On the Passover

Melito of Sardis (d. c. AD 180)

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Introduction

Alternative Sources: 1, 2

Introduction (1-10)
1. First of all, the Scripture about the Hebrew Exodus has been read and the words of the mystery have been explained as to how the sheep was sacrificed and the people were saved. 2. Therefore, understand this, O beloved: The mystery of the passover is new and old, eternal and temporal, corruptible and incorruptible, mortal and immortal in this fashion: 3. It is old insofar as it concerns the law, but new insofar as it concerns the gospel; temporal insofar as it concerns the type, eternal because of grace; corruptible because of the sacrifice of the sheep, incorruptible because of the life of the Lord; mortal because of his burial in the earth, immortal because of his resurrection from the dead. 4. The law is old, but the gospel is new; the type was for a time, but grace is forever. The sheep was corruptible, but the Lord is incorruptible, who was crushed as a lamb, but who was resurrected as God. For although he was led to sacrifice as a sheep, yet he was not a sheep; and although he was as a lamb without voice, yet indeed he was not a lamb. The one was the model; the other was found to be the finished product.

5. For God replaced the lamb, and a man the sheep; but in the man was Christ, who contains all things. 6. Hence, the sacrifice of the sheep, and the sending of the lamb to slaughter, and the writing of the law–each led to and issued in Christ, for whose sake everything happened in the ancient law, and even more so in the new gospel. 7. For indeed the law issued in the gospel–the old in the new, both coming forth together from Zion and Jerusalem; and the commandment issued in grace, and the type in the finished product, and the lamb in the Son, and the sheep in a man, and the man in God. 8. For the one who was born as Son, and led to slaughter as a lamb, and sacrificed as a sheep, and buried as a man, rose up from the dead as God, since he is by nature both God and man.

9. He is everything: in that he judges he is law, in that he teaches he is gospel, in that he saves he is grace, in that he begets he is Father, in that he is begotten he is Son, in that he suffers he is sheep, in that he is buried he is man, in that he comes to life again he is God. 10. Such is Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever. Amen.

I. The Meaning of the OT Passover (11-71)

A. The Biblical Setting–Exodus 12:11-30 (11-15)

11. Now comes the mystery of the passover, even as it stands written in the law, just as it has been read aloud only moments ago. But I will clearly set forth the significance of the words of this Scripture, showing how God commanded Moses in Egypt, when he had made his decision, to bind Pharaoh under the lash, but to release Israel from the lash through the hand of Moses. 12. For see to it, he says, that you take a flawless and perfect lamb, and that you sacrifice it in the evening with the sons of Israel, and that you eat it at night, and in haste. You are not to break any of its bones. 13. You will do it like this, he says: In a single night you will eat it by families and by tribes, your loins girded, and your staves in your hands. For this is the Lord's passover, an eternal reminder for the sons of Israel.

14. Then take the blood of the sheep, and anoint the front door of your houses by placing upon the posts of your entrance-way the sign of the blood, in order to ward off the angel. For behold I will strike Egypt, and in a single night she will be made childless from beast to man. 15. Then, when Moses sacrificed the sheep and completed the mystery at night together with the sons of Israel, he sealed the doors of their houses in order to protect the people and to ward off the angel.

B. Egypt's Calamities (16-29)

16. But when the sheep was sacrificed, and the passover consumed, and the mystery completed, and the people made glad, and Israel sealed, then the angel arrived to strike Egypt, who was neither initiated into the mystery, participant of the passover, sealed by the blood, nor protected by the Spirit, but who was the enemy and the unbeliever. 17. In a single night the angel struck and made Egypt childless. For when the angel had encompassed Israel, and had seen her sealed with the blood of the sheep, he advanced against Egypt, and by means of grief subdued the stubborn Pharaoh, clothing him, not with a cloak of mourning, nor with a torn mantle, but with all of Egypt, torn, and mourning for her firstborn. 18. For all Egypt, plunged in troubles and calamities, in tears and lamentations, came to Pharaoh in utter sadness, not in appearance only, but also in soul, having torn not only her garments but her tender breasts as well.

