

“An Ancient Picture of our Present Salvation”

Exodus 12:1-51

December 1, 2024

This morning we are returning to our series in the book of Exodus, *That the World May Know the Glory of Yahweh.* It’s not only the story of God bringing His people out of bondage in Egypt, but also a worldwide and everlasting declaration that *Yahweh is the Lord and there is no other. His glory is unrivaled in all the earth.*

We left off a couple weeks ago in Exodus 11, with the warning about the 10th and final plague that God would bring on Egypt before delivering His people from Pharaoh’s grip. Today we are going to see the 10th plague carried out but not until God gives His people very specific instructions about how they are to escape the judgment that is coming on Egypt and a command to hold an annual celebration of God’s deliverance. That celebration is known as Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Passover, as we will discover, is an ancient picture of our present salvation in Christ.

1. **God’s people are saved from the death penalty of sin by trusting in His grace provided through the blood of a substitutionary sacrifice** (Ex 12:1-13, 21-28).

[vs. 1-13] God was about to do something so significant, that the Hebrew people would mark time by this event. Their calendar would reflect each new year based on what God was about to do and the celebration of Passover that would mark it annually. This is why vs. 2 says, “This month shall be the beginning of months. It shall be the first month of the year for you.” [Illus: B.C. / A.D. (anno domini)]

The previous 9 plagues had displayed God’s power and supremacy over the Egyptians gods. They had wrought misery, destroyed crops and devastated the economy; even caused physical suffering (boils). But this final plague would be on a whole new level. God would take the life of the firstborn of every Egyptian family. And this would be so devastating that it would result in the Israelites getting expelled from Egypt.

You may recall that beginning with the fourth plague, God made a distinction between His people (the Hebrews) and Pharaoh’s people (the Egyptians). Plagues 4-9 only impacted the Egyptian people while the Hebrews were untouched. When we come to this final plague, the death of the firstborn, God will again make a distinction, but it will not be automatic this time. The Hebrew people would need to take action. That is, they will need to demonstrate *faith* in God’s word through obedience to His instructions to escape the plague of death. Why? Because they too had sinned against God. But God in His mercy had provided a way of escape through the atoning blood of a sacrifice—the death of a lamb in their place.

The Hebrew people are simply obeying God’s instructions so that the judgment of death would pass over their home. And through it, God will teach them about salvation by grace through faith on the basis of a blood sacrifice. But we also know from the NT that the blood of the Passover Lamb was pointing ahead to Christ who would be the ultimate and final Passover lamb—the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, to deliver us from sin’s condemnation and God’s holy wrath.

So as I summarize the Passover instructions, I will also point out their correlation to the Jesus as the Lamb of God.

- Vs. 3-5: Each household was to select a lamb, a male yearling (young but full grown—at the prime of life) *without blemish*. **Jesus, at age 33, was a young but mature man in the prime of His life when He gave His life on the cross. He was sinless, without blemish. A perfectly acceptable sacrifice to a holy God.**
- The lamb was selected on the 10th day of the month but was to be kept until the 14th day. Some scholars suggest that for these four days the lamb would have been kept in the house with the family like a pet. This makes sense since the lamb’s life would be given as a replacement for the oldest son in the family. There’s a sense of identification with the lamb that takes place. There would be a sense of loss when his life was taken. **We too need to have a personal identification with Jesus whose life was given in place of ours. We are to abide with Him and He with us.**

