EXODUS 11-12: The First Passover

Nine times… Nine different acts of God’s judgment fall on Egypt from Chapters 7 thru 10. Moses repeatedly delivers God’s message to Pharoah: “Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, ‘Let My people go!’” And each time Pharaoh’s heart is hardened. There are times when Pharaoh hardens his own heart by his own volition and there are times when God hardens Pharaoh’s heart to fulfill His purposes. But the bottom line is that Pharaoh refuses to obey God and to let the people of Israel leave Egypt.

READ Exodus 5:1-2

So, God shows Pharaoh who He is. But God knows Pharaoh will not listen.

READ Exodus 7:4-5

And just as God told Moses, He sends nine different calamities upon the land Egypt, each one demonstrating God’s mighty power over nature and showing that He is the one true and living God and more powerful than any of the so-called “gods” of Egypt. After the ninth plague, “pitch darkness in all the land of Egypt,” we read these words

READ Exodus 10:27-29

Despite God’s clear message to Pharaoh and His clear revelation of Himself to Pharaoh and the Egyptians thru His divine judgments, Pharaoh flatly refuses to obey God. He won’t do it. So God prepares one final judgment and this one will finally force Pharoah to let God’s covenant people go.

It’s interesting to note that way back in Chapter 4, before Moses had even left Midian to go to Egypt, God said this to Moses:

READ Exodus 4:21-23

This is the warning message that Moses is to deliver to Pharaoh on this tenth and final judgment. But Moses never delivers this warning. Why not? Because Pharaoh has just threatened to kill Moses if he ever sees him again! As a result, Moses never delivers God’s intended message – a message of grace that could potentially have spared Pharaoh’s son and thousands of other sons. That message never gets delivered because of the stone cold hardness of Pharoah’s heart. Which takes us to Exodus Ch 11…

God is about to render final judgment upon Egypt – a plague of death.

READ Exodus 11:1-3

By an act of divine intervention the Lord gives the Israelite people favor with the Egyptians. This is a 180-degree turn from the way the Egyptians had been treating the Israelites for many years. Now all of a sudden they like the Israelites and respect their leader, Moses. But this is a God thing. God is about to do something miraculous, which we’ll see a bit later.

READ Exodus 11:4-6 *[Moses speaking God’s message to the people]*

God plans to kill the firstborn of all the land of Egypt – the firstborn of both all the people and their animals. But God plans to spare the Israelites the terrible carnage that is about to strike the Egyptian people.

READ Exodus 11:7

There will be a stark contrast between grief experienced by the Egyptians and tranquility amongst the Israelites. Not even a dog will growl against the people of Israel! God will make a distinction between Egypt and Israel. Now, if you’ll recall from last week’s lesson, God has already made a distinction between Egypt and Israel. Remember He spared the Israelites many of the worst plagues that befell the Egyptians. And God intends to do so again with the final plague, the death of the firstborn. The Israelites will live, but they must follow God’s plan. And in Chapter 12 God lays out for them what He wants them to do.

READ Exodus 12:1-6

Each household is to take a lamb (or a kid goat). The lamb was to be without blemish, a male and a year old. They are to take the lamb and keep it in their household for four days and then kill it.

READ Exodus 12:7-11

The people are to take the blood of the lamb that has been killed and put it on the two doorposts on either side of the door and on the lintel above the door. Roast the lamb and eat it all with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. Eat it dressed and ready to go – “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.” This is the very first Passover celebration. God’s judgment upon Egypt is about to fall.

READ Exodus 12:12-13

God tells the people that The Passover is to be a memorial and celebrated as a feast every year. Moses relays all of God’s instructions to the leaders of Israel. And the people react appropriately (worshiped).

