Chapter 4

Exodus 12:2

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El-Shaddai, and Jehovah; "I will be to you a Father" -- He puts that first "and ye shall be my sons and daughters. saith the Lord Almighty "; Father, El-Shaddai, Jehovah. Now, beloved friends, that is a wonderful reality, and you may depend upon it, it will not land you in spiritual bankruptcy, which must be the result of getting my mind full of doing this, or that, or the other, and of the claim of this or that upon me -- that, I say, will land us in the bankrupt court spiritually -- and that is where numbers of people have a tendency to drift. Whereas, if you think of the blessedness of the grace of God that has abounded towards us, and brought us to Himself, and set us down in the fulness of it -- (the Lord, in His grace, give our hearts a better sense of it) -- instead of lessening the practice, it will, through His grace, increase it, and give it power and force.

May God apply His word (for He alone can do it). and make our hearts sensible of the grace of God that makes these communications to us, for His blessed name' sake!

Chapter 4: Exodus 12:2

There is a striking analogy, beloved friends, between the announcement that God has given in His word of coming judgment, and the message which Moses was directed to convey from God to the children of Israel with relation to the scene that is described in this chapter. I have only read one verse of it, because I have no doubt that we are familiar with the details of the history. In the previous chapter, there are three great solemn marks of the event that was coming. For God says to Moses, "one plague more, then another word defines the time of the stroke, "midnight"; and then you will find another expression (though I only just indicate it, so that you may be induced to read it for yourselves) which is the great foundation of the whole thing, "The Lord doth put a difference between you and the Egyptians."

Now those three things in Ex. 11 give a very distinct character, and put a very plain and evident mark upon what was coming. God announced them to His servants, and when we come to chapter 12, where the detail is given with regard to the announcement of judgment and the provision of God's grace to meet it, there is a dignity and a quietness in the whole thing which is very remarkable; there is no sensation or stir of any sort. No one can read Ex. 12 without being struck with the quiet, dignified manner in which the announcement of the most awful blow that ever fell upon a nation and a country is given by God. And, beloved friends, there is this about it too, that makes it so striking, that it is exactly what we are told with regard to this world -- that the midnight of judgment is approaching, and that the evening before the midnight is the time to prepare for the blow, that is the time to avail ourselves of the provision which God has made, and which God has revealed in His grace too, with regard to the impending stroke. When the midnight comes, the time of preparation is over -- it is the time before that is of all importance. And that is the word that receives such distinctness all through -- "At midnight I will pass through the land of Egypt."

And it is equally solemn whether you take the midnight to refer to judgment itself, or to that which, to all intents and purposes, will leave this world exposed to judgment. For the Lord Jesus Christ speaks in the NT of His coming as at the midnight hour, that is to say, that the time when men are least looking out for the approach of the dreaded invasion is the time it comes. And the Lord has threatened the responsible church in its failing history with the judgment of the world. You remember how He says to Sardis in the book of Revelation, "I will come upon thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee."

Now all that is brought into this history here. God was about to strike a blow. God is a judge all through these chapters, and it is important to lay hold of that. Their knowledge of Him does not get beyond the fact that He is a judge -- appeased, I admit, but a judge for all that; sheltered they were, I fully own, but sheltered from the judge. He is not yet a deliverer. The deliverance is connected with what we have here to make up one redemption; that is to say, there are two parts in redemption -- what we have in Ex. 12, and what we have in Ex. 14, and both these go together to make up one redemption. There is the blood that sheltered the people in the land of Egypt, when God passed through the land as a judge. Then, connected with that afterwards, there is the outstretched hand of God as a deliverer, who now intervenes in power to emancipate His people out of the house of bondage, and from the thraldom of Egypt for ever. But both these must go together; and, therefore, when we come to speak about the Red Sea (though I must not anticipate it now) and what God effected there, and the manifestation and display of His mighty power in it, there is combined with that, in order to make up the picture of redemption, the blood of the Passover lamb upon the lintel and two side posts of the houses. And this, in a certain sense, has a deeper aspect and a more solemn side even than the open waters of the Red Sea. We shall see that presently.