19. Indeed it was possible to observe an extraordinary sight: in one place people beating their breasts, in another those wailing, and in the middle of them Pharaoh, mourning, sitting in sackcloth and cinders, shrouded in thick darkness as in a funeral garment, girded with all Egypt as with a tunic of grief. 20. For Egypt clothed Pharaoh as a cloak of wailing. Such was the mantle that had been woven for his royal body. With just such a cloak did the angel of righteousness clothe the self-willed Pharaoh: with bitter mournfulness, and with thick darkness, and with childlessness. For that angel warred against the firstborn of Egypt. Indeed, swift and insatiate was the death of the firstborn. 21. And an unusual monument of defeat, set up over those who had fallen dead in a moment, could be seen. For the defeat of those who lay dead became the provisions of death.

22. If you listen to the narration of this extraordinary event you will be astonished. For these things befell the Egyptians: a long night, and darkness which was touchable, and death which touched, and an angel who oppressed, and Hades which devoured their firstborn. 23. But you must listen to something still more extraordinary and terrifying: in the darkness which could be touched was hidden death which could not be touched. And the ill-starred Egyptians touched the darkness, while death, on the watch, touched the firstborn of the Egyptians as the angel had commanded. 24. Therefore, if anyone touched the darkness he was led out by death. Indeed one firstborn, touching a dark body with his hand, and utterly frightened in his soul, cried aloud in misery and in terror: What has my right hand laid hold of? At what does my soul tremble? Who cloaks my whole body with darkness? If you are my father, help me; if my mother, feel sympathy for me; if my brother, speak to me; if my friend, sit with me; if my enemy, go away from me since I am a firstborn son!

25. And before the firstborn was silent, the long silence held him in its power, saying: You are mine, O firstborn! I, the silence of death, am your destiny. 26. And another firstborn, taking note of the capture of the firstborn, denied his identity, so that he might not die a bitter death: I am not a firstborn son; I was born like a third child. But he who could not be deceived touched that firstborn, and he fell forward in silence. In a single moment the firstborn fruit of the Egyptians was destroyed. The one first conceived, the one first born, the one sought after, the one chosen was dashed to the ground; not only that of men but that of irrational animals as well. 27. A lowing was heard in the fields of the earth, of cattle bellowing for their nurslings, a cow standing over her calf, and a mare over her colt. And the rest of the cattle, having just given birth to their offspring and swollen with milk, were lamenting bitterly and piteously for their firstborn.

28. And there was a wailing and lamentation because of the destruction of the men, because of the destruction of the firstborn who were dead. And all Egypt stank, because of the unburied bodies. 29. Indeed one could see a frightful spectacle: of the Egyptians there were mothers with dishevelled hair, and fathers who had lost their minds, wailing aloud in terrifying fashion in the Egyptian tongue: O wretched persons that we are! We have lost our firstborn in a single moment! And they were striking their breasts with their hands, beating time in hammerlike fashion to the dance for their dead.

C. Israel's Safety (30-33)

30. Such was the misfortune which encompassed Egypt. In an instant it made her childless. But Israel, all the while, was being protected by the sacrifice of the sheep and truly was being illumined by its blood which was shed; for the death of the sheep was found to be a rampart for the people. 31. O inexpressible mystery! the sacrifice of the sheep was found to be the salvation of the people, and the death of the sheep became the life of the people. For its blood warded off the angel. 32. Tell me, O angel, At what were you turned away? At the sacrifice of the sheep, or the life of the Lord? At the death of the sheep, or the type of the Lord? At the blood of the sheep, or the Spirit of the Lord? Clearly, you were turned away 33. because you saw the mystery of the Lord taking place in the sheep, the life of the Lord in the sacrifice of the sheep, the type of the Lord in the death of the sheep. For this reason you did not strike Israel, but it was Egypt alone that you made childless.

D. Model versus Finished Product (34-38)

34. What was this extraordinary mystery? It was Egypt struck to destruction but Israel kept for salvation. Listen to the meaning of this mystery: 35. Beloved, no speech or event takes place without a pattern or design; every event and speech involves a pattern–that which is spoken, a pattern, and that which happens, a prefiguration–in order that as the event is disclosed through the prefiguration, so also the speech may be brought to expression through its outline. 36. Without the model, no work of art arises. Is not that which is to come into existence seen through the model which typifies it? For this reason a pattern of that which is to be is made either out of wax, or out of clay, or out of wood, in order that by the smallness of the model, destined to be destroyed, might be seen that thing which is to arise from it–higher than it in size, and mightier than it in power, and more beautiful than it in appearance, and more elaborate than it in ornamentation.

