

## Passover

Exodus 11:1-12:36

### Introduction

**Center:** Pierre Charles L'Enfant designer of Washington D.C. envisioned a series of Avenues radiating out from the center (Capitol Hill, *not* the White House). It was a geographic visual to emphasize a philosophical priority (representation, not monarch). The Capital was the “hub of the wheel”.

- Imagine a wheel, perfectly crafted with strong and sturdy spokes extending outward. At the center lies the hub, seemingly small compared to the rest of the structure. But it is essential. The hub is not just a mere connector for the spokes; it is the central point that holds them all together. Without it, the spokes would scatter, rendering the wheel useless. It provides stability, balance, and strength to the entire structure.
- In many ways, our lives are like that wheel. We have various aspects to our identity—relationships, work, faith, hobbies, and more. Just as the spokes radiate outward from the hub, these aspects extend into different areas of our lives. Imagine if we neglect or ignore the center, the hub of our lives. What happens? The spokes become weak, disconnected, and scattered.
  - The center of the gospel is the sacrificial death of Jesus. The center of our lives must be the sacrificial death of Jesus.
  - And if the crucifixion is the center of the NT story of Jesus, the Passover is its OT twin.

**Different:** This last plague is different (hinted at three sets of three: Aaron, YHWH, Moses). The final plague is the defining moment in the history and identity of Israel.

- God is going to do what only God can do to judge sin and save his people, and it will be the foundation on which they understand their identity, their purpose, and their destiny as the people of God.

### 1. The Final Judgment (11:1-10)

11:1 The LORD said to Moses, “Yet one plague more I will bring upon Pharaoh and upon Egypt. Afterward he will let you go from here. When he lets you go, he will drive you away completely. <sup>2</sup> Speak now in the hearing of the people, that they ask, every man of his neighbor and every woman of her neighbor, for silver and gold jewelry.” <sup>3</sup> And the LORD gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians. Moreover, the man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh’s servants and in the sight of the people. <sup>4</sup> So Moses said, “Thus says the LORD: ‘About midnight I will go out in the midst of Egypt, <sup>5</sup> and every firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne, even to the firstborn of the slave girl who is behind the handmill, and all the firstborn of the cattle. <sup>6</sup> There shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there has never been, nor ever will be again. <sup>7</sup> But not a dog shall growl against any of the people of Israel, either man or beast, that you may know that the LORD makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel.’ <sup>8</sup> And all these your servants shall

come down to me and bow down to me, saying, 'Get out, you and all the people who follow you.' And after that I will go out." And he went out from Pharaoh in hot anger. <sup>9</sup> Then the LORD said to Moses, "Pharaoh will not listen to you, that my wonders may be multiplied in the land of Egypt." <sup>10</sup> Moses and Aaron did all these wonders before Pharaoh, and the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let the people of Israel go out of his land.

**Prophetic:** God has this habit of telling the people what he will do and then doing it ("told ya so"). Both for good and for bad it amazes me when God promises something and it happens and people are surprised.

**Extravagant:** God will do more than the people even asked Pharaoh. Rather than a **three-day worship retreat** he is going to give them **complete freedom**. He is going to send them with the wealth of the Egyptians (gold and silver that they'll use to worship him).

- God uses his judgment not only to **save** us but to **bless** us. Sometimes our trials have a greater purpose.
- The opposition of Pharaoh has elevated Moses' status among the people.
- The opposition of Pharaoh has only magnified the power of God (no one is spared).
  - It will be undeniably clear at the end of this who is in charge.
  - The gods of Egypt will be revealed for what they are, a sham.

**Pharaoh:** Pharaoh still has the people of Israel in bondage, even after 9 plagues that ranged from disgusting to deadly. "Well, we all remember Moses on the banks of the river / He said "Pharaoh, you've got to let my people go. / You don't want me to have to tell you this ten times over — / Denial ain't just a river, you know" / And we all remember Pharaoh, he just wouldn't do it / So the plagues they came upon Egypt one by one / His heart was hard and the other nine just couldn't move it / So the last was the worst: the death of the firstborn son."

