

SESSION NINE

REDEMPTION FROM BONDAGE

Exodus 12:1–18:27

I. INTRODUCTION

Exodus is the outworking of the Abrahamic promise to constitute the Hebrews into a nation. The first half of the book (1–18) concerns the deliverance of the nation's subjects through the mediator Moses. Whereas their bondage is elucidated in ch 1–11, their redemption is portrayed in 12–18. The present section will trace the events involved from Israel's release to their appearance at Mt. Sinai. This will involve three phases: (1) the Passover and exodus, (2) the deliverance at the Red Sea and (3) the migration of Israel to Sinai.

II. THE PASSOVER AND EXODUS (12:1–13:16)

A. The Passover Ordinance (12:1-51)

The prerequisite ritual for the deliverance of the Hebrews by YHWH is the Passover (Heb., פֶּסַח, *pesah*). The setting is the 10th plague upon Egypt in which all the firstborn in the land of Egypt are under a sentence of death, including Israel, unless she performs the necessary ritual.

The underlying motif of the upcoming section is "redemption." In many ways, this will set the stage for the biblical concept of redemption that we will eventually see in its fullness in the New Testament. In our case, however, what we have here is not the redemption of individuals but a nation! Israel, as a nation, is now being redeemed . . . they are being delivered from an earthly bondage to be the people of God. This does not mean they were all "saved" in the New Testament sense of the word. Despite their election through Abraham, they could not be constituted a nation apart from being redeemed.

The "redemption" of Exodus centers on the ritual of Passover. In Ex 6:6, the LORD had promised redemption: "*I will also redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments.*" In the song of praise sung by the Hebrews following the Red Sea deliverance, they proclaim, "*In Thy lovingkindness Thou hast led the people whom Thou hast redeemed*" (Ex 15:13).

This OT act of "redemption" does, however, prepare the way for "the greater redemption" to come. In days future, there would be a future redemption by which God would do more than redeem them from an earthly bondage.

Certainly, the events of Ex 12–14 point toward a greater climax. That the Passover is a picture of our salvation out of the world today must not be overlooked. 1 Cor 5:7 declares that Christ is our Passover! The Passover lamb is a clear anticipation of Christ and His suffering for us, whereby His blood provides protection for us. Only as one observes the Passover ritual does one come out from under the sentence of death to become a part of the people of God. The redemption is followed by

the deliverance at the Red Sea, but the observance of the Passover ritual is the necessary prelude to the deliverance.

That this "redemption" is a key element to Israel's history is evident from Ex 12:1-2, for "*This month shall be the beginning of months to you.*" No longer was the Egyptian calendar acceptable to God's people; the time of the Passover marked a new beginning. Israel eventually had two ways of counting the months of the year: the religious system and the civil system (see *Suppl. 9.2*). According to the religious calendar, the new year began with this month in which they first celebrated the Passover (cf. Ex 40:2,17; Lev 23:5). God commanded it to be the first month, because it brought, in a sense, a change of destiny!

B. The Passover Lamb (12:1-7)

The Passover ritual itself has two parts: (1) the slaying of the lamb which provides the protective blood (vv 1-7); and (2) the supper of feeding upon the lamb (vv 8-11).

1. The Slaying of the Lamb (12:1-7)

a. The Supply of the Lamb (3-4)

The means by which God would provide redemption for His people was the slaying of a lamb. This act and the various activities associated with it were to serve as an object lesson to the people. Obviously, it was not apparent at that time that the Lord Jesus Christ was the true lamb. That awareness does not come until later revelation. But as an object lesson, the slaying of the lamb served to teach the people several lessons, not least of which is the exorbitant price which sin demands and the need for an acceptable substitute to bear sin. In a yet future day, a prophet known as John the Baptist would publicly declare, "*Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!*" (Jn 1:29). Anticipating that sacrifice of His very Son, God used imagery that would prepare the people for His coming.

Each family household was to take a lamb (vs 3) . . . the supply was sufficient for everyone who wanted the lamb, i.e., for everyone who wanted to be delivered from the sentence of death coming upon Egypt. Also, the supply was very precious and not to be wasted (vs 4). While there is a sufficient provision for everyone by the death of Christ, it is not to be wasted, i.e., to be counted as common.

b. The Standard for the Lamb (5-6a)

The lamb to be selected for the Passover sacrifice had to be an "*unblemished male a year old.*" This requirement reflected the need for the sacrificial substitute to be acceptable to God. Of course, no animal ever fulfilled that strictly . . . God was simply anticipating "the" perfect sacrifice, i.e., the Son of God. Thus, the need for a perfect lamb (cf. Lev 22) anticipated the sinlessness of Christ. Even Pilate found no fault in Him, and His disciples who knew Him best declared that He was without sin!