READ Exodus 12:28

The Israelite people were obedient and they did as the Lord had commanded them. They acted in faith. By the way, there was no precedent for this. From a human standpoint it may not have made a whole lot of sense. But by doing what God said, they lived. Let me ask you this: do you suppose that among the roughly 2 million or so Israelites who were there in Egypt at this time, any who may have been, say, adulterers, murderers, thieves, liars, or drunkards? Likely so. There were probably some “bad” folks in this group somewhere. But the point is not who they WERE, but that they OBEYED. They did things God’s way and, as a result, they were saved from God’s wrath. Meanwhile the Egyptians, good and bad, did NOT do what God said. First of all they didn’t get the message, which is on Pharaoh. But even if they had, based on the previous chapters, I contend that they wouldn’t have obeyed God anyway. Well you know what happens next. You’ve heard the story before…

READ Exodus 12:29-30

Just as God had warned, death came. It was God Himself who struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt. One can only imagine the scene as people discover their sons, their brothers, their husbands, their close friends dead. And it hit Pharaoh really hard.

READ Exodus 12:31-32

That last remark by Pharoah is interesting. It tells me that he still doesn’t quite get it. I’m sorry, Pharoah, but you cannot harden your heart and blatantly disobey God and then expect to receive His blessing. It doesn’t work that way. About about all Pharaoh can do, short of repenting (which he doesn’t), is admit defeat and send Moses and the Israelites away.

Well this book is called Exodus for a reason, because there is an exodus – an exodus of God’s covenant people out of Egypt and it takes place here.

READ Exodus 12:33-36

This is exactly what God had told Abraham would happen some 6 centuries before. In Genesis Chapter 15 God says to Abram, “Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs *[which turns out to be Egypt]* and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years *[they were not enslaved for 400 years but there was a prejudice against them by the Egyptians the whole time they were there].* But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions.” And that statement in Genesis 15 is fulfilled here in Exodus 12, just like God said.

And so it is that the Jewish people celebrate Passover every year to commemorate God’s mighty hand in delivering His people Israel from their oppressed condition. They celebrate His mercy, His salvation. There is a massive display of the power as God as He delivers His people by the blood of a lamb. At the same time of year that the Jews celebrate Passover, we Christians are also celebrating, aren’t we? But we aren’t celebrating Passover. We celebrate Easter – the death and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. We too celebrate God’s salvation, but for spiritual deliverance, and not just for a certain group of people, no, for the whole world. Again this was done by His mighty power, accomplished on the cross by the blood of THE Lamb. In John Chapter 19 as Pilate prepares to turn Jesus over to be crucified the scripture tells us that “it was the day of Preparation of the Passover” (John 19:14) So on the same day that thousands of Passover lambs are being slain in the temple courtyard, the Lamb of God, Jesus, also is being slain. Coincidence? No, God planned that way.

Remember that innocent male lamb who is slain in Exodus 12? Isaiah prophesies of a suffering Messiah and describes him as a lamb. In Isaiah 53 v 7-8 he says, “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people?” So who IS this lamb that Isaiah refers to in Isaiah 53? The Ethiopian eunuch wondered the same thing after reading this passage. “And the eunuch said to Philip, ‘About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?’ Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus.” (Acts 8:32-35) Jesus is that lamb! John the Baptist when he first saw Jesus proclaimed to the crowds, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29) Paul says in 1 Corinthians 5:7, “For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.” There is a wonderful passage in Hebrews Chapter 10 which talks about this. It says, “But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God… For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified… Where there is forgiveness of [sins, of lawless deeds], there is no longer any offering for sin.” (Heb 10:12-18) In other words, Jesus our Passover Lamb, the Lamb of God, became the final offering for our sin. “For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit” (1 Peter 3:18 NASB). “Knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.” (1 Peter 1:18-19)

Let me close with one last passage and then we will sing, Revelation Chapter 5, the scene is in heaven: “And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne. And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying, ‘Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.’ Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, ‘Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!’ And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, ‘To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!’ And the four living creatures said, ‘Amen!’ and the elders fell down and worshiped.”

Jesus is our Passover Lamb. It was His blood shed on the cross and applied by faith to the doorposts and lintels of our hearts that saved us. It wasn’t anything we did. It wasn’t because of who we were. All we did was accept by faith what Christ did for us on the cross, God’s provision for our sinful condition, and by that act of our obedience, God saved us and sealed us. The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! He is worthy of our worship!