- Pharaoh's question in 5:2 ("Who is the LORD, that I should obey [him]?") will be answered with devastating and tragic clarity.
  - He is not simply the God of Israel, but he is the God of all creation, and the Lord of life itself.

## 2. A New Creation (12:1-20)

<sup>12:1</sup> The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, <sup>2</sup> "This month shall be for you the beginning of months. It shall be the first month of the year for you. <sup>3</sup> Tell all the congregation of Israel that on the tenth day of this month every man shall take a lamb according to their fathers' houses, a lamb for a household. <sup>4</sup> And if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his nearest neighbor shall take according to the number of persons; according to what each can eat you shall make your count for the lamb. <sup>5</sup> Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male a year old. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats, <sup>6</sup> and you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month, when the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill their lambs at twilight. <sup>7</sup> "Then 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. <sup>8</sup> They shall eat the flesh that night, roasted on the fire; with unleavened bread and bitter herbs they shall eat it. <sup>9</sup> Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water,

but roasted, its head with its legs and its inner parts. <sup>10</sup> And you shall let none of it remain until the morning; anything that remains until the morning you shall burn. <sup>11</sup> In this manner you shall eat it: with your belt fastened, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. And you shall eat it in haste. It is the LORD's Passover. <sup>12</sup> For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the LORD. <sup>13</sup> The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt. <sup>14</sup> "This day shall be for you a memorial day, and you shall keep it as a feast to the LORD; throughout your generations, as a statute forever, you shall keep it as a feast. <sup>15</sup> Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall remove leaven out of your houses, for if anyone eats what is leavened, from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel. <sup>16</sup> On the first day you shall hold a holy assembly, and on the seventh day a holy assembly. No work shall be done on those days. But what everyone needs to eat, that alone may be prepared by you. <sup>17</sup> And you shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread, for on this very day I brought your hosts out of the land of Egypt. Therefore you shall observe this day, throughout your generations, as a statute forever. <sup>18</sup> In the first month, from the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread until the twenty-first day of the month at evening. <sup>19</sup> For seven days no leaven is to be found in your houses. If anyone eats what is leavened, that person will be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he is a sojourner or a native of the land. <sup>20</sup> You shall eat nothing leavened; in all your dwelling places you shall eat unleavened bread."

**Liturgical Instruction:** Written to the Israelites (long?) after the actual events. To the people entering the Promised Land. This explains their calendar, their annual rituals, and worship (e.g., reading about the Passover after having already been celebrating the Passover your whole life; cf. to learning about "the meaning of Christmas" long after you've celebrated a bunch of Christmases).

- The narrative of what happened and the prescription of how to celebrate and memorialize it are intertwined (and sometimes hard to separate). The narrative and the instruction are intertwined (you'll notice some of the instruction is for them to do *in Egypt* and some of the instruction is for them to do *in memory each year*).
- These events narrate two major festivals (Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread). They're often thought to be the same but are described in the Torah as two different festivals that occur consecutively.
  - Passover isn't a week or day but a meal that happens on a particular day.
  - The Feast of Unleavened Bread starts the next day and lasts for a week.

**A New Calendar:** The Passover event is so significant that it became the basis of their calendar. It is now, for them the new year (the Jewish "New Year," Rosh Hashanah actually occurs on the first day of the seventh month; that's a web of historical intrigue).

- They are being remade into a nation and the foundation of their identity is this deliverance event.
  - The first event of their new calendar is this Passover meal.
  - The first week of their new calendar is this feast.

- The pattern of their life is created anew based on the salvation of God.
  - They are no longer slaves to Pharaoh but belong to YHWH.
  - They are set free to worship in the new land (set free *not* to do whatever they want but to worship).
  - **God never sets us free to do whatever we want but sets us free to worship and serve him as we were created.**
    - Misunderstanding freedom (from vs. for).
  - Reorient our lives around the salvation of God (rhythms of work, rest, and worship). The Christian week *starts* with worship, send us into work, and *ends* with rest.
  - What is your life oriented around?