It is a very large subject, and one desires to condense it as far as possible, so that you may carry away the great salient points with you. But there are three great things that come before us in connection with this history. First of all, the people enter upon a new phase altogether of their history. There is a totally new period entered upon here; and that is the reason why God says to them in chapter 12, that this month was to be to them the beginning of months, it was to be the first month of the year. I need not say that, historically and literally, there was nothing new about it; but there is a *moral newness* in it. They began their moral history with God now; it was a new start, as we call it. They date anew, not their old historical dates, not their old years, so to speak, but now they begin positively to date in God's reckoning. From this moment "this month shall be to you the beginning of months, it shall be the first month of the year to you." Why

was this? What was it, beloved friends, which really gave this new character to the people in their relationship with God? Why it is exactly what you find unfolded immediately afterwards. Almost in the very next sentence God begins to say, "You shall take a lamb." Now everything was round that lamb, as far as God's thoughts were concerned. The taking of this lamb was God's own appointed and revealed provision. So that you have not merely the revelation of judgment, that occupies Ex. 11, which is the revelation of the stroke that was about to fall, the revelation of the crash that was about to come, the revelation of the judge, the revelation that God was about to pass through the land, and that God would raise that question with regard to every soul, whether it was an Israelite or whether it was an Egyptian; for if the judge goes through the land, the question is raised with everyone as to the meeting with that judge. No doubt Israel were God's chosen, elect people, and God had looked upon them, and thought of them in His love; but still, if God goes through the land in judgment, the question is raised with regard to every soul. Now, beloved friends, that is a very important thing, because it gives your soul at once, through grace, if you lay hold of it, the character of this. He says, I do pass through the land of Egypt this night in judgment, in that character, and all that, you see, comes out plainly; God does not keep back anything, He reveals it all. He *reveals*, not *removes*, remember; that is where the mistake is in people's minds.

God does not remove the judgment from Israel, He does not put them, as far as they themselves were concerned, on any different platform from the Egyptians; He says, I am going through the land of Egypt this night -- remember, they were in Egypt -- and what He does is this, He reveals, in grace, the answer to the impending judgment.

Now you have two things that ought to be simple to every soul here. You may, perhaps, wonder why they are pressed; but one increasingly finds it is the things at the bottom that are unstable in people's souls, that people are a great deal better versed, somehow or other, in the things that come after the foundation, than they are in the things that are in the foundation; and the consequence is, that they break down in those things that are excellent, because there is not a proper basis on which they rest. There is the revelation of judgment -- but mark, there is the revelation of the answer to it. And that is the reason why everything was now new; in Ex. 12, their history begins anew. As far as I am acquainted with it, there never had been a sacrifice like this ordered of God before. I am perfectly aware that Abel brought a lamb, but I am not aware of any place where God told him to bring a lamb; and he brought the firstlings of his flock, and the fat thereof, and offered it in faith too. But here it was an *appointed lamb*. God specifically directed that the lamb should be taken; and the kind of lamb, and everything about it, was new. In every sense of the word, it was a new sacrifice; the concomitants of it were all new, the place in which it was to be offered was new too; it was a new idea that there should be such a thing as a lamb taken in Egypt. They were in Egypt; God spoke in Egypt; this thing was to be done in Egypt, the lamb was to be selected in Egypt, slain in Egypt, the blood caught in Egypt, and sprinkled upon the lintel and two side posts in Egypt. And they were to eat it after a new fashion; and there were not only new concomitants about the eating of it, but the very attitude they were in was all new, the whole thing new. That is the first thing I press upon you to-night, *the whole thing new*. This is the new start in their national history, and that is the reason why this month gets the dignity of being the first month. And if you were to ask, What was it? in one word it was this, they are beginning with God now, and God is beginning with them; that is what gives it this character. He thought of them before, He pitied then before, He looked upon their burdens before, He sent His servants before, He announced the promise of redemption before, and told them what He was about to do before; now He is positively beginning Himself. It was the intimation of good things to come before, now the time had arrived.

