

The Exodus

Exodus 12:21 – 13:22

Last week – the institution of the Passover – in preparation for and protection from the last plague that was to come upon Egypt. It was now time for the judgment of God to fall upon man and beast because of Pharaoh's hardened heart and refusal to let the people of Israel leave the country.

The night of death has arrived.

I. The Night of Death

A. Preparation for life – Exodus 12:21-28

1) Requirement of Obedience – It wasn't enough that the Israelites were individually part of the covenant community. Their sins needed to be addressed as well; they, too, needed a substitute to appease the wrath of God.

This required obedience to God's command through Moses. Obedience would be the evidence of their faith in the efficacy – the effectiveness – of the blood of the Passover lamb in their place so that God would forego his judgment against them.

2) Requirement of Observance – The need for a sacrifice, a substitute, was not to be once-for-all event. It was to be repeated annually as a remembrance of what God did for them. We see throughout Israel's history many times where the people were instructed to set up memorials by which they would remember God's work on their behalf.

There would be no mercy for the Egyptians:

B. Execution of Death – Exodus 12:29-32

This is God's judgment against Pharaoh and the Egyptians. As Pharaoh brought about the death of male Hebrew children, now God visits death upon the firstborn male of Egyptian families.

A little later we will look at God's instructions regarding the redemption of the firstborn as part of his contract with Israel. In a sense, what we have here is the redemption of Israel's firstborn through the death of the Egyptian firstborn.

This is precisely what God had told Moses in preparation for Moses' return to Egypt –
Exodus 4:21-23

The execution of God's judgment against a substitute in order to effect redemption is a picture of what would ultimately be accomplished through the sacrificial death of Christ whom Paul calls our Passover Lamb. This ultimate sacrifice fulfills what we see God doing in this last judgment against Egypt.

Pharaoh has had enough! He summons Moses in the middle of the night – interestingly, just as Moses had told Pharaoh would happen – **Exodus 11:4-8**.

The Israelites had been told to be ready to depart Egypt. **Exodus 12:11**

II. The Exodus from Egypt

A. The Fear of the Egyptians – Exodus 12:33

The Egyptians feared for their lives. Who knew where the judgment of God would end? Perhaps this would be just the start of a tragic end. They had already endured the previous nine plagues. Who was to say more catastrophic events weren't coming soon?

While there was fear on the part of the Egyptians, the Israelites, on the other hand, were ready to respond by faith to God's command.

B. The Faith of the Israelites – Exodus 12:34-39

This is a reminder that genuine faith, biblical faith, always has an obedience aspect to it. They had done just what God had commanded them to do. They were ready to go. And when God through Moses said, "Go," they obeyed.

C. The Faithfulness of God

Moses, writing this account in Israel's experience about 41 years later, puts this all in context – **Exodus 12:40-42**

We see the faithfulness of God on display. He had heard the cries of his people; he had seen their suffering; he had come to deliver them out of bondage by his mighty hand; he had humbled Pharaoh and all of Egypt. And now, he kept watch over Israel on this night of Exodus.

God institutes remembrances for the people of Israel. He knows too well how easy it is to forget. This is one of the constant warnings given to Israel throughout their history. Let's look at another example of this in the book of Deuteronomy, chapter 8.

Deuteronomy 8:1-20

III. The Remembrances of Salvation

A. The Passover – Exodus 12:43-51

These instructions are forward looking. It was a reminder how they were to remember through the Passover observance God's deliverance. Here we see the unique status of Israel in the covenant; but we also see the broader, more universal, application – of the sojourner, the stranger, who would, by faith, identify with Israel's God.

B. The Feast of Unleavened Bread

God also institutes here the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This was to be part of the Passover celebration – **Exodus 13:2-10**

This feast was to begin the day following the celebration of Passover. Today, the feasts of Passover, Unleavened Bread and Firstfruits have all been incorporated into the celebration of Passover – an eight-day celebration called Passover.

Notice that like Passover, this feast is to be an annual observance – another remembrance of what God had done for his people.

In many passages of Scripture, leaven is a picture of sin. Jesus warned his disciples to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and scribes. The Apostle Paul, writing to Corinthians about their tolerance of open sin among some in their church says:

Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed. Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. – *I Corinthians 5:6-8*

This feast is a great symbol of an important aspect of salvation. We are saved and then, being saved, we are to be sanctified. Having been declared righteous – in the right, God begins the process of making us righteous. The Passover is about being saved – a substitute sacrifice in our place, averting the wrath and judgment of God. The Feast of Unleavened Bread is a reminder of what God wants to do in us after he has saved us. The view is towards becoming more and more free from sin.

God didn't save us to run amuck – do what we please – live however we choose to live. Israel wasn't set free from slavery to live how she wanted to live. God set Israel free from being unwilling slaves to Pharaoh to be willing slaves to him.

This image is fulfilled in the believer's identification and union with Christ. Paul talks about this in Romans, chapter 6. **Romans 6:15-23**

There is another remembrance that God commands Israel to observe: the redemption of the firstborn.

C. The Redemption of the Firstborn – Exodus 13:1, 11-16

God is exercising his divine right over the firstborn. In the case of this tenth plague, God was purchasing the redemption of his firstborn – Israel, by the death of Egypt's firstborn. A price was required for the purchase of the firstborn. That price required blood.

This requirement of blood as an acceptable sacrifice goes all the way back to mankind's first family.

Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a worker of the ground. In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground, and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering he had no regard.

– *Genesis 4:2-5*

I think that from the very beginning God had told man what was required of him, what kind of sacrifice was acceptable to him. Cain gave what he wanted to give; Abel gave what God required. And it was that sacrifice that God found acceptable.