37. So whenever the thing arises for which the model was made, then that which carried the image of that future thing is destroyed as no longer of use, since it has transmitted its resemblance to that which is by nature true. Therefore, that which once was valuable, is now without value because that which is truly valuable has appeared. 38. For each thing has its own time: there is a distinct time for the type, there is a distinct time for the material, and there is a distinct time for the truth. You construct the model. You want this, because you see in it the image of the future work. You procure the material for the model. You want this, on account of that which is going to arise because of it. You complete the work and cherish it alone, for only in it do you see both type and the truth.

E. Relationship Between OT and NT (39-45)

39. Therefore, if it was like this with models of perishable objects, so indeed will it also be with those of imperishable objects. If it was like this with earthly things, so indeed also will it be with heavenly things. For even the Lord's salvation and his truth were prefigured in the people, and the teaching of the gospel was proclaimed in advance by the law. 40. The people, therefore, became the model for the church, and the law a parabolic sketch. But the gospel became the explanation of the law and its fulfillment, while the church became the

storehouse of truth. 41. Therefore, the type had value prior to its realization, and the parable was wonderful prior to its interpretation. This is to say that the people had value before the church came on the scene, and the law was wonderful before the gospel was brought to light. 42. But when the church came on the scene, and the gospel was set forth, the type lost its value by surrendering its significance to the truth, and the law was fulfilled by surrendering its significance to the gospel. Just as the type lost its significance by surrendering its image to that which is true by nature, and as the parable lost its significance by being illumined through the interpretation,

43. so indeed also the law was fulfilled when the gospel was brought to light, and the people lost their significance when the church came on the scene, and the type was destroyed when the Lord appeared. Therefore, those things which once had value are today without value, because the things which have true value have appeared. 44. For at one time the sacrifice to the sheep was valuable, but now it is without value because of the life of the Lord. The death of the sheep once was valuable, but now it is without value because of the salvation of the Lord. The blood of the sheep once was valuable, but now it is without value because of the Spirit of the Lord. The silent lamb once was valuable, but now it has no value because of the blameless Son. The temple here below once was valuable, but now it is without value because of the Christ from above.

45. The Jerusalem here below once had value, but now it is without value because of the Jerusalem from above. The meager inheritance once had value; now it is without value because of the abundant grace. For not in one place alone, nor yet in narrow confines, has the glory of God been established, but his grace has been poured out upon the uttermost parts of the inhabited world, and there the almighty God has taken up his dwelling place through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory for ever. Amen.

F. Components of the Mystery of the Passover (46-71) — 1. The Passover (46-47a)

46. Now that you have heard the explanation of the type and of that which corresponds to it, hear also what goes into making up the mystery. What is the passover? Indeed its name is derived from that event–"to celebrate the passover" (to paschein) is derived from "to suffer" (tou pathein). Therefore, learn who the sufferer is and who he is who suffers along with the sufferer. 47. Why indeed was the Lord present upon the earth? In order that having clothed himself with the one who suffers, he might lift him up to the heights of heaven.

2. The Creation and Fall of Man (47b-48)

In the beginning, when God made heaven and earth, and everything in them through his word, he himself formed man from the earth and shared with that form his own breath, he himself placed him in paradise, which was eastward in Eden, and there they lived most luxuriously. Then by way of command God gave them this law: For your food you may eat from any tree, but you are not to eat from the tree of the one who knows good and evil. For on the day you eat from it, you most certainly will die. 48. But man, who is by nature capable of receiving good and evil as soil of the earth is capable of receiving seeds from both sides, welcomed the hostile and greedy counselor, and by having touched that tree transgressed

the command, and disobeyed God. As a consequence, he was cast out into this world as a condemned man is cast into prison.

