

Exodus 12:1-13 **The Lord's Passover**

Our text is the first part of a section of Moses' writing that extends to 13:16. The larger passage is dominated by two declarations of the Lord to Moses. These are interwoven with the words of Moses spoken to the elders of Israel as well as the narratives that describe the actions of God and the response of Israel. Into this material there is also a further interweaving of didactic portions that give explanation to the significance of the events as well as directions to memorialize the events. All of this has as a central theme, "**...the Lord's Passover.**"

This interweaving of historical narrative (e.g. 12:29-32) and didactic (e.g. 12:14-15) should be readily accepted as the norm for those who believe in Redemptive History. Our God is a real God that works in history (real time and space) toward redemption (purpose). Those events are recorded not as mere history, but they are also instructive. It is God who not only acts in history (narrative) but the One who defines (didactic) the significance of those same actions.

From this larger block of Exodus we are considering only a portion of the first declaration that God gives to Moses and Aaron. The part that we are choosing is being selected with respect to our present church situation as well as the approach of Easter.

We will first consider the passage in general and then move to a particular consideration of the chronology and significance of "**...the Lord's Passover.**"

The Word of the Lord to Moses and Aaron Regarding Passover 12:1-13

As we have indicated this is the first of two declarations made by God in this section of Exodus. These are only two of many declarations that are recorded throughout the book. This phrase, "**...the LORD said to Moses...**" is actually used 37 times from chapter 4 through chapter 34. The point is that God is speaking through the book of Exodus.

The Chronology of Passover 2-3a

The chronological statements regarding Passover are not limited to verses 2 & 3. They extend through the whole passage and include references to a particular month (vs.2), the beginning of the year (vs. 2), particular days (vss. 3, 6,) these references even include parts of days (vss. 6, 10), the number of days the Passover lamb is to be watched (vs. 6) and even the time when it is

to be killed (vs. 6). There is also a larger chronological reference that we will explore later.

The Selection and Sacrifice of the Passover Lamb 3b-7

Here God describes when the Passover lamb is to be selected (vs. 3) as well as for whom the Passover lamb is to be selected (vs. 3). He makes provision in these instructions for smaller households (vs. 4). He tells Moses that that the Passover lamb is to be pure (vs. 5), it may be a sheep or a goat (vs. 5) and when it is to be killed (vs. 6).

The Passover Meal 8-11

God's instructions also include how the lamb is to be cooked (vs. 8) and what is to be eaten along with it (vs. 8). He tells Moses that none of it is to be left over until morning (vs. 10) and whatever remains is to be burned (vs. 10). God even describes the dinner dress (vs. 11).

The reason for all of the particulars is made very clear in verse 11;

12:11 'Now you shall eat it in this manner: *with your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it in haste-- it is the LORD'S Passover.*

The Passover is first and foremost something that belongs to the Lord, He is the One who orders and performs it, it belongs to Him. Further we note that Passover is a real event in history which God condenses into signs for the purpose of transporting its significance through history.

The Lord is the one who signifies the Passover. The Passover and its corresponding signs are not the invention of men contrived, but rather it is the directive of God who works from His purposes and then assigns corresponding signs to reflect the significance of the event.

The Significance of Passover 12:12-13

What is the significance of Passover? Passover is the means by which God delivers His people from His judgment upon Egypt.

12:12 'For I will go through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments-- I am the LORD. 13 'The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live; and when I

see the blood I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.

This significance is expressed through corresponding signs.

While the particular features of Passover from the timing and selection of the Lamb to the cooking and eating of it are signs, there is one sign that stands out as an inclusive sign, it reflects that the nature of the whole. That sign is described by God in verse 7 and referred in 13.

12:7 'Moreover, they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses in which they eat it... 13 'The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live; and when I see the blood I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.

The substance of this sign is that it indicated the substitution of a lamb for the first born. This act of substitution was already a part of the life of Israel dating back to Genesis 22 where we have the record of the ram being substituted for the life of Isaac.

Both of these substitution events foreshadow the real substitution event in the gospel, where it is God who substitutes His Son, referred to by John as the Lamb of God, in order to deliver His chosen Ones from His judgment coming upon the world (1 Thes. 1:9-10).

This sign is not an amulet that wards off evil spirits; rather it is an indicator of the faithfulness of God to His word and purpose. It is not the one who possesses the sign that has protection, but rather the one who believes in the word of the One who defines the sign.

Hebrews 11:28 By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood,
so that he who destroyed the firstborn would not touch them.

Faith is the operative component in the sign.

