The Gospel according to Exodus

Exodus 12:1-51 – The Passover


Chapters 11 and 12 are all about God’s rescue.
Rescue through the judgment of Egypt
Rescue from judgment

Judgment

The plagues.
The power of Pharaoh versus the power of God.
The darkness over all the land for 3 days.

12:1-2 – God sets the reset button.
12:3-11 – Instructions regarding the killing and eating of a lamb
12:12, 21-24 – Judgment on Egypt

A night of utter tragedy and devastation.
The darkest episode in the history of a nation.
11:4-7 – a distinction is made, there is great wailing
12:30 – there is not a house throughout the whole land where someone is not dead
The judgment of God is a terrible and a terrifying thing.
In some ways, you could argue, the Egyptians had it coming.

They had built concentration camps for the Israelites. They had worked them to within an inch of their life. Their leader Pharaoh had ordered the mass murder of their firstborn baby boys. They had resisted God time after time after time. They had lied and delayed and deceived and directly opposed God and his people. They had been warned and they had been given chance after chance to change their mind.

But they did not and they would not.

And God's judgment came upon them.

With terrifying consequences.

We like the idea of justice and judgment if we can clearly identify the baddies and the goodies.

Not only do we like it – we want it. We want and demand justice. We want bad people to be punished and good people to be protected.

In this account, the Egyptians are the baddies, and the Israelites are the goodies.

Aren't they?

But it’s not that simple. The Bible does not share our pantomime view of the world.

We won’t be long as we progress through the story of the Exodus before we see the Israelites in a slightly less favourable light.

We will see that the Israelites can be just as hard-hearted as Pharaoh. We will see them grumbling against God in the desert. We will see them deserting him to worship before a golden calf.

We will see them rebelling against Moses their leader.
We see a rebellious, hard-hearted, idolatrous and disobedient people.

And yet – God makes a clear distinction between the Israelites and the Egyptians when it comes to judgment and punishment.

What is that difference?

The thing that makes the difference between the Israelites and Egyptians on Passover night is not that some are good and some are bad.

The difference has nothing to do with race or ethnicity or moral standards.

The only difference is that some have blood on the door and some don’t.

God warned the Israelites: stay in your house. Stay under the blood.

God has made a distinction, but it is only because of the blood.

As he promised:

12:13 “when I see the blood, I will pass over you.”

In every house there is either a dead son or a dead lamb.

The judgment on Egypt fell on the firstborn.

The judgment of Israel fell on the lamb.

Jesus is the firstborn and Jesus is the lamb.
“The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.” (Colossians 1:15)

“The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29)

Substitution

A lamb for a household.

The story of the lamb in the Bible:

**Genesis 22: Abraham and Isaac**

Offer up your only son as a sacrifice to me

God claims the life of the firstborn – the debt of the family, the debt of the sin

Gen 22:7-8 “Where is the lamb for the sacrifice?”

“God himself will provide the lamb... my son.”

I hope you will not have to die for my sins.

**Exodus 12: Moses and the Passover**

If you go out the house, if you go out from under the blood of the lamb, you will be smitten – you will die. (Exodus 12:22)

Its blood is daubed on the doorposts and the lintel of the household. God sees the blood and passes over the household.

The lamb dies. An Israelite boy lives.
A life for a life.

A substitution takes place.

Salvation is provided from God’s judgment through the blood of a substitute.

Abraham…Moses…

All of this foreshadows another lamb – the Lamb of God – Jesus.

**Jesus – the Lamb of God**

The prophet Isaiah speaks of the Messiah to come as he says:

“he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearsers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.” (Isaiah 53:7)

Before judgment falls in Egypt….

Egypt lies in darkness for three days (the ninth plague).

Before Jesus dies, Jerusalem lies in darkness for three hours.

After the darkness and the judgment….

Egypt’s firstborn sons are killed

In Jerusalem, the only begotten Son, the firstborn, is slain

In Egypt, a lamb’s blood covers the doorposts of homes.

In Jerusalem, the Lamb of God’s blood covers the sins of the world.

The punishment and judgment that we deserved was placed on him.
As Paul states: “He loved me and gave himself for me.” (Galatians 2:20)

“Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.” (1 Corinthians 5:7b)

As Peter reminds us:

“it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.” (1 Peter 1:18-19)

Celebration:

Luke 22:14-20:

It is the night of Jesus’ betrayal and the night before his death. In this passage we see Jesus’ instigation of the Lord’s Supper – of what we refer to as the Lord’s Table, Communion, the Eucharist.

