

**The Passover**  
**Exodus 12:1–13**  
**March 1, 2026**

I don't know how much you've thought about the term, "weekend." It's a word we've all used our entire lives; honestly, it's a term I doubt I'll ever fully jettison.

However, I've thought about the term a *lot* this week, trying to consider what it implies, how particular assumptions *surrounding* it function in the world around us, and maybe how all that could—*potentially*—influence us as God's people.

First, let's consider what the term implies. Very simply, the term "weekend" *includes* two days: Saturday and Sunday. I'm *not* saying your printed wall calendar shows the week that way; I'm saying the term *itself* assumes that. And I'm saying the term assumes that the week *ends* on Sunday.

It's *certainly* not a stretch to say the world around us functions as if that's the case. The *world's* week begins on Monday. Sunday night is when you drive back in town, pack the lunches, do the homework, and—*generally*—prepare for the week ahead.

Why bring all this up? In part because what we *think* affects what we do. And what we *do*—in particular our habits—ends up forming us, at least to some degree.

The God who knows *that*—the Creator that knows how His creation works—wants us to know who He is. And He reveals *aspects* of Himself in the meals He designs for us—meals He instructs us to observe repeatedly, in certain ways at certain times.

We'll see this *first* in Exodus 12—in the liturgy of the Passover, in the Lamb at the center of it, and in His design and governance of this meal. But not *just* in that meal, also in the one the Passover points to, the one we'll observe together at the close of the service, *today*.

1. **The Liturgy of the Passover** (vv. 1–11)

For a number of weeks, we've journeyed through the plagues. Last week we considered the last plague. The LORD told Moses that after *this* one, Pharaoh wouldn't merely *let* them go, he'd *drive* the Israelites away (11:1). Because during the night ahead—around midnight—darkness would deepen further. From the firstborn of the Pharaoh to the firstborn of the slave girl, death would come (11:5). And a cry unlike any before or since would spill out from every household among the Egyptians.

The LORD said all this would come about. Over the next few weeks, as Exodus unfolds it, we'll consider various angles of this final plague—also known as the Passover.

And in this *first* point we consider the intricacy of His design of it. Verse 1: **Now the LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, "This month shall be the beginning of months for you; it is to be the first month of the year to you."** Most likely, in *that* culture the new year would've begun in the fall, at the end of the harvest.<sup>1</sup> After *that*, the calendar would flip.

But God desired that Israel be different—stand out. And they were to be so, in part, based on what He'd done in and for them. What was about to happen in Exodus 12 was to be the defining event of their lives. There's a sense in which He is inaugurating a new beginning.<sup>2</sup> God aims to reorient time itself.

We'll see next week more of the purpose behind this, but what God would soon do was something they were to memorialize, to remember, to *embed* within the patterns of their life together as God's people.

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<sup>1</sup> Doug Stuart, *Exodus*, NAC, 272; Jeffrey Leonard, *Exodus 1:1–15:21*, 315.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Morales, *Exodus: Old and New*, 67.

A number of us went to Oak Forest on Thursday to read to the kids for an event called “Read for the Record.” Each of us read the *same* book to the class we were assigned. People all over the country joined us to read the same book at various schools. Apparently over 2 million did it last year. And that’s why it’s called, “Read for the Record.” To be clear: I love the idea. I’m glad we’re a part of it. I love books. I like serving the school behind us.

But let me be clearer: we were not *close* to breaking any sort of record. Tens of millions of people gather on the *same* day *every* week so that they might read from the *same* book. And they’ve done so for thousands of years. Because something *quite* significant for our faith happened on the *first* day of the week. It was *so* significant that the people of God began to gather on *that* day rather than the day prior. God reorients time. And He does so based on His saving acts.

For the Israelites, He’s not *only* specific about the first month of the year, but also about some particular dates within that month. Verse 2 says that **on the tenth of this month they are each one to take a lamb for themselves.** Then they keep that lamb for *four* days. Verse 6 says that they **shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month.**

The *month* is specified. The *dates* within the month are specified. And even the *time* is. What they’re to do with that lamb, they’re to do **at twilight** (v. 6).

