone should be broken; and he is particular that the smallest child of the family should have some of it to eat, for so the Lord had commanded. He tells them "it is a solemn night—but get ready—in another hour we shall all go out of Egypt." He looks at his rough, calloused hands, and he thinks, "I will never be a slave again." His oldest son, perhaps, has taken awful beatings, and he says, "Son, you've had the task-master's lash on your back this afternoon; but it is the last time you will feel it." He looks at them all, with tears in his eyes—"This is the night the Lord God will deliver you."

When Jesus and his disciples gathered around a table on the night when he was betrayed, this is what they gathered to remember. They were about to re-live what God had done for their forefathers in Egypt. God's people had done this every year for over a thousand years. But at this particular Passover, Jesus says something no one had ever said before. (Mark 14)

*And as they were eating, he took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to them, and said, "Take, this is my body." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. And he said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.*

The disciples would be seeing a lot of Jesus' blood in the next few hours. Just after eating this Passover, they went with Jesus to the garden of Gethsemane. There, Jesus prayed to His Father with such intensity that he was sweating "great drops of blood" (Luke 22: 44). After Jesus was arrested, a crown of thorns was pushed down onto his brow. The Roman whip tore Jesus' back to shreds. The rough crossbeam ground into his shoulders. Then they witnessed Jesus' body pierced with nails and a spear.

When the disciples saw the blood of Jesus, they could only see it as something terrible. At the time, they could not grasp the sign of the Passover. They could not grasp the sign of the blood that saved people from death. They could not recall the words Jesus had spoken to them at the table, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many." But in time, after the resurrection, they would understand. They would come to see how the pieces fit together. Jesus' followers would not only come to believe it, but they would proclaim that they had been there to see Jesus' blood as it was spilled, and they would stake their lives on this; that it was not a bad sign; on the contrary: Jesus' blood was forgiveness and life. Not one bone of His was broken. Jesus has been slain for us, our Passover Lamb. I will never be a slave again.