It is the feast of Passover in Jerusalem and Jesus and his disciples are celebrating the Passover meal together. This is a custom that goes back over 1500 years to the deliverance of the people of Israel from Egypt under the leadership of Moses.

“Obey these instructions as a lasting ordinance for you and your descendants. When you enter the land that the Lord will give you as he promised, observe this ceremony. And when your children ask you, ‘What does this ceremony mean to you?’ then tell them, ‘It is the Passover sacrifice to the Lord, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and spared our homes when he struck down the Egyptians.’” (Exodus 12:24-27)
And this is what they did. For 1500 years they celebrated the Passover meal and the deliverance of Israel from Egypt by God's supernatural intervention.

This was their custom.

The head of the household would lead them through the meal, with four stages. They would eat lamb with bitter herbs and unleavened bread, and they would share wine, with four different cups.

The Passover meal was rich in symbolism and was an ancient custom to retell the story of the Passover to each new generation.

The unleavened bread was equated in the meal with bread of affliction because it reminded them of their persecution in Egypt as mentioned in Deuteronomy 16:3

“Do not eat it with bread made with yeast, but for seven days eat unleavened bread, the bread of affliction, because you left Egypt in haste—so that all the days of your life you may remember the time of your departure from Egypt.”

Now Jesus took this ancient custom, and he instigated a new custom, a new ritual, a new commemoration, taking the bread of the meal and the wine to symbolise a new deliverance – the deliverance of people from their slavery to sin by his sacrifice on the cross.

So in this meal, on this evening, reclining at the table with his disciples, Jesus first takes the bread. But instead of saying this is the bread of affliction, as would be said at the Passover meal, he says:

19: “This is my body given for you, do this in remembrance of me.”

This is the bread of my affliction. I am going to give you ultimate freedom.
And he takes one of the cups of wine (normally there were four at the Passover meal, and he says:

20: “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.”

There is bread. There is a cup. But there is no lamb on the table – the third part of the Passover meal.

There is no lamb on the table, because the lamb is at the table.

God will provide a lamb.

The blood of the lamb will save you.

Jesus is the Lamb of God – and he is now removing sin once and for all.

Jesus is instigating a new custom. A new commemoration. Instead of looking back to the Exodus and the blood of a lamb daubed on a doorpost, we look back on the death and sacrifice of the Lamb of God who has taken away our sin once and for all on the cross.

The bread that we eat symbolically represents Jesus’ body broken for us, and the wine that we drink represents his blood poured out for us.

This is a new custom by which we are to remember the Lord’s death until he comes again.

So when we take communion together, we are following a 2000-year old custom, which builds on a preceding 1500-year old custom – that’s 3500 years of custom and tradition remembering the deliverance of God and the covering of the blood of the Lamb for our sins.

And this will continue until he comes again.
Have you forgotten what Jesus has done for you? Truly achieved for you? Remember afresh as you take the bread and drink the cup. This is not our bread of affliction, this is the body of Jesus broken for your sin. This is not the blood of a lamb daubed on a doorpost in Egypt, this is the blood of the Lamb of God, who died to take away your shame and guilt and wrongdoing.

We are saved – and saved only by the blood of the Lamb.
Community group MAP

Meditation:

Exodus 12

Exodus 12:13 “when I see the blood, I will pass over you.”

“Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.” (1 Corinthians 5:7b)

“it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.” (1 Peter 1:18-19)

Picture it: Read the account of the Passover in Exodus 12 and picture it. What would it have been like? The sounds, the smells, the sights....? What would it have been like to be an Israelite on this night?

Probe it: What are these passages saying about the blood of the lamb? How does what happened at the Passover relate to Jesus – the Lamb of God? (See also Romans 3:25, Romans 5:9, Ephesians 1:7, Ephesians 2:13, Hebrews 9:14, Hebrews 9:22)
Application:

What was it that protected the Israelites from the judgment of God? (Exodus 12:13)

How can we stay “under the blood”?

How are we tempted to justify ourselves or escape God’s judgment in other ways?

Prayer:

Pray for those who are still facing the judgment of God – who are not under the blood of the lamb.

Pray with thanksgiving to the Lamb of God who took our punishment so that we could be forgiven.

Pray for one another and the needs represented in the group.