**Unleavened Living:** All the symbols of these feasts are intended to highlight the circumstances of deliverance.

- The herbs they eat are bitter, like the slavery that God delivers them from. A reminder of what God has done (LS, we need to remember, we forget; mental, emotional, physical, taste, touch, smell).
- Food is to be roasted, not boiled (limited prep and clean-up time). They are to eat with their belts fastened, sandals on their feet, and staff in hand (ready to go).
  - Always have my crocs on ready to go.
  - Sometimes we miss God's deliverance because we are not ready when the opportunity comes (not just mental desire but practical preparedness).
- And the feast is of "unleavened bread" because they didn't have time to let the bread rise.

This unleavened situation becomes a picture of the new thing God was doing with his people. The haste with which they left meant there was a decisive break from their old life.

- Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come (2 Cor 5:17).
- In the NT, the leaven becomes a picture of sin: Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy (Lk 12:1). 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 (1 Cor 5:6-8).
- All of the corruption and sin of Egypt was to be left there. God has a new world for them to inhabit.
  - Too often we want the promised land before us while holding on to the sin behind us. Unleavened (nt (1 Cor 5), new exodus, hasty (no leaven to corrupt, sin)

### 3. A Necessary Substitute (12:21-28)

<sup>21</sup> Then Moses called all the elders of Israel and said to them, "Go and select lambs for yourselves according to your clans, and kill the Passover lamb. <sup>22</sup> Take a bunch of hyssop and dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and touch the lintel and the two doorposts with the blood

that is in the basin. None of you shall go out of the door of his house until the morning. <sup>23</sup> For the LORD will pass through to strike the Egyptians, and when he sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the LORD will pass over the door and will not allow the destroyer to enter your houses to strike you. <sup>24</sup> You shall observe this rite as a statute for you and for your sons forever. <sup>25</sup> And when you come to the land that the LORD will give you, as he has promised, you shall keep this service. <sup>26</sup> And when your children say to you, 'What do you mean by this service?' <sup>27</sup> you shall say, 'It is the sacrifice of the LORD's Passover, for he passed over the houses of the people of Israel in Egypt, when he struck the Egyptians but spared our houses.'" And the people bowed their heads and worshiped. <sup>28</sup> Then the people of Israel went and did so; as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron, so they did.

**The Lamb:** The lamb that was selected and lived in the house for **four days** (don't name the lamb [Craig?]) finally takes center stage (needed time to test its purity? needed to get it before the three days of darkness?).

- The blood of the lamb is spread on the doorpost as a sign so the LORD will not allow the destroyer (Cf. language of plague and **death angel** in 2 Sam 24:15-16) to enter the house.
- The destroyer is the hand of God. God must destroy sin (Pharaoh's, yours, and mine).
- The destroyer is so strong that the greatest power with the greatest military couldn't even mount a defense.

**Stay Inside:** What is hinted at here becomes clear throughout the Bible, that something has to die to pay for their sins. A cursory reading might suggest that their ethnicity would save them (punish Egypt, spare Israel; a dog wouldn't even make a sound; **our dog still barks when it hears a doorbell on TV—we don't even have a doorbell**), but that is clearly not the case. It is always by faith. It is not their ethnicity but the blood that saves them

- How do we know? They had to wait inside, under the covering of the blood, until the destroyer passed over them. If they stepped outside, they would die too.
- The Israelites were sinners in need of grace just like the Egyptians. They were chosen not because of their righteousness but because of God's grace.
- It was his faithfulness to his promise that saved them, not some inherent goodness of their own.

**Their Response:** By faith he kept the Passover and sprinkled the blood, so that the Destroyer of the firstborn might not touch them (Heb 11:28).

- <sup>28</sup> Then the people of Israel went and did so; as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron, so they did.
- Imagine Dad's watching the game, his firstborn son comes up and says, "Wanna go put that blood on the door." Is his response, "I'll get to it later?"
  - The stakes are too high. I know you're serious when you understand the significance of the problem and therefore take the solutions seriously (just got back from the Funeral: puts in perspective what really matters. When you stand before your maker, your intentions won't matter, etc
- Don't trivialize the covering of the blood (family, office, tires).

