

## INTRODUCTION

The way we decorate our home reflects our personality. The color you choose and the décor you pick show something about you. Among all the features there may be something that captures important moments in your life. Perhaps there are pictures of family members – child-birth, vacations, graduation and wedding. Some people frame certificates and put trophies in cabinets to show their accomplishments. Those items help recall snapshots of your past. If you are a Christian what do you use to remind yourself of your relationship with Jesus Christ? Last time we finished Exodus chapter 6. God reconfirmed the covenant He made with Abraham to Moses. Then Moses and Aaron went to see Pharaoh, but Pharaoh refused to let the Israelites go. God then judged Pharaoh and the Egyptians. Chapters 7 to 10 record nine of the Ten Plagues. In our Sunday sermons we will skip that section. However, in your bulletin insert there is a table that summarizes the plagues. As we come to chapter 11 we find the last plague, which is the killing of the firstborns. In the previous plagues Pharaoh suffered some loss. River Nile turned into blood, and his country lost a lot of livestock and crops. Pharaoh might think that given time, he could replenish everything. God used the last plague to take away even Pharaoh's first child. This time it got personal. Pharaoh finally surrendered. God preserved the Israelites in this last plague. He gave Moses and Aaron instructions to set up the Passover. It was not only a means for the Israelites to avoid the calamity, it was also a reminder of God's deliverance to the future generations. Nowadays, we find ways to help us remember important events. I am old-fashioned and I still write things down on my calendar. You may use your electronic device. No matter what method you use, if we do not intentionally keep certain things in mind then our memory will fade away easily. That applies to our relationship with the Lord too. Therefore, we have to constantly remember God's salvation grace for us. In our study of the Passover we will look at three aspects – preparation, protection and perpetuation.

## EXPLANATION

### 1. Preparation 準備

First of all, God told Moses and Aaron to prepare for a new start. Look at **verse 2**: "This month is to be for you the first month, the first month of your year." Bible scholars told us that in the ancient world different nations had their own calendars. They had different starting points for a new year. To the Israelites, the night they left Egypt symbolized a new start for them. A new year would begin with the Passover. They were no longer slaves but they became God's own people. We will have a new start the moment we accept Christ. Paul said in **2 Corinthians 5:17** that: Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! If you are a new Christian you have two birthdays. I was saved in August, 1982 and I was baptized two years later. Therefore, according to my spiritual age I am only 35 years old! God's deliverance marks a new beginning for us. In the following verses, God gave detail instructions on how to prepare for the Passover. I put the main points on the screen. Every family had to choose a lamb, whether a sheep or a goat. The lamb had to be without defect, meaning that, for example, it could not be missing an eye or crippled in one leg. If one lamb was too much for a

family to consume then neighbors should share a lamb. Any leftover had to be burnt away. After the Israelites slaughtered the lamb, they had to smear some blood from the animal on the sides and the top of their door frames. The lamb must be roasted on fire. It must not be boiled in water or eaten rare. People had to eat the meat quickly along with bitter herbs and unleavened bread. They also had to be dressed with their robes tucked in, and with sandals on their feet and staff in their hands. What are those requirements all about? The Passover meal was more than a late-night snack to provide energy to the Israelites for their long walk. It was a ritual established to represent God's salvation. Let us look at the practical aspects first. The Israelites were to leave soon after the meal. They might only have a few hours to prepare the food. The bread was unleavened because there was not enough time to raise a dough. People were dressed up ready to evacuate in a short notice. Now we come to the main focus of the meal, which is the lamb. Most of you should know that the lamb symbolizes Jesus Christ. He was the perfect sacrifice to substitute for our sins. Therefore, the Passover lamb had to be perfect. Such imagery of a sacrificial lamb is used throughout the Bible. For example, in [Isaiah 53:7](#), Jesus was depicted as a lamb who suffered for us. The prophet wrote: He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. The killing of the Passover lamb was to foretell Jesus' death on the cross. We shall talk more about the smearing of the animal's blood later. But suffice to say, the Passover was a ceremony prepared for those whom God intended to save. The meal has a communal aspect in it. No one should enjoy the BBQ lamb alone. By eating together under the same roof, it pointed to the fact that God saved the Israelites as one people. Who were eligible to eat the Passover meal? It was prepared only for the Israelites. But there is an exception written in [verse 48](#): "An alien living among you who wants to celebrate the Lord's Passover must have all the males in his household circumcised; then he may take part like one born in the land. No uncircumcised male may eat of it." Any non-Jew who wanted to observe the Passover had to be circumcised to indicate their participation in God's covenant. God saved individuals by inviting people into a faith community. It is the same for the church today. Jesus does not only save each person one by one. He also saved us into God's family. If you live like a lone-ranger Christian then you are not enjoying all the blessings God has for you. Nowadays, there are many church goers but not that many Christ-followers. They come to church meetings, sit alone, never say hi to anyone and leave soon after the meeting is adjourned. Are you one of them? God puts us in a church family. When we are together we do not have 150 churches, but only one. If you make FCBC your home church then you are part of the family. We love each other and we pray for each other. Everyone is important and no one is dispensable.