Well, now, that is very blessed if we take it out of type for a moment, because it exactly sets before us what is true of ourselves now. That is where we begin our history -- I do not say it is where we end it -- but that is where we begin our history in connection with God's Lamb. That is where every soul begins its history. If there is a person in this room to-night, who has not begun with Christ, God's Lamb, you have not begun your history yet, you have not made a start yet. The lamb, of course, was the type of our Lord Jesus Christ, and hence everything about it was designed to set forth the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the first great point that comes before us in this chapter, in this aspect of redemption.

Now look at the second for a moment. Not only was there the revelation of the lamb as that which alone could meet the claims of God in holiness and truth, and meet Him in His character as Judge, but you find another thing, that this lamb was be slain. Now, I quite admit that people speak about Christ, and there is a kind of sentiment with regard to Christ, and they talk about "no one but Christ"; at the present moment there is an immensity of that kind of thing; but it is an entirely different thing when you have to do with a Christ who was sacrificed, whose death was an absolute necessity, a crucified and dying Christ on whom the judgment of God fell because of our sin. And one has to insist upon that in these days. It is a very humbling, solemn thing when you think of it, that this is the truth the devil is trying to destroy now in Christendom. I was saying to you last week, that this was really at the root of Satan's wile, to keep the cattle from going out with the people. When Pharaoh was beaten off every point, he says at the last, "You may go, but you must not take your cattle." And I do not believe that it was merely that they should go out resourceless -- I have no doubt it was partly that -- but they were to go out *without the divinely appointed means of having to do with God by sacrifice*. It was a thrust at sacrifice, it was an attempt to destroy the only righteous way by which a sinner could approach God. That is reason why he wanted to keep the cattle back. And to-day, people say, Oh! may approach God, you may go to God. God

is merciful, God is kind, God is good, and Christ was so tender, so gracious. And the life of Christ is spoken of -- His blessed wonderful life down here in this world, how kind, and gentle, and patient, and gracious He was. I admit it, beloved friends, but I say, with all reverence to-night, and with the whole strength of my soul, not all the spotlessness of His life, not all the marvelous, wonderful thirty-three years that He passed in this world, and there was none -- none like Him -- not all of it, could meet the claims of God in holiness. Nothing but His blood, nothing but the sacrificial death and atonement of One who was God, but became man that He might do this, could satisfy the righteous and holy claims of God. And that is the reason why you have the blood brought in here, the death; it was not merely the lamb, but the death of the lamb. And that is the great central figure in the whole of God's revelation; it is as the little hymn says, the

Center of two eternities,

it is around that everything revolves; that is the pivot upon which everything turns, both as to God's glory, and as to the eternal blessing and eternal emancipation of every soul that has to do with God. And outside of that, there is nothing.

Hence, you see, the very same revelation that unfolds the provision, insists upon every condition with regard to that provision. You shall kill the lamb, and more than that, you shall take of the blood that is in the bason. Now, I never read of the blood being caught and put apart for a purpose like this before. The blood was always spilled upon the ground, because it was the emblem of the life reverting to God, but I never read of it being reserved and put to a certain purpose like this.

There is another thing that was new about it, "Ye shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is in the bason, and strike the lintel and two side posts." I do not want to be fanciful, but why "the 1intel and two side posts," why is it not the two side posts and then the lintel, why the lintel first? I believe it was because the judgment was coming from above, it was judgment from God. "Ye shall strike the lintel and two side posts with the blood that is in the bason, and none of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning, for the Lord will pass through to smite the Egyptians." There is the wonderful provision of God, and God's own pledge of security in connection with that provision.

Now it may appear very simple, but I am laboring to be simple. for I have a very intense pressure in my heart that it is the downright simple, earnest things people want. But I should like to bring one point before you to-night, in connection with this, because I know exactly what passes through people's minds concerning it.

