

THE PASSOVER, PART 2

EXODUS 12:1-13

The first nine plagues are finished. The important thing to understand about this is they were all supernatural acts of God and part of their purpose was to show the powerless nature of the pagan gods Egypt worshiped. They were also designed to show Pharaoh, who was thought to be a god himself, powerless. Some of these judgments use natural processes not unfamiliar to the Egyptians, but they differed from natural acts both quantitatively and qualitatively. These facts defeat any attempt to explain them by means of natural processes that just happened to all coincide at once which is the standard rationalistic explanation. Their ultimate purpose was to reveal to both the pagans and the Israelites the power and the nature of the one true God of the universe.

The stage had been arranged and set by Yahweh for Pharaoh, under compulsion, to send the Israelites out of Egypt. The Egyptian subjects of Pharaoh were afraid they would all be dead if they didn't get Israel out of their land. The final plague, the death of the firstborn, would be the final judgment that Yahweh would inflict on Egypt and the result would be the expulsion of Israel from that land. The salvation of the Israelites from this final judgment has been memorialized in the Passover. It has enormous significance for Israel; they observe it every year and our church ordinance, the Lord's Supper, flows directly from the Jewish observance of Passover.

Higher critics claim the Passover pericope wasn't written until the Babylonian exile. That, of course, isn't true and the Passover is the oldest continually observed religious service in the world. It has been observed now for about 3,500 years. Passover is a powerful picture of Christ and His sacrifice on the cross and it provides the background for the Lord's last Passover and the Upper Room discourse.

First, the Lord gave Moses instructions for the Passover.

Exodus 12:1–2 ¹Now the LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt,
²“This month [חֹדֶשׁ] shall be the beginning of months for you; it is to be the first month of the year to you.

It is difficult to pin down what “it is to be the first month of the year to you” means in terms of the beginning of the year. We have to realize that calendars have changed throughout history. Many kings and nations established their own calendars. It gets confusing because the Jewish calendar has changed somewhat. The calendar they used after the Babylonian captivity was an amalgam of the Babylonian and Jewish calendars at least as far as the names of the months are concerned. You can see evidence of that in the month named Tammuz, the name of a god in the Babylonian mother/child cult. Was Yahweh creating a new calendar for the Israelites to use making the month of the Passover the actual beginning of their calendar year? That may have been the case. Now, the Jews have two beginnings, one is religious beginning in the month of Passover and also known as the new year for kings and still considered the first month of the year, and one is civil beginning at the end of summer during the

celebration we know as Rosh Hashanah which is the beginning of the Jewish calendar year. The Jews believe Rosh Hashanah marks the creation of the heavens and earth. The religious calendar begins with the month of Abib (later and to this day it is Nisan) which occurs in March/April and the civil calendar begins with the month of Tishri in September/October. Essentially, this means the religious calendar year runs from Abib to Abib and the agricultural calendar year runs from Tishri to Tishri. Their calendars are based on a combination lunar/solar cycle. Months, *חַדָּשִׁים*, means month, monthly, or new moon; it refers to a calendar lunar month which begins on a new moon.

The change in name of the month of Abib is clearly presented in the Scriptures. Abib is used four times in Exodus (Ex. 13:4, 23:15, 34:18) and twice in Deuteronomy (16:1). In Nehemiah 2:1 and Esther 3:7, both of which are during or after the Babylonian exile, Nisan is used to refer to the same month indicating the approximate time when the name change occurred.

The calendar as the Jews use it today is thought to have been defined by the Sanhedrin president Hillel II in approx. 359 A.D., but the original details are uncertain.¹ The actual details of the calendar are quite complicated. The Jews view time differently than we understand time to be reckoned. "The western sense of time is basically the measurement of linear, progressive motion, but in Hebrew thinking, time is seen as an ascending helix, with recurring patterns or cycles that present a thematic message or revelation of sacred history. Indeed,

¹ <http://www.tondering.dk/claus/cal/hebrew.php> (accessed 1 August 2017).

part of being a Jew today is to be mindful of this divinely ordered spiral of time and to order our affairs accordingly.”²

The time table the Lord built into the Passover here in Exodus 12 means it begins on Abib 14 with the slaying of the lamb but the meal is eaten in the evening which places it on Abib 15. The Passover lamb was slain as the sun set on Abib 14. This means the Passover begins after the end of daylight on Abib 14 and the evening of Abib 15 begins. I think there are Jewish groups who reckon it differently and maintain the fourteenth date. I found both in various Jewish publications and web sites. It's a little complicated.

