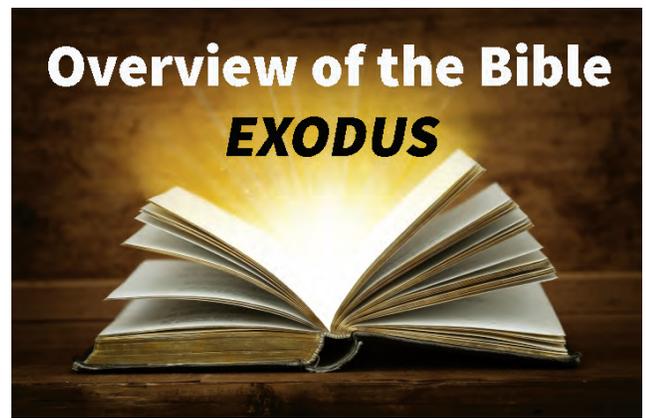


EXODUS: The Passover

Exodus 12 - 14 – Lesson 14

Wednesday, May 13, 2020



Exodus 12 spells out the procedures in the observance of Passover. The Hebrew word for "Passover" is *pesah*. There is also a verb, *pasha* ("to pass over"), used three times in Exodus 12: "When I see the blood, I will pass over you" (12:13); "The Lord will pass over the door" (12:23); "it is the sacrifice of the Lord's Passover, for he passed over the houses of the people of Israel in Egypt" (12:27).

But what is the meaning of "the Lord will pass over"? Does it mean that God will bypass the house over whose door the blood is smeared? The clue is found in 12:2: "The Lord will pass over the door and will not allow the destroyer to enter your houses to slay you." To "pass over," then, means "to protect" or "to stand over and guard." The Lord Himself will block the entry of the destroyer. He will be a protective covering for his people. Their security is in his presence.

Most important here is the use of the blood. That blood is to be extracted from the lamb's body and then smeared over the doorposts and the horizontal beam atop the door (12:7,13). Failure to take this action will result in disaster.

Exodus 12 is concerned not only about the when of Passover, the why of Passover, and the how of observing it, but also about who may participate (12:43-49). The observance of Passover is not an indiscriminate invitation to everyone. Who may participate? The congregation of Israel (v. 47); the slave (v. 44), if circumcised, who has the same privileges as a Hebrew; the stranger (v. 48), the non-Israelite who has become a believer in Yahweh. Who may not participate? The foreigner (v. 43), the pagan unbeliever; the sojourner (v. 45), either the resident alien or the visitor who will settle temporarily on Israelite soil; the hired servant (v. 45), one belonging to another nation but working in Israel. These distinctions are necessary because of the "mixed multitude" (12:38) leaving Egypt, and this is why instructions about eligibility for participation in Passover (12:43-49) come just after this "mixed multitude" leaves Egypt (12:37-39).

The New Testament writers deliberately move from the lamb to the Lamb, from type to the antitype, for this is the fullness of God's plan. The prison now is a kingdom of darkness, not slavery in Egypt. The captive who is called forth is not Israel, but the world. Redemption is an ethical change rather than a geographical change.

As with the lamb of Egypt (Exod.12:46), so not one bone of Jesus, the Lamb was broken (John 19:36). The two explicit references in the New Testament to Christ, the Passover Lamb are in 1 Corinthians 5:7 and 1 Peter 1:19. What is of interest in these passages is that both Paul and Peter are concerned with the implications of redemption by the Lamb for holy living than they are in formulating a theological discourse on soteriology. That is, the apostles move beyond salvation into sanctification.

The immediate sequel to the Passover is Moses' transmission of further instructions to the Israelites about the Feast of Unleavened Bread (13:3-10) and the consecration of the firstborn (13:11-16). Each of these two sections stresses that God's redemption is both from and into. It is from Egypt, but into the land of the Canaanites (13:5, 11). Israel's possession of the new land will be the fulfillment of God's promises to the patriarchs. Suddenly the reader is taken back as far as Genesis 12:7. But once in the land, the people of Israel must share their testimony with the children whom God will give them (13:8, 14). God's faithfulness reverberates over three periods: the past (your ancestors); the present (you); the future (your children).

The Exodus (13:17-15:21)

Exodus 12:37 informs us that six hundred thousand men, besides women and children, left Egypt. The total number of Israelites leaving would have been in excess of two million. This same number is repeated substantially in Exodus 38:26; Numbers 1:46; 2:32; 26:51.

The Crossing of the Red Sea

The crossing of the Red Sea is described miraculously. To have the Red Sea divided would be no insignificant event. Today the Red Sea is approx. 1,200 miles in length. Its width varies from 124 to 155 miles. Its average depth is a bit more than 1,600 ft. Minimum depth is 600 feet, and maximum depth is 7,700 feet.

Exodus 14 concludes by observing, *“The people feared the Lord and they believed in the Lord and in his servant Moses”* (v. 31). But such belief must be verbalized, for impression without expression leads to depression. Moses is coupled with the Lord at the end of chapter 14, but in the song of chapter 15 Moses is absent.

It is fitting in this litany of praise in Exodus 15 that God is addressed primarily as Yahweh. Thus, the hymn is an affirmation of God’s Lordship.

The emphasis is primarily on what God has done. Israel does serve a God who acts, and acts decisively. To tamper with God’s people is no small risk. As early as Genesis 12 an Egyptian Pharaoh discovers that truth.

The hymn celebrates not only the great acts of God, but also his nature; who He is.

He is ‘majestic in holiness’ (v.11).

He is God of covenant, and steadfast love (v.13).

He is comparable (v.11).