

**Sermon Title: Ex. 12-13: This is Our Passover. By Paul Hudson.**

This morning we are continuing in Exodus and the passage this morning will take us through chapter 12 and into the first few verses of chapter 13. We're just going to read sections of the chapters to highlight the story for us. So if you want to mark in your Bible, the Scripture for this morning will be chapter 12 verses 1-3, 5-8, 11-14, 28-34, verse 39, and chapter 13 verse 3. This is the story of the Passover and the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt.

Scripture: Exodus 12:1-3, 5-8, 11-14, 28-34, 39, 13:3.

**Ex 12:1–3.** The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in Egypt, <sup>2</sup>“This month is to be for you the first month, the first month of your year. <sup>3</sup>Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb <sup>†</sup> for his family, one for each household.

**Ex 12:5–8.** The animals you choose must be year-old males without defect, and you may take them from the sheep or the goats. <sup>6</sup>Take care of them until the fourteenth day of the month, when all the members of the community of Israel must slaughter them at twilight. <sup>7</sup>Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses where they eat the lambs. <sup>8</sup>That same night they are to eat the meat roasted over the fire, along with bitter herbs, and bread made without yeast.

**Ex. 12:11-14.** This is how you are to eat it: with your cloak tucked into your belt, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand. Eat it in haste; it is the Lord's Passover.

<sup>12</sup>“On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn of both people and animals, and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the Lord. <sup>13</sup>The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are, and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt.

<sup>14</sup> “This is a day you are to commemorate; for the generations to come you shall celebrate it as a festival to the Lord—a lasting ordinance.

**Ex 12:28–34.** The Israelites did just what the Lord commanded Moses and Aaron.

<sup>29</sup> At midnight the Lord struck down all the firstborn in Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh, who sat on the throne, to the firstborn of the prisoner, who was in the dungeon, and the firstborn of all the livestock as well. <sup>30</sup> Pharaoh and all his officials and all the Egyptians got up during the night, and there was loud wailing in Egypt, for there was not a house without someone dead.

<sup>31</sup> During the night Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, “Up! Leave my people, you and the Israelites! Go, worship the Lord as you have requested. <sup>32</sup> Take your flocks and herds, as you have said, and go. And also bless me.”

<sup>33</sup> The Egyptians urged the people to hurry and leave the country. “For otherwise,” they said, “we will all die!” <sup>34</sup> So the people took their dough before the yeast was added, and carried it on their shoulders in kneading troughs wrapped in clothing.

**Ex 12:39.** With the dough the Israelites had brought from Egypt, they baked loaves of unleavened bread. The dough was without yeast because they had been driven out of Egypt and did not have time to prepare food for themselves.

**Ex 13:3** <sup>3</sup> Then Moses said to the people, “Commemorate this day, the day you came out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery, because the Lord brought you out of it with a mighty hand. Eat nothing containing yeast.

We’ve come to the crucial point in the Exodus story where God’s judgment on Pharaoh, the Egyptians, and their gods is about to get real and serious. Up to now, we have seen nine plagues afflicted on the Egyptians, ranging from minor annoyances due to nature gone wild—frogs, gnats, locusts, hail, and a bloody river— to the more serious but manageable plagues of boils, dead animals, and three days of total darkness, but none of the nine plagues have taken any Egyptian lives. And the whole story leading up to this point was told in a highly

descriptive, fast-paced fashion from scene to scene without much of a pause in the action. The first nine plagues were bang bang bang, one right after the other with a pattern of results that would become very predictable— Moses would say, "let my people go," Pharaoh would say "I will not let your people go," Moses would stretch out his hand, God would send a plague, Pharaoh's heart would be hardened, and the whole thing would repeat again. Until we get to this tenth plague. Then suddenly, everything stops and the narrator slows the story down considerably— and this gives us a sense that something dramatic, climactic, deathly serious, and immensely important is about to take place. Really, **the narrator has led us to a part of the story where we need to pause, reflect on, ponder, understand, appreciate, and even fear the magnitude of what God is about to do, which is: the passover event.**

So first, let's revisit the story a little and observe a few notes that will help us understand the meaning of the passover event. At the very beginning of this section, **12:2, the Lord said, "this month is to be for**

**you the first month, the first month of your year,” so we see that this event, the passover, completely resets the ancient Israelite calendar.**

Now, in modern times for reasons unknown, the Jewish calendar begins on a different date, but early in Israel’s history the beginning of their year coincided with the passover event- so this event was clearly meant to be of lasting historical significance. It is my belief that the reason the passover is not the beginning of the Israelite year is because the passover only foreshadowed the real passover that came to us through the blood of Jesus. How amazing is it that the world’s calendar was reset to the coming of Jesus?