Moses and Aaron received the Passover instructions from the Lord which they were to pass along to the Israelites. It is not insignificant those two men are from the Levitical tribe of priests and we know Aaron would eventually become the first High Priest. The priests were charged with teaching the people the Law and this is the prototypical teaching event although it is before the giving of the Mosaic Law. In terms of this plague, the men of God do nothing except relay God's instructions to the Israelites so they can prepare to be spared as the death of the firstborn takes place. The actual observance of the Passover that will protect the Israelites from death was a onetime event “in the land of Egypt.” The celebration of the Passover in the future will be a memorial of that singular night in Egypt.

² <http://www.hebrew4christians.com/Holidays/Calendar/calendar.html> (accessed 1 August 2017).

Passover and Unleavened Bread in terms of memorials are permanent ordinances for Israel that predate the Mosaic Law. It seems that as long as Israel exists, these Feasts will be celebrated. The Mosaic Law will be done away but these Feasts apparently will not.

We know that Israel will always exist, but Replacement Theologians cannot acknowledge that fact. Here is an example of how a professor in a Reformed Calvinist seminary understands this situation. “His [Moses’] long-term audience was all Israel throughout history—at the present time the church, an audience positioned to benefit from the real point of the exodus story: that God supernaturally delivers his people from bondage to bring them to a promised land and that they belong to him, not to themselves. These features make the exodus event powerfully relevant to modern believers ...”³ Of course, the exodus event is “powerfully relevant to modern believers” because it deals with Israel and Israel is “powerfully relevant” to understanding God’s program for history including the Messianic Kingdom in which Israel will have a powerful role, but this guy rejects that truth and replaces Israel with the church all the way back to Egypt. He has to spiritualize this Scripture in order to make it say what his theology says it should say rather than using literal hermeneutics to allow the Word of God to speak for itself. What kind of impact will the students leaving this teacher’s seminary as pastors have on the people whose spiritual welfare they are

³ Douglas K. Stuart, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture: Exodus*, gen. ed. E. Ray Clendenen (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 270-271.

supposed to shepherd? They will be leading people away from the truth of the plan and purpose of God instead of to it. It is interesting to note, this particular theologian is heralded as an expert in ancient languages: Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, Latin, Egyptian, Ugaritic, Akkadian, Syriac, and Arabic. That's excellent, but don't be enamored of some teacher simply because they are brilliant when it comes to the languages. The important issue is, how are they utilizing the knowledge of those languages to interpret the Scriptures? Are they using them to actually interpret God's Word according to literal hermeneutics or are they disregarding the languages they know so well in order to impose their theology onto the text? Whenever you are using extra-biblical resources to help you study the Bible, which is fine and can be quite useful, you have to be very careful concerning some of these so-called scholars. Be discerning. If Israel is written out of the Exodus story, then all meaning is lost and the plan of God for history cannot be properly understood—and that is a tragedy for the believer who desires to know what God actually had to say to us by putting the story of Israel's creation, relationship to God, and formation into a nation culminating in the Exodus and entrance into the Promised Land as a major part of the Word of God. If that isn't properly understood, then the Word of God is not properly understood.

The instructions for what to eat in the Passover meal, how to handle it, when to kill it, what to do with the blood, how to cook the animal, and how to eat it are given by God through the prophets. This judgment did not happen immediately after Moses' last meeting with Pharaoh; a few days elapsed.

Exodus 12:3 ³Speak to all the congregation [עֵדָה] of Israel, saying, ‘On the tenth of this month they are each one to take a lamb [שֶׁה] for themselves, according to their fathers’ households [בָּיִת], a lamb [שֶׁה] for each household [בָּיִת].

Moses and Aaron were given instructions to relay to “all the congregation” of the Israelites in order to properly and safely prepare for the Passover. It is doubtful this refers to all the people at once in one large congregational meeting since they were a group of two million people or more and spread out over a fairly small yet significant geographical area. They were most likely passing these instructions on to the leaders of the tribes and clans who would then be responsible for disseminating this information to everyone.

