

EXODUS

THE GOD WHO RESCUES

SESSION OBJECTIVE: EXODUS 12:14-28

To understand more about the preparations for the Passover.

Read the Text:

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. 15 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. 16 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. 17 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. 18 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. 19 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. 20 You shall eat nothing leavened; in all your dwelling places you shall eat unleavened bread.” 21 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. 22 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. 23 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. 24 You shall observe this rite as a statute for you and for your sons forever. 25 And when you come to the land that the LORD will give you, as he has promised, you shall keep this service. 26 And when your children say to you, ‘What do you mean by this service?’ 27 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. 28 Then the people of Israel went and did so; as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron, so they did. (Exodus 12:14-28, ESV)

Study the Text:

Preparations for the Passover (Pt. 2)

Chapter 12 continues to unfold some of the preparations necessary for the tenth and final plague. The people of God and those in Egypt who had begun to follow and worship Yahweh were given specific instructions not only for the lambs they would sacrifice and eat and the manner in which they were to consume them, but also concerning a feast of unleavened bread. Below is a breakdown of some of the key details in this passage.

A STATUTE FOREVER

Verses 14 through 20 describe a future feast that was to be upheld by the people of God “forever,” known as “The Feast of the Unleavened Bread” (described below). It is important to note that this feast was not carried out by the original exodus community. If you recall, they were to kill the lamb and consume it with unleavened bread at twilight on the 14th day of the first month (Ex. 12:6). This feast was a practice for the following generations to remember this initial movement of God. Notice also that verse 14 indicates the importance of a specific day, “this day,” though the description that follows actually entails seven full days ranging from twilight on 14th day of the month to the 21st day of the month. Why then an emphasis on the one day? Because if one doesn’t start on the first day of the seven days, it would be impossible to properly commemorate the entirety of the events, and that is the central reason for such a feast: to commemorate the

work of God in bringing His people out of the bondage of Egypt. Douglas Stuart writes, “Why such an emphasis on commemoration? Because what is not carefully remembered by a community is very naturally and easily forgotten—and virtually completely forgotten as soon as the oldest members of that community who experienced the original event die.”¹ This is precisely what begins to happen in Judges, after the Joshua generation “who had seen all the great work that the LORD had done for Israel” passed away (Josh. 2:7-10). These commemorative moments in the life of Israel (and the church as well) are full of purpose. They are not merely rituals God’s people carry out to check a box; they are meant to keep on our minds the faithfulness of God lest we forget. The significance of the unleavened bread should be rather obvious; haste was required! For the same reasons the Israelites were commanded to roast the lamb and prepare and eat it fully clothed so that they could leave with urgency, they were also to eat bread that had been baked with no leaven. Leaven requires time to rise, and time was not a luxury they were afforded. Thus, in order for the future generations to immerse themselves in the Exodus experience, they were commanded to eat unleavened bread for a week in observation of this momentous occasion.

A SOJOURNER OR A NATIVE

Verse 19 includes an interesting detail: “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.” Who does this refer to? Remember that this is instruction for future generations to come, not the current Exodus community. This is likely then a reference to the newcomers to the covenant, whether they are Jewish by birth or Gentiles who have converted. It was also not uncommon to “take in” travelers as they made their way to their final destination. In fact, the commandment to care for sojourners was based off of God’s redeeming acts to bring Israel out of Egypt in the Exodus! Leviticus 19:34 states, “You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.” This kind of kindness was not only expected but demanded because the Israelites themselves knew what it was like to be in a foreign land and to be oppressed in it.

The point, then, of verse 19 is that even if the Israelites had travelers in their midst that are not Jewish, those travelers were still required to observe the feast of the unleavened bread. This was not a festival only for those of faith; it was a solemn celebration “for generations to come,” and a “statue forever” that was to be observed by anyone in the land. There is much made of the importance of sojourners and refugees in the Old Testament as it pertains to modern immigration issues in the United States. One must realize, however, that while the Old Testament does place a high premium on caring for the refugees, the Old Testament also demands obedience to God from those sojourners. There is every expectation that the sojourner will follow the law of God. Therefore, to make an application from the Old Testament to modern immigration demands that we uphold refugees to the law of God still, a prospect most people would find offensive by today’s standards. We cannot appeal to only a part of the Old Testament narrative; we either stand on all of it or none of it.

