

Passover

February 11, 2024

Lesson Summary

Main Passages

Exodus 12:1-39

Session Outline

1. Instructions for the Passover (Exodus 12:1-11)
2. The Point of the Passover (Exodus 12:12-20)
3. The Result of the Passover (Exodus 12:27-39)

Theological Theme

God rescued His people from bondage through the miracle of the Passover. Passover pointed to the coming deliverance of God's people through the Lamb of God, Jesus.

Call to Action

Give thanks to the Lord for how He has forgiven you and given you new life in Christ.



Leader Guide

Passover

Introduction

The word *sacrifice* can stir up various thoughts and ideas. Many consider it noble to sacrifice. Others avoid sacrifice of any kind. Some are willing to sacrifice to a certain degree if it is not too painful. Some studies show that around twenty-three percent of people would not be willing to make any sacrifices, even for love.¹

When we think of sacrifice, we may consider things like being willing to move out of state or change jobs or giving up a routing convenience for the sake of another. These kinds of sacrifices might be inconvenient or even hard, but the ultimate sacrifice in the Bible is giving up a life for the sake of another.

- ❓ What is one of the biggest sacrifices you've made for someone or that someone has made for you? How did this impact you?
- ❓ Why do you think sacrifice is uncomfortable for many of us? Where are you likely to avoid sacrifice if possible?

Session Summary

Scripture tells us that “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23) and that for sins to be forgiven, blood must be shed (Hebrews 9:22). This concept was established in the garden of Eden (Genesis 3:21); God continued to teach it through the Passover and delivering the Israelites from bondage in Egypt as well as the sacrificial system that followed. Ultimately, Jesus became the sacrificial Lamb for the sins of the world.

The Passover was a significant moment for the children of Israel that is celebrated and observed to this day. Understanding all that happened when the Israelites were released from slavery and sent off to the promised land is important to understanding God's story of redemption throughout

the Bible. His timing is perfect, and there is purpose to all He does. When we trust God and obey Him, then we position ourselves to join in His redemptive story that has been revealed throughout history.

1. Instructions for the Passover (Exodus 12:1-11)

After four hundred years of slavery, God was preparing the children of Israel for the deliverance that was coming their way. It was to be a new start for them and even their calendar would change to reflect it. Everything was about to change, and these events would be a reminder for the future of God's faithfulness to His people.

The Lord had specific instructions about this protection for His people. Through their obedience, God's wrath would pass over them, pointing to His ultimate redemptive work that would come through the Messiah. Though they did not understand all the history and significance, the Israelites were aware that these instructions were important, and it was important that they follow them to the letter.

- ❓ Why is it important to obey the Lord even when you don't know or understand all the details and significance of what He is doing?

The lamb was to be in the best condition possible and brought into the home for four days prior to the feast. Because sin had entered the world, sacrifice was necessary for atonement of sins. Compare these instructions with the sacrifice God initiated in the garden to clothe Adam and Eve following their disobedience to God. Ultimately, this moment pointed to the coming sacrifice of Jesus, the Lamb of God, for the sins of the world.

- ❓ How do the events of the Passover point to the sacrifice Jesus would make for the sins of the world?

Before the Passover lamb could be eaten, the blood needed to be spread on the top and sides of the home's doorposts. Each time a person went in or out, they would remember the sacrifice necessary to rescue them from their bondage and protect them from the final plague.

- ❓ Application: What in your life acts a daily reminder of your need for a Savior?

Reminders of God's Work

The Passover celebration, the consecration of the firstborn, and the feast of unleavened bread serve as continuing reminders of what God did to redeem His people. The firstborn of all the families of Israel belonged to the Lord because He had spared them when He had decimated the families of Egypt.

2. The Point of the Passover (Exodus 12:12-20)

God made it clear that the exact placement of the blood on the doorposts was essential for the Israelites to be spared the judgment on the firstborn that was coming. The blood of the lamb was crucial to the plans of the Lord for rescuing His people.



