



LAKWOOD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Brian Mitchell
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The First Passover Exodus 12:1-14

Good Morning, today we continue our journey through the book of Exodus with a look at the first portion of chapter 12, which deals with the first Passover meal. Last week was the burning bush story and the lectionary has jumped us up 8 chapters, so we need a quick catch up.

Moses had a few objections to taking on this task of leading God's people out of Egypt to freedom. After some to-ing and fro-ing between Moses and God, God allows Moses' brother Aaron to go with him to speak for him. They meet with the Hebrew leaders, perform the signs with the staff and leprous hand that God had shown Moses earlier. The leaders recognize that Moses and Aaron speak for God and worship God.

Then in Chapter 5 we read,

"Afterward Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'Let my people go, so that they may celebrate a festival to me in the wilderness.'" 2 But Pharaoh said, "Who is the Lord, that I should heed him and let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, and I will not let Israel go."

This is the beginning of the stories of the plagues. We read that Pharaoh's heart was hard, he would not yield regardless of the plague sent to him. In fact, after the initial request, instead of letting them go, Pharaoh insists the Hebrew slaves work even harder. He does not know God, he has no allegiance to God, no love for God and no fear of God. So we see the plagues one after the other, increasing in intensity as they progress.

Water turned to blood. (Exodus 7:14-25).

Frogs cover the land. (Exodus 8:1-15).

The dust turns into gnats or lice. (Exodus 8:16-19).

Swarms of flies cover the land. (Exodus 8:20-32).

Death of all Egyptian livestock. (Exodus 9:1-7).

Boils break out on the people of Egypt. (Exodus 9:8-12).

Hailstorms kill unsheltered humans, animals, and vegetation. (Exodus 9:13-35).

Locusts cover the land and consume all remaining vegetation. (Exodus 10:1-20).

Darkness covers Egypt for three days. (Exodus 10:21-29).

We are all fairly familiar with the plagues, we learn about them in Sunday School and to be honest, when I was a kid, I thought that this stuff was pretty cool. I mean who does not love stories about frogs covering the land, nasty boils covering the people, scary storms killing livestock. Water to blood, flies and locusts, darkness for 3 days, it's like a horror movie. I loved all that. I remember as a boy we had a year when there seemed to be a plague of frogs

in my hometown. There were hundreds of them in the streets. I thought that was so cool. I wasn't so keen on the boils right enough when my teen years kicked in.

The 3-day darkness is plague 9. It is when we get to plague 10 that it becomes really horrific. Plague 10 is death. Death will come to the firstborn children of all Egyptians and their livestock.

It is important to think on all the plagues before we come to this one. The slow build up to plague 10 may be a result of the hardness in Pharaoh's heart as much as anything else. In a way God is at war with Pharaoh over the freedom of the Hebrew slaves. Their freedom will come at a terrible cost. It is also important that we remember the context of this first Passover meal that we will read of in a moment. It comes during this time of conflict between God and Pharaoh. Our passage immediately precedes the horror of plague 10.

Exodus 12: 1-14.

12 The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt: 2 This month shall mark for you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year for you. 3 Tell the whole congregation of Israel that on the tenth of this month they are to take a lamb for each family, a lamb for each household. 4 If a household is too small for a whole lamb, it shall join its closest neighbor in obtaining one; the lamb shall be divided in proportion to the number of people who eat of it. 5 Your lamb shall be without blemish, a year-old male; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats. 6 You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month; then the whole assembled congregation of Israel shall slaughter it at twilight. 7 They shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. 8 They shall eat the lamb that same night; they shall eat it roasted over the fire with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. 9 Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted over the fire, with its head, legs, and inner organs. 10 You shall let none of it remain until the morning; anything that remains until the morning you shall burn. 11 This is how you shall eat it: your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it hurriedly. It is the passover of the Lord. 12 For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike down every firstborn in the land of Egypt, both human beings and animals; on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the Lord. 13 The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live: when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague shall destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.

14 This day shall be a day of remembrance for you. You shall celebrate it as a festival to the Lord; throughout your generations you shall observe it as a perpetual ordinance.

In reading Exodus 12 we can see why Passover is still important to our Jewish friends. In verse 2, the Hebrews are told that they are to set their calendars according to this day. *This month shall mark for you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year for you.* Time will be marked by their liberation from Egypt. What then follows are instructions for the meal. Each household should take a lamb, they may share with a neighbor if their household is small. The lamb must be a year old and without blemish. Older than a year and the meat would be less than perfect. The sacrificial element of the meal is shown here. We read at a certain time the blood of the lamb should be painted on the posts and lintel of the

door, this is a sign to the Hebrews that God will pass over their homes when the 10th plague comes. Instructions are given on how to prepare and eat the meal. There is a haste involved. All the meal must be eaten or burned the next day. Unleavened bread and bitter herbs are to be eaten with the roasted meat. They shall eat, “with loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it hurriedly.” In other words, be ready to move, God is coming.