In vs 6a, we are told that the lamb had to be kept until the 14th day. Thus from the 10th to the 14th day, the lamb was kept under close observation. In a similar manner, Jesus the Messiah formally presented Himself to Israel in the days between the triumphal entry and His crucifixion. The nation of Israel to whom the Messiah came had ample

opportunity to observe the Lamb of God in their midst and to listen to His teaching. Although the religious leaders rejected Him as Messiah, they could not deny His sinlessness!

c. The Slaying of the Lamb (6b)

The "whole assembly" of the congregation was to kill the lamb at twilight (Lit., "between the two evenings"). Although scholars are divided as to the exact meaning of this phrase, Alan Cole notes, "The orthodox piety of Pharisaic Judaism understood the meaning as between the time in the afternoon when the heat of the sun lessens (say 3 or 4 p.m.) and sunset."¹ Josephus (a Jewish historian at the time of Christ) noted that it was the custom in his day to offer the lamb about three o'clock in the afternoon (*Antiquities*, XIV, 4:3). It is no mere coincidence that Jesus was crucified on the occasion of Passover; furthermore, the NT informs us that His death was between the hours of 3 and 6 in the afternoon. At the 9th hour (3 p.m.) He cried, "My God, My God," and by 6 p.m. He had to be off the cross so as not to violate the Sabbath day custom.

Ex 12:46 adds the note that no bone of the lamb was to be broken, anticipating the fact that the soldiers who crucified Jesus did not break His bones (Jn 19:33). The stipulation that the whole congregation participate in the killing reflects the fact that all share the responsibility for the death of the lamb. Likewise, we all are responsible for Jesus going to the cross. It is my sins and yours that put Him there; we cannot simply blame some hard-hearted Jews of the 1st century!

d. The Sprinkling of the Lamb's Blood (7)

The text notes that the blood had to be applied to the doorposts and lintel in order to be effective. The blood represented the price paid by the lamb, and protected the house from the destruction of the first-born. Davis notes,

The sprinkling of blood also eloquently speaks of a substitutionary atonement. Just as the lamb was substituted for the firstborn, thus protecting him from death, so the Lamb of God would someday die in the place of all sinners, thus providing escape from the judgment of God.²

But it was not enough that the lamb be slain; the blood also had to be applied to the doorposts and lintel in order to be effective. Cassuto notes, "The doorposts and the lintel are naturally suited to bear the sign of the person dwelling in the house, and such is the custom to this day" (139). The blood applied marked out the houses of those who had believed from the ones that had not. Correspondingly, the blood of Christ must be trusted in personally and appropriated by faith!

2. The Supper of the Lamb (12:8-13)

a. The Meal (8)

¹Alan Cole, *Exodus*, Tyndale OT Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 106.

²John Davis, *Moses and the Gods of Egypt* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1971), 140.

The meal consisted of three basic parts:

1) Eating of the roasted lamb

The lamb had to be roasted with fire before being eaten. Often in the OT, fire is used to depict judgment and such is the case here. The roasting of the lamb reflects the judgment born by the lamb. As Jesus the Messiah suffered the fire of God's wrath and judgment, He cried out from the cross: "*My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?*" (Matt 27:46; cf. Isa 53:7,10). When we believe in Christ and are joined to Him, we should be conscious that we are becoming one with Him who has suffered the wrath of God for us.

2) Unleavened bread (see comments on 12:14ff.)

3) Eating with bitter herbs

This was a reminder of the bitterness of the bondage of Egypt. Likewise, we must not lose sight of the bitterness of our bondage to sin and former life before Christ.

b. The Dress for the Meal (vs 11)

The Israelites were instructed to eat the meal with their loins girded, their sandals on, and their staff in hand. To gird one's loins was to tuck the long garments up to one's waist. The point is clear: they are to be dressed as people going somewhere, i.e., as pilgrims. They will no longer be welcome in the land of Egypt. Rather, they have a destiny before them, and they must be on their way. By way of application, there should be no lingering, but an immediate embarking upon the journey of the Christian life. Discipleship must not be put off but taken up immediately.

Further comments: Notice in vs 12 that the 10th plague not only affected the first-born of Egypt but served as a polemic against the gods of Egypt as well. In this act of judgment, God will point out the impotence of Egyptian idolatry. "The death cry which was heard throughout Egypt was not only a wail that bemoaned the loss of a son or precious animals, but also the incapability of the many gods of Egypt to respond and protect them from such tragedy."³

How precious are the words of vs 13: "*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.*" NT revelation teaches that through faith in Christ, we are under the blood of Christ and immune from God's judgment on the lost. "*Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life*" (Jn 5:24).

