



The Essentials Series

Week 11 – Passover and The Exodus Exodus 12-14

St. George's Episcopal Church

Spring 2015

The Passover

- This is the first feast of the Lord, it takes place in what is commanded to be the first month of the year for Israel.
 - Compare with Rosh Hashanah, the Feast of Trumpets, which later became the start of the civil new year. Somewhat parallels our secular New Year on January 1, versus the liturgical New Year on Advent 1.
 - The feast was to be an everlasting ordinance, and a reminder to Israel generation to generation of the Lord's saving power.
- What are the key components of Passover, as commanded by God, given through Moses to Israel?
 - Lamb to be killed at twilight
 - Lamb to be a male goat or sheep (12:5)
 - One year old, without blemish (12:5), i.e. in the prime of its youth and strength
 - Two things to be done with the lamb:
 - It is to be roasted and eaten, all of it, along with unleavened bread and bitter herbs (12:8)
 - Its blood is to be smeared on the doorposts and lintel (12:7)
 - Note that the blood is to be a sign both to the people as well as to God himself (12:13), that is, we may deduce a covenantal role or witness that the blood is signifying between God and his people, the Blood of the Old Covenant, which anticipates the blood of Christ shed for the New Covenant.
 - Eaten in haste, i.e. dressed and ready to travel.
- The Plague of the Firstborn
 - Note that this plague is specifically identified as God targeting his judgment on the Egyptian gods.
 - Note also that God's justice is meted out in two forms, locally or globally.
 - In Genesis we see an example of global judgment in the Flood. Here in Exodus the judgment is more localized and specific to Egypt. Later God will explain other localized judgments against other nations, like Assyria and also (unfaithful) Israel herself.
 - God's local judgments are intended to serve both an immediate purpose (judging the sin of Egypt, in this case) but also serve as foreshadow of God's final global judgment on the Last Day.
 - This connection is made readily apparent in Revelation, when the plagues described are very similar to the Ten Plagues of Egypt, noting that the first 'round' of judgment is partial (i.e. repeatedly involving 'one third' of the affected realm, objects, or people) but the final round is total.
- New Testament application
 - Passover, of all the OT feasts, is the one with which most Christians are at least somewhat familiar, or at least have heard of.
 - It has direct ties to Christ and the Gospel
 - John the Baptist declares in the opening chapter of John's Gospel, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!" (John 1:29)
 - Paul specifically connects the death of Jesus Christ with the fulfillment of Passover and the call of the faithful Christian to strive for holiness through their faith in Jesus as fulfillment of the Feast of Unleavened Bread: "Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump [of dough], as you really are unleavened. For Christ our Passover lamb has been sacrificed; let us therefore celebrate the festival" (1 Cor 5:7-8).
 - The Passover meal is the basis for Jesus instituting the Lord's Supper/Eucharist/Communion, only now he changes the meaning from a remembrance of the Exodus to his own body broken and blood shed for the establishment of the New Covenant.

The Exodus

- This is perhaps *the* great salvation moment in the Old Testament, and certainly for Israel.
 - It casts a large 'shadow' on the path of salvation history, and was a profoundly formative moment in Israel's identity.
 - This act/event essentially becomes the paradigm for future salvation moments that God will enact. For example, the Babylonian captivity was viewed as a return to "Egypt" requiring another "Exodus".
- The entire Book of Exodus may readily be divided into three primary sections, as follows:
 - The Salvation of God (Israel delivered from Egypt), chapters 1-18
 - The Law of God (Israel at Sinai), chapters 19-25
 - The Dwelling of God (Israel and the Tabernacle), chapters 26-40.
- These three themes of 1) salvation, 2) Law, and 3) dwelling are central to the organization of Exodus, but also are huge themes throughout the entire story of the Bible.
 - Note particularly that at the end of the Biblical Story, in Revelation, we are told, "Behold, the dwelling [lit. "tabernacle"] of God is with man" (Rev 21:3). In the Gospels, when Jesus was born we are told, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us [lit. "tabernacle-ed, or pitched his tent, among us"]".
 - Thus when John is describing the Incarnation in his Prologue, he is directly alluding to the dwelling of God among his people, as typified in Exodus with the Tabernacle, and later via the Temple]
- Flight from Egypt and Crossing the Red Sea
 - Israel flees Egypt under the leadership of Moses and Aaron (prophet and priest) and must trust in the Lord to deliver them, even in the face of a wrathful Pharaoh and his chariot army.
 - God declares that his judgment upon Pharaoh and his army are intended to be a witness to all Egypt that YHWH is the Lord (again, laying to rest God's victory in the cosmic showdown).
 - The means of Israel's deliverance and Pharaoh's ruin culminates in the Red Sea crossing, by which they pass through the waters, after which they then enter the wilderness on their way to Sinai. We note that like the Red Sea crossing, the Cross is both our salvation and Satan's ruin.
- In the Gospels, particularly Matthew's, we see Jesus being baptized by John (who is the final prophet or witness of the Old Covenant), and then immediately entering the wilderness to be tempted.
 - The Gospel writers are very subtly but very clearly demonstrating Jesus' life to be a recapitulation of Israel's life, first through the waters and then into the wilderness
 - However, unlike Israel, Jesus is faithful and obedient in the wilderness, and affirms his identity as the true Israel (the shoot from the stump of Jesse; Isaiah 11:1). It is of no small significance that the words Jesus uses to refute Satan are direct quotes from Moses' speeches in Deuteronomy.
 - Thus we begin to see the rich textures of the Gospel accounts through the backstory of themes and images from the Old Testament. Jesus, the true faithful Israelite (and Prophet, Priest, and King), is the means of a new Exodus, and new deliverance of God's people, not just one nation from slavery in Egypt, but all nations from slavery to sin and death. This New Exodus was described in the prophets (like Isaiah).
 - This figural reading of the Gospels is an essential component to our right understanding of the New Testament in particular, but the Scriptures as a whole. Christ revealed in the NT also then enables us to go back and rightly understand the fullness of what was happening in the OT.

For Further Reading

Hayes, Richard. *Reading Backwards: Figural Christology and the Fourfold Gospel Witness*. Waco: Baylor University Press, 2014.

Dillard, Raymond B. and Tremper Longman III. *An Introduction to the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994.