## 2. Protection 保護

The Passover was a ritual to prepare the Israelites into a new relationship with God. It is also a symbol of God's protection. Look at [verses 12-13](#): 12 "On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn both men and animals - and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the Lord. 13 The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt." On that night, God killed all the firstborns in Egypt. It was a judgment to the Egyptian gods. Those idols could not protect the Egyptians who worshipped them. The last god Jehovah had to deal with was Pharaoh himself. In Egypt, Pharaoh was treated as a deity. But no matter how much power Pharaoh had, he could not protect even his own child. In contrast, God

would protect the Israelites who obeyed Him. Those who wanted to seek rescue had to smear some blood of the lamb on their doorposts. When God saw blood at a certain home He would pass over it; hence the name Passover. The all-knowing God surely did not need any reminder of who belonged to Him and who did not. It is not like nowadays people put flags and signs outside their home to show their loyalty to a school, a sports team or an election candidate. Those who followed God's instructions would be spared. We see another example in the plague of hail. It reads in **9:21-22** – 21 But those who ignored the word of the Lord left their slaves and livestock in the field. 22 Then the Lord said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand toward the sky so that hail will fall all over Egypt - on men and animals and on everything growing in the fields of Egypt.” Those who ignored God's words suffered loss. Aren't we all like that? Sometimes we think that God's commands are optional. When we get into trouble we complain that God's does not watch over us. Whose fault? If I were God I would say to those people: “I told you so!” But of course, I am one of them too! Not only that the Israelites had to apply animal blood on their doorposts they also had to stay indoor when God executed the firstborns. **Verses 22-23** say: 22 ... “Not one of you shall go out the door of his house until morning. 23 When the Lord goes through the land to strike down the Egyptians, he will see the blood on the top and sides of the doorframe and will pass over that doorway, and he will not permit the destroyer to enter your houses and strike you down.” No one must leave the house to check what was going on outside. Once people crossed over the line marked by the blood they would no longer be under God's protection. We know the result. Young and old, rich or poor, every firstborn in Egypt, including livestock was killed. Pharaoh's oldest child was among them. Anyone that was not protected by the blood was under God's curse. As we mentioned earlier, the lamb points to our Lord. Jesus was the Passover Lamb who shed His blood for us. Remember when did Jesus established the communion with His disciples? It was when they were eating the Passover meal. Jesus used the fruit of vine to represent His blood. Paul also made it clear in **1 Corinthians 5:7** when he said: ...For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Jesus suffered the penalty that we all deserve. Those who are under the blood of Jesus Christ will be spared from God's eternal condemnation. There is a classical hymn titled “Nothing but the Blood.” The lyrics read: What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. O! Precious is the flow that makes me white as snow. No other fount I know. Nothing but the blood of Jesus. Jesus died for our sins once and for all. Therefore, we no longer have to slaughter a lamb. When we confess our sins and accept Jesus as Savior and Lord by faith, then we are under His blood. The question is: do you know this Jesus? Do you trust the cleansing power of His blood? Are you under the protection of the Lamb of God?

