

Exodus 12, The Passover

Necessary Context

The detailed instructions on the passover are in the first half of Exodus 12 (vv.1-28). They are sandwiched between the Lord informing Moses of the 10th plague (and Pharaoh too) and the actual killing of the firstborn sons of Egypt (11:1-10 & 12:29-42). We then have further instructions about the passover, who can take and who cannot, followed by the consecration of the firstborn of Israel.

All this helps us to see that the Passover is intimately connected to the tenth plague and helps us see this is a vitally important ritual that communicated deep theology of the need for sacrifice in redemption. The cost of Israel's freedom, was at the expense of the death of the firstborn of Egypt. (This was also retribution for the Pharaoh of Exodus 1 and his killing of Israel's sons.) Israel becomes God's firstborn son (cf. 4:22-23) and Israel is to dedicate its firstborn sons to the Lord.

These threads of sacrifice and the cost of firstborn are foundational concepts for understanding the atonement of Christ. Jesus is God's Son who is the true and better Israel. His death grants us life and extends to people beyond the nation of Israel. Our freedom to serve God comes at the price of Christ's blood. We are not free to do as we please, but we were bought with a price (1 Cor. 6:20).

Jesus of course instituted the Lord's Supper the night before his death when he celebrated the passover with the disciples. This guides us in helping see what is similar about the Lord's Supper and Passover and what is different about it. It is a deeply important ritual for Christians that calls us to remember, reflect, and look forward to all that Christ is for us, past, present, and future.

Questions

1. What is the importance of sacrifice in the Bible? What are examples of things we sacrifice for today?
2. Reflect on the price of Israel's freedom. How does a biblical view of freedom differ from a secular view of freedom?
3. Do you have important days and rituals in your home, especially around the holidays? Who instituted them? For what purpose? How have you modified them for your family?
4. What is the importance of Christian rituals (Baptism and the Lord's Supper)? How do they help create a common identity? How do they lose their sense of meaning? What are the critical things to understand about them?
5. What sacrifices have others made for you that really affected your life? How does Christ's sacrifice for you continually sustain your life in him?

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