I take two cases in this way. Here are two persons, Israelites, who have heard God's revealed way of shelter, who have heard the revelation of judgment and the announcement of what would meet it, and they have accepted it, and believed it, and have selected the lamb according to the divine arrangement; the lamb has been slain, and the blood has been taken and sprinkled on the lintel and the two side posts. And one of the Israelites, who has placed himself under the shelter of that blood, divinely, according to God's arrangement, goes into his house and sits down to feast upon the flesh of the lamb in quietness and at rest, so far as quietness and rest could be conceived in connection with the revelation of this truth, or as far as it can be so said. But here is another. He equally sprinkles the blood, he equally selects the lamb according to God's arrangement, strikes the lintel and two side posts, goes into his house, sits down in trepidation, dismay, terror, fear of every possible description. Which of these two is safer? I asked a person that question not very long ago, and a person who would be very angry if you did not give him the place of a Christian, and he said to me at once, without the smallest hesitation, of "course, the first." Beloved friends, do not you see what is involved in that? They were positively bringing into the shelter *the feeling of the sheltered*. I quite admit this is only shelter, I do not want to put into it more than God puts into it. It is not salvation, salvation is when they have *changed the place altogether*; but this is shelter, and shelter is a very essential part of salvation -- not the whole, nor the most blessed part of it, but the beginning, the first part of it, and everyone of us must have this shelter. But if you say that the person who is at rest in the shelter, whose mind is, so far, removed from any disturbance in the shelter, who can sit down and feed and feast upon the flesh of the lamb, whose blood was sprinkled on the lintel and the two side posts, that that person is more safe than the person who is equally sheltered by the blood, and sits down to feed upon the flesh of the lamb in trepidation, do not you see that you are importing into the safety *the* sense of the security or shelter? And that is what a great many people are doing, and a great many more than we think. The real truth of the matter is, one is just as safe as the other; they are not both equally happy, I admit, but they are both *equally safe*, because what sheltered them both alike is what has met the claims of God, and that is the blood.

Now I will redeem my pledge which I made to you at the beginning. This is the reason why, in a certain sense, the Passover has a deeper aspect than even the Red Sea. The judgment of God was executed at the Red Sea, I perfectly admit, and a very fierce and solemn judgment of God too, and judgment overtook all the enemies of Israel and of God, no doubt of it. But in the Passover, it was a question of God's moral claims, and that is why it has a deeper aspect. May God, by His Spirit, give us to appreciate that side of it, because that is a wonderful side. In the Red Sea, God was acting in power for His people; and it was a blessed deliverance and wonderful overthrow of their enemies and extrication of Israel. But on the night of the Passover it was a deeper thing, it was a question of the moral claims of God, of what would meet God, of the vindication in righteousness of God's holy nature. He is a holy and righteous judge, and there must be complete and full satisfaction rendered; that is what is in the Passover. And what could do that? Nothing but the blood of Him who was a lamb without blemish and

without spot, His own Son who became a Man, and who willingly gave Himself to exhaust the judgment of a holy God, so that that judgment is as much, through grace, removed from us who deserved it as it is removed from Him now who in His grace undertook to bear it.

I was reading not very long ago, that very beautiful passage of scripture in ch. 9 of the epistle to the Hebrews, where the apostle says, "But now once, in the consummation of the ages," which is really, I believe, the meaning of it, that is, after all the ages had run their course, "hath He," that is, the Lord Jesus Christ, "appeared for the putting away of sin, by the sacrifice of himself; and as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment, so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." And it is a very remarkable and interesting thing that in the Douay version of the scriptures, which is the Roman Catholic version, the word is translated "exhaust," "Christ was once offered to exhaust the sins of many." And the note which is given in the Douay version to explain this word "exhaust" is a very fine word, "that is," says the writer of the note, "to empty, or draw out to the very bottom, by a plentiful and perfect redemption." Now that is exactly what it is. The Lord Jesus Christ, by a full and plentiful satisfaction, exhausted the whole of God's judgment, and God is perfectly vindicated, and further, is perfectly glorified. Thank God, we can say that now, because, of course, the fulness of the thing is but feebly presented in the type -- but that is what God has found in the cross -- a complete satisfaction for all His holy, righteous claims, and He has been as well perfectly glorified. O the blessedness of it! There is nothing in heaven or earth like it. It would be impossible to exaggerate the magnificence of it. See what an important thing it is to look at this great transaction as between God and Christ in all its *objective* blessedness, without importing into it any *subjective* state of ourselves at all. It was God who appointed the lamb, and directed the lamb to be slain; it was God who told them to sprinkle the blood on the lintel and the two side posts, and God said, not, "When you see the blood," for they could not -- they were to go in and shut their doors, it would be positively contrary to the divine order to go out to see whether it was there or not -- He says, as it were, Close your door, and do not go out till the morning; it is not for you at all, it is for me, "When I see the blood."

