

#9 - Passover and the exodus - Exodus 11:4-14:31

Engage:

This is another lesson which covers several chapters of material. This story picks up where the last one stopped. In the last story Moses was called to be God's spokesperson before Pharaoh. God had heard the cries of His people and was going to deliver ("redeem") them from Egyptian bondage. This story tells us how God accomplished this feat by showing Pharaoh and the Egyptians that He is God.

In the audio version, the story teller began by saying that God told Moses and Aaron that He would work miraculous signs and wonders through them but Pharaoh would not listen to their request to go worship.

For example, Aaron's staff would turn into a snake. Each of Pharaoh's sorcerers and magicians would be able to duplicate this feat, but Aaron's staff would eat theirs. There would be 10 separate, disastrous plagues that would affect the Egyptians. The (1) water in the Nile River would turn to blood. There would be plagues of (2) frogs, (3) gnats and (4) flies to afflict the Egyptians. The (5) livestock of the Egyptians would die, while the livestock of the Israelites would not. There was a plague of (6) boils and (7) hail that afflicted both men and animals from Egypt. The next plague was (8) locusts which devoured what was left after the hail. The next plague was (9) three days of darkness. There was no darkness where the Israelites lived.

Each of these plagues was an attack against one of the many gods that the Egyptians worshiped. God's stated intention was to show that He was God! This leads us to where the story for this lesson begins the 10th and final plague.

Thoughts about the story:

The 10th plague was the one that finally caused Pharaoh to allow the Israelites to leave. It was the plague of the death of the firstborn son of the Egyptians, including Pharaoh, as well as the firstborn of the cattle.

The Israelites were told how to protect themselves from this plague. This is a new twist to the story. This is the first time that the Israelites were told to do something to escape the plagues. They were given detailed instructions as to how to observe the first Passover. This was to serve as an annual memorial to remind the people of Israel of God's redemption of them from Egyptian bondage.

Can you imagine the impact of what it must have been like for so many sudden deaths to occur for each family in Egypt? This was God's way of finally breaking Pharaoh's stubbornness (at least long enough for the Israelites to leave) and to prove that He was God. Deliverance for the people of Israel came through being obedient to God by applying the blood of the sacrificial lamb on their doorposts. There was no other plan. Failure to obey carried the consequences of death for the firstborn. Ex 12:50 says that "all the Israelites did just what the Lord had commanded Moses and Aaron."

Note: Centuries later, the death of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God would become God's way to free humankind from the bondage of sin. Like the first Passover, the blood of Jesus is the only way God has provided for our redemption.

Christ Our Passover Lamb

Passover involved

- the sacrifice of a lamb (Ex 12:3)
- a lamb without spot or blemish, in the prime of life (Ex 12:5)
- lamb's blood shed that Israel might have life (Ex 12:23)

Christ died

- as the Lamb of God (1 Cor 5:7)
- without spot or blemish and in the prime of manhood (1 Pet 1:18-19; Jn 8:57)
- shedding His blood that we might live (Lk 22:20; Jn 3:16; Rom 5:9-11)

Point: We learn that innocent blood must be shed to provide redemption for God's people (Eph. 1:7; Heb 9:22). The sacrificial lamb became a substitute for the firstborn of the Israelites. The same is true for what Jesus did for us.

The next part of the story is the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt (about 600,000 men, and women and children - or between 2-3 million people - Ex 12:37). The Egyptians were ready for the Israelites to leave as they feared they would die if the Israelites didn't leave (Ex 12:33). The Israelites did as God had instructed: they asked the Egyptians for silver, gold and clothing. The Israelites "plundered" the Egyptians (Ex 12:36). Question: Could this have been God's way of "paying" Israel for all of the years they were slaves? Also, can you imagine having the nerve to ask captors to give you their wealth as you walked away from them? How would you respond if you were an Egyptian?

God intervened by leading them with a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.

Pharaoh's heart was again hardened. (Note: Does it ever make you wonder how he could have been so hard – and how you can do the same thing?) He and his officials pursued the Israelites. When the Israelites saw the Egyptian army coming after them, they were "terrified and cried out to the Lord" (Ex 14:10). God spoke to Moses and told him to "stretch out" his hand "over the sea to divide the water so that the Israelites" could go through on "dry ground" (Ex 14:16). Just before Moses did as God had told him, the angel of the Lord and the pillar of cloud moved from in front of the Israelites to between them and the Egyptians. On the side of the cloud where the Egyptians were, there was darkness. On the side where the Israelites were, there was light.

After the Israelites crossed through on dry ground, the Egyptians were trapped when the opening in the sea was closed by God. This is another example of how God has proved Himself capable of being the redeemer of His people. Question: How has God proved Himself capable of placing a barrier between you and Satan's temptations?

Thus the people of Israel "feared the Lord and put their trust in Him and in Moses His servant" (Ex 14:31). Even though God had revealed Himself so powerfully, the Israelites continued to revert back to grumbling (See Ex 15:24; 16:2-4; 17:2-3). They were really no different than we are! We can be thankful that God sees us as to what we will become, rather than what we now are!

Note: 1 Cor 10:1-2 tells us that just as Israel was “baptized into Moses (identified with Moses) in the cloud and in the sea” so we identify with Christ and are separated from the our past life to live a new life through our faith which leads to repentance and baptism into Christ (Rom 6:3-14; Gal 3:26-29; 1 Pet 3:21).