Again, in this observance of the redemption of the firstborn, we have a picture of what was to come. Peter Enns writes:

The tenth plague was not a divine temper tantrum where God flexes his muscles before the Egyptians and really lets them have it. It is the necessary implementation of a redemptive pattern, one that requires death as a means to fuller life. The consecration of the firstborn, therefore, is a reminder of the once-for-all substitutionary death of the beloved firstborn son who is to come.

When Jesus gathered his disciples in the Upper Room in Jerusalem to celebrate Passover, he transformed that remembrance with something new – the bread was to represent his body which was to be broken for them and all believers to come; the cup represented his blood – the blood of the new covenant. With the final Passover Lamb, there is a new celebration, a new observance in this new community of faith – a chosen people.

The Apostle Peter speaks in this new terminology of God's chosen people – a people of faith, writing in his first epistle:

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.
– *I Peter 2:9-10*

The redemption of the firstborn also finds expression and fulfillment in Jesus. Enns writes:

Christ is the only Son of his Father. He, like Israel, is the firstborn son in whom the Father's favor rests. But here we note an important twist. In the Old Testament it is the beloved son who is redeemed through a substitution of some sort. But Christ, the firstborn Son, is the *means* of redemption. It is in Christ that God actually claims *fully* his right to the firstborn son – he belongs to God. By sacrificing the firstborn Son of God, God's redemption of Israel is now complete.

Let me read a little more from Enns as he talks about how Christ fits into the imagery we see in Exodus:

The great irony is that the *true* firstborn Son is not protected as was Israel, but he has become the enemy of God, as was Egypt. In his death, God's firstborn Son is more like Egypt than Israel in that he bears God's wrath. But three days later he rises to exaltation to fulfill another purpose, the exaltation of Israel... With Christ's death and resurrection the true spiritual pedigree of God's people comes to light. The people of God are *not* the firstborn, but they *become* firstborn through their union with Christ, the true firstborn Son.

Paul alludes to this when describing the great work of salvation through Christ in Romans, chapter 8:

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are the called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. – *Romans 8:28-29*

Back to Exodus 13:

IV. The Presence of God

A. God's Wisdom – Exodus 13:17-18

God leads the people of Israel to the south. This wasn't the shortest way; it wasn't the easiest way; it wasn't the most logical way; but it was God's way.

I remember when Nancy and I moved to Virginia in 1974. We had just gotten married and were headed to our new assignment with Campus Crusade for Christ at Virginia Tech. Before packing our U-Haul truck and setting off cross-country, we went to the Triple A office and got a Trip-Tik. It would lay out the most direct route we should take from Minneapolis, Minnesota to Blacksburg, Virginia.

Had Moses gone to the Triple A office in Goshen and gotten a Trip-Tik, this wouldn't have been the route. But God knew that Israel needed some time to prepare to face the enemies. He also needed to teach them more about himself, his promise to protect them, to deliver them from the Egyptians, to take care of them when they lacked even the resources to survive. Their desert education was just beginning.

B. Joseph's Faith – Exodus 13:19

Go back to Genesis, chapter 50. We need to see Joseph's faith in God's promise and confidence in God's faithfulness.

Genesis 50:22-26

The writer of the New Testament book of Hebrews notes:

By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and gave directions concerning his bones. – *Hebrews 11:22*

C. God's Presence – Exodus 13:20-22

This is God's reminder that the people are not alone, that God would be with them in a visible expression of his presence. We will continue to see how God manifests his presence with Israel throughout their journey.

Conclusions

1) We like Israel, but now in a completed and fulfilled manner, have been redeemed through the payment of a ransom. This ransom price was the blood of Jesus on the Cross. This is why the Cross is central to the message of the Gospel. And why the resurrection is so critical in that the ransom price was fully accepted by God, appeasing his wrath and averting his judgment.

Paul talks about the implications of our redemption. In First Corinthians six, he writes:

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body. – *I Corinthians 6:19-20*

That price was the blood of his sacrifice. Paul writes in Ephesians one:

In him (that is, Christ) we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us....
– *Ephesians 1:7-8*

2) Our redemption, like the Passover, is our salvation. But having been saved, we are now to be sanctified. Having been declared righteous (that is justification), we are now to be made righteous, which is sanctification – a process of transformation through the work of the Holy Spirit.

3) We see in Israel's situation, as we need to see in ours, God's faithfulness to his promises. Even in her deliverance, Israel needs to trust that God knows what he is doing: that his direction is best for them, that his way is the best way, that his leading is the wisest for them.

One reason is that God sees the big picture; he sees what we cannot see and where we cannot see. The exodus is on one hand the culmination of God's faithfulness to the covenant he made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The timing was tied to God's waiting until the fullness of the iniquity of the Canaanites, to getting Moses ready to lead, to executing his judgment against Pharaoh and Egypt for their enslavement of Israel, etc.

In our own lives, we need to trust that God sees where we cannot see, that he sees what we cannot see. He sees the beginning from the end; there is nothing that can surprise him, nothing that can confound him, nothing that can sidetrack him. He does and will do everything for his glory and for our ultimate good. But I have to choose to trust him.

4) Lastly, we need to consider how God manifests his presence among his people today. It is no longer in the cloud by day and pillar of fire by night. It is more profound than that; it is more pervasive than that; it is more personal than that.

God's presence with his people today is through the indwelling Holy Spirit. When we believe the Gospel and trust in Jesus Christ, God saves us eternally and he sends his Spirit to take up his dwelling place within us.

This is how God leads us today. The Holy Spirit takes God's written Word and leads us in our understanding of how to live lives that please God. He works in our minds, our hearts,

and our wills in such a way that he influences our decisions, our thoughts, our actions, every part of our being – if we will allow him to lead us.

Israel's redemption from Egypt is just the beginning of their adventure of faith. In our text next week, we will see how they do when dire circumstances confront their faith.