

Jehovah's Passover

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"The Beginning of Months"

The Passover was Israel's fundamental institution. It marked the commencement of their history as a nation, and as a people in special relationship with Jehovah. That night in Egypt was never to be forgotten by them. Its terrible doings were to be rehearsed in the ears of their children from generation to generation.

What a night! The angel of Jehovah sweeping through Pharaoh's empire from end to end with his destroying sword! Every house, save those which were marked with blood, was bereaved of its firstborn. Every stable too was robbed of its choicest and best. One deep united wail ascended to heaven as Jehovah thus vindicated His offended majesty, and manifested His superiority over all the gods of the heathen, and over all the might and glory of men.

The awful story has a living voice for men today. God was acting in His judicial character as the avenger of sin. Pharaoh and his people had openly defied His commandments. Spite of plague after plague they still refused to let Israel go. Even divine long-suffering has its limits. Accordingly we have Jehovah in Exodus 12 carrying into effect His original threat as given in Ex. 4: 22-23: "Thou shalt say unto Pharaoh. thus saith Jehovah, Israel is My son, even My firstborn; and I say unto thee, Let My son go, that he may serve Me; and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy firstborn." Are men more subject to the voice of God in our day than in Pharaoh's time? Is it not a fact that His every commandment is outraged amongst us, and His authority everywhere challenged? As surely then as He desolated Egypt in ages past, so will He desolate the whole earth shortly. None will escape His avenging hand but those who are sheltered beneath the Saviour's blood.

The Passover chapter opens very suggestively. "And Jehovah spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt saying, This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year unto you" (Ex. 12: 1-2). The month in question was Abib, otherwise Nisan (Ex. 13: 4), and corresponded to our March-April. It had hitherto been the seventh in order of reckoning; from the time of Israel's deliverance from Egypt it was to be accounted the first. Redemption thus gave the people a

new start with God. Even so is it now. When a man acknowledges himself a sinner in the divine sight, exposed to eternal wrath, and in simple faith takes refuge under the blood of the Lamb, he begins life anew. His past of sin and guilt is divinely expunged. His whole previous course, "alienated from the life of God" (Eph. 4: 18), is accounted as so much waste, and so utterly worthless that it is mercy on the part of God to wipe it out of all remembrance.

We are aware that this is not men's usual way of looking at things. When it becomes whispered around that such and such a one has become "converted," it is too commonly supposed that the individual referred to has said "good-bye" to "life" once for all. What men call "life" and what God so describes, are two wholly different things. Men's idea of "life" is the gratification of their own lusts and pleasures at the utmost possible distance from their Creator. Bitterness and disappointment result, as the Lord so graphically showed in the parable of the lost son in Luke 15, and as the wise man so painfully records (writing down his own experience) in the book of Ecclesiastes. It is feeding upon ashes and striving after the wind. Life according to God is participation in divine joys. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life" (John 3: 36). The happy man of whom this is true finds himself in heart and mind in touch with pleasures outside this world. The life he has thus received, as the fruit of sovereign grace, is of a heavenly order, and carries with it capabilities of entering into divine thoughts, divine affections, and divine counsels. This is life indeed. He who is in it looks back with shame and selfjudgment upon all the years spent in ignorance of God and His Son. The knowledge of redemption involves a tremendous revolution; it is "the beginning of months" — a new point of departure. a new mode of being; altogether.

"Every Man a Lamb"

Ten plagues in all fell upon rebellious Egypt. From nine of them the captive Israelites were markedly exempt. When their oppressors were enveloped in darkness that could be felt, the Israelites had light in their dwellings; when the deadly murrain destroyed the cattle of the Egyptians, the cattle of the Israelites escaped unharmed; when the hail wrought havoc with the crops of the one people, the crops of the other were absolutely untouched; and so on. The captives were spared all the providential inflictions from which their tormentors suffered. Thus did Jehovah openly signify the difference between those who were His and those who were not His. But when the moment came that the angel of death must be sent through the land, invading with his sword the homes of all who transgressed the divine will, Israel could be exempted no longer. However favoured these people might be, in the sovereignty of God's grace, they were sinners like all others (Ezek. 20: 5-9); if therefore they were to be spared the last dread stroke some righteous ground for this must be discovered. This is why the lamb was prescribed.