Congregation, עֵדָה, means congregation, assembly, band, entourage, or a pack depending on context. It can refer to various kinds of groups or communities. It comes from a root meaning to determine, decide, ascertain, or gather together. The problem with understanding this word is that some Replacement theologians want to make this a term that always applies to the believing community and then use that definition to claim Israel was the church in the Old Testament. For example, in connection with the book of Ezra, one theologian wrote, “And herein lies its significance for the Church in all ages, which has always recognized its organic continuity with the ‘congregation’ of Israel...”⁴ Notice how he slips the “always recognized” dogma that Israel was the Old Testament church into his text as though it is total truth accepted by everyone which, in his mind and in his theological system, makes it unquestioned fact. I don’t

⁴ James Oscar Boyd, “The Composition of the Book of Ezra,” *The Presbyterian and Reformed Review* 11, no. 41–44 (1900): 289.

recognize that as fact and I hope you don't either. The church has not "always recognized" that Israel was the church in the Old Testament. In this context, congregation simply refers to the Israelites as a cohesive group of related people without any religious significance attached to the meaning. This is the first time the word was used to describe the Israelites in totality as a community which may be suggesting that God's program for forming them into a nation has been completed and they are now ready to leave Egypt as that nation.

We don't know exactly how long before the Passover it was that God gave these instructions to Moses and Aaron, but it wasn't very many, but we also know it didn't immediately take place either. We do know it was past the first day of the month of Abib because the Lord referred to "this month." We also know it was before the tenth because that was when they were to select the lamb and some amount of time had to be allocated in order for God's instructions to be disseminated to the Israelites. We also know that once the lamb was selected, it would be four more days before the Passover (Ex. 12:6). There had to be at least five days and as many as thirteen or fourteen days between the time when Moses was banished from Pharaoh's presence under penalty of death and the night of the judgment.

The sacrificial animal was to be a sheep or a goat. There was no provision for substituting any other animal for the lamb. The word translated lamb, *אֵזֶר*, refers to a young lamb of sheep or a young kid of goats which are part of a larger flock of animals. The lamb is the central element in the observance. "[T]he lamb

was the core requisite for Passover. It was the centerpiece of all that was accomplished. If there was no lamb, there would be no deliverance. So central was the lamb to the Passover observance that the term 'the Passover' came to be used interchangeably of the lamb as well as the holiday. One could not exist without the other. The lamb embodied the holiday, and without it, the holiday was meaningless."⁵ If there was no lamb, there was no blood and no protection was afforded by means of the application of the blood. Later, in 1 Corinthians 5:7, Paul referred to Christ as "our Passover." Some of our English translations interpret this verse as "Passover [or Paschal] Lamb," but that is incorrect; lamb is not in the original manuscript. The Jews came to refer to the lamb as the Passover and that was what Paul was writing.

Household, *בֵּית*, means a family or a household. A family is a very small unit of a clan or tribe consisting of parents, children, close relatives and including servants living in relatively close proximity. In this context, it refers to the house as a structure and the family living within it. The Passover was to be a time of family togetherness while God exercised his judgment on the firstborn of Egypt. Each family was to protect their own home by following God's instructions concerning the blood, remain in their own home, and eat the Passover meal in their own home. It was not an individual event, unconnected to other people; it was done in family units. The entire nation was, in a sense, observing the Passover together,

⁵ Kevin Howard and Marvin Rosenthal. *The Feasts of the Lord: God's Prophetic Calendar from Calvary to the Kingdom* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1997), 50.

as a community, thereby exhibiting an element of national unity, but it was done in and through the individual family unit.

Exodus 12:4 ⁴Now if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his neighbor nearest to his house are to take one according to the number of persons *in them*; according to what each man should eat, you are to divide the lamb.

Obviously, some individual households would be too small to consume an entire lamb; therefore, provisions were made for the nearest neighbors who also were too small to consume an entire lamb to collaborate in procuring the lamb and to divide the meat according to the number of people in each family. Much later, one of the Jewish Targums would set the number of people who could eat a single lamb at ten.

Exodus 12:5 ⁵Your lamb shall be an unblemished [תמים] male a year old; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats.

Lambing took place in the spring of the year and this event is in the spring so it makes sense that the youngest available animal for eating would be a year old. It had to be male which later relates to the fact that all the firstborn males belonged to God and had to be redeemed. It could be either a lamb or a goat but nothing else and it had to be unblemished.

Unblemished, תמים, means without defect, unblemished; it pertains to having a good quality animal without handicap implying a prime animal of high monetary value. Why would the animal have to be perfect? You can eat an animal that has outward physical defects just as easily as you can eat one that looks perfect on the outside. First, a perfect God deserves and requires a perfect

sacrifice. There is obviously a spiritual aspect to the requirement that a sacrifice symbolizing the Messiah should be perfect just as the Messiah would be perfect when He came to be offered as the substitutionary sacrifice.