THE DESTROYER

Verses 21 through 28 are a repeat of what God said to Moses in verses 7 through 13, only this time it comes from Moses to the people. One interesting detail, however, is that in place of the LORD passing through Egypt (Ex. 12:12), Moses says it is the “the Destroyer” that will come (Ex. 12:23). Who is the destroyer? It is likely none other than the Angel of the LORD, the one who brings death in 2 Samuel 24:16, 2 Kings 19:35, 2

¹ Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, vol. 2 of The New American Commentary, eds. E. Ray Clendenen and Kenneth A. Mathews (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2006), 282.

Chronicles 32:21, and Isaiah 37:36. While God is the final word as it pertains to life and death, it seems common for Him to send His angel to do the actual killing of those under His judgment in the Old Testament.

Another possibility for this angel's identity stems from the New Testament book of Revelation. One question that arises is, "Is this 'destroyer' the same angel described in Revelation 9:11?" The angel in question is described as being over the bottomless pit, and he is called *Abaddon* in Hebrew and *Apollyon* in Greek, both of which mean "destroyer." Some have argued that this angel is a specific angel, but not Satan. Others have suggested that this is Satan. This prompts a further question, "Is the destroyer none other than Satan himself?" Satan serves as God's executioner in the Old Testament, and destruction is synonymous with his character. Bear in mind, this was in the Old Testament prior to his final downfall described in Revelation 12. It is possible, then, that Satan's role within the divine economy of God was to carry out God's judgments of death against people, and that this was one of those times.

What About Now?

The major takeaway is the importance of remembering the faithfulness of God. The Feast of the Unleavened Bread is but one example of a practice that commemorates a moment wherein God faithfully saved His people. There are a number of feasts in the Old Testament that highlight various moments. We in the church do this today through the Lord's Supper and baptism. We remember the broken body and shed blood of Jesus in communion. We remember God's faithfulness to us as we think back on our baptism. We also have "Ebenezer" moments in the lifespan of a church or family that are worth remembering. Remembering the goodness and faithfulness of God helps balance us out in times of despair and uncertainty.

Study Questions

Day One

1. Read Exodus 12:14-15. What "day" were the Israelites to remember? For how long would they celebrate? What is the significance of this amount of time?

2. Read Exodus 12:16-18. What were they to do on the first and seventh day? What was this feast called? Why? What is the significance of unleavened bread?

Day Two

1. Read Exodus 12:19-20. Who all did this feast include? What was the result of not obeying this?

2. Read Exodus 12:21-22. What did Moses command the elders to do?

Day Three

1. Read Exodus 12:23-24. What did the LORD do? What was the purpose of the blood on the lintel and the doorposts? For how long was the statute to be observed?
-
-

2. Read Exodus 12:25. Were the people to continue this practice when they reached the promised land?
-
-

Day Four

1. Read Exodus 12:26-27. What were the people to say to their children when they asked about this practice?
-
-

2. Read Exodus 12:28. What did the people of Israel do in response to Moses' commands from God?
-
-

Discuss the Text!

Week 25 Discussion: Commemorate

The feasts of the Old Testament are meant to draw the people of God back to crucial moments in history where God acted on our behalf. We do this primarily through the Lord's Supper today which is itself built off of the Passover meal. Talk as a group about other ways you remember God's faithfulness in your life, whether through song, ritual, or reminder.

1. Icebreaker: How important is communion to you, personally?
2. What personal rituals, if any, do you carry out to remind yourself of God's goodness to you?
3. What worship songs are extra special to you, and why?
4. What are non-Christian rituals that Americans participate in for the purpose of remembering something?
5. Does the Lord's Supper cause you to remember the faithfulness of Christ in a way that reading the Bible does not? Why or why not?
6. What are other ways the church can draw people out of their own distractions and into remembering the faithfulness of God?

Takeaways:

1. God gives instructions for the Feast of the Unleavened Bread, to be carried out forever in future generations.
2. Moses delivers to the people what God told him concerning the Passover, and they are obedient.