C. The Feast of Unleavened Bread (12:14-20)

The Passover ritual became a sacred event for Israel and was always celebrated during the seven-day period known as the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The two were inseparable. This passage establishes the procedure for the future celebration of Passover, in which Passover shall be celebrated during the

³John Davis, 141.

week-long Feast of Unleavened Bread. Even at the initial occurrence, the requirement of unleavened bread had a symbolic meaning, for it was associated with the haste in which the Hebrews were to leave Egypt (not even having time for their dough to leaven—see 12:33-34). Yet, there is more to the stipulation: they are to leave in haste, not just because they are unwanted, but because Egypt is evil and represents the old life of bondage. Notice how the NT develops this thought: according to 1 Cor 5:8, leaven looks at sin . . . at malice and wickedness, which we need to part from. Partaking of the salvation of the lamb (Passover) should always be followed by separation from sin and the living of a holy life. We are to leave the old way of life in haste, trusting that He will make the provision for us as we start the new life of faith.

In conclusion, the Passover was a new beginning, necessitating a new calendar, and marking the beginning of the nation as a redeemed people (a nation purchased for Himself; cf. Isa 43:1).

D. Consecration of the First Born (13:1-16)

This section seems awkward at first glance, but one should note that vv 1-2 are the divine oracle giving instructions to Moses, while vv 3-16 recount Moses' address to the people. There is a parallel concern involving the feast of unleavened bread (vv 3-10) and the consecration of the first-born in vv 11-16 (note 5//11; 8//14; and 9//16). The overriding concern shared by both sections is the answer which the father gives the son in explaining the faith. Childs notes,

The initial point that God claims the first-born has been spiritualized. This claim has been extended from the first-born to all Israel. God has a special claim on His people: 'he belongs to me.'⁴

This is no less than an ongoing experiential appropriation from the heart in response to what God had done. Anything less than dedication is unacceptable (13:13), and we should be reminded of the imperative of Romans 12:1-2. The emphasis on the "house of slavery" (3,14,16) is a reminder that one must never forget what he came out of (i.e., slavery) nor the greatness of the act by which YHWH has redeemed him.

III. DELIVERANCE AT THE SEA (13:17–15:21)

This section focuses on the salvation (i.e., deliverance) from bondage. The idea of "salvation" is used in the more common sense of the word to mean *deliverance* (in this case, physical deliverance from Pharaoh and the Egyptian army). This was the fulfillment of Ex 6:6, "*I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from their bondage.*" The salvation-deliverance in this case was national in scope (and not necessarily reflective of one's personal spiritual salvation, i.e., we need not conclude that every Hebrew coming out of Egypt was "spiritually saved"). However, there are certainly parallels to be drawn and lessons to learn by way of application (cf. 1 Cor 10).

The prohibition in 13:17 about not going the way of the Philistines (though the nearer route) was purposeful. "According to this verse even though the road was a convenient one and the shortest to Canaan, God did not permit His people to use that route, primarily to avoid war; for this roadway was dotted with Egyptian fortresses and to pass along this way would be to encounter strong resistance and perhaps discourage the

⁴Brevard Childs, *The Book of Exodus* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1974), 204.

people."⁵ God was anticipating the faintheartedness of His people. Israel here is being viewed in her "spiritual infancy." The "roundabout way" will teach much about God, walking with God, trusting God, etc. As for them, so for us—there are no shortcuts to spiritual maturity!

The carrying of the bones of Joseph linked the present generation with the patriarchs to whom God confirmed His covenant. This brought to their consciousness the fact that after all these hundreds of years, God had not failed in His promises or program.

Ch 13:21-22 teaches that from the very beginning of their journey, the glory of the LORD was among them. Later on, the glory was designated as "Shekinah" (16:10; 40:34). This was a source of comfort and assurance to those who moved in anxiety. How much more splendid that today we have the comforter who dwells within us!

One final lesson was needful for both the Egyptians and Israel to understand what God meant when He said, "*I am the LORD.*" The salvation of the Israelites at the Red Sea (Lit., *Sea of Reeds*) would be remembered as the greatest miracle of the Old Testament. A military defeat at the hands of the LORD would demonstrate once and for all to Pharaoh and his army that they were powerless against Him. As LORD, He is triumphant! The Hebrews also needed to see firsthand the defeat of their enemy. How much greater is the victory of the cross! Notice in 14:1-9 that the LORD purposefully rerouted His people to make them appear confused before Pharaoh and thus a helpless prey. With this act, God drew them into the confrontation that would establish that He was LORD!