- On the 14th day at twilight the lamb was killed/sacrificed, his blood collected into a basin. Then the blood was painted on the door frame of the house to indicate *faith* in God's mercy through the substitutionary blood of the lamb. **This of course points to our need to come under the blood of Christ by faith. Hebrews tells us that it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin" (10:4). We needed the blood of a perfect human, without sin, to take our place. Only Jesus could that.**
- Then the family was to roast the meat on a fire and eat it that night with bitter herbs and unleavened bread. They were not to take the time to boil the meat for the same reason that they were not to eat bread with leaven that needed time to rise. When vs. 9 says it was to be roasted with its inner parts, it doesn't mean that it was roasted whole, but that it was gutted simply and roasted quickly, rather than a detailed butchering process. This was simply to expediate the process because time was of essence.
- The *bitter herbs* could be gathered easily, quickly, and consumed with minimal preparation. But they also became a symbol of the affliction the Hebrews experienced in Egypt as slaves. In 1:14 we were told that the Egyptians "made their lives bitter with hard service" and "in all their work they ruthlessly made them work as slaves."
- Vs. 10 tells us that none of the meat was to be left till morning. It was to be eaten or burned. This points to the fact that this was no ordinary meal. The lamb was set aside for this holy purpose and was not to be eaten as common/ordinary food. **Remember, in Jn 6:54 Jesus said, "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life." In essence, Jesus is saying that believing in Him is as essential to eternal life as food is to physical life.**
- Then vs. 11 tells us they were to eat with their belt fastened, their sandals on their feet, and their staff in hand—ready to depart at a moment's notice. The phrase at the end of vs. 11 is key: "*It is the LORD's Passover.*" In other words, this meal is symbolic, dedicated to the Lord, eaten by faith, trusting in His deliverance. **Notice how "the Lord's Passover" is parallel to "the Lord's Supper"—also a "meal" dedicated to the Lord, eaten by faith, celebrating our deliverance from sin. It was the Passover meal that Jesus was eating with His**

disciples just before His death in which He took the cup and the unleavened bread and said, "This is My body...this is My blood" (Mt 26:26-28). In other words, "I am the Passover Lamb of God that delivers you from sin." Or as Paul said in 1Cor 5:7, "Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed."

[vs. 12-13] It's important to notice that apart from having the blood of the sacrificial, substitutionary lamb over the door of their house, the Hebrews would have been struck as well. But God in His mercy provided a way of escape for His people. The purpose of this final plague is two-fold. First it is judgment on all the false gods of Egypt and those who worshiped them. Yahweh is laying claim to His rightful place of supremacy: "*I am the Lord.*" This short statement captures the message of Exodus: *Yahweh is the Lord and there is no other. His glory is unrivaled in all the earth.*

The second purpose is to teach the Israelites about God's salvation. This is why vs. 13 says, "the blood shall be *a sign for you*...when I see the blood I will pass over you." When they looked up, they saw the blood as a covering for sin. Only blood could atone. Sin is a capital offense, so a life had to be given to cover one's sin (expiation). But when God saw the sign of blood—that a life had been given—He regarded it as propitiation, appeasing His wrath. The blood on the door was a sign of *faith*, trusting in the provision God had made by taking Him at His word. **God's people are saved from the death penalty of sin by trusting in His grace provided through the blood of a substitutionary sacrifice.**

2. **God's redemptive work must be remembered, celebrated, and passed on to future generations (Ex 12:14-20).**

[vs. 14-20] Here the Lord established a 7-day feast called the Feast of Unleavened Bread. If you've taken part in a messianic Passover seder, it is the retelling of the story of God's deliverance. It involves eating mutton, unleavened bread (bread of affliction), and bitter herbs as they retell the story of the bitter affliction of Egypt, the 10 plagues, and God's mighty deliverance from Pharaoh. Every year they were to commemorate what God had done. The feast began with the Passover Seder, and involved 7 days of eating unleavened bread. Not only did the unleavened bread remind them

of how quickly they had to leave Egypt, but it later became closely associated with purity. In vs. 15 they were instructed to remove all leaven from their home on the first day of the feast. Leaven, throughout the Bible, is often associated with sin. Sin like leaven/yeast, has a permeating effect.

One of the many aspects of symbolism that unleavened bread represented was making a clean break from the idolatrous influence of Egypt. Remember, they didn't have yeast packets in those days. They had to take a pinch of old bread dough that contained yeast and put it in a new batch of dough for the yeast or leaven to spread and cause it to rise. Unleavened bread symbolizes discontinuity. The kind of discontinuity that God would want Israel to have from idolatrous Egypt.

Paul made this kind of connection for us in 1Corinthians 5: *"Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough? Clean out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Let us therefore celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."* In other words, make a clean break from sin. Be cleansed of sin's influence. Don't hold on to sins of the old nature because sin is like yeast. It will keep spreading until it has corrupted everything.

As NT believers, we do not celebrate Passover and the Feast of Unleavened bread like the OT saints did. We celebrate their ultimate fulfillment through the cross of Jesus as we partake of the Lord's supper. Remember, the Lord's supper was instituted at the last supper, that is the last Passover seder as the OT saints knew it. Do you see the connection between the two? The blood of the Passover lamb pointed to the blood of Christ, and the unleavened bread represents His sinless sacrifice. The Lord's supper celebrates the ultimate exodus, deliverance from sin and Satan's dominion to serve the true and living God. The cup and the unleavened bread points to Christ as the means of our cleansing or sanctification. In 1Cor 1:30 Paul referred to Christ as our righteousness, sanctification and redemption.

