

PASSOVER

Exodus Series part 7: chapters 12-13
Stonebrook Sunday AM, 9/17/23, Matt Heerema

Turn to Exodus chapter 12.

This morning we are in week 7 of our walk through of Exodus. Last week we looked at one of the most well known and powerful stories in Exodus: God's judgment on Egypt through the ten plagues. In these plagues God judged Egypt's idolatry, worship of false gods, proving them to be powerless. Perhaps there were real spiritual forces at work, but they were no match for The Most High God. Also through these plagues, God revealed to Pharaoh and to all Egypt the consequences of their hard-heartedness and rebellion against their creator.

Last week's section culminates with the final plague: the death of every first born son. In every other plague, Pharaoh continually refused God's command to let the Israelites go. Toward the end even his own counselors were pleading with him to let them go. But this last plague finally breaks him.

What we are going to look at this morning is The Passover: one of the greatest turning points in the history of God's people. This climactic event sets the tone for the rest of the story of the whole bible.

In Passover narrative we see:

- 1) God spares his people from judgment,
- 2) God releases them from the slavery
- 3) God helps them to remember
- 4) God leads them all the way home

GOD SPARES THEM FROM JUDGEMENT

God is about to drop the final hammer of judgement on Egypt, and the results are dire: the death of every firstborn male human or animal, but God gives Israel a way of escape: a meal. He commands them to start a festival that they are supposed to hold every year, from now on. As a result of this festival, they would be saved. In the first 20 verses of chapter 12, God gives very specific instructions for this, and we'll pick up in verse 21 - let's read

Exodus 12:21-28 (CSB)

21 Then Moses summoned all the elders of Israel and said to them, **"Go, select an animal from the flock according to your families, and slaughter the Passover animal.** 22 Take a cluster of hyssop, dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and brush the lintel and the two doorposts with some of the blood in the basin. None of you may go out the door of his house until morning. 23 **When the Lord passes through to strike Egypt and sees the blood on the lintel and the two doorposts, he will pass over the door and not let the destroyer enter your houses to strike you.**

24 "Keep this command permanently as a statute for you and your descendants. 25 When you enter the land that the Lord will give you as he promised, you are to observe this ceremony. **26 When your children ask you, 'What does this ceremony mean to you?' 27 you are to reply, 'It is the Passover sacrifice to the Lord, for he passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt when he struck the Egyptians, and he spared our homes.'** " So the people knelt low and worshiped. 28 Then the Israelites went and did this; they did just as the Lord had commanded Moses and Aaron.

Here we see God sparing his people from judgment, through the blood of a lamb.

Think of the scenario for a moment: "Tonight, an angel of death is going sweep through Egypt and kill every firstborn male. Here's how to not have that happen to you... paint some lamb's blood on your doorpost."

I feel like my response to Moses would be something like "Are you sure that's all he said to do? I don't know. That doesn't seem like very much effort. You're sure this is going to work?"

God wanted to teach his people to trust him. "Trust me. The blood of the lamb is the only thing that will save you.

No other magical incantation, no other pleading or begging or crying to other gods; I want you to trust and obey me. That's how I'll know which houses to pass over: those who trust me, and follow my simple, unintuitive instruction."

Through the simple act of obedience and trust, God spares them from judgement.

GOD RELEASES THEM FROM SLAVERY

Exodus 12:29-36 (CSB)

29 Now at midnight the Lord struck every firstborn male in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the prisoner who was in the dungeon, and every firstborn of the livestock. 30 During the night Pharaoh got up, he along with all his officials and all the Egyptians, and there was a loud wailing throughout Egypt because there wasn't a house without someone dead.

31 He summoned Moses and Aaron during the night and said, "Get out immediately from among my people, both you and the Israelites, and go, worship the Lord as you have said. 32 Take even your flocks and your herds as you asked and leave, and also bless me."

33 Now the Egyptians pressured the people in order to send them quickly out of the country, for they said, "We're all going to die!" 34 So the people took their dough before it was leavened, with their kneading bowls wrapped up in their clothes on their shoulders.

35 The Israelites acted on Moses's word **and asked the Egyptians for silver and gold items and for clothing. 36 And the Lord gave the people such favor with the Egyptians that they gave them what they requested. In this way they plundered the Egyptians.**

God's mission is accomplished.

It is not as though the first 9 plagues failed to convince Pharaoh, (remember that it says "The Lord hardened his heart" about four times as much as it says "Pharaoh hardened his heart") But rather in this final act of judgement against the Gods of Egypt, God fully makes himself known as the King of Kings, Pharaoh over Pharaohs, God over gods.

The Egyptians are so eager to be rid of Israel now that they hurry them out, and give them money and clothing for the journey, just like God said they would in chapter 3.

No armed uprising. No political coup. By the single-handed work of God through the proclamation of his word and display of his power...

