

Deliver Us: Passover and Exodus  
Graymere Preachers Day

*The Lord gets his best soldiers out of the highlands of affliction—Spurgeon (Gleanings among the Sheaves, p. 132)*

1. The power of memory has always played a role in religion

a. The entire Bible is a representation of the past, and the Israelites are called upon to trust God based upon works done in the past (e.g., **Exodus 3:6** And he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.)

b. This is in stark contrast to many today, who claim allegiance to God based on a feeling they have or even a message they have received in the present (contrast the historical Psalms, e.g., **Psalms 105:5-6** <sup>5</sup> Remember the wondrous works that he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he uttered, **Psalms 105:23-38** <sup>23</sup> Then Israel came to Egypt; Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham. <sup>24</sup> And the LORD made his people very fruitful and made them stronger than their foes. <sup>25</sup> He turned their hearts to hate his people, to deal craftily with his servants. <sup>26</sup> He sent Moses, his servant, and Aaron, whom he had chosen. <sup>27</sup> They performed his signs among them and miracles in the land of Ham. <sup>28</sup> He sent darkness, and made the land dark; they did not rebel against his words. <sup>29</sup> He turned their waters into blood and caused their fish to die. <sup>30</sup> Their land swarmed with frogs, even in the chambers of their kings. <sup>31</sup> He spoke, and there came swarms of flies, and gnats throughout their country. <sup>32</sup> He gave them hail for rain, and fiery lightning bolts through their land. <sup>33</sup> He struck down their vines and fig trees, and shattered the trees of their country. <sup>34</sup> He spoke, and the locusts came, young locusts without number, <sup>35</sup> which devoured all the vegetation in their land and ate up the fruit of their ground. <sup>36</sup> He struck down all the firstborn in their land, the firstfruits of all their strength. <sup>37</sup> Then he brought out Israel with silver and gold, and there was none among his tribes who stumbled. <sup>38</sup> Egypt was glad when they departed, for dread of them had fallen upon it.)

2. Memory is most acute in reflection upon tragedy

a. Think about soldiers or victims of terrible crimes with PTSD—often they don't want to talk about it

b. But God *commands* the Israelites to remember and share their suffering: After relating the feast of Unleavened Bread, note the statement: **Exodus 13:8-9** <sup>8</sup> You shall tell your son on that day, 'It is because of what the LORD did for me when I came out of Egypt.' <sup>9</sup> And it shall be to you as a sign on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes, that the law of the LORD may be in your mouth. For with a strong hand the LORD has brought you out of Egypt.

1. Traditional—"tell your son" (v. 8)

2. Personal—"for me" (v. 8)

3. Memorial—"memorial between your eyes" (v. 9)

I. Passover (Ex 12)

A. The Selection of the Victim (vv. 1-6)

a. A Communal Event (12:3-4)

1. Spiritual foundation begins in the home and then spreads to include the neighborhood (1 Timothy 3:4-5 <sup>4</sup> He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, <sup>5</sup> for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? 1 Timothy 3:7 <sup>7</sup> Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.)

b. A Congregational Event (12:3,6)

1. Whenever the text includes the “whole congregation” what follows is always of extreme importance (Hamilton 180)

2. We are told that the “whole congregation” grumbled about food (Ex 16:2), the “whole congregation” grumbled in reaction to the spies’ report (Num 14:2); but the “whole congregation” was assembled when the Levites were installed (Num 8:9), the “whole congregation” was assembled when the Tabernacle was set up at Shiloh as the land had been subdued (Josh 18:1)

B. The Celebration of the Feast (vv. 7-13)

a. The Blood (v. 7)

1. Why it is to be placed on the doorframes is debated. Hamilton points out that blood is always smeared on extremities (181), but the idea that this rite has a pagan background in warding off evil spirits who might come into the house is too mythological to fit the Bible

b. The Food (vv. 8-10)

1. Roasted lamb—pots, pans or ovens would normally be used to cook meat (Hamilton), but here it is to be cooked over an open flame

2. Unleavened bread—the term *matzot* is translated by Robert Alter as “flatbread” because there is no reference to “leaven” in the Hebrew term; obviously, leaven would be normal in bread

3. Bitter herbs—the text never explains why bitter herbs are to be eaten; later rabbinic tradition is logical enough: the bitter herbs exemplify the bitterness of Egyptian slavery (Mishnah, *Pesachim* 10.5)

c. The Ambiance (vv. 11-13)

1. The usual explanation for v. 11 is that the Israelites were to leave in haste; but it just says they were to eat in haste, with no connection with their leaving: this implies that it was merely symbolic, ready for God to call them to action.

