

## Exodus Chapters 11-12 - John Karmelich

There's a joke where a famous American football coach was asked whether their upcoming game was a matter of life or death. The coach responded, "No, it's more important than that." In effect that's how I feel about these chapters. What God called the Israelites to do at this point in Exodus literally became a life or death issue for them. It's the famous story of Passover: What God commanded them became the basis of a religious holiday celebrated to this day. For those who don't know, the command was for the Israelites to smear a bunch of lamb's blood on their doorposts so God would spare their lives. Any door in Egypt not marked as such suffered the death of the firstborn sons. Even Egyptian animals of a home not marked in blood was killed. That's not an annual ritual. Remembrance of this is for Israelites!

So why's all of that more important than our life or death? For us the issue isn't our earthly life, but the eternal one. I'm not saying Christians have to do a Passover ritual to be saved nor am I implying Jewish people who do that ritual annually are now automatically saved. I'm saying this ritual symbolizes what God has called us to do to be saved and what to do after we're saved. In other words it's more than just life or death! Let me explain further:

Remember why we're saved, to use our lives as a witness for God! Let put it this way. After that ritual was performed, for the next seven days the Israelites were required to eat unleavened bread. Leaven or yeast as it's better known, is a symbol for sin because it corrupts as it grows. This ritual is implying we "Trust in the blood of the lamb that was sacrificed for our sins (and gives us eternal life), then we'll use the time we got left to live to be witness for God". The bible never says clean up your act and then you can become saved. It's always to trust in Jesus first and then use our life as a witness for Him. But what about when we sin after that? Welcome to the club. Remember God's aware of every sin we have done before we did them. We turn from that sin, deal with the consequences and continue using our lives as a witness for Him! I always assume my readers know that, so let's discuss these chapter details as they tie directly to what God did for us.

Chapter 11 opens with God saying in effect, "Who does this Pharaoh guy think he's messing with? It's time to put this game to an end once and for all!" More literally God tells Moses the Pharaoh will agree to your terms to leave! At the same time have the Israelites ask their Egyptians neighbors for stuff they can take with them. What they took was used for both making the tabernacle (Exodus describes that a bit later in the book. It's where rituals are performed to show loyalty to God). The things they got were also used to build a golden calf (an idol they built to turn away from God)! It's a reminder that even the saved still sin! Meanwhile back to the Passover ritual: God announced that this coming night, if a door has blood on it, they will be spared the death sentence. The text said Moses told this to Pharaoh and he (Moses) left in anger. We don't know why he was angry, but I suspect it was because the Pharaoh will not turn to his life over to God after all the plagues to date!

All of this leads to the big scene. God tells Moses in order to commemorate this date, this month when it occurred shall be considered the first month of the year (in the springtime). (The Israelites later made New Years on the first fall month after they returned from Babylon). Anyway, God told them through Moses that they got to choose a lamb on the 10th day of the month. By the way, it was on the 10th day of the same month that Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey. (Palm Sunday). That was Jesus's way of saying choose Me as I'm THE sacrificial lamb for those who accept Me as that payment for your sins!

Then we get eating instructions. The lamb must be kept as a pet for 4 days, and then killed on the 14th day of the month. It's to show that innocent blood must be killed for the price of sin. That blood had to

be put on the doorposts and on the bridge above the door. The lamb had to be cooked by roasting it. If a family was too small to eat a whole lamb, they should celebrate it with another family! Realize that it was on that same day (Passover) Jesus was crucified for our sins. Like I said, this was bigger than just life or death!

God's not finished giving Moses instructions about celebrating this holiday. It must be done every year on this date. In Jewish families it's called a Seder dinner. (I've been to a handful in my life. If one gets a chance one should go to one!) Then God says in effect, "That's not all, after that holiday is done, it is time for another holiday that requires every Jewish person to not eat leaven for seven days". That is for us to remember that once the "blood of the lamb" has paid for our sins, we must then use our lives as a witness for Jesus which is symbolized by a week of eating bread without leaven (a symbol of sin)!

The instructions are in effect repeated. The first time was God telling this to Moses. The second time is Moses telling the Israelites to do the lamb's blood thing! I picture the Israelites thinking, "You know the god who caused all of those plagues? Well now He demands we keep a lamb as pet for 4 days then kill it, put some blood on our doors and then eat the lamb. I don't know about you, but I'd do what God says because personally I'd like to no longer be a slave and have my life end in a few days!" If you did not know the Jewish month is based on a lunar (moon) cycle, were the 1st day is "no moon". The 14th is a full moon. That same day on their calendar roughly 1,500 years later is the day Jesus was crucified. That's why Easter is on the first Sunday after the first full moon after spring equinox!

OK the plan was in place. The Israelites did what was required and others who took sides with them! It lead to the big death scene of all the first born people and animals dying. That meant uncles, grandpa's as well as babies. Why animals? To show that God is in control of the animals the Egyptians treated as gods! Anyway the Pharaoh who apparently wasn't a first born son said in effect, "Uncle! You win! Go get out of Egypt and never come back!" The Egyptians equally wanted them gone said in effect, "Take our stuff! Take whatever you want, just leave!" So the Israelites left which is the actual exodus itself!

The final part of the chapter gave a few more instructions about the Passover itself. Notice we get more verses about Passover instructions than we do about the event itself! It shows God is more interested in people remembering this event than the event itself. To give an idea of how it's remembered, over 400 years later when the Israelites were fighting another enemy, that enemy said in effect, "This is the God who did all the damage in Egypt!" My point is that event was remembered through history. There was a desire by Thomas Jefferson to make the official seal of the United States showing the Israelites when they left Egypt. (The idea was rejected.) My point is this Exodus is bigger than just this one story!

Back to the instructions: It's not to be eaten by foreigners, but only family members and guests of those families which is why Christians are allowed to join the Seder dinner if invited. The instructions repeat about the whole lamb being consumed and even families joining together that weren't big enough to eat a whole lamb. Then we get a strange comment: None one bone is to be broken on the lamb. We get a quote of that in John's Gospel saying that not one of Jesus bones were broken (John 19:31-36), despite the fact the Roman soldiers were required to break the legs of prisoners on the cross that day! With all that said, the Israelites did as commanded and the Exodus occurred!

I could go on how this lesson is far more than a life and death story. Obviously it ties well to the cross events and how Jesus blood paid for our sins. It's more than life and death as the act of accepting Jesus blood is about eternal life and not just this one! I'll end it with that "food for thought"!

If interested, there are two other links on this chapter. They are for a more detailed lesson that I wrote about 20 years ago. Of course, you're welcome to read that if you'd like. Either way, I'm grateful that you did read this! If you're new here, realize you're always welcome to e-mail me. Thanks again, John