Yet to consider the liturgy of the Passover *rightly* we need to consider *more* than merely the month, date, and time. The Lord is *also* specific concerning the ones participating. If what we considered thus far is the *when*, verse 3 tells us the *who*.

God instructs Moses to say all this to **the congregation of Israel.** This is the first time in the Scriptures that Israel is referred to as a “congregation.” As you might guess, it’s a phrase used *repeatedly* going forward.<sup>3</sup> I bring that up because it’s important not to miss what’s developing here. Thus far in Exodus God has told us of the Hebrews’ multiplication, He’s told us of their multiplied afflictions, and we’ve heard of multiplied plagues sent upon their enemies. But we haven’t *yet* seen the LORD gather His people and speak to them as a gathered congregation.

We do here. They’re gathered so He might address them. And in this address, He instructs them. There’s a *when*, a *who*, and a *what*.

And there’s a lot of “what.” We’ll consider *more* next week. But we ought not miss that the Passover celebration is, fundamentally, a meal. Though it’s not a solo lunch, nor a meal eaten passively; rather, it’s a meal eaten purposefully *with* a particular people.

Further, it’s a meal eaten in a particular way. Let me give you the principle first; and then we’ll aim to see it in the Bible. The principle of this meal is at least two–fold: (1) everyone had to eat the meat; (2) all the meat had to be eaten.<sup>4</sup>

That’s the reason for the somewhat odd commands in verse 4: **Now if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his neighbor nearest to his house to take one according to the number of persons in them; according to what each man should eat, you are to divide the lamb.** To put it in our terms, if a household only had two or three people, they might not be able to—by *themselves*—consume a whole lamb at one sitting.<sup>5</sup> But the principle holds: everyone was to participate; and there were to be no left–overs. Verse 10 details that even further: **And you shall not leave any of it over until morning, but whatever is left of it until morning, you shall burn with fire.**

The unsaid principle of this meal is that it was to be eaten by faith. Most obviously, we’ll see this aspect in the second point of this sermon. But in *less* obvious ways, we see it in the elements of

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<sup>3</sup> Leonard, 291.

<sup>4</sup> Stuart, 274.

<sup>5</sup> Conversely, this *could* produce a situation where a household had so many people that the single lamb for that household meant that everyone received a smaller portion. Stuart, 273–274.

the meal, and in the way they ate it. Concerning the latter—their method—verse 11 says this: **Now you shall eat it in this manner: with your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it in haste.**

Why? Why must they eat so quickly?

Because *soon*, they would be leaving. What does this have to do with faith? Keep in mind that they'd lived in Egypt for 430 years. In the houses *they'd* built, in the communities their parents *and* grandparents grew up in, they were to make a meal “to go.” They didn't normally wear their sandals in the house, nor hold a staff during dinner.<sup>6</sup> But as they prepared *this* meal, and as they ate it, they were to be ready to leave at a moment's notice—likely, *never* to return.

To do that would be to eat believing what God says. And to not save *any* of this meal for the journey would be to believe He'd not *only* deliver them, but also provide for the following day.

The Lord has spelled out the *when, who, what, and how* of this Passover meal.

I won't connect all the dots for you just yet. But note that the people of God divide up a meal among themselves. It's a meal they eat together on a particular date. And they eat it by faith.

Secondly, we note the most significant aspect of this meal.

## 2. The Lamb of the Passover (vv. 1–11)

As we've noted, in verse 3 they were to **take a lamb for themselves . . . a lamb for each household**. On the tenth day of the month, they were to pick their lamb out, based on certain parameters. Verse 5 tells us those parameters: **Your lamb shall be an unblemished male a year old.**

We might ask: would an unblemished lamb have a different taste than one that was lame, or spotted? And if *not*, why have this particular requirement?