2. There is a theological motivation behind the 10<sup>th</sup> plague (v. 12): the plagues demonstrate that the foundational Egyptian principle of *ma’at* has been disturbed at the hands of slaves’ God

C. The Institution of the Feast (12:43-49)

a. Exclusions of the feast (no foreigner, no uncircumcised person)

1. The Lord’s Supper, perhaps because of this language here, was an exclusive feast in the early church (Justin Martyr: “We call this food the Eucharist, of which only he can partake who has acknowledged the truth of our teachings, who has been cleansed by baptism for the remission of his sins and for his regeneration, and who regulates his life upon the principles laid down by Christ” *First Apology* ch. 66, trans. *Fathers of the Church* series)

D. The Passover in the New Testament

a. The number of people in Jerusalem

1. Jesus attended the Passover at least three times (John 2:13; 6:4; 11:55)

2. Josephus says during the tenure of Gessius Florus, at least 3 million people were there (*JW* 2.280), but this is probably exaggerated

b. The connection with Jesus

1. Jesus certainly introduced the Lord's Supper at the time of the Passover, and almost certainly in the context of a Passover meal

2. Jesus is called "the Passover lamb" (**1 Corinthians 5:7-8** <sup>7</sup> 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. <sup>8</sup> 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.)

c. The connection with the church

1. It is impossible to determine whether or not Christians in the NT celebrated the Passover (Acts 12—a large crowd is gathered during the days of Unleavened Bread when Peter was miraculously delivered from prison)

2. The church fathers tended to regard Easter as an acceptable celebration, but Passover as a Jewish custom (the so-called "Quartodeciman controversy" was about whether Easter ought to be celebrated on the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan [and hence the name], or on the Sunday afterward)

## II. Exodus (14:1-4)

### A. The Route of the Exodus (vv. 1-2)

a. We do not know where a single stop is in the entire Wilderness Trek through the Sinai desert

b. We know the Israelites did not take the shortest and most logical route (**Exodus 13:17** <sup>17</sup> When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near. For God said, "Lest the people change their minds when they see war and return to Egypt.")

c. Sometimes the best spiritual path is the most crooked and difficult path (cf. R. Frost, "The Road Not Taken")

### B. The Hardening of Pharaoh (vv. 3-4)

a. The Bible certainly affirms that God hardened Pharaoh's heart (e.g., 9:7; 10:20), but also that Pharaoh hardened his own heart (e.g., 8:15, 32)

b. Clearly here Pharaoh makes up his mind by himself to do exactly what God wanted him to do (vv. 5-7)

### C. The Exodus in Tradition

a. Memory motivates obedience: **Deuteronomy 6:20-25** <sup>20</sup> "When your son asks you in time to come, 'What is the meaning of the testimonies and the statutes and the rules that the LORD our God has commanded you?' <sup>21</sup> then you shall say to your son, 'We were Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt. And the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. <sup>22</sup> And the LORD showed signs and wonders, great and grievous, against Egypt and against Pharaoh and all his household, before our eyes. <sup>23</sup> And he brought us out from there, that he might bring us in and give us the land that he swore to give to our fathers. <sup>24</sup> And the LORD commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as we are this day. <sup>25</sup> And it will be righteousness for us, if we are careful to do all this commandment before the LORD our God, as he has commanded us.'

b. Nearly 250x in the Bible reference is made to Israel being led out of Egypt (comes to symbolize a spiritual journey as much as a physical one—Ezekiel the Tragedian, Philo)

c. Whenever the Israelites are inclined to question God's authority or to question his power to do what he has promised, they needed to look no further than the Exodus event (Cross is our great liberation event)

1. The Passover and the Exodus are stories of God's salvation, first from death and then from slavery—powerful physical and spiritual blessings that made life for the Israelites possible

2. In the greatest moment of despair, when his people are crying out to him, he saves them

3. Spurgeon: *The Lord gets his best soldiers out of the highlands of affliction*