In verse 14 we read, *This day shall be a day of remembrance for you. You shall celebrate it as a festival to the Lord; throughout your generations you shall observe it as a perpetual ordinance.*

I’d like us to think about that verse and this idea of a day of remembrance.

It sometimes helps to see how different translators interpret the Hebrew.

The NIV translates verse 14 *“This is a day you are to commemorate; for the generations to come you shall celebrate it as a festival to the Lord—a lasting ordinance.*

The Common English Bible as *““This day will be a day of remembering for you. You will observe it as a festival to the Lord. You will observe it in every generation as a regulation for all time.*

A day of remembering. I like that. We certainly know about days of remembering. We have holidays throughout our year to remember important events and people in our country’s history. We have days to remember those who gave all in the armed forces, a day coming up tomorrow to remember all who have worked and do work to make this country what is it.

I love that we celebrate birthdays and anniversaries here at LPC. They are indeed days of remembering. I saw a wonderful post on Facebook this week. Beth Randall shared that it was her parents George and Edie Taylor’s 65th anniversary. I thought her words were beautiful and appropriate to today. So, I asked her if I could share them with you. Beth wrote,

65 years. 780 months. 23,742 days. Days, weeks, months, and years of love and laughter, dedication and devotion, triumph and tragedy, courage and commitment. These are the hallmarks of my parents' marriage. They are truly an inspiration. Theirs is a love story for the ages.

What a day to remember. There was also 2 wonderful pictures of George and Edie at different stages of life. To be married 65 years (I would imagine) requires not just devotion and commitment, but also sacrifice. Sometimes you carry the other, sometimes you are carried. I know we have many such couples in our congregation and our lives, but As I thought of Beth’s words, triumph and tragedy, it struck that many of our days of remembering are full of triumph and tragedy. Some of those days bring joy, some sadness. Triumph and tragedy. Both worth remembering. Passover certainly has its share of both.

Many of you know, my wife, Sara was raised Jewish. The Mitchells have a Seder meal which is the Passover meal every year. We have tried traditional versions and messianic versions through the years, usually it is just us, but we have had guests and we had a whole church Seder once. There are very particular prayers and order to the meal. I am always struck by the use of first-person pronouns as opposed to third person. When describing the Hebrew experience, it is "We" as opposed to "They." There is a mysterious connection to God and God's present saving power in the meal. It is not just a remembrance of the past. It is a day to remember that it is the same God who saves today who saved the Hebrews from Pharaoh. But there is also a real connection to the people of that time.

But what about those of us who never participate in a seder? Where is our connection?

That brings us to this table. There is certainly triumph and tragedy here. The triumph wins. But just as with the first Passover, there is a price to pay for the triumph. Do we remember that when Jesus met with his disciples in the upper room, it was this same Passover meal that they were celebrating?

Jesus used the elements on the Passover table to reveal himself in a deeper way to his disciples and indeed to us. Jesus would have used unleavened bread as in the original meal. Leaven is often used symbolically to refer to sin in scripture. Unleavened bread similarly is symbolically a picture of sinlessness.

In 1st Corinthians 11 we read that Jesus took the cup after the supper and said, *"This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."* It is no coincidence that the cup after dinner in a Passover meal is the cup of redemption. This cup reminds Israel of the price paid for her redemption from slavery in Egypt which was the blood of that unblemished Passover lamb. Jesus is connecting his disciples with that great act of deliverance with this new act of deliverance that will be seen on the cross and the empty tomb. The context of this table is Passover. The context of this table is a celebration of God freeing the Hebrews from bondage and slavery. When we eat the bread and drink the cup, we celebrate the fact that we too have been set free from the bondage of sin and have been redeemed. We are no longer slaves to sin; we are children of God.

And what does Jesus say about this meal. Do this, in remembrance of me. Every time we come to this table it is a day of remembering. We remember what God did through Jesus for our redemption. We celebrate our freedom. We connect with the story of God's people that goes back to that first Passover. So, may this meal be more than just a thing we do once a month, a meaningless ritual. May we not take this meal for granted. The body was broken for you. The blood shed for you. May it be a time for us to celebrate the new life we find in Jesus. It is our day of remembering. Remember. Amen.