1 Peter 1:18–19 ¹⁸knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, ¹⁹but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.

1 John 3:3 ³And everyone who has this hope *fixed* on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

The most obvious connection between Christ and the Passover is the fact that He is referred to as the Lamb or the Lamb of God in the New Testament, referring to the One who was slain and who takes away the sin of the world.

John 1:29, 36 ²⁹The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! ... ³⁶and he looked at Jesus as He walked, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God!”

Revelation 5:6, 12 ⁶And I saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders a Lamb standing, as if slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth. ... ¹²saying with a loud voice, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.”

Instructions were given for the time of the lamb's death.

Exodus 12:6 ⁶You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month, then the whole assembly [קְהָל] of the congregation [עֵדָה] of Israel is to kill it at twilight [עֶרֶב].

Earlier we noted that Replacement theologians use the word congregation, עֵדָה, to claim the church is in the Old Testament; they do the same thing with the word translated assembly, קְהָל, which is generally considered to be synonymous with congregation although there are some contexts that present

some nuanced differences. The word means an assembly, company, or congregation and any sort of assembly may be designated; context must decide the meaning. It does often refer to a religious gathering, but it doesn't have to do so and that is not the use in Exodus 12:6. It is simply referring to the Israelites as a united group of Abraham's descendants who were formed into a nation by God for His purposes.

The word twilight, עֶרֶב, means evening or sundown; it is the period of time related to the setting of the sun from late or very late afternoon to the beginning of the dark night time. It marks the end of one day and the beginning of the new day. That's why Passover is technically on Abib 15 rather than Abib 14 although almost everyone uses the Abib 14 date. The lamb is killed at twilight then roasted and eaten which places the meal on the fifteenth because the new day begins in the evening.

Why the four day interval between the selection of the lamb and the killing of the lamb for the Passover meal? Two of the theologians on staff at *The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry* believe it allowed for time to insure the lamb was, in fact, unblemished and fit to be the Passover. Secondly, it gave the family time to become attached to the lamb. In Exodus 12:3, they were to pick "a lamb," but in Exodus 12:5, it had become "your lamb." That is supposed to impress on them the personal and costly nature of the sacrifice on their behalf as

the innocent lamb is sacrificed on their behalf.⁶ Then, some theologians relate that to the fact Jesus presented Himself to the Jewish people for inspection so they could see He was the Passover, but they rejected Him instead.

Exodus 12:7 ⁷Moreover, they shall take some of the blood [דָּם] and put it on the two doorposts [מְזוּזוֹתַיִם] and on the lintel [מִשְׁקוּפֵי] of the houses in which they eat it.

The doorposts, מְזוּזוֹתַיִם, refers to the two posts on the right and left of the door and the lintel, מִשְׁקוּפֵי, refers to the crosspiece over the door. It is the means by which people enter into the home. The symbolism here is that death would not enter the home that was marked or protected by the blood smeared on the doorposts and the lintel. As a sign, the blood on the door signified that the family inside was faithfully following God's instructions and exercising their belief that God would do exactly as He said He would do if the blood was applied and that is pass over that home and spare the firstborn inside. Blood sacrifice was nothing new so they understood to some extent the concept of substitutionary sacrifice that was going on here. Blood was not placed on the threshold of the door; it was sacred in the plan of God and must not be subjected to that kind of indignity. It was not to be treated lightly; the symbolism of the blood it was significantly important.

The door also represented a place of security to the people of the Middle East. Later in Israel's history as they succumbed to idolatry, God rebuked them for placing idols "behind the door and the doorpost" (Is. 57:8). That was likely

⁶ Kevin Howard and Marvin Rosenthal, *The Feasts of the Lord: God's Prophetic Calendar from Calvary to the Kingdom* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1997), 49-50.

done because they thought the idols afforded some sort of protection. By Isaiah's time, they had obviously forgotten the lessons of the Exodus judgments in terms of where their protection came from and which God was actually their powerful guardian. Pagan gods afforded them no protection at all.

Blood, דם, refers to the red liquid in creatures which is essential for life. In other words, blood is the means by which life is sustained. This verse doesn't explain the full-blown doctrine of blood sacrifice, but it does add information to the doctrinal development of the meaning of substitutionary sacrifice as biblical revelation continued to progress afterward.

No blood equals no life. In the Old Testament, blood often denotes a life that is offered up in death. When the blood is removed, life is terminated. This is the basis for the sanctity of life. No man is allowed to shed the blood, meaning remove the life, of another man and the death penalty is the judgment imposed for unlawfully doing so.