What did Moses believe?

Moses and all who heeded the words of the Lord believed that they would be spared the judgment of God that was coming upon Egypt. The application of the blood to the door post and lintel was simply the expression of that faith; they were obeying God because they believed He would do what He had declared that He would do. That had been made evident in the previous 9 plagues.

Just as it was faith, not just the sign, which delivered Moses and Israel from the judgment of God upon Egypt, so it is with us who seek to be delivered from the wrath of God that is coming upon the whole world. We like those in Exodus must believe the Word of God. For us that Word concerns the work of God in Christ to deliver us from the judgment.

If you hope to escape the coming judgment of God you must believe that God has through the life, death, burial and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, which we begin to celebrate this week next, has secured the means by which to save you from His own wrath.

Now we turn our attention back to the chronological element in our passage. As we stated previously there are many time elements in our text. The first time reference in verse two points out that Passover was to reorder the life of Israel.

12:2 "This month shall be the beginning of months for you; it is to be the first month of the year to you.

“This event established Abib (later called Nisan) as the first month in the religious calendar of Israel...The Israelite calendar was a lunar calendar with periodic adjustments to the solar year. Abib began with the first new moon after the spring equinox, generally mid-March, and went through mid-April.”

John Walton *The Background Bible Commentary* p. 84

This event is so significant that it called for the reordering of the entire nation. That reordering begins with God delivering His people and the rest of their life to flow forward from that event.

The next time marker we consider demonstrates that Passover is not just an arbitrary point in time, in which Israel is to turn over a new leaf, or get a fresh start on life. Rather Passover is a decisive point in time that is dictated by God.

12:12 'For I will go through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments-- I am the LORD.

The night that God is referring to the 14th day of the month specified in verse 2;

12:6 'You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month, then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel is to kill it at twilight.

This is not just any night, but rather one that was promised to Abraham by God in Genesis 15;

Genesis 15:13 God said to Abram, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. ¹⁴ "But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve, and afterward they will come out with many possessions.

How do we know that this is what is being referred to? Because Moses references this in Exodus 12;

12:40 Now the time that the sons of Israel lived in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years. ⁴¹ And at the end of four hundred and thirty years, to the very day, all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt.

Notice again the specificity of the time, "...to the very day...", which corresponds to the phrase in our text "...**on that night**..."(12:12). What is the point that I am trying to make? Simply that every thing that God does is precise, nothing is arbitrary.

The scripture is replete with examples of this kind of language that leads to this conclusion.

Genesis 7:13 On the very same day Noah and Shem and Ham and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons with them, entered the ark,

Ezekiel 24:1 And the word of the LORD came to me in the ninth year, in the tenth month, on the tenth of the month, saying, **2** "Son of man, write the name of the day, this very day. The king of Babylon has laid siege to Jerusalem this very day.

Romans 5:6 For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

Galatians 4:4 But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, **5** so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

1 Timothy 6:14 that you keep the commandment without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, **15** which He will bring about at the proper time-- He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords,

The point that I am seeking to establish is once again is that not only is Passover the Lord's but the timing of it is His as well. In the Exodus context Passover is

the culmination of 400 years of history that has been so finely tuned that God gives instructions down to the very time of day that the Passover Lamb is to be killed and eaten.

These 400 years are not wasted history, but rather they are leading up to the Passover night and involved the preparation of leadership, the setting up particular attitudes and dispositions in other people and getting people into particular places,.

3:10 "Therefore, come now, and I will send you to Pharaoh, so that you may bring My people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt."

4:21 The LORD said to Moses, "When you go back to Egypt see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders which I have put in your power; but I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go.

8:22 "But on that day I will set apart the land of Goshen, where My people are living, so that no swarms of insects will be there, in order that you may know that I, the LORD, am in the midst of the land.

God orchestrates history to fulfill His purposes. On the night of 14 Nisan God demonstrated His faithfulness. I pray that this strengthens your faith in God by enabling you to see that His work is a detailed, chronological and a certain work, "**...the Lord's Passover...**" demonstrates that.

It is the predictable randomness of God's actions that make our faith believable. If our religion were built on the constancy of the world then Egypt's religion has as much credibility as does ours. Who cannot predict the rising of the sun? If there were never any interruption of constancy then the naturalist would have credibility. It is the "apparent" randomness that gives credibility to our belief in the purposes of God. When through the prophetic announcement our attention is drawn to that which is not expected and we behold that which is predicted our religion rises above those who merely speculate or those who deny and we have confidence in the One whom we have yet seen.