

International Bible Lessons Commentary
Exodus 12:1-14

New Revised Standard Version

International Bible Lessons
Sunday, February 7, 2016

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The **International Bible Lesson** (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, February 7, 2016**, is from **Exodus 12:1-14**. **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lesson Commentary*. **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** discusses *Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further* to help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the [International Bible Lessons Commentary](#) website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. If you are a Bible student or teacher, you can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the [International Bible Lesson Forum](#). [The Commentary below is expanded and revised from November 10, 2013]

International Bible Lesson Commentary

Exodus 12:1-14

(Exodus 12:1) The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt:

Though God first spoke to Moses at the burning bush on the mountain of God, Moses did not need to go to and from the mountain of God in order to hear from God. The Bible makes clear that Moses did not need to be in a special place or pray during a special time to hear from God. The eighth and ninth plagues of locusts and darkness may have already come upon the Egyptians by the time God speaks to Moses again in Exodus 12:1. Some commentators think the plague of darkness descended upon the Egyptians beginning the 10th day of the month, immediately before the first Passover was to be celebrated.

(Exodus 12:2) This month shall mark for you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year for you.

The name of the new first month is Nisan, which falls during the latter part of March or the first part of April, since the Jews use a lunar calendar. For this reason, the dates for Passover, Palm Sunday, and Easter vary from year to year. The previous Egyptian calendar would have made this month the seventh month of the year. With this first Passover, the Jews began a new calendar, a new calendar year, and a new way of life under the ceremonial Law of Moses before they entered the Promised Land. In a similar way, after the resurrection of Jesus Christ Sunday became the first day of the week and our new calendar is divided into BC and AD.

(Exodus 12:3) Tell the whole congregation of Israel that on the tenth of this month they are to take a lamb for each family, a lamb for each household.

The new moon began a new month. In the Bible, the number 10 is a symbol for completion. On the 10th day, with the selection of the Lamb, the Hebrews began to make their Passover preparations. God's plagues in Egypt would be completed after He brought ten of them upon the Egyptians. Each person in the whole congregation was to be involved in the celebration of the Passover, and the head of each household would serve as a priest in the slaughter of the sacrificial lamb.

(Exodus 12:4) If a household is too small for a whole lamb, it shall join its closest neighbor in obtaining one; the lamb shall be divided in proportion to the number of people who eat of it.

A family could be comprised of many households. At this time, the Hebrews lived in houses with doors and door posts instead of tents. Some households could be too small in numbers or too impoverished to acquire or use a whole lamb, so God made provision for everyone, rich and poor alike. They were told to join with their "closest neighbor" to buy the lamb or take a lamb from the flock to use. The lamb would be divided equally among each person at the feast. Centuries later, the rabbis would say that each

person needed to eat some lamb and no piece of lamb eaten could be smaller than the size of an olive.

(Exodus 12:5) Your lamb shall be without blemish, a year-old male; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats.

The lamb to die sacrificially and be eaten was to be “the best,” without blemish; just as the Lamb of God was the Messiah who never sinned and the best Person that God the Father could give as a sacrifice for our sins. At future Passover celebrations, the lamb would have been born near or shortly after the previous Passover (after the Hebrews began to celebrate the Passover in later years). It would be a male, who would represent males and females; just as the Lamb of God, the Son of God, died for the sins of males and females and represented males and females when He died for all.

(Exodus 12:6) You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month; then the whole assembled congregation of Israel shall slaughter it at twilight.

As God’s judgment on the gods of Egypt and the Egyptians (who worshiped the sun as a god or idol), some believe the Egyptians were in darkness from the 10th day of the month to the 14th day of the month. Their sun god could not overcome the true God and give them light or save their firstborn children from death. During this same time, the Israelites were caring for their livestock and their

families in the light that God provided for them alone. As night approached on the 14th day, the lamb would be slaughtered and eaten in the evening, which was the beginning of the 15th day.

(Exodus 12:7) They shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it.

As the darkness of the evening approached, the Israelites obeyed Moses in faith and they put some blood from the slaughtered lamb or goat on the two door posts and the beam above the door (the lintel) of the house, but not on the threshold where it could be trampled underfoot. The blood would protect all those who stayed inside the house, so each one could be at peace on the inside of the house on the night of God's Passover. They may not have understood why this was important, but their faithful obedience led to their salvation when the death angel passed over their homes and saw the blood of the lamb where God had commanded them to place it.

(Exodus 12:8) They shall eat the lamb that same night; they shall eat it roasted over the fire with unleavened bread and bitter herbs.

The lamb would be slaughtered and roasted immediately after it was slaughtered. In later years, the Hebrews would eat the lamb with unleavened bread in remembrance of how quickly they had to leave Egypt (before their bread had time to rise with yeast), and bitter herbs in

remembrance of their bitter years of slavery in Egypt. Just as believers are saved from spiritual death by the blood of Christ, so they need to eat spiritually of the Lamb of God for spiritual life moment by moment.

(Exodus 12:9) Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted over the fire, with its head, legs, and inner organs.