3. Consequences of the Fall (49-56)

49. And when he had fathered many children, and had grown very old, and had returned to the earth through having tasted of the tree, an inheritance was left behind by him for his children. Indeed, he left his children an inheritance–not of chastity but of unchastity, not of immortality but of corruptibility, not of honor but of dishonor, not of freedom but of slavery, not of sovereignty but of tyranny, not of life but of death, not of salvation but of destruction. 50. Extraordinary and terrifying indeed was the destruction of men upon the earth. For the following things happened to them: They were carried off as slaves by sin, the tyrant, and were led away into the regions of desire where they were totally engulfed by insatiable sensual pleasures–by adultery, by unchastity, by debauchery, by inordinate desires, by avarice, by murders, by bloodshed, by the tyranny of wickedness, by the tyranny of lawlessness.

51. For even a father of his own accord lifted up a dagger against his son; and a son used his hands against his father; and the impious person smote the breasts that nourished him; and brother murdered brother; and host wronged his guest; and friend assassinated friend; and one man cut the throat of another with his tyrannous right hand. 52. Therefore all men on the earth became either murderers, or parricides, or killers of their children. And yet a thing still more dreadful and extraordinary was to be found: A mother attacked the flesh which she gave birth to, a mother attacked those whom her breasts had nourished; and she buried in her belly the fruit of her belly. Indeed, the ill-starred mother became a dreadful tomb, when she devoured the child which she bore in her womb. 53. But in addition to this there were to be found among men many things still more monstrous and terrifying and brutal: father cohabits with his child, and son and with his mother, and brother with sister, and male with male, and each man lusting after the wife of his neighbor.

54. Because of these things sin exulted, which, because it was death's collaborator, entered first into the souls of men, and prepared as food for him the bodies of the dead. In every soul sin left its mark, and those in whom it placed its mark were destined to die. 55. Therefore, all flesh fell under the power of sin, and every body under the dominion of death, for every soul was driven out from its house of flesh. Indeed, that which had been taken from the earth was dissolved again into earth, and that which had been given from God was locked up in Hades. And that beautiful ordered arrangement was dissolved, when the beautiful body was separated (from the soul). 56. Yes, man was divided up into parts by death. Yes, an extraordinary misfortune and captivity enveloped him: he was dragged away captive under the shadow of death, and the image of the Father remained there desolate. For this reason, therefore, the mystery of the passover has been completed in the body of the Lord.

4. Predictions of Christ's Sufferings (57-65)

57. Indeed, the Lord prearranged his own sufferings in the patriarchs, and in the prophets, and in the whole people of God, giving his sanction to them through the law and the prophets.

For that which was to exist in a new and grandiose fashion was pre-planned long in advance, in order that when it should come into existence one might attain to faith, just because it had been predicted long in advance. 58. So indeed also the suffering of the Lord, predicted long in advance by means of types, but seen today, has brought about faith, just because it has taken place as predicted. And yet men have taken it as something completely new. Well, the truth of the matter is the mystery of the Lord is both old and new–old insofar as it involved the type, but new insofar as it concerns grace. And what is more, if you pay close attention to this type you will see the real thing through its fulfillment.

59. Accordingly, if you desire to see the mystery of the Lord, pay close attention to Abel who likewise was put to death, to Isaac who likewise was bound hand and foot, to Joseph who likewise was sold, to Moses who likewise was exposed, to David who likewise was hunted down, to the prophets who likewise suffered because they were the Lord's anointed. 60. Pay close attention also to the one who was sacrificed as a sheep in the land of Egypt, to the one who smote Egypt and who saved Israel by his blood. 61. For it was through the voice of prophecy that the mystery of the Lord was proclaimed. Moses, indeed, said to his people: Surely you will see your life suspended before your eyes night and day, but you surely will not believe on your Life. Deut. 28:66. 62. And David said: Why were the nations haughty and the people concerned about nothing? The kings of the earth presented themselves and the princes assembled themselves together against the Lord and against his anointed. Ps. 2:1-2.

63. And Jeremiah: I am as an innocent lamb being led away to be sacrificed. They plotted evil against me and said: Come! let us throw him a tree for his food, and let us exterminate him from the land of the living, so that his name will never be recalled. Jer. 11:19. 64. And Isaiah: He was led as a sheep to slaughter, and, as a lamb is silent in the presence of the one who shears it, he did not open his mouth. Therefore who will tell his offspring? Isa. 53:7 65. And indeed there were many other things proclaimed by numerous prophets concerning the mystery of the passover, which is Christ, to whom be the glory forever. Amen.