How do we see God's grace revealed in this portion of His instructions to the Israelites?

Think about how God regards the children of Israel. They are His firstborn, favored people. When Egypt refused to release the firstborn of the Lord, then He required the firstborn of Egypt as punishment, penalty, and judgment. God takes the treatment of His people seriously and we can trust that He will deal with those who come against His people with justice and righteousness.

The Lord stressed that these instructions about Passover were to be followed and kept as a feast throughout generations. This was not a one-time dinner. It was a new celebratory feast that the people should make a yearly priority and everlasting ordinance. God knew that looking back on this occasion would be a powerful reminder of His power and might exercised on behalf of His people.



What are some ways you have seen God's power and might exercised on your behalf? How does this encourage you?

For this first Passover, unleavened bread was a practical necessity due to the expediency with which the people would need to exit Egypt. In all the following Passover feasts and celebrations, unleavened bread would serve as a testimony of the Lord's protection and provision.


Leaven is also symbolic of sin and corruption in the Bible. In Galatians 5:9, Paul compared the way a little leaven influences an entire batch of dough to the way any amount of corruption infiltrates the Christian life. Just as leaven causes dough to puff up, sin causes a person to be puffed up. Just as the Passover required unleavened bread, we must guard against allowing sin into our lives in even the smallest amount because it can affect every part negatively. The Lord calls us to moral purity. Any time we think sin doesn't really matter or make a difference, we can remember how leaven affects all the dough and make the choice to live an "unleavened" or godly life.




Application: Where is God calling you to avoid even a little bit of "leaven" in your life right now? How can you do that?

3. The Result of the Passover (Exodus 12:27-39)

The people's first response to God's instruction was worship. They honored the Lord and were grateful for all He said He would do. This is one of the most important parts of the Passover story because it reminds us of the truth that to receive the good things God had for them, the people had to choose obedience. Their deliverance hinged on their response to the truth God revealed to them.

 How does God call all His people to respond in obedience in order to receive His promised blessings?


God warned Moses that Pharaoh wasn't going to let them go until he was forced to by mighty acts of the Lord. Everything that the Lord said transpired exactly as He predicted. At midnight, the plague struck all the firstborn of Egypt. Pharaoh, his servants, and all of Egypt experienced great loss in one fell swoop. Pharaoh finally realized that the Lord God was greater than any of the gods they worshiped, including Pharaoh himself.

 How does it encourage you to remember God is greater than any other force in the universe?

Amid vast destruction, the tide turned completely. Pharaoh didn't just allow the Israelites to leave, he commanded them to go. The Egyptian people agreed with Pharaoh and let their own houses be plundered by Israelites as they gathered supplies quickly for their upcoming journey.

Finally, the Israelites were free of the Egyptians, and they took off in a hurry. Verse 34 reminds us they did not have time for the bread to rise, pointing back to God's previous instruction regarding the exclusion of leaven. We are told the men numbered about six hundred thousand, indicating an estimated population of Israelites around two million left Egypt for the promised land.




The timing of the Lord was perfect, and He fulfilled everything He instructed and promised about the exodus from Egypt. That first Passover set the precedent that Jews have followed for generations since. The moment reminds us of the wages of sin, the providence and deliverance of God, and a foreshadowing of the coming Savior.

 Application: How does the Passover point you to the truth about Jesus?

Conclusion

The Passover is more than just a celebration or an ordinance. It was a literal moment where the angel of the Lord passed over the Israelite homes that were obedient to the instructions of the Lord. This was all part of His plan to rescue His children and deliver them from their bondage in Egypt. The blood of an innocent lamb was spread on the doorposts of each home as a signal for the angel to spare that house from the plague of the firstborn.

God takes the treatment of His people very seriously and Pharaoh endured nine other plagues without releasing the Israelites. So, God finally brought the death of the firstborn to every part of Egypt that was missing blood on the doorposts. The blood was significant represented the sacrifice necessary for the forgiveness of sin and restoration of people into right relationship with God. Jesus would be the ultimate sacrifice for the sins of all people who placed their trust in Him as foreshadowed by the blood of the Passover lamb.