God commanded the Hebrews to cook by roasting the entire lamb in haste. There was no time to remove the insides of the lamb (or “properly” dress it as a butcher would) before roasting it. Eating boiled lamb with its head and inner organs instead of roasting the lamb entirely might also have made people sick (or be sickening to look at and eat). Roasting the whole lamb might be considered a symbol of the fact that we are to receive into our lives and hearts Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, wholly and completely as He is. Furthermore, we must receive the Lamb of God into our hearts on His terms, not on our terms or in our way but in His way, even though we may not completely understand His terms or His way.

(Exodus 12:10) You shall let none of it remain until the morning; anything that remains until the morning you shall burn.

The Hebrews needed to learn complete trust in God for their salvation and daily provision. They needed to trust God for their daily bread, and obey God in order for them to receive all the blessings God wanted to give them. They

were to burn all of the remains of the lamb and trust God for their next meal; just as later they were not to keep manna in the wilderness that they received overnight because it would spoil, except on the day before the Sabbath. Even though the Israelites may not have understood everything God wanted them to do, they understood enough to obey God in faith. The remains of their meal was consecrated and eaten in faith; it was not to be trampled underfoot or thrown in the trash by Egyptians after the Israelites exited the land.

(Exodus 12:11) This is how you shall eat it: your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it hurriedly. It is the passover of the LORD.

The Israelites were commanded to eat in haste and prepared for their quick deliverance by God. They were to eat with their “loins girded” (with their robe tied around their waist so they could run or work and the robe length would not get in their way or trip them), with their sandals on their feet because they would not have time to search for them and put them on before embarking on the hard road ahead, and with their staff for support as they walked. Remember, Moses did great things with his staff. God wanted the Hebrews to be ready when He moved quickly, as He did (and often does). Though God may seem to take a long time, when He does move or want people to move, He often does so very quickly. From Passover, we learn to always be prepared to do God’s will immediately.

(Exodus 12:12) For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike down every firstborn in the land of Egypt, both human beings and animals; on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the LORD.

God executed judgment “on all the gods of Egypt;” these gods were a total failure and some of these gods may have been inspired by evil spirits, as Paul described them: “For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 6:12). The ten plagues and the exodus show that if we trust in false gods, we will suffer with them when they fail or when they suffer God’s judgment. The Israelites learned this same lesson by hard experience over and over again throughout their history, as their prophets warned and taught them. Through Moses, the prophet of God, God gave the people good and sufficient reasons to believe God and obey God. They had witnessed nine plagues that had fallen on the Egyptians and they had every reason to believe that God would do what He said. The Pharaoh pretended to be the son of the sun god, and his son was considered a god too; therefore, at the first Passover God would be judging these men who were considered to be gods when the true God killed the firstborn of every Egyptian and every Egyptian animal. God would do this after He had blotted out the sun during the ninth plague as judgment on the idol that the Egyptians worshiped as their highest god. God’s just judgment would have been milder

than Pharaoh's persecution of the Israelites, because the Pharaoh had ordered the midwives to kill every newborn male child: "When you act as midwives to the Hebrew women, and see them on the birthstool, if it is a boy, kill him; but if it is a girl, she shall live" (Exodus 1:16).

(Exodus 12:13) The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live: when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague shall destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.

The angel of the Lord would pass over every house; he would see the blood of the lamb on the door posts and on the beam above every door; he would see and save the occupants of the house from death. Those who put the blood of the lamb on their door posts and lintel believed God and acted in faith, believing the word of the Lord spoken to His prophet, Moses. Those inside the house could not see the blood on the door posts, but they trusted that the angel of the Lord could see the blood and save them from death. We do not see the blood of Jesus Christ, but when we trust in Jesus Christ, in His death for us, in His blood shed for our sins, in His resurrection from the dead, by grace He saves us through our faith in Him.

(Exodus 12:14) This day shall be a day of remembrance for you. You shall celebrate it as a festival to the LORD; throughout your generations you shall observe it as a perpetual ordinance.

God told the Hebrews when and how to celebrate the Passover yearly in commemoration of this first Passover. Later, Jesus the Messiah made a new covenant in His blood, and He instituted the new covenant in a communion celebration during His last Passover meal with His disciples. He has told all who believe in Him as Lord and Savior to celebrate and remember His death for their sins in the celebration of the communion meal, the Lord's Supper, until He comes again (see 1 Corinthians 11:24-25).

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. Thinking about calendar days and why calendars and days are changed, what might be some reasons why many weekly calendars today begin with Monday instead of Sunday?
2. In what way during Passover is the head of the household similar to a priest? Why would this be important in later years?
3. What type of lamb or goat were the Israelites commanded to use in the celebration of Passover? In what way is this Passover lamb similar to the Messiah?
4. Why would the Israelites eat their first Passover in peace instead of fear?
5. Why do you think the Israelites obeyed God in faith and did what God told them through Moses at their first

Passover, even though they might not have understood all of God's reasons for His commands? Why is knowing this important?

Begin or close your class by reading the short weekly
International Bible Lesson.

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