...God rescues them from slavery.

GOD HELPS THEM TO REMEMBER

We also see that God gives them practices, acts of worship, to help them remember what was done for them.

There are actually three things he wants them to remember: the release from captivity, the meager provisions, and the sparing of the firstborn. We saw the first already in 12:26-27. Let's go to chapter 13 for the other two.

Exodus 13:5-10 (CSB)

5 When the Lord brings you into the land of the Canaanites, Hethites [Hittites], Amorites, Hivites, and Jebusites, which he swore to your ancestors that he would give you, a land flowing with milk and honey, **you must carry out this ceremony in this month. 6 For seven days you must eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there is to be a festival to the Lord.** 7 Unleavened bread is to be eaten for those seven days. Nothing leavened may be found among you, and no yeast may be found among you in all your territory. 8 **On that day explain to your son, 'This is because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt.'** 9 Let it serve as a sign for you on your hand and as a reminder on your forehead, so that the Lord's instruction may be in your mouth; for the Lord brought you out of Egypt with a strong hand. 10 Keep this statute at its appointed time from year to year.

Exodus 13:11-16 (CSB)

11 "When the Lord brings you into the land of the Canaanites, as he swore to you and your ancestors, and gives it to you, 12 you are to present to the Lord every firstborn male of the womb. All firstborn offspring of the livestock you own that are males will be the Lord's. 13 You must redeem every firstborn of a donkey with a flock animal, but if you do not redeem it, break its neck. However, you must redeem every firstborn among your sons.

14 "In the future, when your son asks you, 'What does this mean?' say to him, 'By the strength of his hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt, out of the place of slavery. 15 When Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the Lord killed every firstborn male in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of humans and the firstborn of livestock. That is why I sacrifice to the Lord all the firstborn of the womb that are males, but I redeem all the firstborn of my sons.' 16 So let it be a sign on your hand and a symbol on your forehead, for the Lord brought us out of Egypt by the strength of his hand."

The Israelites were to remember where they came from, the condition they were in before being rescued by God. They were given ceremonies to remember that a blood sacrifice was required for their rescue.

The words and these memorials were to be passed down from generation to generation so that God's people would always remember how God saved them.

God helps them to remember, and finally...

GOD LEADS THEM ALL THE WAY HOME

God doesn't simply release them from slavery and leave them to figure it out on their own from here. No, God leads them out of the land of their captivity to a promised land he has prepared for them.

And he does this in an unmistakable, impossible to miss way:

Exodus 13:21-22 (CSB)

21 The Lord went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to lead them on their way during the day and in a pillar of fire to give them light at night, so that they could travel day or night.
22 The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night never left its place in front of the people.

God leads them this way, all the way to the promised land. We're going to be following this journey through Exodus, which by ends with them still wandering, still following this pillar of cloud and pillar of fire, with a long way left to travel: long lessons to learn, long hardships to endure.

And that should sound familiar and encouraging to us. Because God still works this way.

In Christ, God still spares his people from judgment, releases them from slavery, helps them to remember, and leads them all the way home.

John the Baptist said "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!" Paul calls Jesus "our passover lamb."

CHRIST IS OUR PASSOVER LAMB

Through Christ's sacrifice, we are spared from judgement on the last day.

John 6:40 (CSB)

...everyone who sees the Son and believes in him will have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day."

Through Christ's sacrifice we are released from slavery

Romans 6:22-23 (CSB)

22 **But now, since you have been set free from sin** and have become enslaved to God, you have your fruit, which results in sanctification—and the outcome is eternal life! 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Christ gave us a way to remember

1 Corinthians 11:23-26 (CSB)

23 For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: On the night when he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

25 In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, and said, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

The first Lord's Supper was the passover meal.

Jesus reinterprets and redirects the passover meal to be about Him.

There is now a *New Covenant* for Israel and *everyone* who would believe.

No longer are Jews to eat and drink in memory of the passover rescue;

we are now to eat and drink in memory of Christ's life, death, resurrection, and return.

Christ leads us from our life of captivity to a promised life he has prepared for us

John 14:1-6 (CSB)

1 "Don't let your heart be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. 2 In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? **3 If I go away and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to myself, so that where I am you may be also. 4 You know the way to where I am going."** 5 "Lord," Thomas said, "we don't know where you're going. How can we know the way?" 6 Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

Like Israel in the exodus from Egypt, it takes us a lifetime to reach the promised land.

We wander in deserts of hurt, pain, suffering, and joys and triumphs.

We experience great moments of faith and see mountain-moving miracles happen. And the next minute we wallow in doubt and complaining, uncertain if this God hears, sees, knows, or cares what we're going through.

But remember Christ, our passover lamb, who has rescued us, who has freed us, who tells us to remember, and leads us all the way home.

Let's pray.