5. Deliverance of Mankind through Christ (66-71)

66. When this one came from heaven to earth for the sake of the one who suffers, and had clothed himself with that very one through the womb of a virgin, and having come forth as man, he accepted the sufferings of the sufferer through his body which was capable of suffering. And he destroyed those human sufferings by his spirit which was incapable of dying. He killed death which had put man to death. 67. For this one, who was led away as a lamb, and who was sacrificed as a sheep, by himself delivered us from servitude to the world as from the land of Egypt, and released us from bondage to the devil as from the hand of Pharaoh, and sealed our souls by his own spirit and the members of our bodies by his own blood. 68. This is the one who covered death with shame and who plunged the devil into mourning as Moses did Pharaoh. This is the one who smote lawlessness and deprived injustice of its offspring, as Moses deprived Egypt. This is the one who delivered us from

slavery into freedom, from darkness into light, from death into life, from tyranny into an eternal kingdom, and who made us a new priesthood, and a special people forever.

69. This one is the passover of our salvation. This is the one who patiently endured many things in many people: This is the one who was murdered in Abel, and bound as a sacrifice in Isaac, and exiled in Jacob, and sold in Joseph, and exposed in Moses, and sacrificed in the lamb, and hunted down in David, and dishonored in the prophets. 70. This is the one who became human in a virgin, who was hanged on the tree, who was buried in the earth, who was resurrected from among the dead, and who raised mankind up out of the grave below to the heights of heaven. 71. This is the lamb that was slain. This is the lamb that was silent. This is the one who was born of Mary, that beautiful ewe-lamb. This is the one who was taken from the flock, and was dragged to sacrifice, and was killed in the evening, and was buried at night; the one who was not broken while on the tree, who did not see dissolution while in the earth, who rose up from the dead, and who raised up mankind from the grave below.

II. The Death of Christ and Israel's Sin (72-99)

A. Place and Cause of Christ's Death (72-86)

72. This one was murdered. And where was he murdered? In the very center of Jerusalem! Why? Because he had healed their lame, and had cleansed their lepers, and had guided their blind with light, and had raised up their dead. For this reason he suffered. Somewhere it has been written in the law and prophets, "They paid me back evil for good, and my soul with barrenness Ps. 34:12 plotting evil against me Ps. 34:4; 40:8 saying, Let us bind this just man because he is troublesome to us." Isa. 3:10 (LXX). 73. Why, O Israel did you do this strange injustice? You dishonored the one who had honored you. You held in contempt the one who held you in esteem. You denied the one who publicly acknowledged you. You renounced the one who proclaimed you his own. You killed the one who made you to live. Why did you do this, O Israel?

74. Hast it not been written for your benefit: "Do not shed innocent blood lest you die a terrible death"? Nevertheless, Israel admits, I killed the Lord! Why? Because it was necessary for him to die. You have deceived yourself, O Israel, rationalizing thus about the death of the Lord. 75. It was necessary for him to suffer, yes, but not by you; it was necessary for him to be dishonored, but not by you; it was necessary for him to be judged, but not by you; it was necessary for him to be crucified, but not by you, nor by your right hand. 76. O Israel! You ought to have cried aloud to God with this voice: "O Lord, if it was necessary for your Son to suffer, and if this was your will, let him suffer indeed, but not at my hands. Let him suffer at the hands of strangers. Let him be judged by the uncircumcised. Let him be crucified by the tyrannical right hand, but not by mine."

77. But you, O Israel, did not cry out to God with this voice, nor did you absolve yourself of guilt before the Lord, nor were you persuaded by his works. 78. The withered hand which was restored whole to its body did not persuade you; nor did the eyes of the blind which were opened by his hand; nor did the paralyzed bodies restored to health again through his voice; nor did that most extraordinary miracle persuade you, namely, the dead man raised to life from the tomb where already he had been lying for four days. Indeed, dismissing these things, you, to your detriment, prepared the following for the sacrifice of the Lord at

eventide: sharp nails, and false witnesses, and fetters, and scourges, 79. and vinegar, and gall, and a sword, and affliction, and all as though it were for a blood-stained robber. For you brought to him scourges for his body, and the thorns for his head. And you bound those beautiful hands of his, which had formed you from the earth. And that beautiful mouth of his, which had nourished you with life, you filled with gall. And you killed your Lord at the time of the great feast.