The instructions concerning the lamb were very comprehensive. "Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers a lamb for an house" (Ex. 12: 3). There is no mistaking the plain force of such words as these. "All the congregation of Israel" were addressed, and "every man" was to take a lamb. There were at that time about six hundred thousand men amongst them capable of bearing arms; reckoning upon this basis there were probably some three millions of Israelites in Egypt that night. Amongst so large a number of people there were doubtless great differences in character and ways. The religious and the irreligious, the amiable and the cantankerous, the honourable and the dishonourable, the generous and the mean, not to mention the universal distinction between high and low, and rich and poor. But every man must take to himself a lamb. Neither character nor station counted for anything in the presence of the judgement of God. In thus insisting upon a lamb Jehovah

was thinking of Christ. 1 Cor. 5: 7 puts this beyond all dispute. "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us." Accordingly this ancient story of Israel in Egypt has its voice for our consciences at this hour. Nothing counts with God but Christ. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1: 29). The most outrageous sinner who shelters himself in faith in Christ and His blood is secure from all alarms; the most estimable character that ever lived who has not humbly availed himself thus of God's merciful provision is speeding to eternal ruin. No proposition could be more simple, and yet nothing seems so difficult for the human mind to grasp. We all love to think that there is some thing in us that should commend us to God; like the Pharisee of Luke 18: 11 we are more or less disposed to say, God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are." In such an assertion, however badly expressed, there may be a measure of truth, yet it still remains true that with God nothing counts but Christ. The Lamb, and the Lamb only, is our sole hope and plea.

"The Tenth Day"

The fact is remarkable that while the Passover month was to be henceforward the first in the year to the people of Israel, the lamb was not appointed to be slain on the first day of that month. One might almost have supposed that Jehovah would have commenced the new reckoning with the great fact of redemption. Yet this is what we read in Ex. 12: 3: "Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb. "Ten days were thus to run their course ere the victim was drawn from the flock for death.

Numbers are used in Holy Scripture with divine significance. The frequent occurrence of "seven" and "twelve" in the book of God is sufficient to suggest this to every observant reader. This is scarcely the place in which to show the meaning of all the numerals divinely employed; for our present purpose it is enough to say that "ten" represents the full measure of human responsibility. Thus we have ten commandments in Ex. 20, ten virgins in Matt. 25: 1-13, and ten pounds in Luke 19: 13. The ten days of Ex. 12: 3 speak to us therefore of the ages of responsibility (or probation) which ran their course ere God sent forth His beloved Son to be the Lamb of God, the taker away of the sin of the world.

The preceding ages of responsibility were divinely designed to teach men their deep need of a Saviour, that thus they might be disposed to welcome Him with adoring appreciation at His appearing. Taking Archbishop Usher's chronology (which cannot, however, be insisted upon) men were being thus disciplined during forty centuries. During that long period God's ways with His fallen creatures varied considerably. Until Noah's day men had the testimony of creation and the voice of conscience. No Scriptures existed, and there was neither sovereign nor magistrate to call evil-doers to account. The end was the Deluge, the earth having become full of corruption and violence. When Noah and his sons were re-established in the cleansed earth, God set up the principle of human government (Gen. 9: 6) — a merciful provision intended as a curb upon wickedness. This quickly failed; Noah's drunkenness, Nimrod's tyranny, the building of the tower of Babel, and the idolatry which soon covered the earth proving only too sadly that magistracy (however excellent as an institution) is inefficient as applied to so rebellious a being as man.

Later there was the giving of the law, with its solemn "Thou shalt not's," and its accompanying threats and curses for all who were disobedient thereto. The law was given to Israel only (Ex. 20: 2; Ps. 147: 19-20); for God would demonstrate in that nation the moral condition of flesh everywhere. The commandments had scarcely gone forth from Jehovah's lips before the first was violated by the setting up of the golden calf: and this was but the commencement of a long history of transgression culminating at last in the murder of the Son of God, who was constrained by lawless men to tread the

same path of blood as all others who had ever sought to bring God before their consciences. The parable of the husbandmen in Matt. 21: 33-46 declares the wretched story vividly.