### 3. Perpetuation 延續

The Passover was prepared to represent God's deliverance. Those who put their trust in God were under the protection of the blood. But God did not want the Passover to become a one-time event only. The Israelites had to perpetuate this tradition to their future generations. God told the Israelites in **verse 14**: “This is a day you are to commemorate; for the generations to come you shall celebrate it as a festival to the Lord - a lasting ordinance.” Then also in **verse 17**: “Celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread, because it was on this very day that I brought your divisions out of Egypt. Celebrate this day as a lasting ordinance for the generations to come.” The Passover and the Feast of the Unleavened Bread are to be observed together. The former is a one-day festival and the latter is a week-long event. The two festivals were set up for a few common

purposes. First, people were to remember God's deliverance. Once a year they kill a lamb, sprinkle the blood, roast the animal and bake some unleavened bread. The food items remind people that God once saved their ancestors from Egypt. Secondly, as they went through the preparation steps they relived the history. Your parents or grandparents may tell you stories about their upbringing. It is one thing to listen to their sharing or see photos about it. It is quite a different experience to visit their hometown, to see the house they grew up from and to follow their recipes to make some traditional food. The third and the most important purpose for observing the festivals was perpetuation of the spiritual lesson. Read **verses 25-26**: 25 "When you enter the land that the Lord will give you as he promised, observe this ceremony. 26 And when your children ask you, 'What does this ceremony mean to you?'" God told the Israelites to explain the meaning behind the custom to their children. See the **next verse**: ... 'It is the Passover sacrifice to the Lord, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and spared our homes when he struck down the Egyptians.' God ordered His people to perpetuate their faith to the future generations. Similarly, in **Joshua 4:6-7**, after Joshua led the Israelites cross the River Jordan, God told Joshua to grab 12 stones as a monument: "6 ...In the future, when your children ask you, 'What do these stones mean?' 7 tell them that the flow of the Jordan was cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord... These stones are to be a memorial to the people of Israel forever." Whether it was stones, the Passover lamb or unleavened bread, when people saw the objects they would be reminded of God's mighty work. Today we eat zong zi in June and mooncake in September and treat them as seasonal food. Our kids may not know the stories behind the food. They may not even like those strange food. That is alright because some of those traditions are based on superstition. But in U.S., some of the holidays we celebrate are related to the Christian faith. We as parents have to educate our kids about them. If not, our kids will buy in to what the secular world tells them. Easter is about bunnies and eggs. Thanksgiving is about turkey and shopping. Christmas is about Santa and gifts. It is good for you to bring your kids to church. But our teachers cannot go to your home to do what God asks you to do. Lead your children to Jesus! Needless to say, we are going against the current of this world. When my kids were younger they only listened to Christian music stations in the car. Before I notice they now only hear pop music. That is the kind of music their friends listen to. What should we do as parents? We need to pay attention to their choices of movie, music and games. We also need to proactively teach them Biblical values. Something is wrong not just because dad and mom do not like it. It is bad if God sees them as sins. Sooner or later they have to make their own decisions, whether at school, at a friend's house or when they leave for college. If they have God's value in their mind then they will know when to turn and walk away when they face temptations. I do not think any parent are unwilling to give their children the best. When our children have Jesus, they have the best blessing in this life. In turn they can pass the same faith to their next generation.

## CONCLUSION

We have to constantly remember God's salvation grace for us. If we fail to cherish our relationship with God we will take His blessings for granted. Some Christians wear a necklace with a cross pendant. A common object every Christian should have is a paper Bible. No, your cellphone cannot replace your Bible. Every time you carry your Bible you should feel like holding God's hand. Every time you read it, the words should feel like a love letter. God speaks to us to comfort us, to encourage us and to remind us that we have a covenantal relationship with Him. God is our loving Father and we are His children.