This is why we examine ourselves as we come to the Lord's table. To cleanse our lives from the old leaven of sin. If you hold on to the old leaven of lust, it

will permeate all of your thoughts. If you hold on to the old leaven of bitterness, it will creep into every relationship. If you hold on to the old leaven of falsehood or lying, it will fully corrupt your entire conscience. If you hold on to the old leaven of greed or materialism, it will dominate your life.

Perhaps now we can understand why vs. 15 & 19 contain multiple warnings about eating any leaven during the feast: *"that person shall be cut off from Israel"* (15, 19). Why such a severe consequence? Because disobedience to these simple instructions that represent God's redeeming and sanctifying grace for His people, demonstrates an irreverence for God and a disinterest in His redeeming grace. It reveals that you are not truly a part of the covenant people of God.

Furthermore, the object lessons of cleansing one's home from leaven and participating in the Passover seder, was (according to vs. 26) a means of passing on to the next generation the testimony of what God had done and our need to honor Him with pure, unleavened lives.

The two important take aways from vss. 14-28 are these:

- a) ***God's redemptive work is to be regularly remembered, celebrated, and passed on to the next generation.*** This is precisely why we partake of the Lord's supper on a regular basis. To recenter our lives on the redeeming grace of God through the cross of Jesus—the ultimate exodus from sin's slave-hold on us. It's also why we make a big deal out of Christmas, Good Friday, and Resurrection Sunday. Not only to celebrate our redemption in Christ, but to also use these holidays to speak into the lives of our children about what matters most.
- b) ***God saves us in order to sanctify us.*** Let me put it to you very bluntly. If we continue to welcome sin into our hearts it makes a mockery of the death of Jesus for our redemption. Jesus didn't just bail us out of jail so that we could go on feeding our deviant desires. Now we know that our lives will never be completely free of the leaven of sin on this side of heaven. But some of us have made a

peace treaty with certain sins. If you make your heart a sanctuary city for a particular sin, you demonstrate that you have no true interest in a covenant relationship with Christ—any more than a man with a mistress demonstrates sincere reverence for his marriage covenant to his wife. The proper response to God's redemptive grace is found in vs. 27: "the people bowed their heads and worshiped." Faith, obedience, and worship are the overflow of a heart that has been truly redeemed. "The proof of faith is a faithful life."¹

Now, as we come to vss. 29-42, we are going to see the severity and mercy of God in carrying out the final plague, the plague of death to the firstborn.

3. Behold the severity and mercy of God (Ex 12:29-42).

[vs. 29-42] Let me just point out some observations as well as some gospel principles that are illustrated here:

- Striking down the firstborn was a just retribution for Pharaoh and the Egyptians taking the lives of Hebrew baby boys in chapter 1 (4:23). Also take note that the Hebrews *cried out* because of their suffering at the hands of the Egyptians in 2:23, but now 12:30 the Egyptians *cry out* because of God's judgment on their ruthless oppression of His people.
- **All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God** (cf. Rom 3:23). Keep in mind that the plague of death would have also impacted the Hebrews apart from the substitutionary blood of the lamb.
- **The wages of sin is death** (cf. Rom 6:23). We see this not only in the death of the firstborn, but also in the death of the Passover lamb to cover the sins of the Hebrews. Note the severity of sinning against a holy God with a hardened heart that fails to repent. "There was not a house [among the Egyptians] where someone was not dead" (30).
- **Sin does not discriminate, and the judgment of God is impartial.** Regardless of one's status, from the prince of Egypt to the firstborn

of a servant (11:5) or prisoner, God's justice was rendered impartially (12:29).

- **God's ways will not be thwarted by man's persistent rebellion.** In the end there was no bargaining left for Pharaoh. God's commands would not be compromised. All of God's people and all their livestock was released by Pharaoh (31-32). Furthermore, when Pharaoh says, "bless me also" (32), he is acknowledging that *Yahweh is the Lord and there is no other. His glory is unrivaled in all the earth.* Only Yahweh as the authority to judge or bless.
- **The severity of sin is superseded by the tenaciousness and generosity of God's mercy.** The severity of sin is evident in the death of every firstborn. The mercy of God is evident in five ways. First, we see the tenaciousness of God's mercy in allowing a blood of a sacrificial lamb to spare the firstborn of the Hebrews. I use the term tenacious, because God did not easily relent of His mercy toward His sinful people but graciously provided a way of escape.

