

p 35 WEEK 5: PASSOVER AND EXODUS

Exodus 12:1–13:16

The Place of the Passage

These chapters record the climactic finale of God’s plagues against the Egyptians, in which the death of every firstborn in Egypt moves Pharaoh to release the Israelites from bondage. As God brings judgment against Egypt, he gives Moses instructions for the Passover sacrifice so that the plague of death “passes over” the Israelite households. To commemorate this saving event, God instructs the Israelites to keep the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread annually, and to set apart for the Lord every firstborn male. By doing so, Israel was to keep the memory of God’s gracious salvation alive throughout their generations.

The Big Picture

God brings his final plague against Egypt by killing every firstborn male, but spares the Israelites who are covered by the blood of the Passover lamb.

p 36 Reflection and Discussion

Read through the whole passage for this study, Exodus 12:1–13:16. Then review the shorter passages below and write your answers to the following questions. (For further background, see the *ESV Study Bible*, pages 162–166; also available online at www.esvbible.org.)

1. Instructions for the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread (12:1–28)

This section starts off by rearranging Israel’s calendar around this deliverance from Egypt (12:1–2). What benefits would this have for future generations of Israelites?

Verses 3–13 contain a series of instructions for Israel to follow in preparing the Passover lamb. Why do you think God didn’t simply pass over the Israelite houses automatically? What do these instructions reveal about the way God extends salvation to his people?

What are some similarities between the Passover sacrifice and Jesus’ sacrifice? For clarification read John 19:36 (comparing Ex. 12:46) and 1 Peter 1:18–19.

p 37 Verses 14–20 of Exodus 12 provide instructions for the annual Feast of Unleavened Bread. During this time the Israelites were not permitted to use leaven in their bread, which reflected the haste with which they had to depart Egypt (12:33–34, 39). The Passover meal was similarly to be eaten in haste, with the people dressed for departure, to reenact the sudden Israelite exodus (v. 11). Why was it important for Israel to remember and reenact this event? What are some ways that we in the church remember and reenact our past?

2. Final Plague and Exodus (12:29–42)

When Israel leaves Egypt, the Egyptians give them silver and gold jewelry, which the text interprets as Israel “plundering” the Egyptians (12:35–36). Furthermore, in verse 41 the text refers to the departed Israelites as “all the hosts of the LORD.” Both of these are military phrases, portraying Israel as conquering the Egyptians in battle. In light of Exodus 1:10, what is ironic about all this militaristic description?

3. Institution of the Passover (12:43–51)

These verses tell us how the Passover celebration began. Read John 19:36 in conjunction with Exodus 12:46 and Psalm 34:20. How does Jesus ultimately fulfill the Passover?

p 38 4. Instructions for Consecrating the Firstborn and the Feast of Unleavened Bread (13:1–16)

Exodus 13:3–10 reiterates further instructions concerning the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Notice how an Israelite is to explain the rationale for keeping this feast (vv. 8–9). Were the particulars of this feast to be kept *in order to* enjoy a relationship with God, or *because* God had already brought about a relationship with Israel through his saving grace? How might this affect how we view the relationship between our salvation and the good works to which God calls us?

Exodus 13:11–13 says that all firstborn males in Israel were to be set apart for God. This meant that either they were to be sacrificed (certain animals) or they were to receive a sacrificial substitution (all male children, certain other animals). What would such a substitution remind an Israelite of? What does this substitution point forward to?

Twice this section looks forward to the future, when Israel will live in the land of Canaan (13:5, 11). In what ways do these verses emphasize God’s faithfulness and grace?

p 39 Read through the following three sections on *Gospel Glimpses*, *Whole-Bible Connections*, and *Theological Soundings*. Then take time to reflect on the *Personal Implications* these sections may have for your walk with the Lord.

Gospel Glimpses

THE PASSOVER LAMB. The sacrifice of the Passover is one of the clearest pictures of the gospel in the Old Testament. The Israelites were to sacrifice a spotless lamb and smear its blood on their doorframes. When God brought his judgment of death against the land of Egypt, he would see the blood of the lamb and “pass over” the Israelites’ houses (Ex. 12:13). Building off this image, the New Testament presents Jesus as “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). Just as the shed blood of the Passover lamb covered the people of Israel so that God’s judgment passed over them, so does Jesus’ shed blood bring forgiveness to those who put their faith in him (Eph. 1:7). Therefore it is very fitting that the Gospels record Jesus’ sacrificial death as occurring during the Passover festival (Matt. 26:2; Mark 14:1; Luke 22:15), making him the fulfillment of this Old Testament ritual. In fact, this association is so strong that Paul actually identifies Jesus as “our Passover lamb” (1 Cor. 5:7).