-  Where is God calling you to respond in obedience today?
How will you act?
-  The Passover was to serve as a reminder. How can we as a group regularly remind one another of the work of God in our midst?
-  How can you share the gospel with another using the story of the Passover?

Prayer of Response

Praise Jesus for His willing sacrifice on the cross to offer you forgiveness for your sins and new life in Him. Thank the Lord for His plans and provision for your life.

Memory Verse

The blood on the houses where you are staying will be a distinguishing mark for you; when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No plague will be among you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt. - Exodus 12:13

Additional Resources

- *Be Delivered* by Warren Wiersbe
- *Exodus* by Douglas Stuart
- *Exodus Chapters 1-18* by J. Vernon McGee

Disciples Multiplying Disciples



Historical Context of Exodus

Purpose

The book of Exodus shows God at work with the goal of having such close fellowship with people that he is described as dwelling among them. He rescued the Israelites in order to make himself known, not only by the exercise of his power but also through an ongoing covenant relationship based on his capacity for patience, grace, and forgiveness. The record of what the Lord did for the Israelites provided grounds for them to recognize him as their God who deserved their complete loyalty and obedience. This record would make clear to the Israelites their identity as God's people and would continue the display of his glorious identity.

Author

The book of Exodus does not state who its author was. It does refer to occasions when Moses made a written record of events that took place and what God had said (17:14; 24:4, 7; 34:27–28). The book also contains references to preserving and passing on information. Along with the other four books of the Pentateuch, it has long been considered to be primarily the work of Moses. Moses could have written Exodus at any time during a forty-year time span: after the Israelites finished constructing and dedicating the tabernacle at Mount Sinai, at the start of their second year after leaving Egypt (1445 BC), and before his death in the land of Moab (about 1406 BC).

Setting

Exodus picks up where the Genesis narrative ended with the death of Joseph around 1805 BC. It quickly moves us forward almost three hundred years to a time in Egypt when the circumstances of Jacob's descendants had changed. The Israelites were serving as slaves during Egypt's Eighteenth Dynasty, probably under the pharaohs Thutmose and Amenhotep II. The Hebrew slaves experienced a miraculous deliverance by God's hand through his servant-leader Moses. The Israelite slavery ended in 1446 BC. The book of Exodus records the events surrounding the exodus from Egypt and the Israelites' first year in the wilderness, including the giving of the law.

Special Features

The title "Exodus" is an anglicized version of a Greek word that means "departure" in recognition of one of the book's major events—the departure of God's people from Egypt. Exodus could be considered the central book in the Old Testament because it records God's act of saving the Israelites and establishing them as a covenant community, a nation chosen to serve and represent him. Exodus describes the enslavement and oppression of the Israelites; the preparation and call of Moses; the conflict between Yahweh the God of Israel and the gods of Egypt (represented by Pharaoh); the exodus of the Israelites; their establishment as a nation in covenant with the Lord; their rebellion; and the Lord's provision for their ongoing relationship, symbolized by his presence at the tabernacle they built for him.

Extended Commentary

Exodus 12:1-39

12:2 Because of what the Lord was about to do in the current month, the Israelites were to consider it the first month of their year (the beginning of months). Its Canaanite name was Abib and its Babylonian name was Nisan (13:4). This lunar month overlaps with portions of the solar months of March and April.

12:3 To select an animal of the flock four days in advance would give opportunity to observe it for defects. But more importantly, early selection would draw attention to what was ahead. Just enough should be prepared for the people who would eat together.

12:4–7 As Douglas Stuart explains, the principle was that “everyone had to eat the meat, and all the meat had to be eaten.” The perfection of the animal foreshadowed the perfection of the Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world (Jn 1:29).