Second, we see God's mercy in vs. 33 where the Egyptians recognized that they *all* could have died at the hand of God's judgment. If you are asking the question, "how it is fair for God to take the firstborn of every family in Egypt," you are asking the wrong question. The right question is, "how could a just God leave any sinners unpunished by His judgment (Hebrews or Egyptians)?" Behold both the severity and the mercy of God!

The third way we see God's mercy is providing for the needs of His people by giving them favor with their enemies. Not only would they give them clothing to take with them for the long wilderness journey, but also gold and silver that would be used in building the tabernacle as their worship center for Yahweh.

The fourth way we see God's mercy is in vs. 38: "A mixed multitude" left Egypt with them. It was not just Hebrews. Some were Egyptians who had transferred their trust from the gods of Egypt to fear Yahweh.

¹ Douglas Stuart, *Exodus* (New American Commentary, pg. 284).

The final way we see God's mercy is through His deliverance of His people from oppression in Egypt. Yet all of these expressions of God's mercy pale in comparison to the sacrifice of Jesus on our behalf to rescue us eternally from the oppression of sin and Satan and to reconcile us to God's favor forever!

- **God's mercy is applied by *faith* on the basis of God's *grace*.** Grace allowed for a sacrificial lamb to die in their place. Faith was trusting in God's provision and painting the blood over the door. Today, God's grace is provided in the death of Jesus, the unblemished Lamb of God. And the blood of His sacrifice is applied to us by faith as we trust in the sufficiency of His death to cover our sin.
 - **God saves in order to sanctify—a call to discipleship.** We already saw this in cleansing their homes from all leaven. But consider the picture of discipleship we see in the exodus itself. When the Hebrews left Egypt that night, they left everything they knew to follow Yahweh by faith. That generation had only known Egypt. Yet they left their homes and their way of life to go into the wilderness where they would need to learn to trust God for everything. Doesn't this sound like Jesus' call to discipleship? When Peter said to Jesus, "we have left everything to follow You," Jesus replied, "no one has left houses or family for My sake and the gospel but that he will receive 100 times more in this life, and in the age to come, eternal life."
4. **Only those who are part of the covenant people of God can participate in the blessings of His grace** (Ex 12:43-51).

Let me conclude by just summarizing what the last 9 verses of Ex 12 are about. Here God is giving specific instructions about who can participate in the Passover celebration and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Here's what it comes down to: Only those who were a part of the covenant community of faith could join in celebrating the Passover because only they could participate in the blessings of God's redeeming grace. The key issue in vs. 43-51 is circumcision because that was the sign of belonging to the covenant

people of God (women by association with their husbands and girls with their fathers). Regardless of one's ethnic background, they could participate in celebrating the blessing of God's grace as long as they had officially become a part of God's covenant people.

As we come to the Lord's table today, the same principle stands. All those who have become a part of the new covenant people of God and only those who have entered the new covenant by faith in Jesus are welcomed to the Lord's table. Not by circumcision, but by faith in Jesus publicly expressed in baptism and the obedience of discipleship—following Christ.

As we come to the Lord's supper, Jesus calls us to examine ourselves. To throw out any of the leaven of sin by confessing it to Jesus and forsaking its place in our lives.

Communion:

- **Bread** (unleavened): **virgin birth** – unblemished, without sin, a perfectly acceptable sacrifice; **God-man** – not an animal, but one who could truly stand in our place as a man, tempted in every way yet without sin, to offer Himself without blemish to God.
- **Cup:** at the last Passover celebration in which Jesus inaugurated the new covenant, Jesus held up what is called the cup of redemption and said, "this cup is the new covenant in my blood..." In essence Jesus was saying, "I am your Passover lamb who atones for your sin because you trust in Me. My blood covers you and secures God's forgiveness and favor."
 - *"Without shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sin" (Heb9:22)*
 - *"This is My blood of the covenant, poured out for many for forgiveness of sin" (Mt 26:28)*
 - *"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of or trespasses, according to the riches of His grace" (Eph 1:7)*