Continuing in the story, the Lord said, on the tenth day of this month, every family, every household of the Israelite community must take a young unblemished lamb, one that has never broken a bone, and slaughter it at twilight. Then, **the Lord told them to dip a hyssop branch into the blood— hyssop was commonly used in purification rituals— and paint the sides and tops of the doorframes of their houses with the blood.** It probably looked exactly as you would

imagine— deep red blood dripping down the doors from the top and both sides.

Let's stop here a moment. You might be tempted to think that the smearing of the blood on the doorposts was a mystical, magical ritual but it was not. Instead, as we can see in **vs. 13, the blood-smearing was a sign for the Israelites on their houses where they were. So in other words, the blood symbolized the dedication of their own house to God as a *sacred space*, enabling their protection from the wrath of God that was meant for the first-born sons and animals of the Egyptians.** By slaughtering the lamb and smearing its blood on the doorframes of their houses, they were acknowledging that God owned this space, and his people were dwelling here in this place— as a result, when the angel of God saw the symbol of God's divine ownership, he would pass-over the house and no destructive plague would come upon them.

In a sense, **the symbol of the blood turned the Israelite houses into little embassies of God in a foreign land during a war-time atmosphere.** When I lived in Thailand, I came to learn that the US embassy was considered 100% US soil. At the entry gates of the US embassy, there was a seal that looked like this (**pic**), and in this picture (**next pic**) you can kind of see



where it's located in the upper part of the entry there. Anytime I went to the US embassy and saw that seal, I knew that beyond those gates was US soil. So I always knew that if my life or my rights as a US citizen were in danger, I could run to the embassy for refuge and it would be as if I was standing on US soil, protected by US law — and hopefully our military would come for our protection and rescue if it came to that. **Just like that seal, the blood of the passover lamb was applied at the entryway of the Israelite houses as a seal that told the invading angel**

**of God that this dwelling place is indeed heaven's soil.** That seal of blood symbolized their protection from judgment, it symbolized their escape, their freedom, and their rescue from a life of slavery. You might be drawing parallels to Jesus right now, and you should be!

Let's continue on and observe a few other details. So after the blood-smearing ritual, each family was to have a meal together inside their own homes. There are two interesting things about this passover meal. First, **each family ate the meal in their own separate houses, but it was a communal experience-** the whole community performed the same ritual and ate the same meal at the same time that night. From the smallest to the greatest, the most insignificant to the most significant, the meal was prepared and eaten in the exact same way. There was no distinction in how the different families should take the meal, only the Lord told them that if one whole lamb is too much for a smaller family, then they should share the lamb with their neighbors. So the emphasis on this meal was communal and without respect for social status. It was meant to be a shared community experience, but only for God's people.

At the same time, it was also very personal and private— it was a meal eaten individually with immediate family members, and they were not to go outside of their own homes in celebratory fashion— it was a serious and somber meal.

The second interesting thing is the unleavened bread and how that little detail pertains to how they were to eat the meal. Unleavened bread is flat-bread, made without yeast. **The reason why the Lord instructed them to eat bread made without yeast was to symbolize the haste of their redemption- in other words, their redemption would come so fast that there would be no time for the yeast to rise in their bread- it was meant to be a meal eaten in haste (Ex. 12:11).** Verse 11 of chapter 12 says, “this is how you are to eat it: with your cloak tucked in your belt, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand. Eat it in haste, it is the Lord’s passover.” So, this was quite different from a typical family meal where the shoes, or sandals, would be left off for the night, the coats and outdoor gear would be hung up and put away, maybe a night garment or lighter clothes would be worn; instead this passover



meal was to be eaten as if they were already late for a long trip, like they had one foot out the door.

In this story, the Lord's redemption from slavery was literally just around the corner and it would not wait for the Israelites to be ready for it; instead, they had to be ready for it at a moment's notice, and they had to be shut up inside their little protected embassies until the time came for them to escape. **So the passover meal was, for one, to be a shared communal experience but private for each individual family, and two, it was to be eaten with one foot out the door. The unleavened bread symbolized that the moment of salvation had arrived and they had to be ready for it in the exact way that God had told them.** If God is nudging at your heart right now asking you to follow him, do not wait, make that decision today! Don't wait! Nothing in life is guaranteed, we live with one foot already in the grave and there is no better time than right now to accept Jesus' offer of freedom from death! Take it now before both feet end up in the grave and it's too late!!