80. Surely you were filled with gaiety, but he was filled with hunger; you drank wine and ate bread, but he vinegar and gall; you wore a happy smile, but he had a sad countenance; you were full of joy, but he was full of trouble; you sang songs, but he was judged; you issued the command, he was crucified; you danced, he was buried; you lay down on a soft bed, but he in a tomb and coffin. 81. O lawless Israel, why did you commit this extraordinary crime of casting your Lord into new sufferings–your master, the one who formed you, the one who made you, the one who honored you, the one who called you Israel? 82. But you were found not really to be Israel, for you did not see God, you did not recognize the Lord, you did not know, O Israel, that this one was the firstborn of God, the one who was begotten before the morning star, the one who caused the light to shine forth, the one who made bright the day, the one who parted the darkness, the one who established the primordial starting point, the one who suspended the earth, the one who quenched the abyss, the one who stretched out the firmament, the one who formed the universe,

83. the one who set in motion the stars of heaven, the one who caused those luminaries to shine, the one who made the angels in heaven, the one who established their thrones in that place, the one who by himself fashioned man upon the earth. This was the one who chose you, the one who guided you from Adam to Noah, from Noah to Abraham, from Abraham to Isaac and Jacob and the Twelve Patriarchs. 84. This was the one who guided you into Egypt, and guarded you, and himself kept you well supplied there. This was the one who lighted your route with a column of fire, and provided shade for you by means of a cloud, the one who divided the Red Sea, and led you across it, and scattered your enemy abroad. 85. This is the one who provided you with manna from heaven, the one who gave you water to drink from a rock, the one who established your laws in Horeb, the one who gave you an inheritance in the land, the one who sent out his prophets to you, the one who raised up your kings.

86. This is the one who came to you, the one who healed your suffering ones and who resurrected your dead. This is the one whom you sinned against. This is the one whom you wronged. This is the one whom you killed. This is the one whom you sold for silver, although you asked him for the didrachma.

B. Israel Brought to Trial (87-93)

87. O ungrateful Israel, come here and be judged before me for your ingratitude. How high a price did you place on being created by him? How high a price did you place on the discovery of your fathers? How high a price did you place on the descent into Egypt, and the provision made for you there through the noble Joseph? 88. How high a price did you place on the ten

plagues? How high a price did you place on the nightly column of fire, and the daily cloud, and the crossing of the Red Sea? How high a price did you place on the gift of manna from heaven, and the gift of water from the rock, and the gift of law in Horeb, and the land as an inheritance, and the benefits accorded you there? 89. How high a price did you place on your suffering people whom he healed when he was present? Set me a price on the withered hand, which he restored whole to its body.

90. Put me a price on the men born blind, whom he led into light by his voice. Put me a price on those who lay dead, whom he raised up alive from the tomb. Inestimable are the benefits that come to you from him. But you, shamefully, have paid him back with ingratitude, returning to him evil for good, and affliction for favor and death for life– 91. a person for whom you should have died. Furthermore, if the king of some nation is captured by an enemy, a war is started because of him, fortifications are shattered because of him, cities are plundered because of him, ransom is sent because of him, ambassadors are commissioned because of him in order that he might be surrendered, so that either he might be returned if living, or that he might be buried if dead. 92. But you, quite to the contrary, voted against your Lord, whom indeed the nations worshipped, and the uncircumcised admired, and the foreigners glorified, over whom Pilate washed his hands. But as for you–you killed this one at the time of the great feast.

93. Therefore, the feast of unleavened bread has become bitter to you just as it was written: "You will eat unleavened bread with bitter herbs." Bitter to you are the nails which you made pointed. Bitter to you is the tongue which you sharpened. Bitter to you are the false witnesses whom you brought forward. Bitter to you are the fetters which you prepared. Bitter to you are the scourges which you wove. Bitter to you is Judas whom you furnished with pay. Bitter to you is Herod whom you followed. Bitter to you is Caiaphas whom you obeyed. Bitter to you is the gall which you made ready. Bitter to you is the vinegar which you produced. Bitter to you are the thorns which you plucked. Bitter to you are your hands which you bloodied, when you killed your Lord in the midst of Jerusalem.