12:8–10 The meat must be eaten immediately, and anything left must be burned and not left to ordinary uses the next morning. That it must be roasted whole also fits the need for special treatment of this animal, whose blood above the doorway and on the side posts identified the inhabitants of the house: they were people who took the Lord’s commands seriously (9:20–21).

12:11–14 The declarations it is the Lord’s Passover and I am the Lord reinforce the truth that what was happening centered on God’s identity and his self-revelatory actions (6:2–8, 29; 7:5, 17, etc.). In this instance he exercised his ability and right to execute judgments against all the gods of Egypt.

12:15–20 Eating unleavened bread would remind the Israelites of their rapid departure from Egypt that did not allow time for a leavening agent to make the bread rise (v. 39). Those who ate leavened bread showed disdain for what the Lord had done in founding Israel as a nation and were subject to either banishment (Nm 19:13) or the death penalty, which was meted out to intentionally defiant lawbreakers in Nm 15:22–31 and carried out by human or divine agency (Ex 31:14; Lv 20:1–24).

12:21–22 The instructions were summarized for the elders, who would pass the instructions on to the rest of the Israelites. Hyssop would be used in cleansing rituals (Lv 14:4, 6, 49, 51–52; Nm 19:6, 18; Ps 51:7; Heb 9:19). See also Jn 19:29.

12:23 The descriptions of the death of the firstborn say nothing more about the destroyer, nor do they indicate how the humans or animals died. The Lord’s sovereign activity was the issue, and he presented himself as bringing about the deaths. He also referred to the plague as destroying (v. 13), in an expression that uses a Hebrew word closely related to the one here translated “destroyer.” Elsewhere an angel from the Lord is described using the Hebrew word for “the destroyer” in a situation that involved a deadly plague (2Sm 24:16). David chose “plague” because it would allow him to “fall into the Lord’s hands” (2Sm 24:14). Angels came to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah (Gn 19:13), while God was repeatedly credited with destroying the cities (Gn 13:10; 18:22–19:14, 24–25).

12:24–28 The Lord expected the Israelites to teach their children about him in the process of regularly celebrating what he had done for them (10:2; 13:8–9, 14–15).

12:29–30 The prisoner who was in the dungeon was another person opposite Pharaoh in social standing, like “the servant girl who is at the grindstones” (11:5). Mention of both extremes encompassed all people in between.

12:31–32 Pharaoh had one last encounter with Moses and Aaron. He had declared that Moses would die if they met again, but he could not keep that resolve. Instead, he capitulated and gave unconditional release of all the Israelites to go and worship, but he himself made no mention of worshipping the Lord (cp. 2Kg 5:17–18). Pharaoh’s desire for blessing recalls earlier dealings of Egyptians and others with God’s people that show things could have been far different for him (Gn 12:3; 21:22–24; 26:28–31; 39:5; 47:7, 10).

12:33–34 We’re all going to die! is the last recorded statement to Moses by ordinary Egyptians. It uses just two words in Hebrew and assesses the situation without any pretense, the expectation being that all the Egyptians were about to die if the Israelites stayed any longer in Egypt.

12:35–36 These verses describe what the statements in 3:21–22 and 11:2–3 had looked toward.

12:37 Rameses and Succoth are thought to have been in eastern Egypt (1:11), with Succoth east of Rameses in an area that the ancient Egyptians called Tjeku. This was at the eastern end of the Wadi Tumilat and contained fortifications because the area was a trade route with access to the Sinai Peninsula. The large number of people who left Egypt contrasts with the small number who had entered it (1:1–5). The census of about six hundred thousand able-bodied men implies a total population of more than two million. See also note at Nm 1:44–46.

12:38 The mixed crowd may have included other laborers who saw an opportunity to escape from Egyptian servitude, but who had not necessarily come to faith in the Lord (Nm 11:4).

12:39 See 12:14–20.²

References

1. “What Sacrifices Would You Be Willing to Make for Your Love?” *Life, Love, & Sex*, December 12, 2019, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/243659/sacrifices-americans-would-make-for-their-love/>.
2. *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017).