Some one has said, and it is perfectly true, that the great subject of Ex. 12 is, that death was everywhere, that there was not a house where there was not one dead; but there was this mighty difference, in the houses of the Israelites it was the death of God's lamb, in the houses of the Egypt it was the death of the first-born. Death everywhere, judgment in the one, freedom from it and shelter in the other, for the blood was there.

Now there is one other thing, and it is very interesting too, that the blood was to be sprinkled with hyssop. What does that mean? I have been wondering, because I think one ought to avoid everything like sensationalism or sentimentality with regard to it, or driving things beyond their legitimate exposition; but surely there must be a meaning in it. Why was hyssop the plant that was selected by God, and that they should dip this hyssop in the blood and sprinkle it? What is hyssop? Well, there is another instance of it, and a very remarkable one too, in Num. 19. Hyssop there, is to be dipped in the water of purification, which was made out of the burning of the heifer. That chapter is the ordinance of the red heifer, as it is commonly called, and out of that ordinance there was made a purification for defilement or sin. Running water was mingled with the ashes of the heifer that had been burnt, the hyssop was dipped in that, and the person was sprinkled to be cleansed from his defilement. Here the Israelite, taking the hyssop, sprinkled the lintel and the two side posts. What is the meaning of hyssop then? I think there is a clue to it in Psa. 51, when David says, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean." How could hyssop cleanse him? Well, I think that the cleansing there is moral cleansing, and that hyssop really is the symbol of humiliation; because, in the case of David, it was the departure from God of one who was in a certain relationship to Him, and when he was really humbled and broken in his soul about the thing, he was, in that sense, purified. It was through humiliation, and brokenness, and humbling, that God brought him into that moral condition before Himself. I think that is the reason why hyssop is employed in the other two instances; that it sets forth the broken and humiliated state of soul that is in consonance with this marvelous revelation of God's shelter for poor wretched creatures like us; because it was the smallest and most insignificant thing, "the hyssop that springeth out of the wall." That is only in passing, but I think every word has its importance, and that one ought to seek to find out the meaning of each word as God conveys it to us.

That is the second point. The first was the new start with God, in the fact of their having to do with the lamb. The second thing we have been speaking of, is the judgment of God met by the lamb's blood sprinkled.

And now we come to the third thing, and that is, that they have to feed and feast inside on the flesh of the lamb, whose blood had secured their shelter outside. The blood outside for God, the flesh of the lamb inside for Israel, that is to say, in figure, it conveyed the fact of communion with God. I do not mean to say that they had communion, but, *in the interpretation of it*, we have communion with God about Him whose blood has sheltered us from God's judgment. The flesh of the victim was, as it were, partaken of by them, symbolical of common thoughts between the soul and God. As we have come into Christianity, we can understand what the meaning of things in the OT is which they did not understand; but *we* understand now what communion is.

But more important than that even, in connection with this third point, is what I want really to fix your mind upon, that is, the adjuncts, the accompaniments of this feast, and the manner of it, because that sets forth exactly what becomes us now. He says, You shall eat the flesh that night roast with

fire. What is the meaning of that? Well, fire is always in scripture emblematical of the judgment of God; that is to say, the flesh of the lamb which they partook of inside the house, was the lamb on which judgment fell. Judgment had overtaken the lamb; it had met the judgment, the fire had done its work, and they were to feed upon the flesh of a victim on which fire had fully and completely played. You shall eat the flesh of the lamb roast with fire. Beloved friends, that is a very important thing for our souls: the One that we feed on is the One that has gone through death. You remember how the Lord Jesus Christ Himself sets before us the fact in John 6,

> Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you;

unless you appropriate to the need of your soul a Christ that has died, you have no life, because eating His flesh and drinking His blood is appropriating His death to the needs of your soul; it is the symbol of His death, it is not the Lord's supper. Do not be deceived about it. People think, when they read John 6, it is the Lord's supper. I will give you a very simple reason why it cannot be. If that were the Lord's supper, every one that ate the Lord's supper would have eternal life, because the Lord Jesus Christ says, "Every one that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." So it cannot be that. But it is appropriating to the needs of my soul a Savior that has passed through death, and I have life through His death: that is the meaning of it.