Thus men proved, during forty centuries, that under every variety of circumstances and conditions there was nothing but evil in their hearts. This terrible fact having been fully demonstrated, God sent forth His Son. "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly" (Rom. 5: 6). God's "due time" is set forth typically in "the tenth day" of Ex. 12: 3. Oh, that men everywhere understood the lesson of it for then would they renounce all pretension to goodness and strength in themselves, and glory in Christ alone!

The Fourteenth Day

The lamb was thus to be taken out from the sheep or from the goats on the tenth day of the month; nevertheless it was not to be slain on that day. "Ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening" (Ex. 12: 6). Under this arrangement the victim was for three or four days under the immediate observation of those for whom its blood was to be shed. This finds its answer in the years of the public ministry of the Lord Jesus. During the first thirty years of His earthly pathway He lived in the retirement of Nazareth. His perfections during those years are known to God alone. It was when He emerged into public view that John the Baptist gave utterance to that marvellous word: "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." There before John's eyes was He to whom the Paschal lamb and every other sacrifice pointed. He had come from heaven to fulfil all the types and shadows of the law. But He did not go to Calvary at that moment. He was indeed on His way thither when John beheld Him but three and a half years of ministry — matchless ministry — ran their course ere "His life was taken from the earth" (Acts 8: 33). He was thus, as it were, "taken out" on the tenth day, and "kept up" until the fourteenth. The typical picture is the more complete when we remember that His death actually coincided with the Passover feast of that year. His priestly murderers would fain have had it otherwise, fearing a tumult amongst the people (Matt. 26: 5); but God's hour had struck, and the deed must be done at that time, and at no other.

During His three and a half years of ministry the Saviour lived in the fierce glare of hostile criticism. No ascetic was He. as John; not in the desert was His home; He moved freely in and out amongst the people. All the facts of His life were therefore fully known. If His foes could have discovered a single flaw in Him, how it would have delighted their evil hearts! But He was God's holy One. The Paschal lamb was to be "without blemish"; only thus could it set forth Him who was at once holy in nature, and stainless in all His ways. At the end His judge had to say, "I find no fault in Him" (John 19: 6) and His enemies could only find the semblance of a charge against Him by bribing men to commit perjury in their court (Mark 15: 55-60).

His spotless life proclaimed His fitness to die in atonement for the sins of others. Could it be proved that He was ever guilty of the smallest transgression, then salvation is impossible for any of us; for in that case He would have needed a Saviour for Himself. His years of public life demonstrated that death had no possible claim upon Him. He was thus divinely competent to take up the sin question and settle it to the eternal satisfaction of the claims of the throne of God. "Hallelujah! what a Saviour!"

"Kill It"

Death is everywhere stamped upon our chapter (Ex. 12), Let us at this moment lay all possible emphasis upon the solemn words of verse 6: "The whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall

kill it in the evening." Nothing short of this could satisfy the claims of God, and avert the destruction that was approaching. The lamb must die; the blood of the innocent must be shed if the guilty were to be spared.

Death lies upon men everywhere as the fruit of sin; it is sin's wages, as Rom. 6: 23 tells us. Had sin not intruded itself into God's fair creation, not a grave would ever have been dug, not a tear of bereavement would ever have been shed. Let us have no misunderstanding as to this. Those who speak of their impending dissolution as "the debt of nature" are simply hiding from themselves the real truth of their position in relation to God and His throne. No folly could be greater. The presence of death in the world admits of but one explanation — man is a fallen creature, a rebel against his Maker. For those who fail to seek divine grace and pardon the death of the body is but the Prelude to "the second death, the lake of fire" (Rev. 20: 14). The righteousness of God demands that if any are to be spared the last dread sentence then death must fall upon another instead.