- The blood of Jesus covers our sins, it doesn't bless our pet desires.
- The blood on the door is **not proof** of their righteousness **but proof** of their trust and obedience to the Word of the Lord.
  - "Faith isn't a leap into the dark, but a leap into the light" (Motyer). It opens up all sorts of understanding. When you trust God and his Word you see how his path leads to salvation and prevents destruction.

**Pay the Price:** This is part of the larger biblical understanding of salvation and forgiveness. For God to save *anyone* from their sin, something has to pay the price. Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins (Heb 9:22b).

- You must **measure up** (which you don't). You don't even meet your own standards (think of your own moral standards and I bet you can think of a time when you didn't measure up; integrity? Etc. Not to mention God's character, the Golden Rule, or Ten Commandments, etc.)
- Just **forgive** them? That would be unjust. And forgiveness is actually payment (imagine a debt someone owes you, they either pay it or you, by taking the loss, pay it; that is true of emotional debts too). **When I forgive someone, I pay the debt they owe.**
- The blood of the lamb paid the debt the Israelites needed to pay to spare the punishment of God.

#### 4. Death of the Firstborn Son (12:29-36)

<sup>29</sup> At midnight the LORD struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of the livestock. <sup>30</sup> And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he and all his servants and all the Egyptians. And there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was not a house where someone was not dead. <sup>31</sup> Then he summoned Moses and Aaron by night and said, "Up, go out from among my people, both you and the people of Israel; and go, serve the LORD, as you have said. <sup>32</sup> Take your flocks and your herds, as you have said, and be gone, and bless me also!" <sup>33</sup> The Egyptians were urgent with the people to send them out of the land in haste. For they said, "We shall all be dead." <sup>34</sup> So the people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneading bowls being bound up in their cloaks on their shoulders. <sup>35</sup> The people of Israel had also done as Moses told them, for they had asked the Egyptians for silver and gold jewelry and for clothing. <sup>36</sup> And the LORD had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have what they asked. Thus they plundered the Egyptians.

**Free at Last:**<sup>1</sup> The judgment God promises finally comes, and so does the justice, and the freedom.

- Pharaoh, who had killed so many firstborn sons of Israel, now has lost his own firstborn son.<sup>2</sup> Pharaoh who had enslaved Israel, God's firstborn, would now experience the loss of his own firstborn.

<sup>1</sup> The Passover is an undeniably politically charged event.

<sup>2</sup> Thutmose IV was the next Pharaoh (son of Hyksos) and ancient inscriptions show he is not the eldest and received the throne through unforeseen circumstances (like the death of an older brother).



- The tears that every Israelite family had experienced are now experienced by the Egyptians.
- The wealth and military might of that great Empire would have been of little consolation.
- He would not let the people go, repent of his sin, and trust in the LORD, so he experiences the most severe plague both theologically and personally.
- And true to the promise of Abraham, those who bless Israel will be blessed and those who curse Israel were cursed.

## Conclusion

**Rescue:** The people of God have been rescued through judgment (the judgment of Pharaoh) and from judgment (the judgment of the destroyer).

- But realistically, we recognize the lamb is just a placeholder. How can “fluffy and muffy” (Keller) protect us from the just judgment of God?

**Last Supper:** So we get to the story of Jesus and the Last Supper in Luke 22. They are celebrating the Passover (Lk 22:7). They have the unleavened bread (symbolizing his broken body) and the crushed fruit of the vine (symbolizing his spilt blood). But where’s the lamb?

There is no lamb mentioned. **Because Jesus is the perfect spotless lamb of God.**

- The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! (Jn 1:29).
- 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 (1 Cor 5:7).

Jesus is the perfect, permanent sacrificial lamb who’s blood pays our debt and covers us from the judgment we all deserves.

- For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Cor 5:21).
- Red door don’t measure up.

Jesus, our Passover lamb, **gives us life and changes how we live.**

- Will you be spared by the just judgment of God? Do you have life and freedom in the Promised Land? Or are you in slavery to your sins, having not experienced deliverance?
- How would you live if you knew the only reason you were alive is because another firstborn had died? Is your life filled with gratitude for his gift? Are your priorities aligned accordingly?