Then there is another thing of the deepest moment in connection with it. It is not only that my needs are thus met in that way, but there is the constant supply of my soul in feeding upon Him. And hence it goes on to say, "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood dwelleth in me, and I in him" -- that is communion, this is the way that the life we have from and in Him is supported, and fed, and sustained. It is the *constant feeding* for the support of life, it is the constant eating. Further, whosoever has done it, has appropriated to the needs of his soul a Christ who has died, has eternal life once for all. But then the life needs support, and Christ, who is my life, and through whose death I have life, is the food of my soul. And unless I am feeding upon Christ, and taking Him in for the needs of the life I have in Him must be sickly and feeble. And there is the real secret of the state many a child of God is in, the life is not fed, there is no feeding upon Christ, there is no sustainment, no vigor, he is sickly. I cannot say life is not there, but the man is not in vigor. It is like a person who is alive, but who is feeble and sickly, and poor, and unable to perform his duty, because he is not sustained. It is this sustainment I press upon you, for it is a very important subject. We need this sustainment and support. There is no such thing as power without it; one cannot conceive it. The very principle of our life is to be fed and supported, and Christ is the sustainment of it. The feeding upon Him in that continuous way in which it is presented in this scripture, is the means by which we are invigorated, and strengthened, sustained, and supported, and enabled to perform the functions of life.

Now the lamb's flesh, upon which they fed in Egypt, on the night of the shelter, was roast with fire. But mark, there is a distinct communication put to something else, "Eat not of it raw." What is that? It simply means this -- that it must have undergone the action of fire, that there must have been what fire signifies; death must have taken place, it must be Christ's death, the death of the lamb, the fire must have done its work -- in scripture, fire is always the judgment of God -- the lamb's flesh must have been subjected to the action of the judgment of God, and that was the only way in which they could it."Eat not of it raw." Now Popery answers to "raw," the unbloody sacrifice of the mass, so called, that is a raw thing. "Eat not of it raw." Eat not of it until it has been subjected to the action of fire.

But there is more than that, "Eat not of it raw nor sodden at all with water." What is the thing that is sodden? I have no doubt it is that sort of sickly sentimentality that people have when they talk about Christ in a natural kind of way. People speak of Christ in a sort of humanizing way. "Roast with fire" is what God says, in contradistinction to what is raw and to what is sodden with water.

Then mark again. "his head with his legs and with the purtenance thereof." I have no doubt the different parts set forth the intelligence and the walk: the head, which is the seat of intelligence, and the legs, which are that by which one is conveyed about. O the blessedness of it, that the One whose blood has secured us God's divinely appointed shelter, His flesh becomes food inside the sheltered house, upon which the heart can feed in safety.

And then there were certain things that were to go along with it. There was unleavened bread, that is to say, there was to be the open avowed refusal in principle of sin for which the blood was necessary, the unleavened bread always sets that forth. The bread was to be compressed bread, bread that was not separated by the particles of leaven. The principle of leaven is, that it separates the particles of bread. Leaven is never used in scripture, except as the type of what is evil. And there is to be the absence of that. You must not talk about feeding upon Christ, if you allow sin. You cannot put sin and Christ together. Christ was made sin by God on the cross that you and I, through grace, not only might be delivered from the judgment due to our sins, but that we might have a holy, everlasting detestation of sin. And that is what unleavened bread is; it is the acknowledgment of our positive abnegation of the whole of that, on account of which the judgment of God fell upon God's Lamb.

Then there are the bitter herbs, which express the sense that the soul would have, and must have, of what it cost that blessed One to undergo all this, "and they shall eat the flesh that night roast with fire, and unleavened bread, and with bitter herbs, they shall eat it."

And then there is one thing more, that is, that there was to be a certain attitude about themselves -- "Thus shall ye eat it, with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand," that is to say, you are to be ready to leave Egypt. You see, they had not left Egypt yet; they were