This is what is set forth with all plainness in the ordinance of the Paschal lamb. The angel of death was to pass through the land of Egypt at midnight to destroy the firstborn in every house. No way of escape was possible from so fearful a visitation. But the death of the lamb. In every home in which death had done its work upon the sacrifice death passed the firstborn by. Wherever the people failed to put the death of the lamb between themselves and God there the stroke fell. Even so is it now, The death of Christ, humbly accepted and appropriated in faith, is our only possible door of escape from the eternal judgement of God. A living lamb would not suffice in Israel; a living Christ could not suffice for us. His personal presence on earth was an inestimable privilege and blessing for men, but atonement was not effected thereby. He must die ere He could be available as Saviour for the lost. His own words in John 6: 51 show this conclusively: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." To this may be added His memorable utterance to Nicodemus: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3: 14-15). Happy is the man who can say, "The Saviour died for me." Upon such a one the stroke of divine judgement can never fall. The whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening." Not 'them,' but 'it.' Thousands of lambs were slain that night, and yet in the mind of God there was but One. Christ is God's first great thought, and to Him every sacrifice pointed. There is no salvation in any other.

"Take of the Blood" In Ex. 12: 7, for the first time in Holy Scripture, we have blood mentioned in connection with man's deliverance and blessing. In various passages in the book of Genesis, blood is spoken of as evidence of human guilt (notably in the story of Cain and Abel), and in the early chapters of Exodus blood is twice introduced as one of God's judgements upon rebellious Egypt (Ex. 4: 9; Ex. 7: 17); now, in the ordinance of the Paschal lamb, it comes before us as the means whereby God's believing People were sheltered from destruction. From this point onward to the close of the book of God the doctrine of atoning blood stands out in unmistakable characters. By blood, and by blood alone, can men be saved. These were the instructions given to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt: "They shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side-posts and on the upper door-post of the houses wherein they shall eat it" (Ex. 12: 7). Further on in the chapter we hear Moses addressing the elders of Israel thus: "Draw out and take you a lamb according to your families, and kill the Passover, And ye shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and strike the lintel and the two side-posts with the blood that is in the basin; and none of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning" (v.v. 21-21). The various steps were thus made perfectly clear for God's people. The dullest amongst them could not well misunderstand what was so essential to his salvation. First the

lamb was to be selected for sacrifice; then it was to be brought into the house; four days later it was to be killed; and finally the blood was to be sprinkled upon the lintel and side-posts of the house of every man of Israel. It was not enough to kill the lamb, nor even to present the blood in a basin; it must be sprinkled in obedience to the word of Jehovah.

The meaning for us in this day is plain enough. Christ, the Lamb of God, has been slain; His precious blood has been shed: all that God requires from the sinner who would escape the wrath to come is to accept these mighty facts in simple-hearted faith. But just as in Egypt that night no man could help his neighbour, each being compelled to sprinkle the blood for himself, so now no man can shelter himself under the cloak of another's faith; each must appropriate for himself Christ's precious blood as the only safeguard of his soul. To those who have done this Peter writes thus: "Ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold..... but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot; who verily was fore ordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, who by Him do believe in God that raised Him up from the dead, and gave Him glory; so that your faith and hope are in God" (1 Peter 1: 18-21). The sentiments expressed in this passage manifestly go far beyond anything that was experienced in Egypt in Moses' day. Then it was simply a matter of keeping God as Judge out of the house; now, on the righteous basis of the blood of Christ, every believer is brought to God, accepted and taken into favour in the risen One, and withal entitled to know it in the power of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.

"When I See the Blood"

If the instructions to Israel were very explicit, so that no one could well misunderstand them. they were also severely inflexible. No room whatever was left for human opinion as to what was right and proper that night, and no deviation was permitted from the strict letter of the divine word. The blood of the lamb was the divine requirement. and nothing else could be accepted in its stead. Here is Jehovah's message to the people: "I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgement: I am Jehovah. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt" (Ex. 12: 12-13).