C. Gentiles Are Witnesses of Israel's Crime (94-98)

94. Pay attention, all families of the nations, and observe! An extraordinary murder has taken place in the center of Jerusalem, in the city devoted to God's law, in the city of the Hebrews, in the city of the prophets, in the city thought of as just. And who has been murdered? And who is the murderer? I am ashamed to give the answer, but give it I must. For if this murder had taken place at night, or if he had been slain in a desert place, it would be well to keep silent; but it was in the middle of the main street, even in the center of the city, while all were looking on, that the unjust murder of this just person took place. 95. And thus he was lifted up upon the tree, and an inscription was affixed identifying the one who had been murdered. Who was he? It is painful to tell, but it is more dreadful not to tell. Therefore, hear and tremble because of him for whom the earth trembled.

96. The one who hung the earth in space, is himself hanged; the one who fixed the heavens in place, is himself impaled; the one who firmly fixed all things, is himself firmly fixed to the

tree. The Lord is insulted, God has been murdered, the King of Israel has been destroyed by the right hand of Israel. 97. O frightful murder! O unheard of injustice! The Lord is disfigured and he is not deemed worthy of a cloak for his naked body, so that he might not be seen exposed. For this reason the stars turned and fled, and the day grew quite dark, in order to hide the naked person hanging on the tree, darkening not the body of the Lord, but the eyes of men. 98. Yes, even though the people did not tremble, the earth trembled instead; although the people were not afraid, the heavens grew frightened; although the people did not tear their garments, the angels tore theirs; although the people did not lament, the Lord thundered from heaven, and the most high uttered his voice.

D. Israel Questioned and Sentenced to Death (99)

99. Why was it like this, O Israel? You did not tremble for the Lord. You did not fear for the Lord. You did not lament for the Lord, yet you lamented for your firstborn. You did not tear your garments at the crucifixion of the Lord, yet you tore your garments for your own who were murdered. You forsook the Lord; you were not found by him. You dashed the Lord to the ground; you, too, were dashed to the ground, and lie quite dead.

III. The Final Triumph of Christ (100-105)

100. But he arose from the dead and mounted up to the heights of heaven. When the Lord had clothed himself with humanity, and had suffered for the sake of the sufferer, and had been bound for the sake of the imprisoned, and had been judged for the sake of the condemned, and buried for the sake of the one who was buried, 101. he rose up from the dead, and cried aloud with this voice: Who is he who contends with me? Let him stand in opposition to me. I set the condemned man free; I gave the dead man life; I raised up the one who had been entombed. 102. Who is my opponent? I, he says, am the Christ. I am the one who destroyed death, and triumphed over the enemy, and trampled Hades under foot, and bound the strong one, and carried off man to the heights of heaven, I, he says, am the Christ.

103. Therefore, come, all families of men, you who have been befouled with sins, and receive forgiveness for your sins. I am your forgiveness, I am the passover of your salvation, I am the lamb which was sacrificed for you, I am your ransom, I am your light, I am your saviour, I am your resurrection, I am your king, I am leading you up to the heights of heaven, I will show you the eternal Father, I will raise you up by my right hand. 104. This is the one who made the heavens and the earth, and who in the beginning created man, who was proclaimed through the law and prophets, who became human via the virgin, who was hanged upon a tree, who was buried in the earth, who was resurrected from the dead, and who ascended to the heights of heaven, who sits at the right hand of the Father, who has authority to judge and to save everything, through whom the Father created everything from the beginning of the world to the end of the age.

105. This is the alpha and the omega. This is the beginning and the end–an indescribable beginning and an incomprehensible end. This is the Christ. This is the king. This is Jesus. This is the general. This is the Lord. This is the one who rose up from the dead. This is the one who sits at the right hand of the Father. He bears the Father and is borne by the Father, to whom be the glory and the power forever. Amen. The Peri Pascha of Melito. Peace to the one who wrote, and to the one who reads, and to those who love the Lord in simplicity of heart.

Source. English translation: an older public-domain translation as collected in the Writings-Database (HistoricalChristianFaith), mostly from the Ante-Nicene, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers and similar nineteenth-century editions. SermonIndex has only divided it into chapters and short sections; the wording is the translator's own. Square brackets, Greek or Latin words and footnote-free text are as the source file prints them, and a transcription error may remain. No Greek or Latin text is shown beside it yet, and no modern English version has been made.