A MIXED MULTITUDE. Exodus 12:38 notes that when the Israelites left Egypt, “a mixed multitude also went up with them.” This indicates that people of other nationalities accompanied the Hebrews as they departed their land of slavery. This short note reflects the fact that God’s plan of salvation has always been international in nature. When God called Abram, Israel’s ancestor, he told him, “in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen. 12:3). Later, when Israel first enters Canaan in their conquest of the Promised Land, Rahab defects from the Canaanites and aligns herself with the Israelites (Joshua 2). This theme reappears, with people such as Ruth the Moabite and Uriah the Hittite showing faith in God, but it is most evident in the New Testament mandate for the gospel to go out to all the nations. Not only does Jesus commission his followers to go out and “make disciples of all nations” (Matt. 28:19), but Paul explains that this good news for the nations was actually contained in God’s original promise to Abram back in Genesis 12:3 (Gal. 3:8).

Whole-Bible Connections

SALVATION THROUGH JUDGMENT. A pattern that reappears throughout Scripture is God saving his people through judgment. While the flood brought [p 40](#) judgment upon the whole human race during Noah’s day, it simultaneously lifted up the ark, saving Noah and his family (Genesis 6–9). Here in the exodus, God’s tenth plague of judgment against Egypt also served as the catalyst for Pharaoh to release Israel (Ex. 12:29–32). Later, the prophets will often speak of Israel’s salvation from exile by proclaiming judgment against their enemies (e.g., Jer. 46:27–28; Ezek. 28:25–26). The cross of Christ is the most significant example of salvation through judgment: because Jesus was wounded in our place for our transgressions, we are healed (Isa. 53:5; 1 Pet. 2:24). Similarly, at the end of time, God will finalize our salvation by remaking all creation into “new heavens and a new earth” (2 Pet. 3:13), yet he will do so by bringing fiery judgment upon the current creation (2 Pet. 3:7).

GRACE-DRIVEN OBEDIENCE. Three different times in these chapters the Israelites are instructed how to communicate to their children the significance of the rituals described here. In each case, obedience in carrying out the ritual is grounded in the grace of God’s salvation. The Passover was to be “observed” as a “statute” (Ex. 12:24) because the Lord “passed over the

houses of the people of Israel in Egypt" (12:27). Concerning the "statute" of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (13:10), an Israelite was to say, "It is because of what the LORD did for me when I came out of Egypt" (13:8). Similarly, the practice of devoting the firstborn reflected God's deliverance of Israel: "By a strong hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, from the house of slavery" (13:14). This pattern parallels the relationship of grace and good works in the New Testament. As Paul says, it is by grace we have been saved through faith, and through this gracious salvation we have been "created in Christ Jesus for good works" (Eph. 2:8–10). Therefore, in both the Old and New Testaments, God's grace is the fuel that drives the believer's obedient response.

Theological Soundings

SUBSTITUTION. Central to the gospel message is the glorious truth that Jesus suffered and died on the cross in our place as our substitute. As John says, Jesus "laid down his life for us" (1 John 3:16). This doctrine of substitution is reflected at various points throughout the Old Testament, from the ram that God provided Abraham to sacrifice instead of his son Isaac (Gen. 22:13) to the servant who suffers on Israel's behalf in the book of Isaiah (Isa. 53:4–6). This concept of substitutionary sacrifice is also seen here in the exodus account as the Passover lamb is killed instead of Israel's firstborn males. By providing substitutes, God graciously spares his people from experiencing his judgment.

SACRAMENT. Sacraments are signs established by God that represent his saving work and encourage the faith of believers. Traditionally, Protestants have observed two sacraments: baptism and the Lord's Supper. These New ^{p 41} Testament sacraments provide tangible pictures of the salvation that Jesus has achieved for us. As Paul says concerning the Lord's Supper, "as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Cor. 11:26). As the precursor to the Lord's Supper, the Passover was an Old Testament sacrament that also signified God's saving work. In this passage, God repeatedly instructs the Israelites to observe the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread for generations to come in order to commemorate his saving grace through the exodus (Ex. 12:14, 17, 24–25, 42).

Personal Implications

Take time to reflect on the implications of Exodus 12:1–13:16 for your own life today. Make notes below on the personal implications for your walk with the Lord of the (1) *Gospel Glimpses*, (2) *Whole-Bible Connections*, (3) *Theological Soundings*, and (4) this passage as a whole.

1. **Gospel Glimpses**

2. **Whole-Bible Connections**

3. **Theological Soundings**

As You Finish This Unit ...

Take a moment now to ask for the Lord's blessing and help as you continue in this study of Exodus. And take a moment also to look back through this unit of study, to reflect on some key things that the Lord may be teaching you—and perhaps to highlight and underline these things to review again in the future.