Suppose some in Israel had pleaded that their lives were so much better than their neighbours', that therefore there was not the same urgent necessity for putting the blood upon the door-post, what would have happened? The angel of death would have swept through that dwelling, even though the people therein were in very deed the most upright and the most religious in the land. Jehovah did not say, "When I see your excellent lives," but, "When I see the blood." Again, suppose some had objected to slaying the lamb, their minds revolting from the gruesomeness of shedding blood, and had instead tied the living animal to the door-posts of their houses, would this have been accepted? By no means. Jehovah did not say, "When I see the lamb," but "When I see the blood." The blood was the confession on the part of those who sprinkled it that they were personally only worthy of death, and that they sheltered themselves under the death of another. To God the blood witnessed that death had already entered the houses upon which it rested ; and this justified Him in bidding His ministers of judgement pass such houses by. How simple are these lessons, and yet how difficult it is to get men to take them in, albeit they concern their eternal peace! How many plead their moral and religious lives as if excellent living should exempt them from the holy judgement of a sin- avenging God. Again, how many profess for the living Christ, admiring His perfect ways, and acclaiming Him as the great

Preacher to whom all men would do well to hearken. "Back to Christ," they say. "Let us live according to the principles of the Sermon on the Mount, and all will be well." Vain delusion! False hope! Men's great need is not a holy example, nor a teacher of good, but a sin-atonement sacrifice. This is found alone in the precious blood of Christ. He has made peace through the blood of His cross (Col. 1: 20), and in no other way could peace ever have been made between men and God. "Apart from shedding of blood is no remission" (Heb. 9: 22). A millennium of holy living and divine teaching on the part of the Son of God would have left the sin question just where it was before He came to earth. Sin could only be expiated by blood.

God be praised for the atoning death of Christ. It has made it righteously possible for Him not only to exempt from judgement the sinner who believes, but also to take such a one into His heart of love for ever and ever. No wonder the redeemed on high ascribe all worthiness and glory to the Lamb who was slain.

"I will Pass over You"

The significance of Jehovah's pledge to Israel — "I will pass over you," is frequently misunderstood. By many it is taken to mean mere exemption from destruction; whereas, in reality, a great deal more than this is involved in the words. We will quote Ex. 12: 23 at length in order that we may have the whole Pledge before us: "Jehovah will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when He seeth the blood upon the lintel, and upon the two side-posts, Jehovah will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come unto your houses to smite you."

Jehovah "passing through" is thus one thing; but Jehovah "passing over" is quite another. Our inquiry just now is to the latter. What does it mean? Isaiah 31: 5 (R.V.) will help us here. "As the birds flying, so will the Lord of Hosts protect Jerusalem; He will protect and deliver it, He will pass over and preserve it." The language of Isaiah 31 is thus very similar to that of Ex. 12, and its meaning is transparent. It gives the idea of a mother bird hovering over her nest, anxiously watching it, and mounting guard over her young. This is what Jehovah promised to do in Egypt for all who, in obedience to His word, sprinkled the blood upon their houses. He would Himself be the protector of such people. He would Himself stand between them and all harm. "I will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you."

This presents to us a truly delightful view of the God with whom we have to do. He positively ranges Himself upon the side of those who, in faith, have sought the shelter of the blood of Jesus. The fact that He has raised His Son from amongst the dead is the public proof that every requirement of His throne has been fully met. In perfect consistency therefore with His own character of righteousness, He against whom all our sins have been committed is now able to constitute Himself the guardian of His believing people. Faithful to His word and to the precious blood of Jesus, He will never, while eternal ages roll, permit judgement to touch His own. This being most certainly true, let us get rid of all servile fear. There is no room for dread in our relationships with such a God.

The men of Israel might well sit down in quiet confidence that night. Even if others' wail of distress reached their ears, they had no occasion for alarm. They had put the blood of the lamb between themselves and the destroyer, and they had Jehovah Himself standing sentinel, as it were, outside their sprinkled doors. Had anxious thoughts been entertained by them, they would have cast dishonour upon God — His faithfulness and truth. In like manner the unbelieving apprehensions of many in our day who truly love the Saviour's name are a deep affront to the God of our salvation. As Toplady's lines put it:-

From whence this fear and unbelief,
If God, my Father, put to grief
His spotless Son for me?
Can He, the righteous Judge of me,
Condemn me for that debt of sin,
Which, Lord, was charged on Thee?
Impossible!