**Let's come back to this aspect of a shared community experience yet private to each individual household. This template, you could say, of God's redemptive work in the passover is really a beautiful precedent for how God moves among his people.** I have a testimony of God's Spirit moving in this way when I was at the Youth With A Mission base in Montana back in 1994. This base was a missions and discipleship training location that had three schools running simultaneously, one was a discipleship school, which was the one I was in, another was a school of Biblical Studies, and the third was a School of Worship. Each of the schools met in separate buildings on the campus, and the only interaction we had with each other was during free time activities, meals and a Friday night community service. Otherwise, each of the schools really did their own thing according to their own programs. Well, I was asked to lead worship for one of the morning worship times in our school, and through prayer, I felt that God was asking me to prepare a foot-washing time during the worship. I shared the idea with the worship team, and they agreed to it. So we led the foot-washing time— and I want to tell you, it was one of the most powerful

worship experiences I've ever been in— students who had previous problems with each other were humbling themselves and washing each other's feet with tears, forgiveness, healing, and restoration- God moved so powerfully in our school that morning. Well, as it turned out a little later during our lunch meal, a tangible buzz of excitement started rising up throughout the campus. We found out that— by God's private guidance— all three schools had foot-washings during their worship times that morning! There was no collaboration between the worship leaders, nothing was planned by the staff leaders, it was all God's doing. Each of the schools experienced individually an incredible release of forgiveness, healing, and restoration, which flooded out through the whole campus. It turned out to be a wonderful shared communal experience that was first kept private and secured within each of our schools before affecting the entire community as a whole. My faith was greatly encouraged but I remember thinking that I had almost dismissed the idea of a foot-washing as outrageous, out of my comfort-zone, and far outside of my realm of authority to even suggest as a student in the school— think of what we would have missed if I or any of the other

worship leaders didn't obey!! But **this is how God works— He is not a respecter of social status, and He cannot be limited by your comfort zone— he calls for the student and the teacher, the child and the parent, the parishioner and the pastor to share in his redemptive work. When he moves in his powerful acts of redemption and restoration, healing and forgiveness, he moves through us all.** His works are meant to be a shared experience for the whole community but at the same time, he moves within the privacy and safety of your immediate families and in ways that address your specific situation, your specific surroundings, and your specific needs.

Maybe you are in a place right now where you have hesitated getting too involved in the church because of a fear of community or you feel it's too far outside your comfort zone or realm of authority. Or maybe you have been marginalized or felt pushed down, discriminated against or made to feel inferior by others who seem to hold superiority or who come from a higher social status. Well **I encourage you to become a part of God's community and do not fear- none of us are perfect but**

**all of us have a unique part in God's community.** The freedom, redemption, healing, and restoration are available to all in God's community no matter who you are- so come and be a part of his community. He will make you a part of the worldwide move of his Spirit while respecting your own private and unique person. He will let you share in all that he has for his community even while using your individuality in the very special way that he made you, unique and unlike any other person in this world. God is calling out to you to join his community right now. He will never try to make you become someone or something you are not— he knows exactly who you are and exactly what you need, and he will bring you out of slavery and into your freedom in a way that is uniquely you, but that also gives you a sense of friendship with others in his community because of our unifying shared experiences— God's people are together yet separate, unified as one community yet respected as unique and private families and individuals.

In closing, **just as the passover event marked the very beginning of freedom from slavery and the birth of Israel, our passover seal has been given to us by the blood of the Lamb, Jesus— and we have been marked by his blood as his own, chosen people.** In a few moments Rob will lead us in communion, where we will remember Jesus' body given for us and his blood poured out for us. Our celebration of communion is derived from Jesus' last supper, but the root of the last supper runs all the way back to the Passover event. So the Passover foreshadows God's plan of redemption that would come to the world through his only son Jesus. Luke 22:7-20, which is the last supper passage, Jesus said to Peter and John, "go and make preparations for us to eat the passover." In the last supper, there is no mention of a passover lamb because Jesus' own flesh and blood would take the place of the passover lamb. **In 1 Corinthians 5:7, the Apostle Paul explicitly says, "Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed." The blood of Jesus is the sign upon us that enables our escape from death and our inclusion in God's community, where we are unified by the blood of Jesus yet valued separately as unique individuals, each with a**

**special design crafted by God's very own hands.** Come today, do not wait! Step into God's community, become active and discover your unique design! Accept the blood of Jesus and his sacrifice for you. Then you will be marked for salvation and set free from this world of death and enslavement, and you will be brought into God's great community where you will find yourself and your true friends. Amen! Let's pray.

Benediction:

Romans 15:5–6 (NIV): May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.