To protest against Moses (10-12) revealed that the Hebrews were not willingly submitted to Moses (contrast 14:31); they repudiated his authority. It also reveals the shallowness of their faith:

Their statement that it would have been better for them to have served the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness exhibits a remarkably short memory. Had they so quickly forgotten the humiliation and despair and hopelessness of the situation from which they had been delivered (cf. 2:23-24)? The reaction of the Hebrews is quite typical of those whose spiritual perspectives are those which are conditioned by the present alone.⁶

Despite the immature cries from the people, Moses exhibits a mature faith and courage (14:13): "*Stand by and see the salvation of the LORD which He will accomplish for you today . . . the LORD will fight for you while you keep silent.*" Though this act of salvation is not deliverance from sin, but deliverance from the Egyptian army, it does reflect a truth: salvation is God's work alone! The "greater salvation to come" will be in accord with this (cf. 1 Cor 1:30-31).

The determination of the crossing may be influenced by the correct translation of the Hebrew phrase itself. It is clear that the "sea" crossed by the Hebrews in ch 14 was the *yam-sûp* (יַם־סוּף), i.e., "Sea of Reeds."⁷ "The expression Red Sea comes from the Septuagint and does not represent the best translation of the Hebrew text."⁸ A number of conservative scholars feel that the actual place of crossing was somewhere in

⁵John Davis, 156.

⁶John Davis, 161.

⁷See Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests*, 66.

⁸John Davis, 169.

the Bitter Lakes region, although no precise identification can be made today. K. A. Kitchen suggests a possible route of the Exodus from Raamses (at Qantir) to Succoth (at Tell el Maskhutta) and then to the wilderness edge, turning back up to Lake Ballah and so across a Sea of Reeds somewhere there. From there, the Hebrews went south through Shur/Etham toward the west coast of the Sinai peninsula.⁹

Though God used a wind to divide the Sea, this was certainly a supernatural act (cf. Ps 74:13- "*Thou didst divide the sea by Thy strength . . .*").

The significant outcome of the LORD's act at the Sea is reflected in 14:31, "*And when Israel saw the great power which the LORD had used against the Egyptians, the people feared the LORD, and they believed in the LORD and in His servant Moses.*" This should not be taken to mean that the people exercised "saving faith" at this time. The point is that they began to understand and have faith in what God was now revealing about Himself as YHWH (this should be seen in contrast to 14:10-11). In that Moses had used the rod in the act of dividing the Sea, God was establishing the authority of Moses before the redeemed people. The means by which God destroyed the Egyptians served to bring the people into submission both to God and His theocratic administrator.

The Song of Moses (15:1-21). The deliverance is followed by the "song of Moses," by which we see that a redeemed people shall be a worshipping people. The song also underscores two important facts which the redeemed have learned:

- 1) Recognition of the uniqueness of God
"Who is like Thee among the gods, O LORD?"
- 2) Recognition of God's right to rule
"The LORD shall reign forever and ever" (vs 18). The redeemed people interpret their redemption as a sign of God's faithfulness to His promise, and see that through it He is establishing His right to rule.

IV. MIGRATION OF ISRAEL TO SINAI (15:22–18:27)

Testings in the Wilderness (15:22–17:16)

The bulk of this section deals with the testing of the redeemed in the wilderness (cf. 15:25; 16:4). Their hardships were not simply coincidental. God was leading them, and the circumstances served to educate the people of YHWH. To grumble and rebel against the LORD is not the proper response of a redeemed people. God is able to meet their needs and lead them to blessing, if they will but implore His grace and walk by faith. In these experiences, it was evident that parts of their old life were brought with them and had to be dealt with. Nevertheless, they were not alone: "*all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ*" (1 Cor 10:4). In John 6:33, Christ recalled the experience of the manna from heaven which gives life to the world (the one coming to Him would not hunger). God supernaturally provided for His people in the wilderness, although He was not well-pleased with most of them (1 Cor 10).

⁹K. A. Kitchen, *ZPEB*, 5:47. The suggestion found in the *MacMillan Bible Atlas* is certainly wrong.

V. A LESSON FOR OUR LIVES

Ex 13:1-16 has a lot to teach us. It also alerts us that we have a responsibility to our children. Our children need to know the slavery and the powerful act of deliverance that has brought us to a dedication of ourselves to the LORD. When I recall the slavery to sin and the darkness to which I was confined, and when I recall the powerful act of God by which He procured my salvation in Christ, my response should be one of total dedication to Him.