"Eat the Flesh"

The blood of the lamb having been sprinkled according to the ordinance of Jehovah, the flesh of the animal was to be cooked and eaten. Here also for every detail there was divine legislation; nothing whatever was left to the decision of the people. So we read: "They shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it. Eat not of it raw nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof" (Ex, 12: 8-9). Eating has in Scripture the double force of appropriation and identification. In John 6: 51-57 the Saviour insists upon the necessity of eating His flesh and drinking His blood in order to have and enjoy eternal life. It is folly to drag the Lord's Supper into John 6., for it had not been instituted at the time our Lord thus spoke. The meaning is that not only must He be slain in order to meet the need of sinful men, but men must distinctly appropriate Him in faith in that character. Hence the language of the new song in heaven: "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood" (Rev. 5: 9). They who surround the throne adoringly acknowledge that their every blessing is due to the Saviour's death. Israel's feeding upon the lamb in Egypt is thus typical of our appropriation to-day of the once-slain Christ.

But there is more than this. It was distinctly forbidden to boil the flesh, as also to eat of it raw. It must be "roast with fire." Fire is the emblem in Scripture of the holiness of God in judgement. It is not enough for me to know that Christ died; it is essential that I should believe that He died atoningly, having first exhausted all the judgement of God that my sins deserved. "His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree" (1 Peter 2: 24). Feeding, as it were, upon the roast lamb, I enter in some measure into the awful judgement which fell upon Christ as my sin-bearer, and I realise that but for His self-sacrificing love I must myself have remained under the wrath of God for ever (John 3: 36). A sense of this doubtless weighed heavily upon the soul of Saul of Tarsus in Damascus when for three days he could neither eat nor drink (Acts 9: 9).

The "bitter herbs" which accompanied the roast lamb are suggestive of the same principle. The realisation that sin — my sin — is of such exceeding gravity in the sight of God that nothing could expiate it, and thus save me from eternal ruin, but the death of Christ, and that in the midst of circumstances of unparalleled grief and shame, is bitter indeed; though the knowledge of redemption yields ultimately and for ever exceeding joy. Anything that remained of the Paschal lamb was to be destroyed in the morning. The sacrifice in all its ceremonial was to be completed within a single night.

Ye shall let nothing remain until the morning; and that which remaineth of until the morning ye shall burn with fire." The rising sun was thus to see no trace of the slain lamb. In like manner the atoning work of Christ is not a progressive, but a completed thing. It is not in process of being

accomplished; it has been accomplished definitely and eternally. As a fragrant and hallowed memory Calvary's costly sacrifice abides with God and the redeemed for ever, but the sacrifice itself is past and complete So divinely efficacious is it that nothing further could ever be required or accepted. For God's suffering Lamb the dark night of judgement is no more, and He lives on high in the eternal sunshine of divine favour and love.

The Stroke

Men's threats are sometimes mere idle words or empty bombast; not so the predicted judgements of God. At no stage in the worlds history has the Creator threatened judgement which He had no intention of executing. There have been occasions when His hand has been averted by the repentance of the people. The sparing of Nineveh in the time of Jonah an example of this. It is part of the declared ways of God to withdraw sentence when men humble themselves before Him Jer. 18: 7-8 shows this plainly. It is also true that He is "slow to anger," leaving until the last an open door for repentance but even the long-suffering of God has its limits. This was solemnly proved by the defiant Egyptians in the days of Moses At the commencement of Moses' mission Jehovah said to Pharaoh: "Israel is My son, even My firstborn and I say unto thee, Let My son go that he may serve Me, and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy first born (Ex 4: 22, 23). The patience of God being now exhausted after various appeals and preliminary judgements, this dread sentence took effect on the night of Israel's Passover. It came to pass that at midnight Jehovah smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the firstborn of the captive that was in the dungeon; and all the firstborn of cattle. And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he, and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt; for there was not a house where there was not one dead" (Ex. 12: 29-30). There was thus no respect of persons. The royal palace, in every country shielded to the utmost from the calamities which befall the lowly, was no more immune that night than the prison cell or the stable. The king's heart was torn with anguish as well as that of the meanest of his subjects. Truly, it is a terrible thing to defy the God of judgement!