Exodus 20:13 13" You shall not murder.

Genesis 9:6 6" Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed, For in the image of God He made man.

Through the blood, we have the concept of a substitutionary blood sacrifice that renders a person acceptable to God. The innocent pays the price for the guilty. Why God devised this method of dealing with sin instead of some other way, we don't know, but this is the method he prescribed.

Leviticus 17:11, 14 11" For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason

of the life that makes atonement.'... ¹⁴"For as for the life of all flesh, its blood is identified with its life. Therefore I said to the sons of Israel, 'You are not to eat the blood of any flesh, for the life of all flesh is its blood; whoever eats it shall be cut off.'

Hebrews 9:22 ²²And according to the Law, one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

The blood had to be drained from the sacrifice before it could be offered to God; it was sprinkled on the altar or buried in the ground. It could not be eaten; it was such an important element in God's way of dealing with sin that it was deemed to be too sacred for profane use. The primary theological emphasis of blood is the role it does play in providing a remedy for the sin problem. The blood itself is not the remedy because Christ is the remedy, but it plays a part in the process. The slaying of the Passover lamb is the type fulfilled by the sacrifice of Christ on the cross as the antitype.

Exodus 12:8–9 ⁸'They shall eat the flesh that same night, roasted with fire, and they shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter [מָרָר] herbs. ⁹'Do not eat any of it raw or boiled at all with water, but rather roasted with fire, both its head and its legs along with its entrails.

The lamb was eaten that night. It was to be roasted with fire and not cooked any other way. Pagans apparently ate raw or half-boiled meat during some of their religious activities so the Israelites' meat may have been roasted in order to avoid any resemblance to pagan practices. Part of the symbolism in the meal was the haste involved in preparing and eating it in anticipation of their emancipation and the need to quickly leave Egypt. Roasting the meat

didn't involve a lot of elaborate preparation; all they needed was a fire and a spit on which to hold the animal over the flames.

The lamb would have been butchered but probably not quite in the normal manner; no bones could be broken (Ex. 12:46). It wasn't roasted intact without removing the entrails first. The command to roast the entrails does not necessarily mean they roasted every bit of the inner parts of the animal. There are parts of the animal that need to be removed or they will ruin the meat such as the bile sac on the liver, the intestines, and the bladder. I would think roasting it with the hair on, which is flammable, would make it taste like an animal pulled out of a barn fire rather than meat that was roasted over an open flame. Certainly, they roasted all the organ meats they ordinarily ate probably including at least the heart, liver, tongue, and possible the kidneys and the brain, and whatever else they routinely ate. Some theologians, Jews included, think the animal was roasted completely whole and while I can acknowledge that is possible, it doesn't seem practical to roast the animal without any butchering at all. It would still be a whole animal in appearance as it was eaten.

The bread was unleavened. This fact also related to haste because there was no time to wait for the bread to rise. Leaven suggests corruption, decay, uncleanness. Christ our Passover was the sinless Bread of Life (John 6:35).

John 6:35 ³⁵Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst.

The meal was accompanied by bitter herbs. This is most likely a reminder of the slavery they had endured and all the difficult hardships involuntary servitude entailed. That harkens back to the revelation in Exodus 1:13-14 where it says, “The Egyptians compelled the sons of Israel to labor rigorously; and they made their lives bitter with hard labor ...” After this first night, the Passover was to forever be a memorial or a remembrance of what took place on this night and of what led up to it. The bitter herbs are a continual reminder to the Jewish people of their slavery in Egypt. Bitter, *מרר*, refers to some edible plants or roots with a bitter taste which is a taste sensation that is acrid, astringent, and disagreeable. These herbs were probably some kind of bitter lettuce, chicory, or endive which are all native to Egypt.

Exodus 12:10 ¹⁰And you shall not leave any of it over until morning, but whatever is left of it until morning, you shall burn with fire.

They didn't need leftovers; God was taking them out of this place. The Israelites didn't know it yet, or at least not the extent of it, but God was going to provide for and sustain them once they left Goshen. They were eating this meal and then they were leaving.

Exodus 12:11 ¹¹Now 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—it is the LORD's Passover [*פסח*].

The way they were commanded to be dressed is the opposite that which one would think about when enjoying a leisurely meal. This meal was prepared and eaten in haste and they were dressed to leave by girding up their garments

and keeping the shoes on their feet so they could quickly get their journey underway. They wouldn't have to get dressed to leave. They were even commanded to hold their staff in their hand while they ate. The whole picture is one of hurry up and haste in order to get out of Egypt as soon as God struck Israel's firstborn and Pharaoh was compelled to order them out of Egypt.