After they killed the lamb at twilight, but *before* they ate it, verse 7 tells us what they were to do first: **they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses in which they eat it.**

The doorway, in *one* sense, stood for the house. The house represented the household within.<sup>7</sup> And keep in mind: these were a people facing a plague against their firstborn. Maybe you say, “I thought the LORD distinguishes between Israel and Egypt.” He has; and He will. But in this case it's *not* without asking His people to trust Him and His Word. At twilight they were to kill the unblemished lamb. Then, in verse 7 they were to take some of the blood and apply it to the doorposts of their houses.

And they were to do this trusting what God promised in verse 13: **The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live; 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.**

It's possible to read this story and subtly assume it was *only* Egypt that deserved death. Surely the Hebrews *deserve*, and have earned, life. But to be clear, *nothing* in Exodus has asserted that. In fact, as we keep reading this book, we'll become *quite* aware that this grumbling, golden-calf constructing people delivered by God were delivered due to mercy alone.

And that's what's happening here too. At the center of this Passover meal was a lamb—an unblemished lamb—whose blood was shed that they might live.

I don't think it's incidental that after the lamb was slain, and the blood applied, the *whole* lamb—intact—was roasted over the fire. The meal to come would *not* be a bunch of meat in a pot

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<sup>6</sup> Stuart, 277–278. By the way, to roast the meat (as verse 9 instructs) would be a fast, simple way to cook it. And unleavened bread doesn't have to wait for dough to rise, also lessening the necessary prep time.

<sup>7</sup> Morales, 70.

of stew with indistinguishable features. Unmistakably, maybe *uncomfortably*, before them was the body of a lamb that died. In Goshen, a mother or a father could've known the cry ahead for all of Egypt, looked at the lamb sacrificed, and believed that his firstborn would continue to breathe.

Death wouldn't come to them; because a death had already occurred in their place.

Centuries later, one who'd grown up observing this very meal didn't miss what all this pointed to. In 1 Corinthians 5, the Apostle Paul wrote: **For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed** (1 Cor. 5:7). Peter grew up celebrating the Passover as well. And he reminded a bunch of elect exiles that they were **not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold . . . but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ** (1 Peter 1:19).

### 3. The LORD of the Passover (vv. 11b–13)

Verse 11 ends with that *really* important phrase. The instructions have been given. And verse 11 ends: **it is the LORD's Passover**. The *when*, the *who*, the *what*, and the *how* are all told us because it's *His* Passover. What comes *about* comes about because He is LORD of it.

Which is what's described in verse 12: **For I will go through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments—I am the LORD**. Yahweh's revealed Himself—His *name* at the burning bush and His power in the plagues. And He continues to make Himself known in this final plague.

Though we've attempted to highlight the true combatants throughout the plague narrative, verse 12 makes what's implied quite explicit. It is against the gods (plural) of Egypt that He executes these judgments (plural). None of this is random, nor reckless. One after another, Yahweh has demonstrated His superiority over the deities these pagans kept bowing before. And in the hours ahead, every household would know who in fact held the power of life and death, and who, by implication, did not.<sup>8</sup> God makes Himself known.

## Conclusion

By the way, after Paul writes, **For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed**, he *then* writes this, **Therefore, let us celebrate the feast** (1 Cor. 5:7).

Why did I start with the stuff about the term “weekend?” Because the week doesn't *end* on Sunday. The New Testament is clear that it *begins* there. And it does so—God designed it that way—*so that* we might start our week gathering with God's people to consider *our* deliverance, at something of a feast, that we might be strengthened for the week ahead.

Unlike these Hebrews, we're *not* sharing this meal as a people still enslaved, but as a people set free.<sup>9</sup> Because hundreds and hundreds of years *after* Exodus 12—during the Passover they continued to celebrate—the unblemished Lamb of God sat at a table with His disciples.

Luke gives us the scene:

**And when He had taken some bread and given thanks, He broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.” And in the same way He took the cup after they had eaten, saying, “This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood”** (Lk. 22:19–20).

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<sup>8</sup> Stuart, 280.

<sup>9</sup> Leonard, 317.