Yet while desolation thus spread itself throughout the land of Egypt, the houses of the Israelites were absolutely unharmed. This was due solely to the fact that they obeyed Jehovah in faith, and sprinkled the blood of the slain lamb outside their dwellings. Neither good conduct nor religious orthodoxy saved them that night, but the blood of the lamb alone. Under the shelter of this they could eat and drink in peace, with girded loins and staff in hand, prepared to march out of a scene which was in no sense their home.

We are ourselves living in a solemn moment in the world's history. The Gospel day is ending, with all its opportunities of eternal blessing. The hour for God's judgements to begin will shortly strike. Then the once-crucified Lord will arise from the throne on which He is seated, and will come forth in His might as the divinely-appointed Judge of quick and dead. First He will deal with the quick (i.e., the living), destroying His enemies before Him like the driven snow; later, when His Millennial reign has ended, He will summon the dead from their tombs to stand before the great white throne. These are tremendous considerations, which it is folly and madness for any to ignore. Happy is the man who, as a confessedly guilty sinner, worthy only of eternal wrath, has fled to the Saviour for refuge, trusting wholly and solely in His precious atoning blood. Such a one is eternally secure — as secure as a righteous God can make him,

"For a Memorial"

That night in Egypt was to be kept in perpetual remembrance by the people of Israel. That it might never be forgotten, the Passover was to be observed annually as a feast to Jehovah throughout their generations. "Ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever" (Ex. 12: 14). There is a dangerous tendency in the human heart to forget, particularly in matters relating to God. How often in Deuteronomy — that book which gives us Moses' final addresses to the people we come across such admonitions as 'Beware lest thou forget," and "Take heed that ye remember." Peter's last epistle was written in order that his readers might after his departure have his teaching "always in remembrance." One of the marks of a backslider, according to this apostle, is his having "forgotten that he was purged from his old sins" (2 Peter 1: 9). The Lord's Supper comes to mind here. The Saviour was on the eve of death when He instituted it. His wonderful course on earth was ending, and He was about to undergo the supreme anguish of Calvary. Only by His death could atonement be effected and salvation be made possible for sinful men. Yet even One so divinely unique as He, and a sacrifice so stupendous as the sacrifice of Himself, would be in danger of being forgotten by His own. Accordingly He gave to His disciples first the bread, and then the cup, saying, "This do in remembrance of Me" (Luke 22: 19-20). Years after His return to heaven's glory, the Holy Spirit reiterated His words in 1 Cor. 11: 23-25, adding, as often as ye eat the bread and drink the cup, ye do show forth the Lord's death till He come." Thus during the whole period of His absence on high the Lord's Supper remains with the Church as the memorial of her once-slain Lord and Saviour. The absurdity of encouraging any to partake thereof who have no saving knowledge of Christ should be apparent; for how can I recall to remembrance a person I have never known? Year by year the Passover feast was to be observed in Israel. In this way the goodness of God was to be kept alive in the minds of the people, and the mighty fact that He redeemed them from the bondage of Egypt, taking them into relationship with Himself on the ground of the blood of the lamb. Connected with the Passover there were to be seven days of unleavened bread. Leaven is everywhere in Scripture the type of evil. Thus in God's picture-book, as elsewhere in the plainest language, He insists upon purity of life and doctrine in all whom grace has sheltered beneath the Saviour's blood.

The children of the Israelites came into the divine thought also. They were to be carefully instructed as to the meaning of the Paschal feast. The case is supposed in Ex. 12: 26-27 of the children inquiring at a later date: "What mean ye by this Service?" The parents were to reply: "It is the sacrifice of Jehovah's Passover, who passed over the houses of the children Of Israel in Egypt, when He smote the Egyptians, and delivered Our houses." Let us in this day see to it that we are not only ourselves under the shelter of the blood of the Lamb, but that our children are also in the same position of divine security. The wrath of God against all ungodliness is a tremendous reality, from which nothing can screen either ourselves or our children but the Saviour's blood.