This is the Lord's Passover. Implied in all this is the fact the right to impose such a judgment belongs to the Creator of life. He gives life and only He has the right to take life unless He delegates that to someone else which, in this case, He did not. This was God's plan; He conceived it and He carried it out. He was the One who graciously passed over the Israelites and struck the Egyptians in divine judgment. Passover, פסח , means to pass or spring over although some theologians believe it means to defend and protect. Both could be correct in terms of this verse; the Lord was defending and protecting the Israelites and He was going to pass over them and spare them judgment. Figuratively, it can mean to spare, to show mercy. The word eventually came to mean the sacrifice itself and then the whole celebration.

Exodus 12:12–13 ¹²For 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. ¹³The 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.

Yahweh is going to go through the land and strike down the firstborn in Egypt. This will take place on that night in only a matter of hours. All the other

plagues came upon Egypt at the command of God and they struck the Egyptians with the consequences of each plague which were different from one to the next. In this judgment, God Himself touched the Egyptians and introduced the consequences of the judgment without using some intermediate cause such as a disease or an armed force of men. He struck down the firstborn Himself however it was that He did it. Last week, we noted the naturalistic explanation involved contaminated grain fed to the firstborn males and animals before others were fed but, God said He was going to strike down the firstborn and He didn't identify any intermediate agent that would do it for Him. He didn't use contaminated grain; that would have made His action in this judgment just like His action in the others, but He didn't do that. He struck the death blow to the firstborn Himself. It didn't have to be a "hands on" strike so to speak; He only had to say the Word in order to remove life from someone, but the point is He did it and He did not use an intermediate agent of some sort. He was executing this judgment because He is Yahweh and it is His prerogative to do so.

The blood applied to the doorposts was the demonstration of the faith of those who obeyed the command to put it on those doorposts and when Yahweh saw that demonstration of faith, He would pass over that house. Simply killing the sacrifice was insufficient; unless the blood was applied, the death of the innocent lamb was in vain. The blood had no personal efficacy for any individual Israelite unless and until it was applied. It was sufficient to save the firstborn from death, but it had to be appropriated. That is the same situation people are

in today. Christ's blood has been shed, He has died on the cross, He has been raised from the dead, and His salvation is available to all, but only those who apply it in terms of belief in Him and His work will be saved.

In this judgment, we have the picture of God's grace as He saves the nation of Israel's firstborn in the midst of judgment on Egypt by the death and shedding of the blood of an innocent substitute, the lamb. Without the provision of the blood, this plague would have struck the Israelites as well as the Egyptians. Could God have spared them without the shedding and application of blood? Of course, He could. He spared them from the other judgments without it. But the aim of this judgment is specifically said to be death which was only an ancillary consideration in the other judgments. Most of the other plagues were a serious nuisance the consequences of which could have led to death more in the long-term due to starvation with the possible exception of the hail which may have killed a few people who refused to heed the warning. This judgment was all about death. This typifies judgment and eternal death; therefore, this is a picture of Christ and what would take place 1,500 years later when Jesus, the Lamb of God, would shed His blood, the innocent for the guilty, in order to provide for the salvation of mankind.

Yahweh specifically says here that one of the purposes of this judgment is to prove the pagan gods of Egypt powerless. This judgment is going to particularly strike at the supposed divinity of Pharaoh. If Pharaoh is such a powerful god, why can't he stop these terrible things that are happening to him and his na-

tion? If Pharaoh is such a powerful god, why can't he keep the next in line powerful god, his son, from death? Because he can't do those things, his supposed divinity is not only seriously questionable, it is disproven. The Egyptians had to have had their faith, phony though it was they believed it, shaken to the core. Pharaoh must have been shaken to the core as well, although subsequent events would prove the shock didn't last long. God's desire is to see people come to faith. Is it not possible that some of the Egyptian pagans came to faith in Yahweh during this time? We don't know, but that is certainly possible. They can't be written off simply because they had been immersed in paganism before this time. God proved to them who He was and some of them must have believed that He was exactly who He was revealing Himself to be. The signs God performs can bring people to believe in Him. When people come to faith as the result of signs, they are not believing in the signs, they are believing in the God of the signs. We also cannot lose sight of the fact the Israelites had been immersed in pagan Egyptian worship themselves and God had to show them who He was in relation to the false gods of Egypt.